



The Absence Made Visible: The Case of *Ausenc´as*, Gustavo Germano’s Photographic Exhibition

Celina Van Dembroucke

University of Texas at Austin (Institute of Latin American Studies)

Abstract

This paper is based on *Ausenc´as*, a photographic exhibition that deals with the disappearances that went on during Argentina’s last dictatorship. Created by photographer Gustavo Germano, the exhibition reconstructs family pictures from the seventies in which the disappeared was/were present. Germano recreates these pictures in the same place and conditions as the originals, and then places the original pictures from the past next to the new pictures taken more than thirty years later highlighting the absence of the disappeared. In this paper, I explore the process of making the exhibition including the performative engagement of the participants who agreed to pose for Germano’s project. The article also describes two pairs of pictures in order to address the effects of *Ausenc´as* on meaning as well as to reflect on the artist’s use of the bodies of others in the staging of absence. The conclusion briefly dwells on the audience’s experience when confronted with *Ausenc´as*’ reenactment of the present using an image from the past.

Not long after the return to democracy in 1983, a multitude of collective manifestations that dealt with the phenomenon of massive disappearances emerged in the Argentine social and artistic arena that often blurred the limits between artistic praxis and political denunciation. This article analyzes one of these artistic responses: the photographic exhibition

Ausenc'as (2006). Conceived by the Argentine photographer Gustavo Germano, the exhibition displays fourteen sets of two pictures. The first is generally an old family snapshot from the seventies in which a 'disappeared' is portrayed, while the second is a recreation of the same photograph with the same people and conditions except that the disappeared is not there anymore.

[2] The first section of this article opens with a brief introduction to Argentina's political background during the seventies. Primarily based on the information from an interview held with Germano, this first segment also concisely revisits the process of creation of *Ausenc'as*. The second section describes two pairs of pictures—out of the fourteen works that comprise *Ausenc'as*—in order to address the technique of collage in the construction of meaning and temporality. In the third section I explore how restaging the past involves an active but difficult decision to perform made by the participants that ultimately changes the meaning of the original picture. Following this thread, throughout the article I argue that, on the one hand, the participants make visible the absence of their loved ones by overtly posing side by side with the empty space left by the disappeared. And on the other, that the act of performing a picture of the seventies transforms a classical intimate family image of the past into a public and politically charged statement of the present, as this imagery is now read as a clear

reference to the still current consequences of state repression. The final section concludes by exploring the uneasiness experienced by the audience when confronted with *Ausencia's* reenactment of the present using an image from the past.

I

Argentina is sadly famous for the brutality of its last military dictatorship (1976-1983). On March 24, 1976, the military Junta took over power and shortly after established a massive system of disappearances and killings in order to eliminate an alleged 'internal enemy.' Under the broad definition of 'subversives,' the targets of the clandestine detentions carried out by death squads ranged from people who were affiliated with armed groups such as ERP (*People's Revolutionary Army*) or *Montoneros*ⁱ to just about anyone who looked suspicious. Thousands of individuals were taken from their houses, the streets, or places of work without any official record, transferred to one of the 340 concentration camps all over the country,ⁱⁱ tortured in order to track down more supposed 'subversives,' and finally, in most cases, clandestinely executed.

[4] The dictatorship ended in 1983 leaving behind what is considered the most violent and conflictive period in Argentina's history. Since the return to democracy, in a prevailing atmosphere of major accomplishments and

setbacks in terms of justice,ⁱⁱⁱ many artistic and collective expressions have arisen in order to engage the phenomenon of the disappearances. Political denunciation and debate invaded the aesthetic terrain up to the point that it became almost an unavoidable topic in Argentine artistic creation. Individually and collaboratively, from different standpoints and bringing into play different representational strategies, several artists made strong stances on this issue. Just to mention a few: *Nosotros no sabíamos* (1976) by León Ferrari is a collage of news clipping collected during the dictatorship stressing the fact that repression was being reported at the time with the aim of confronting the attitude of denial of those who never acknowledged the existence of a state of terror; *El siluetazo* (The Silhouette) consists of a group of artists in different parts of the country who carried out interventions in public space by pasting life-sized human silhouettes on buildings that had functioned as concentration camps during the dictatorship; *Identidad* (Identity) is a collective installation of pictures of the disappeared combined with mirrors reflecting the faces of people born in captivity, among many others.

[5] *Ausencias*, a novel photographic exhibition that participates in this 'wave' of the art addressing the traumatic past and in the long tradition of performance activism involving photography,^{iv} was inaugurated on February 26, 2008 at the Centro Cultural Recoleta in Buenos Aires with an opening

attended by the President Cristina Fernández as well as by representatives of human rights organizations. The project's main idea was simple yet categorical: Germano wanted to denounce the disappearances by reconstructing family pictures in which the disappeared people were present. By putting the old picture side by side with the artificially reshot picture two elements stand out: the passage of time and the absence of the disappeared. The poignancy is produced by the shock of seeing a photographed subject who has aged thirty years in contrast to the nothingness of the blank space that the disappeared would occupy in the present if he or she were alive.

[6] The project was initially conceived in 2001 in Barcelona where Germano continues to live and work as a photojournalist. After an initial rejection by the representative of the Argentinean Embassy in Spain, Cecilia Rossetto,^v Germano presented the project to Casa América Catalunya in 2006, the institution that finally funded not only *Ausenc'as'* costs of production but also the transportation of the exhibition around Europe and Argentina.^{vi}

[7] Having an older brother, Eduardo, who was kidnapped and killed during the last Argentine dictatorship, Germano points out that the motivation behind creating this exhibition came from not having had the

chance to watch Eduardo grow old.^{vii} In an attempt to express that sentiment by means of a photographic language, Germano reconstructed a picture of his own family. The photo he chose was taken in 1969 when the Germanos travelled on vacation from the province of Entre Ríos to the neighboring country of Uruguay. They were about to cross the border when the Argentine police asked for a picture of the four brothers, which was finally taken at a photographic studio in a nearby town. In order to show the passage of time and the material absence of his brother Germano repeated the picture in the same place and conditions, but now without his disappeared brother. He then placed the original black-and-white picture from the past that shows four young brothers right next to the picture taken more than 30 years after, which now shows only three adult brothers.



Figure 1: All photographs are courtesy of Gustavo Germano

[8] Germano did not work by himself in order to remake the pictures of the past that he had chosen, he created a 'team' that worked with him on the proposal. It was composed of his wife Vanina de Monte who is a graphic-designer; Marta Nin the curator from *Casa Amèrica Catalunya*; and his late brother Guillermo Germano president at the time of AFADER, the Association of Family and Friends of the Disappeared from and in Entre Ríos (*Familiares y Amigos de Desaparecidos de y en Entre Ríos*). Germano also relied on the research assistance provided by three organizations that helped in the logistics of identifying and contacting people who appeared in the pictures: AFADER, the Only Record of Truth in Entre Ríos (*Registro Único de la Verdad de Entre Ríos*) and the Daughters and Sons for Identity and Justice Against Forgetting and Silence – Paraná (*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio-Paraná*). Finally, the families and friends of the disappeared that were eventually selected for this project participated actively in the process of reconstruction by providing family pictures and letting Germano photograph them.

[9] As a collaborative project that demanded personal exchanges and extensive dialogues, *Ausencias* was comprised of several stages including going back to Entre Ríos, the province where Germano is originally from, to conduct the necessary research for his artistic endeavor. First, the Only Register of Truth carried out a photographic archival research and sent a

selection of pictures to Germano. From that preliminary corpus he was able to conduct a selection of cases and pictures. In the next stage Germano summoned the relatives of the disappeared who appeared in the original pictures and went with them to the same location in which each one of the first photographs had been taken. There, he reproduced each picture by having the relatives and friends pose in the same spots they had occupied in the initial photographs.

[10] Unlike the staging of ordinary family pictures, posing for *Ausenc'as* was part of the participants' political activism to denounce the everlasting effects of the disappearances. If posing for a camera produces a statement for posterity, posing for *Ausenc'as* adds a different quality in the sense that the potential viewers for whom the participants perform are part of society as a whole. Thus, the act becomes inherently political. As Diana Taylor notes, performance actions attempt to stress the public instead of the private.^{viii} Yet, in this case, the exhibit seems to cover both levels from the standpoint of the family, which easily reaches the collective by identification.



1965
Roberto Samuel Borja
Jorge Cresta
Azucena Soto



2006
Jorge Cresta
Azucena Soto

Figure 2



1973
Raúl Alberto Ramat
Angella de la Rosa
Blanca Fernández
Manuel Ramat



2006
Angella de la Rosa
Blanca Fernández
Manuel Ramat

Figure 3



1970
Jorge Emilio Picetti
Margarita Elena Alegre



2006
-
Margarita Elena Alegre

Figure 4



1970
Maria Ines Ferreira
Maria Susana Ferreira



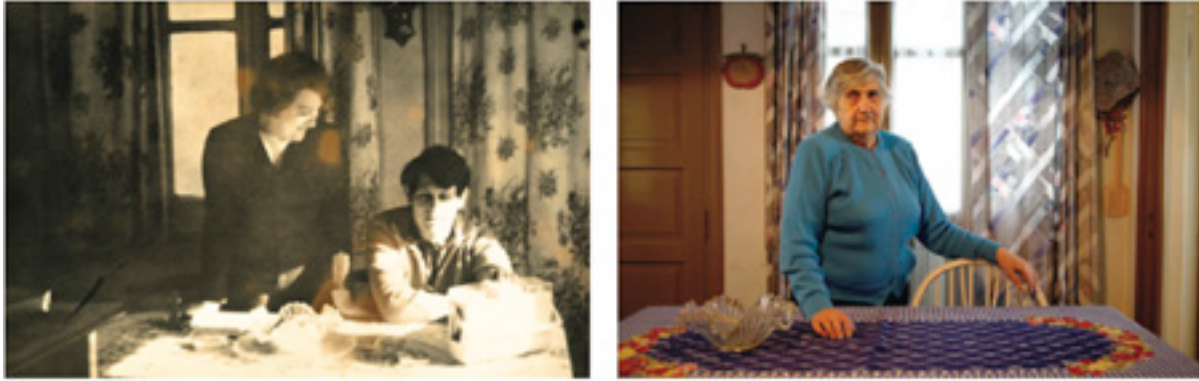
2008
-
Maria Susana Ferreira

Figure 5

[11] The exhibition showcased fourteen pairs of pictures in which the spectator faces the empty space left by the disappeared. Printed in large scale, the visual effect of showing these two pictures right next to each other is simply shocking as they reenact the tension between life and politics making visible that these were people “whose life as living beings [was] at issue in their politics, but also—inversely—citizens whose very politics [was] at issue in their natural body.”^{ix} In this way, the body is trapped in the deployment of state power simply because power was realized at the level of life, or rather, over life.^x

II

This section focuses on the description and analysis of two sets of pictures from *Ausencias*. The first image is a casual family picture taken in 1976, in which Adela Atelman de Fink is listening to the radio with her disappeared son Claudio Marcelo Fink. The second picture is a classic portrayal of a couple getting married in 1973: Luisa Inés Rodríguez and her disappeared husband Raúl María Caire.



1974
Clara Ataman de Fink
Claudio Mena de Fink

2006
Clara Ataman de Fink

Figure 6

[13] The old picture takes place in a typical dining room in a house in Paraná. The mother gazes over her son Claudio with a subtle smile while he seems to be listening to an old radio; his elbows are on the table, and maybe he's changing the station.^{xi} The scene lacks solemnity; it's as if both were aware that the photographer, Claudio's father, was about to take a picture, but did not care enough to pose. The whole picture is organized around the conscious act of not looking at the camera. It seems that we are being invited to glance at an intimate portrait of casual ordinary everyday life and domestic happiness. The image intensifies a sense of warm remoteness that restages the irretrievable past in sepia for some illusory seconds that are interrupted by the second picture, which is displayed right next to it. Indeed, from a colorful background we now see the same living room and the same woman; the mother, in the same position as the first picture, deliberately poses with an arm leaned towards the empty chair where her son used to sit. Her gaze does not land in the palpable void left by

Claudio's absence. Rather, it is confronting the camera in a bittersweet expression opposite to the subtle smile of the first snapshot.

[14] When posing for a regular picture one may attempt to bear a 'natural' expression, but in this picture it is as if the subject could not afford to remain oblivious to the camera any longer. Posing now acquires a confrontational posture, which intensifies the subject's gaze. The present image has lost the power of the amateur shot with its less than ideal lighting, but now reveals the unseen presence of a professional photographer.

[15] The juxtaposition of the old and the current picture makes visible the poignancy of the disappearance in the encounter of both testimony and fiction. On the one hand, the old picture bears the marks of the empirical fact. On the other hand, the current photograph breaks the linear natural sequence of what should have been the next picture. The family narrative that has been tragically disrupted by the disappearance makes visible the links that connect one picture to the next: instead of showing an older Claudio, it shows the empty chair.

[16] In *Ausenc'as* the photomontage reveals evidence that the natural continuity of life has been altered.^{xii} Thus, the causality between a past

where the loved one was alive and the present in which he or she is disappeared is emphasized by the emptiness of the very same place that was formerly occupied with the physicality of the person. Moreover, the marks of time are present not only in the relatives or friends that reappear in the pictures with grey hair and wrinkles, but also in the objects that are still in the scene after so many years providing an uncanny sense of temporality. The same fruit bowl placed on the same table and the same chair: these remaining objects are suddenly charged with nostalgia for their immunity to the passage of time. By contrast, the fugacity of life leaves an imprint on that empty chair exposing the grief of losing someone irreplaceable.

[17] The technique of collage was well described as the encounter of heterogeneities or the conviviality of “the incompatibility of two worlds.”^{xiii} That is to say, the artistic practice connects two forms that function in apparent opposition (absence and presence), making visible the causal relation that links them. However, if the technique of collage provokes a shocking effect on meaning by revealing a “hidden reality,” the reality that arises in the photomontage is that the disappeared are present behind their absence. Their presence, then, has the form of an absence that is paradoxically always there. By means of the photographic image, the powerful effect of the saga lies in the fact that the rearrangement of signs

translates the tragedy into the language of a visual poetics that is available almost to anyone: the aesthetics of the family. As pointed out by photographic curator Peter Galassi, we are able to identify ourselves with family pictures “because all of us have snapshots of our own, and thus know the habit of understanding them, we are all equipped to imagine ourselves in the snapshots of others, into the dreams and the passions they conceal.”^{xiv} Overlapping testimony with visual representation, *Ausencias* manages to make visible what is, by definition, immaterial: somebody’s absence.



1973
Andrés Servín
Raúl María Cairó
Luisa Inés Rodríguez



2006
Andrés Servín
Luisa Inés Rodríguez

Figure 7

[18] In black and white, a young couple is getting married. Holding hands, they are down on their knees while the priest is blessing their union. The couple is mesmerized in the moment, perhaps gazing into their future together. More than thirty years later, the reproduction of the original picture reveals the passage of time in a contradictory manner: the fact that the church looks almost the same after more than thirty years creates the illusion that in reality everything has remained motionless, and yet the priest and the woman have aged.

[19] What once was a typical wedding picture now is a premeditated scene that only keeps the angle or perspective from which it was taken. The photographer, unnoticed in the past, is central in the present: both the priest and the woman are looking at him from an empty church that highlights the absence of the disappeared. The woman is still kneeling down as she was when she was getting married but instead of being side by side with her husband while holding hands, she now is accompanied by an empty space that highlights her husbands' absence.

[20] It can be said that in this picture temporality operates in a threefold way or, as Rancière would suggest, in a "co-presence of heterogeneous temporalities."^{xv} First: whereas in the first picture the protagonists are caught in a living moment, in the second picture the pose reveals a certain

artificiality that draws on the premeditated intentionality of this shot. This precise instant in which both priest and woman pose with a frontal intention looking directly at the camera remains there for good; their bodies are being transformed in the posing but the click's interruption of the flow of time only keeps one gesture. Second: if the original picture congeals forever a moment in time allowing us to look at it from the present, it also projects itself into the future radically spreading the evidence until the end. Those spaces left by the disappeared are going to be vacant for good; they are perpetually lost. Third and finally, these pictures participate in both a historical and a private time because they were originally created within the intimacy of the family yet have acquired a historical and collective status as a result of the intrusion of an outside power—the state—on the life of a family member.

[21] In sum, side by side, the fourteen sets of pictures condense and evoke more than thirty years of personal and collective loss. These relations that illustrate 'how it was,' 'how it has been during these thirty years,' and 'how it is going to be,' are precisely achieved by the fact that the analogy (the 'copy') is determined by the erasure of the referent, that is to say, of 'the beloved body.'^{xvi} In the restaging of the past, the referent is no longer in the picture because it is no longer in life.

III

If, as Foucault asserts, the notion of the *body* is always caught in a deployment of power, then in artistic practice the body appears also as a biopolitical body.^{xvii} In *Ausenc'as* the biopolitical power previously and tragically inflicted on the victims of the dictatorship is exposed by the fact that now the artist is the one who is willing to put in play a series of regulatory controls in order to administrate the insertion of bodies in his work. But why did the participants agree to pose for the artist when it implied putting themselves in the difficult situation of restaging a conflictive past?

[23] Certainly, asking the participants to give a picture of the disappeared and then to go back to the same place in which the picture had been taken originally to rehearse the scene implied dealing, not only with the potential consequences of generating deep emotions among the participants, but also with the very materiality of the bodies in question. The narrow line between the ethical implications of administrating bodies and the artistic creation was somehow kept in place by the artist's decision to share the experience with the participants by bringing his own body into play. Indeed, according to Germano "the fact that I myself experienced losing someone in my family to these same crimes has allowed a greater rapport with these people, because

between us there is a shared brotherhood."^{xviii} The element in common that led to participation was having a disappeared loved one.

[24] Hence, borrowing a term from Jean-Luc Nancy, a sense of 'communion' was created among the participants due to the fact that Germano was disclosing a form of visibility that was common to the group.^{xix} In many occasions there were also 'deep silences' and the feeling of having a 'lump in the throat.'^{xx} But, as Germano points out, these feelings were overcome by the voluntary desire of being exposed in the pictures as a form of political denunciation.^{xxi} *Ausenc'as* is a way in which citizens that were victims of their own government stand up and say: "I am here to show you who is not here anymore. I practice memory in order to avoid silence. This is why I expose myself and I let the photographer take pictures of me."^{xxii} It seems that behind the acting of each picture there is a performative claim that seeks visibility. In fact, what impunity has mobilized through this embodied practice is a political commitment with the act of transfer of never forgetting the disappeared.



Figure 8

[25] The manipulation of the bodies in art leads to the question of the degree to which the participants modify or add meaning to the work. Even though the participatory nature of this project appears to be crucial in the actual process of *making* the pictures the participants performed their old pictures under careful direction. It is as if Germano had introduced the participants to a language that was significant to him, but that would be subsequently appropriated by the participants in order to make a statement with their bodies.^{xxiii} Or, to put it differently, the artist offered a work of art to be completed and performed by the participants.

[26] Since the remaking of old pictures triggered deep emotions, everyone in the project had to deal with the unpredictability that is entailed when engaging other people in the making of a poignant work. This sense of not having everything under control was translated into the manner in which

Ausenc'as was finally realized: "The idea was not to control but to solve. Later I realized that we were going to reshoot the old picture and that the most important thing was to face the situation."^{xxiv} Thus, even though the scenes were premeditated, there was still a desire to deal with the unpredictability of what the acting of the pictures may generate in the participants, and to shoot them with the resources at hand. If performance is a 'twice-behaved behavior,'^{xxv} then rehearsing the pictures meant re-living the scene as a dismantling of the present conditions of enunciation.

[27] Although the final photographic image is characterized by its stillness; motion and performance had an important role in the production of the images of the present. In the sense that Boal explains Aristotle's concept of *mimesis* not as a copy of an exterior model but as a re-creation,^{xxvi} it can be said that *Ausenc'as* reenacts scenes by means of a rehearsal that takes place before and during the shooting of the images. Even if the idea was to reproduce the original in terms of place and posture, in most cases the participants did what they felt and instead of copying the gestures of the first picture ended up looking at the camera in a confrontational fashion. In the same vein, the acting of many of the pictures needed to be repeated several times. For instance, in order to reproduce the energetic stamp of the picture in which the two Amnestoy brothers are running down a green and

grassy hill the remaining brother of around 70 years old had to perform the scene a few times.^{xxvii}



Figure 9

[28] In the exercise of 'restaging the past,'^{xxviii} brings into play the theatrical principle of presence, but not with an idealistic imprint (as the world should be, in Boal's own words), but rather with a realistic seal. Instead of mirroring an ideal family past—as family pictures often do—the artificiality of the second image confronts the happy tone of the original picture emphasizing the harsh reality generated by the disappearance.

IV

What is perhaps most striking about these juxtaposed images is that—given their placement in a gallery—the spectator walks from one set of enlarged paired pictures to the next gradually grasping the Argentine tragedy from a familial standpoint. Accomplished by Germano's conscious

work in the selection of images, *Ausenc'as* offers an emotional and vivid account of the legacy of the disappeared.



1971
Della Carreia
Zulema Carreia
Elsa Raquel Diaz
Ricardo Godoy
Victorio José Ramón Erbetta



2006
Della Carreia
Zulema Carreia
-
Ricardo Godoy
-

Figure 10

[30] Since a visual aspect dominates *Ausenc'as*, there is almost no other text in the exhibition than the pictures' sober captions. Those from the past show the names of the photographed whereas those from the present also name those in the picture, but now there is only a period replacing the name of the disappeared. A name represents a body while a period represents an absence, or the disappearance of that body. The title of the exhibit reflects

this concept of erasure by removing the stem in the letter 'i' of the word *ausencias*.

[31] The unbearable size of the images shortens the distance between image and spectator and prompts the viewers to feel the absences through the analogy and contrast of past and present that stops time as if there were no other time than that of the enunciation.^{xxix} These life-sized images quote a tradition of protest inaugurated by the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza Mayo who used to carry around huge placards displaying the enlarged images of the faces of the disappeared.

[32] *Ausencias* sets up a situation in which the spectator is confronted by the indexicality of the enlarged images where the lack of text operates as "an attempt to avoid an easy or intellectual escape from what the images are saying."^{xxx} The exhibit exercises the theatrical power of directing the viewers' attention by putting into play the 'made-you-look-quality of performance,' as Diana Taylor would call it.^{xxxi} The unaware viewer is urged to complete the sense of 'presence of absence' through witnessing the display of a traumatic memory showing a happy past in contrast to 30 years of impunity.

[33] From its inception *Ausenc'as* was envisioned as a work meant to provoke emotions and so far the exhibition has generated reactions in tune with the proposal. It can be said that *Ausenc'as* takes advantage of the closeness of family pictures—perhaps the most popular use of photography—and projects an almost straightforward identification with the spectator who is unlikely to remain indifferent to the tragedy of the photographed family. In order to expose the brutality of the consequences of the military dictatorship, *Ausenc'as* attempts to show the presence of an absence within a family, a concept that certainly transcends the Argentine case.^{xxxii} Thus, Germano reaches the collective experience through an appropriation of the common place^{xxxiii} by using and recreating the conventional account of the family album.

[34] The happy and naïve tone of the family narrative acts as an entry-point, an intelligible structure for the audience to grasp the profound meaning of the disappearance of a loved one. The audience relates to the images, which shift to addressing the inexplicable by becoming a political denunciation that ultimately calls for critical assessment. In this way, Germano confronts a document of the past with a visual representation of the present creating dichotomist forms: the image of the past and its counterpart in the present, testimony and fiction, presence and absence.

[35] "To pretend is not to put forth illusions but to elaborate intelligible structures," says Rancière.^{xxxiv} It seems that *Ausenc'as* is precisely that; an unexpected but honest mirror that reflects the sad image of a country full of empty chairs.

ⁱ *ERP* (Trotskyite) and *Montoneros* (Peronist) were two dissident armed organizations whose purpose was to take over the military regime. They committed several terrorist attacks against the military hierarchy.

ⁱⁱ CONADEP, *Nunca Más (Never Again). A Report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986 [1984]), 51.

ⁱⁱⁱ The first years after the transition started with the reassurance of justice by the formation of the National Commission on the Disappeared (CONADEP) and the public trials of the Military Junta. Soon after, Congress passed the Full Stop Law and the Law of Due Obedience in the midst of social uproar and protest. These two laws resulted in the end of prosecutions and investigations related to people accused of political violence as well as pre-conviction pardons for every lower rank military officer who committed crimes while carrying out orders of superiors. In 1989 president Carlos Menem signed a series of pardon laws, which finally even liberated the former head of the Junta. In 2003, during Néstor Kirchner's presidency, Congress passed the nullity of the Pardon Law as well as the Full Stop and Law of Due Obedience enabling the Federal Chamber to reopen the cases.

^{iv} For an analysis of several performative acts involving photography regarding the disappeared in Argentina, see Diana Taylor "The DNA of Performance," *TDR* (1988-), Vol. 46, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), 149-169, and Andrea Giunta, "Capítulo 12/ Tiempo, Memoria," *Poscrisis. Arte Argentino después del 2001*, (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2009).

^v Gustavo Germano, interview via Skype by Celina Van Dembroucke, November 20, 2009.

^{vi} So far, *Ausenc'as* has been exhibited in Spain, Italy, France, Switzerland, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

^{vii} Germano, interview by Oscar Ranzani, February, 2008.

^{viii} Diana Taylor, "You are here: the DNA of Performance," *TDR*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Spring, 2002), 154.

^{ix} Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995), 188.

^x Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 137-8.

^{xi} I borrowed some ideas for this description from an essay by Rubén Chababo, director of the Museo de la Memoria in Rosario, available in Germano's blog: <http://ausencias-gustavogermano.blogspot.com/>

^{xii} The technique of photomontage has been widely used to address the issue of absence, particularly after traumatic experiences such as the Holocaust and/or politically motivated deaths as the ones perpetrated in the midst of several Latin American dictatorships. For instance, in the case of the Holocaust, scholar James E. Young has analyzed several photo installations which he called 'counter-monuments' that make use of this technique of montage and assembly in order to rather than just commemorating, enact a memory. See, James E. Young, "The Counter Monument: Memory Against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Winter, 1992), 267-296. Likewise, throughout Latin America, artists as renowned as Doris Salcedo or Graciela Sacco as well as several groups of

collective art such as *Arte Callejero* in Argentina have also relied on this resource in their works.

^{xiii} Jacques Rancière, "The Inoperative Community," in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop (Cambridge: White Chapel and MIT Press, 2006), 84.

^{xiv} Peter Galassi quoted in Deborah Willis, "A Search for Self: The Photograph and Black Family Life," in *The Familial Gaze*, ed. Marianne Hirsch (Hannover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 117-118.

^{xv} Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 26.

^{xvi} Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981) 17.

^{xvii} Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 187.

^{xviii} Germano quoted in UNESCO, "Capturing the Essence of Absence," *The Unesco Courier*, http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=43572&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html, (accessed November 14, 2009).

^{xix} Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 13.

^{xx} Germano, interview by Ranzani.

^{xxi} Germano, interview by Van Dembroucke.

^{xxii} Germano, interview by Ranzani.

^{xxiii} Augusto Boal, *The Theater of the Oppressed* (New York: Theater Communication Group, 2001), 131.

^{xxiv} Germano, interview by Van Dembroucke.

^{xxv} Taylor, "Translating Performance," *Profession* (2002), 45.

^{xxvi} Boal, *The Theater of the Oppressed*, 1.

^{xxvii} Germano, interview by Van Dembroucke.

^{xxviii} Rancière, *The politics of Aesthetics*, 24.

^{xxix} Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" in *Participation*, ed. Claire Bishop, 36. Taylor also develops the idea that performative acts make the spectator feel 'viscerally' in the present time. See "You are here': The DNA of Performance," 6.

^{xxx} Germano, interview by Van Dembroucke.

^{xxxi} Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's Dirty War* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 226

^{xxxii} Germano, interview by Ranzani.

^{xxxiii} Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, 36.

^{xxxiv} Ib. Idem.

Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Barthes, Roland. "The Death of the Author." In *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop, 41-53. Cambridge: White Chapel and MIT Press, 2006.

---. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1981. Bishop, Claire, ed. *Participation*. Cambridge: White Chapel and

MIT Press, 2006.

Boal, Augusto. *The Theater of the Oppressed*. New York: Theater Communication Group, 2001.

CONADEP. *Nunca Más (Never Again): A Report by Argentina's National Commission on Disappeared People*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986. [1984].

Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Germano, Gustavo. 2009. Interview by Celina Van Dembroucke. Skype. 20 November 2009.

---. Interview by Oscar Ranzani. E-mail. February 2008.

---. Brochure *Ausencias*. Buenos Aires: *Página/12*, 2008.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. "The Inoperative Community". In *Participation*, edited by Claire Bishop, 54-70. Cambridge: White Chapel and MIT Press, 2006.

Rancière, Jacques. "Problems and Transformations in Critical Art/ 2004." In Bishop, *Participation*, 83-93

---. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. New York: Continuum, 2009.

Taylor, Diana. "'You are here': the DNA of Performance." *TDR*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Spring, 2002): 149-169.

---. *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentina's Dirty War*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997.

---. "Translating Performance." *Profession* (2002); 44-50.

UNESCO. "Capturing the Essence of Absence." *The Unesco Courier*,
http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=43572&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html (accessed 14 November 2009).

Willis, Deborah. "A Search for Self: The Photograph and Black Family Life."
In *The Familial Gaze*, edited by Marianne Hirsch. Hannover, NH:
University Press of New England: 1999.