

## GOLGOTHA, THE DEATH CARAVAN

*To articulate historically the past does not mean to know it as it truly has been. It means appropriate of a memory just as it flashes in a moment of danger.*

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To get into the work GOLGOTHA, THE DEATH CARAVAN, by photographer Mauricio Toro Goya, may be problematic. That is why, whoever dares to do it, must be ready to be soaked of a dark and sharp atmosphere, which in a straight and direct way gets us into a narration about the memory and the dialogs between history and recent past, revealing tortures and folds left at the open in a space composed by two timeless readings but analogous in speech.

Fourteen ambrotypes -Stations of The Via- will tell us about the events occurred to a couple of supporters of Salvador Allende Government, represented by Jesuscrit and Maria Magdalena. Both characters will be relocated in a hybrid space, full of references and symbols of the Chilean and Latin American culture and history. A metaphoric cross which will reveal the similarity between the episodes of Jesus' Passion and the suppression exerted by the passing of the case known for being one of the first massive for being one of the first massive murders and disappearance, directed by Augusto Pinochet and the delegate officer for that task, General Sergio Arellano Stark, who together with an Army procession, when through many cities of the country with the purpose of hurrying the trials of political prisoners and care for they had a proper defense this mandate meant the executions of 96 people and their later vanishing.

Under this context, the tale is articulated around what happened on October 16th., 1973 at the Regiment Arica<sup>2</sup>, seated in the northern Region of Coquimbo, place of residence Caravan arrives in a Puma helicopter of the Army and orders the execution of 15 political prisoners, according to what was commanded by the Cort Martial among the victims there were union leaders, peasants, representatives of culture and political militants, who were buried in mass grave, without warning to their relatives, who did not know about their whereabouts until the coming of democracy.

By means of the gesticulation of such dreadful fact, Mauricio Toro Goya opens the quandary generated by the Biblical Via Crucis and its turning to this profane representation. Landscapes mix between allegorical interiors, torture rooms and political and social claims sceneries. The attackers are not Roman soldiers anymore but DINA militants and agents.. It is the transposition of time and space in which coexist different readings of the unexpected, showing the social and mental state of the tortured bodies, which swing permanently from unexpected death, total disappearance and the remote possibility of being found.<sup>3</sup> This is a universe that takes place out of the usual, facing them to the

incoherence of the raw and emptied cruelty of foreshadowed senses, revealing the sensitive which ago was invisible or unsensitive because horror of violence.

A plural and transversal perspective based on a visual typology which favours the artifice, fiction strategies and the reflexive nature of the image. In this sense, the facts presented are related in the form of assemblies of many realities., mixing elements which derive from something seen and/or certain specific instants of History. A constant dilemma which doesn't run out the semantic wealth that defines them.. It is the gesticulation between the document and fiction, where the display of recreated forms are magnified and exaggerated in a will for emphasising constituent characteristics and features of a world that doesn't intend to be the real one but sometimes seems to. A drama of codified signs and covered writings in which the quotidian is hyperbolized into a subversive and twisted narration which sends on occasions to the expressive manifestation of the most wretched of the society and in others, to the possibility of resilience of happened pain and trauma.

On this plot of metaphoric compositions melancholic resonances, visual juxtaposition of image gets closer, in any or other way to what empirically already exists, giving account of the obstacles which supposes the complex and conflictive revision of our past, bringing with it the symbolic diasporas which raise from our present. Nevertheless, the figurative of similarities is distorted, stretched and shrunk in every representation, establishing a space that tries a non lineal glance over the past, but indeed of non continuings, breakings and ambiguities.. It destabilizes then preestablished notions and explores different conceptual possibilities by means of the cracks and breakings of History. "It is not the installing of the common world through the absolute singularity of the form, but the re-disposing of the objects and the images which form the common world already given, to the creation of situations adressed to modify our glance and attitudes in relation to that collective surrounding"<sup>4</sup>.

Starting from that, Mauricio Toro Goya reflects on the complex subtexts of every composition, creating an allegorical corpus based on vanitas, symbols and elements of the popular culture, such as animals or different objects. Parts that at their time are placed on a religious scenery full of political claims. Articulation between the visible and the suggested, the evident and the latent of the speech, showing not only the suppression of the state of that time, but the deep catholic roots which have conditioned the different circuits of the social knitting. A result obtained thanks to the totalizing pretensions of the catholic church that took it to extend the principles of its doctrine all over latin america, trying to set upon the religious values and installing its imagery over life and death. However, it must be pointed that during the military dictatorship a branch of the church played an important role in the defense of human rights, mainly the tasks of the Pro Paz Committee and later the birth of Solidarity Vicary, an organism which was born under the wings of the Santiago Archbishopric, with the aim of giving assistance to families and victims of the suppression.

On the other hand, resistance and political desidence is shown in some stations throughout certain strategies of social action, which reflect the urge of

that time to find an answer to its claims and the calling that still is on for the society makes conscience and takes a moral responsibility facing what has happened. Manifestations, chainings, protest actions<sup>5</sup>, among others, were and are a means in which the body is used as an instrument of impeachment. "In that sense the body may be understood as a site, a place in which critical speeches and artistic practices are projected, which take us to speak, by one side of the individual experience of the body, a torn body, exhibited as a show, in a sum a political body open to the public sphere of experience"<sup>6</sup>

Reconstitution and analysis of such representation and analysis of such representations tell of the absence and dissolution of the barriers, making visible traces and hidden gestures that despite are vanishing, they keep on for they have acquired a corporality in the narration of the survivors. An amazing plot written in a aesthetic of memory which assumes the body as a construction, not as a given shape and developed in isolation, but as the product of the dialectics between the individual and the collective of a society.

There is no easiness, but constant intercalling to reality. The "memory of a society is built through different ways in which the marks, the duels, the scarves, the forgettings that have signaled the various periods of its history, they meet and diverge, forming an uneven surface, heterogeneous, marked by tensions, silences, by different versions"<sup>7</sup>. In this sense the stations of Mauricio Toro Goya seem to nourish from the contact with another reality, the one that is vividly revealed by means of cites<sup>8</sup>, references to the history of art and Biblical iconographies, letting see the religious sincretism which is constant on his former works.

Resonance, delayed silences, stopped times, unnamed words which get together and apart from historical memories of the victims, collective memories proposed from the visual retorics that transforms in a poetical way the material debris which remain in it. Elements charged of significations that dissolve the boundaries in search of a plastic and poetic experimentation where the subjective vindication distills semantic hints which are powered by surrealism and pictorial air of the compositions. The highlight of the details, the squarings and the resource of the first and second plains leave the characters in spaces that express in some cases, the claustrophobia and desperation of jail and torture, and in others the frontality of the dramatic gesture. On the other hand the resource of the portraits of some disappeared are suspension and reminiscence, entering an interval which carries us out of the created to come back to reality in an indirect way but not for that less intense and disturbing. Dramatic thickness which is covered by a silence that moves a net of passions and special actions which permit to see not just an individual body that must be found, but a stage of the social tale which requires to be shut by a religious ritual and/or familiar that symbolically allows a farewell. In the same manner of the Pieta of Michelangelo, a sculpture that shows compassion and love of a mother before the tragic destiny of her son; families, wives and mothers who have suffered the loss of some dear relative during dictatorship, they share those feelings and maintain toughness before the persistence of resignation.

From this inner imagery, ambiguous and disturbing, is rising a narrative which proposes a complex transit towards a resilience in which exegesis in

dialog explores new forms of getting visibility and resignifying. This is a process that declares that glances are not over as well as the action repertoires. So the paralelism proposed by Mauricio Toro Goya goes beyond of the junction of meeting certain epochs, since to come to that link it is necessary to re-propose the way as, from an optics mainly puzzling, those concepts are understood. This suppose, taking the relationship itself, to show some repetitive elements which dynamize the perceptive flowing and at the same time, let see the surfacing of the limmits in which action hesitates in front of memory and history.

Soledad Aguirre

1.-BENJAMIN WALTER" dialectic in suspense, lom editions, STGO chile 2009.

2 Arica Regiment would later known for being one of the main torturing places in the north of the country. Many statements of political prisoners claim that during the interrogations, sistematic use of electricity was included in different parts of the body, as well as raping and beatings of different intensity.

3 During military dictatorship there were many cases of covering of crimes, among them "TV drawing operation", name given to the exhumation of corpses of political prisoners killed and buried ilegally in different places of Chile. Some of these unburied corpses belonged to the victims of the Death Caravan, and were thrown to the sea, tied to train reels.

4.-RANCIERE " About aesthetic Politics"

5.-Among the measures adopted by the relatives groups we can mention the fact of getting chained for many hours in different government buildings and the creation of the Cueca Sola, a dance which denounced the disappearance of her dance mate.

6.- CRUZ SANCHEZ " cartography of the body: body dimension in the contemporary art.

7 Lorenzano Politics of Body in Latin Photography

8 The resource of the cite will be seen used in the representation of works of photographers Claudio Perez and Luis Navarro, whom are honored for their work during the tirany of Pinochet, and their contribution to the photography media and to history and memory.