

Manuel Quaranta

Department of Fine Arts

National University of Rosario, Argentina

**Variations on the body¹.
Daniel Garcia's explorations of form and ideas**

**Wariacje na temat ciała.
Poszukiwania formy i idei w twórczości Daniela Garcii**

Abstract

The work of the Argentinian artist Daniel García (Rosario, 1958) is mainly made up of paintings and drawings, but, over time, he has incorporated other formats or devices such as books, records, videos and photographs into his practice. In this sense, his work admits the qualification of heterogeneous; however, not only the body of work allows this qualification but also the variety of problems that he explores in his art, even if they are repeated in a recurrent way: the body and its representation, the history of art and images, the relationship between words and things, memory and oblivion. What we propose in this article is an introductory review of García's work, with a focus on some of the aspects mentioned, and with a constant intention to establish (as García does in his work) relationships with cinema, philosophy and literature.

Keywords: Daniel Garcia, painting, drawing, book, cinema, heterogeneity, body, memory, word, history of art, humanities

No matter what activity one engages in, the body remains the support of intuition, memory, knowledge, work, and, above all, invention.

Michel Serres

¹ The main part of the title of our work, as well as the subtitles of each of the paragraphs, belong to *Variations on the body* (2011), a book in which Michel Serres opposes the conception of the body supported by the western philosophical tradition (until the 19th century) to a provocative idea already contained in the dedication: "To my gymnastics teachers, to my trainers, to my high mountain guides, who taught me to think". For those interested in the topic *body*, we recommend reading this together with another key book on the subject, *Anthropology of the Body and Modernity*, by David Le Breton (1990).

The refusal to accept as a literary precept that which is postulated by those who have made their own failure to achieve equivalence their own destiny is based on the conviction that the realistic delirium of duplicating the world is closely related to the desire to submit to a clear and transparent order where ambiguity would be removed.

Literal (Magazine)

Anch'io sono pittore!

Arturo Carrera

Metamorphosis

From the beginning in 1981, Daniel García started to build a work that, seen in retrospect, admits without objection the qualification of heterogeneous. But we must make it clear that García's work is heterogeneous not only in light of the passage of time, because it constitutes a "heteroclitic" set of pieces that go beyond any definition, but also it could be defined as heterogeneous in terms of the artist's interests, which range from painting to music, from photography to video, from literature to philosophy, and which are not mere provisional approaches to other "disciplines", since those interests have been expressed in effective productions. In this sense, García would qualify as what is usually called, with certain sophistication, a total artist; although we intuit that he would dislike the designation not so much because of a show of humility on his part but mainly because of the distance it would generate with the public. There is nothing less stimulating for a spectator who is undecided or in search of some new experience than to receive the ample warning that one is about to face a total work of art.

Transcendental Flexibility

In addition to painting, drawing and curating his exhibitions, Daniel García is responsible for reflecting on his own practice in various writings, including texts for the exhibition hall, curatorial texts, and texts included in catalogues, which serve as a source for entering into the artist's general proposal, and for this reason we will quote him on several occasions. In a first approach we use a writing from 2008, presented in the exhibition that took place in the Museum of Contemporary Art of Rosario

(MACRO), suggestively titled *Heteróclito (Heteroclite)*. There, the artist quotes Andy Warhol and Arthur C. Danto under two epigraphs²:

How can you say any style is better than another? You ought to be able to be an Abstract Expressionist next week, or a Pop artist, or a realist, without feeling that you have given up something". "For Most artists (...), it is important that they be stylistically identifiable, as if their style is their brand. To change styles too often inevitably would have been read as a lack of conviction.

We believe that both fragments condense, although they do not exhaust, García's fundamental project of remaining in a continuous, constantly changing, intrepid or reckless movement, a kind of anachronistic disciple of Heráclito who repeated (and, in repeating, betrayed) the words of the master: you cannot do the same work twice. Not even once.

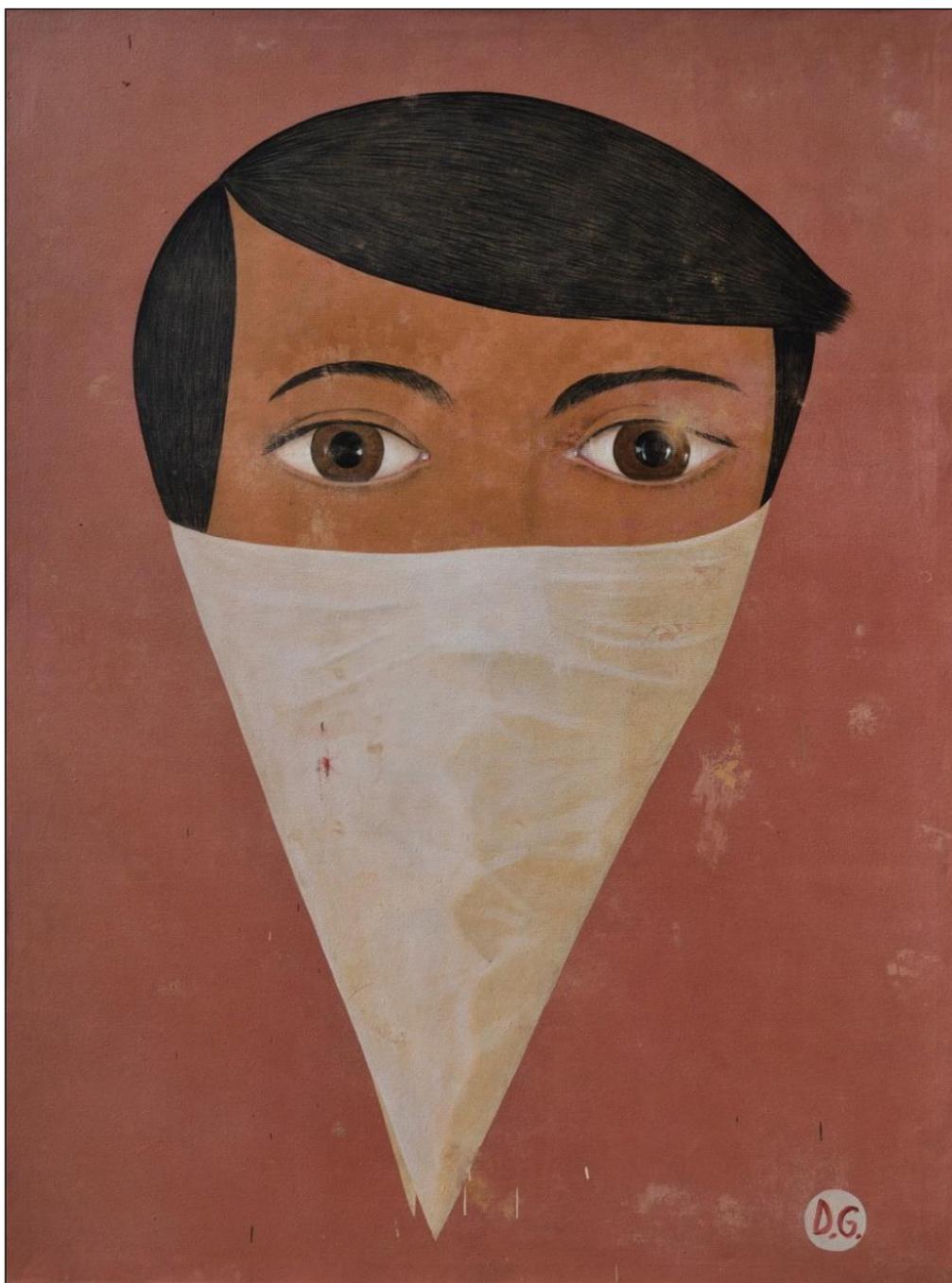
Returning Fulfilled

The *body of the work* is the main text of a book, the one that is surrounded by marginal texts that do not belong to what is called that way: epigraphs, dedications, clarifications, prologues, presentations. This generates an inevitable hierarchy between the substantial and the accessory, to use two terms that were valued by ancient philosophy. In García's work we have the strong impression that the distinction between the main and the subsidiary is denied, by virtue of the fact that the pieces that make up the productions are constantly being revised and relocated, which enables us to believe that the classifications and hierarchies are suspended.

On the other hand, the term *body of the work* refers to the work that becomes a body, to the work that occupies a space, that has an extension, and there too García sets the experimental machine in motion. For example, in 2002 he paints a 47x36 cm acrylic on canvas entitled *Bandido*; five years later he repeats the *motif* and materials, but in a notably larger size (200x150); in 2008, now *S/t*, a figure similar to the bandit in acrylic on paper of 30x22; and, finally, in 2015, he returns to acrylic on canvas, in a size close to the original, 60x32, which appears on the cover³ of a book by the artist, published by Iván Rosado, titled *Bandido*.

² D. García, *Bandido*, Iván Rosado, Rosario, 2015, p. 15.

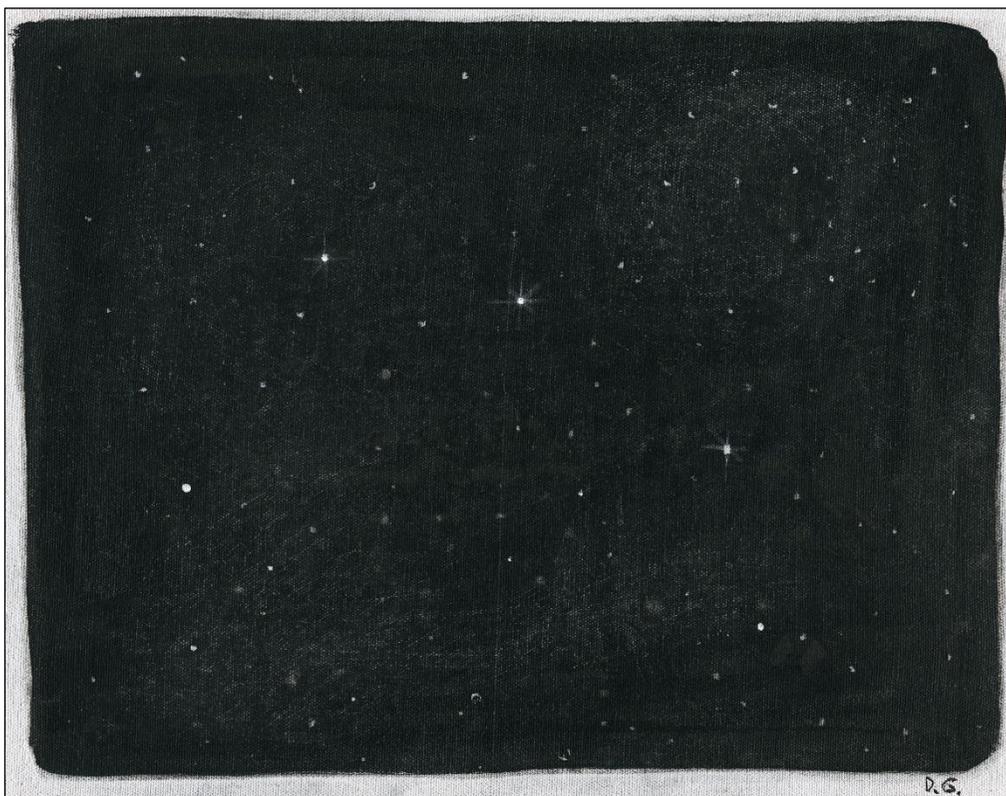
³ The exhibition *Heteroclite* brings together works by García created to illustrate the covers of books published by Beatriz Viterbo de Rosario ("At the origin of these works", writes the artist, "is therefore the letter"; D. García, op.cit., p. 15). The gesture is a demonstration of certain recurrent procedures in his practice. García modifies the exhibition context, makes the paintings independent from the texts they have illustrated, gathers them and exhibits them: a new meaning will then emerge.



01. *Bandido*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 200x150 cm

Astronomy

In 2012, Daniel García held at the Museo del Diario la Capital de Rosario the exhibition *Ad astra per aspera*⁴, a title that is a variation of Seneca's original phrase, "per aspera ad astra". In this opportunity, the curatorial text was written by Fernando Farina who begins by explaining the *modus operandi* of the artist:



02. *Ad astra per aspera VII*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, 30,5x39,7 cm

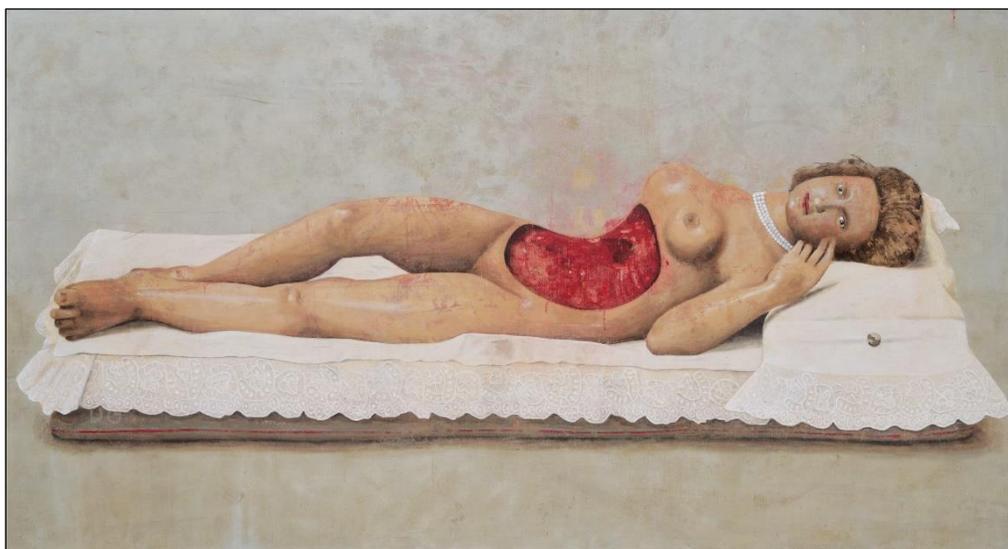
Daniel García makes his own encyclopedia. For years, he has been visiting and revisiting history, retrieving facts, images, breaking down texts in search of meanings and reasons, analyzing meaning, gathering stories, while recording his experiences.

As a researcher, performing a hermeneutic operation, he cannot avoid recognizing those things that contaminate everything. He asks himself about

⁴ We don't know if the reference is intentional or casual, but *Ad astra per aspera* was the motto used by the Argentine Air Force's Grupo de Cazadores 5 that participated in the Malvinas war exactly thirty years before the exhibition.

the symbols, trying to discover what the hidden powers are, and to unravel them. Perhaps that is what his operation is all about: gathering images and painting them. To take their names by portraying them⁵.

Indeed, like a researcher or a cartographer, García traces, draws and paints a series of more or less abstract, more or less realistic star and gravitational maps, in which the “effects of sanding and removing paint from the canvas”⁶ can be seen, and where everything seems to enter into an endless dialectic of construction-destruction. They are present images of a past (of various pasts) that has not yet passed away, which is still passing before us⁷, as if García was trying to revive, to keep the hope, the hope inherent in this case to the obsessive historian who discovers, with Walter Benjamin’s Angel, the following: “That even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious”⁸.



03. *Venus*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 236x128 cm

⁵ D. García, op.cit., p. 29.

⁶ García proposes the exercise of reading literally what asks to be read metaphorically.

⁷ In a beautiful text written by the poet Gilda di Crosta we read: “*Ad astra per aspera* is the past that never ceases to take shape as a present image where the future is also insinuated. A plurality of times in the radiance of the image, in the treatment of the canvas, in the visibility of the stars: shudder before the paradoxical perception of the stars, before their imaginary presence”. D. García, op.cit., p. 35.

⁸ W. Benjamin, *Tesis sobre el concepto de historia* (1940), in: W. Benjamin, *Iluminaciones*, Taurus, Madrid 2018, p. 310.

Last but not least⁹, the presence of a Venus, fixed, lying down, mortally wounded, with her belly open, bleeding, image of a woman fixed in an origin that is sought and never found¹⁰.

The Mystery of the Transubstantiation

In 1996 Daniel García painted *No abras tu boca al mal* (Don't open your mouth to evil), which depicts a man in profile wearing a gas mask similar to a face mask, so in vogue today. It was precisely the change of context (the outbreak of the pandemic) that gave the work a new significance that various national and international media did not hesitate to highlight. The image, due to effects beyond its control, became prophetic and anticipatory. We can see then that the change of context substantially modifies the perception of the work and, therefore, its meaning. As a result of this, García comments: "One creates something to which the spectator puts part of himself, and the meaning is generated between both, and those meanings are historical, cultural, and are potentially in the work, and it is the spectator who develops them"¹¹.

The idea refers to Marcel Duchamp's famous phrase, "the spectator makes the picture", by which he would proclaim the victory of an active, attentive spectator, shaped by his educational, historical, and affective horizon, which gives meaning but does not complete the work, since nothing needs to be completed. This is the basic idea of Hans-George Gadamer's hermeneutics, to which we believe García would subscribe, and which Jacques Derrida transmits in a posthumous tribute to the German philosopher¹²: "Any reading that attempts to understand is but a step on a path that

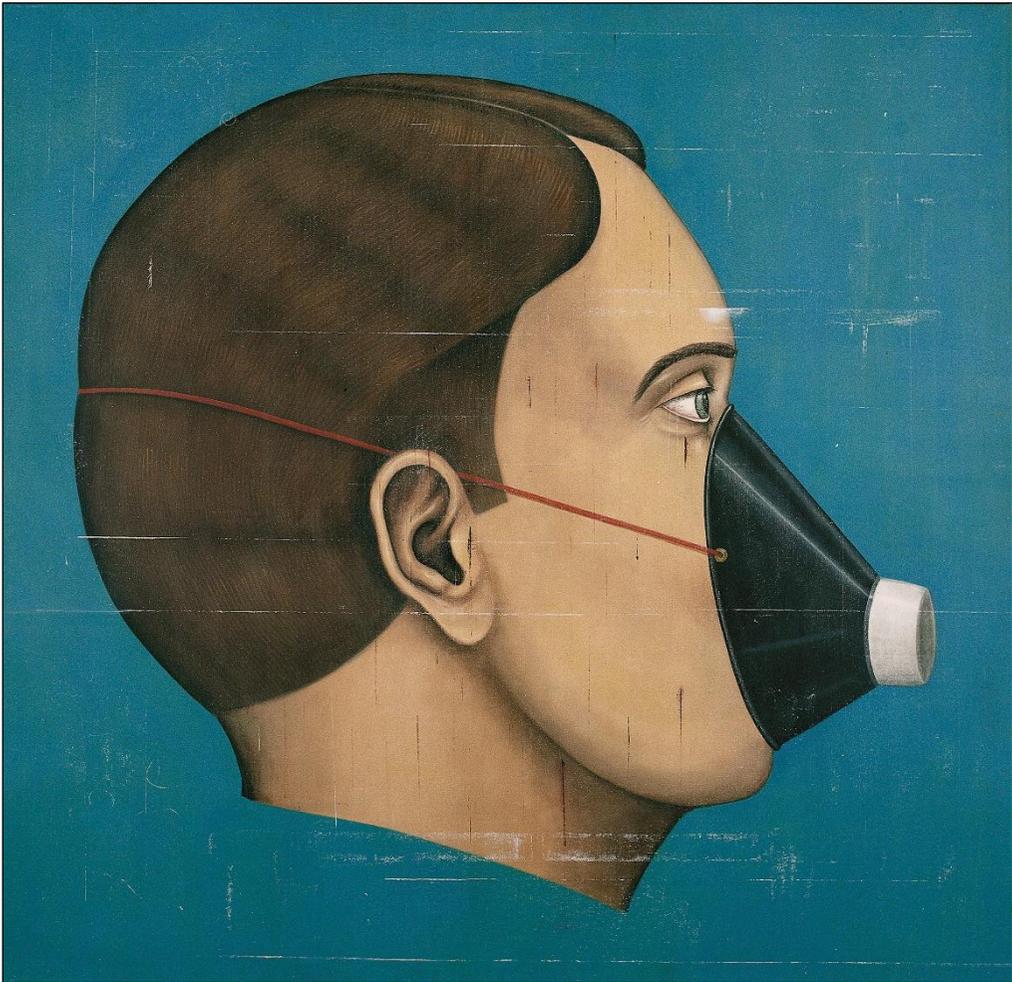
⁹ The exhibition included a digital video titled *Stardust*, described by García as "pure filmic noise, which evokes the creation and destruction of stars, its soundtrack is composed of electromagnetic emissions from stars".

¹⁰ The science fiction film *Ad astra* (2019) tells the story of astronaut Roy McBride, a man haunted by the ghost of his father, a living astronomical myth, who apparently died on a mission to Neptune looking for extraterrestrial life when Roy was a teenager. Many years later, the protagonist, played by Brad Pitt, must travel to that planet because of a malfunction in a space station and there he finally finds his father alive (Tommy Lee Jones), although that legendary figure has given way to a man lost in madness. This gap between what he believed and what he sees is what allows Roy to "kill" his idealized father and thus regain his lost emotionality. Although, it should be clarified, the "killing" only occurs almost at the end of the film, after the father, in a life or death situation, cries out to him in desperation: "Roy, let me go, [...] Let me go, Roy [...] Unhook me, son". J. Gray, *Ad astra*, Estados Unidos 2019.

¹¹ Goethe Plus Eventos Culturales [GoetheSchuleAR] (17 June 2020). Ciclo de Puerta Abiertas: Daniel García, artista visual. Recuperado de <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx2tyuBmwgY>, 15m20s.

¹² B. Peeters, *Derrida*, FCE, Buenos Aires 2013, p. 397.

never finds its end. Whoever wants to enter into that path knows that he will never reach ‘the end’ of his text; he receives his blow”¹³.



04. *No abras tu boca al mal*, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 144x148 cm

¹³ In a certain sense, and combining the fragment with an inevitable reference to *Ad astra per aspera*, we would like to quote Louis Auguste Blanqui, a French political activist, whose thought had great influence in the 19th century, who wrote the magnificent book *Eternity by the Stars* to reflect on time, infinity, the universe and political experience. The text is from 1871, a particularly agitated year in France due to the irruption of the Paris commune: “Indeed, after throwing figures around to the risk of shrugging shoulders and causing laughter, we are still breathless, stuck at the first steps of the road to the infinite. The infinite is however as clear as it is impenetrable, and a word suffices to demonstrate it: Space, filled with celestial bodies, always, endless. It is really quite simple, although incomprehensible”. A. Blanqui, *La eternidad por los astros*, Colihue, Buenos Aires 2002, p. 91.

The Written Body

In the book *Un gato que camina solo*, published in 2015 by Iván Rosado, the artist undertakes a historical research around the representation of the cat and particularly that of Felix¹⁴ the cat, research that we refrain from deploying as we believe that this is not the place to make a thorough reading of the text. In any case, we are satisfied with pointing out a hypothesis: the main problem of the book is the words, but the words in their quality of “proper names”, repeated, reproduced, crossed, multiplied names as much as if the author suffered a true compulsion to name, to give names, that is intensified with the presence of the insistence on names (words) in a book on the history of representation? Perhaps it is then necessary to adjust the hypothesis: the book is about the correspond-dence between words and things, or perhaps better, about the relationship between words and images: “Aldous Huxley, in an article on cinema that he published in 1926, describes a scene from *Feline follies*, in which Felix and his girlfriend transform the musical notes into a kind of skateboard, and points out that ‘for

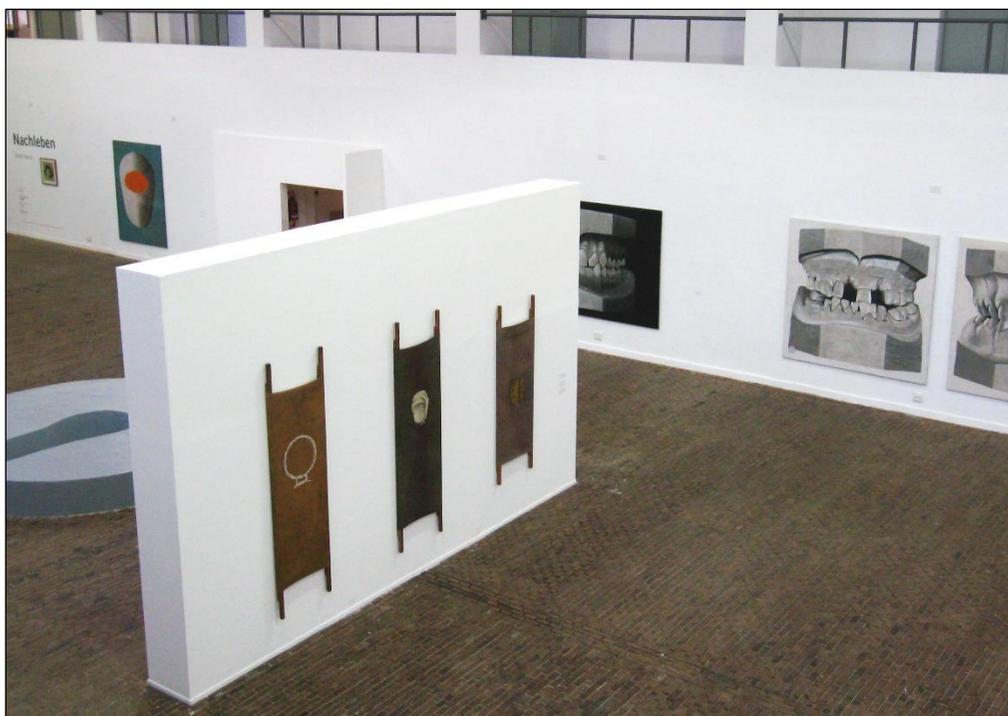


05. *Nachleben*, Haroldo Conti Cultural Centre, Buenos Aires, 2012

¹⁴ The ups and downs of this emblematic figure, in the light of García’s artistic project, incite us to read in that name that of the Phoenix bird (the word game only works in Spanish, Fénix-Felix).

screen playwrights, doing these things is a piece of cake', lamenting that the writer does not have the same freedoms of speech. What cinema can do better than literature or spoken drama is to be fantastic"¹⁵.

The power of the image triumphs over the weakness of the word. However, almost at the end of the book the author comments on Felix's frustrated attempt to transpose the cinema¹⁶, "his natural language" to another visual support, there, according to him, "something —perhaps fundamental— of his personality was lost in the comics"¹⁷. García begins this last fragment with a *boutade* about the afflictions of the passage of time in the body, and significantly does so as follows: "Like many of us"; which confirms, in a way, a suspicion we had since the beginning of the book, when García talks about the constant variations in Felix's representation, about his own practice, about his own process: "The successive transformations of Felix, from film to film, in the search for a more effective design, moved him away from mimesis"¹⁸.



06. *Nachleben*, exhibition view, HCCC, Buenos Aires, 2012

¹⁵ D. García, *Un gato que camina solo*, Iván Rosado, Rosario 2013, s. 63.

¹⁶ In an improvised line for the film *Ghost Dance*, Jacques Derrida tells Pascale Ogier, "Cinema is the art of ghosts [...] It's the art of allowing ghosts to come back" ("Le cinéma est un art de la fantasmachie... c'est un art de laisser revenir les fantasômes") (McMullen, 1983).

¹⁷ D. Garcia, *Un gato...*, p. 81.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 52.

Pain, Forgetfulness

*Nachleben*¹⁹ is the title of an exhibition conceived by Daniel García for the Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti²⁰, an anthology of works from 1990 to 2012, accompanied by two murals created specifically for the space.

The term *Nachleben* refers to central figures of German thought such as Walter Benjamin, George Didi-Huberman and Aby Warburg, and alludes to the survival of images, images that have never left definitively and seem to return to indicate something that somehow we know, that the past never ends. However, on the artist's official website he explains: "In any case, the use of this term as the title of my exhibition has a metaphorical rather than a theoretical use" (García, 14 August 2012), so instead of turning to Benjamin's writings or *The Surviving Image* by Didi-Huberman to delve into the concept, we go directly to a German dictionary. *Nachleben*, as a noun, means "the life of the deceased in the memory of the survivors", that is, in the memory of those who remain, of those who have not died. The dictionary becomes strangely precise when we review García's proposal that conceives of "Nachleben, as a ghost,

¹⁹ It is echoed in *Nachleben Nacht und Nebel* (Night and Fog), the euphemistic name for directives allowing the prosecution of offences committed against the Reich or the Occupying Forces in the Occupied Territories. The decree was signed on December 7, 1941, and allowed for the repression and physical elimination of opponents or resisters to the Nazi regime. Researcher Nuria Sara Miras Boronat notes: "The expression could have come directly from Hitler, who would have heard it in Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* and thought of that name to designate his deportation policy. According to this policy, those arrested who were not directly sentenced to death could be 'displaced' within the 8-day period. After that period, some prisoners would 'disappear into thin air' and cease to exist for their families and relatives, as another purpose of the decree was to create a state of distress among the relatives of those arrested. 'N.N.' also designated a special category of prisoner (as shown in the film). After the war it will become a symbol for all those deported by the Nazis". M. Miras Boronat, *Witnesses Disappearing in the Night and Vanishing in the Fog: Resnais and the Memory of the Holocaust*. "Revista de letras y ficción audiovisual" 2012, No. 3, p. 238. The film to which the researcher refers is *Nacht und Nebel* (1956), the documentary by Alain Resnais, with which he intends to investigate the atrocities of Nazism but basically to ask the spectator about the possibility of cinema to represent horror. The documentary is 32 minutes long.

²⁰ "The Haroldo Conti Cultural Center of Memory is located in the area where one of the most emblematic clandestine detention, torture and extermination centers was located during the last civic-military dictatorship (1976–1983): the Navy Mechanics School (ESMA in Spanish), where nearly 5,000 people were kidnapped, of which about 200 survived. Its name pays homage to the Argentine writer Haroldo Conti, 'the river novelist', who was kidnapped and disappeared in 1976. Since its opening in 2008, the Cultural Center has operated, always free of charge, as a space for the dissemination and promotion of culture and human rights" (quoted from the official website, <http://conti.derhuman.jus.gov.ar/>).

something that, having suffered physical death, refuses to suffer a symbolic death” (García, 14 August 2012). And he refuses perhaps because he ignores that he has died or because he has even been late to his own burial. That is why he insists, claims, protests, wants to continue living in us, in our memory, he does not want to fall into oblivion. In this sense, that which resists death is always untimely, uncomfortable, disturbing.



07. *Reconstrucción I*, graphite on wooden panel, 350 x 550 cm, Nachleben exhibition, 2012

Among the emblematic works that García showed in Nachleben, we discovered *Camillas*, pieces that the artist composed during the early '90s in which, in addition to a reflection on painting, the frame (what it frames), the form, the concept of body, in its double aspect, is filtered, the living body, although wounded, and the lifeless body, an irremediable corpse, although the “empty” stretcher refers, taking into account especially the space of the Conti, to the absence of bodies, to the bodies that are not there, that have “desaparecido” (disappeared), but that are still latent, waiting.

Within the selection, the series *Remordimientos* (Remorses, 2001–2008) is exhibited, paintings made in acrylic on canvas where dentures or molds of dentures are represented, of great size, with very marked gums, tight teeth, almost about to burst, even some of them without the complete teeth. Beyond the dramatic nature of these

compositions, the title of the series (each work has a number) is decisive in Spanish. When we investigate its etymology, we find that the word is formed by the prefix *re-* (backwards, again), *mordere* (to bite, also to torture or to row), plus the suffix *-miento* (action, result), which comes to mean “to feel guilt, repentance”; they are mouths that bite their tongues, mouths incapable of pronouncing themselves, mouths full of guilt, hence the terrible tension they exhibit. At the same time, and the detail is unavoidable for us, the title is composed of the word *miento* (I lie).

The exhibition is completed with two charcoal drawings on 350x550 panels made on site. The titles are *Reconstrucción* (Reconstruction) I and II, and represent two faces, female and male (both young), similar to the identikits used to track down criminals (or suspected criminals) and with a certain resemblance to the faces of the posters carried by *Madres y Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* in the marches and demonstrations demanding Memory, Truth and Justice.

The Body’s Memory, As well as the World’s and Life’s

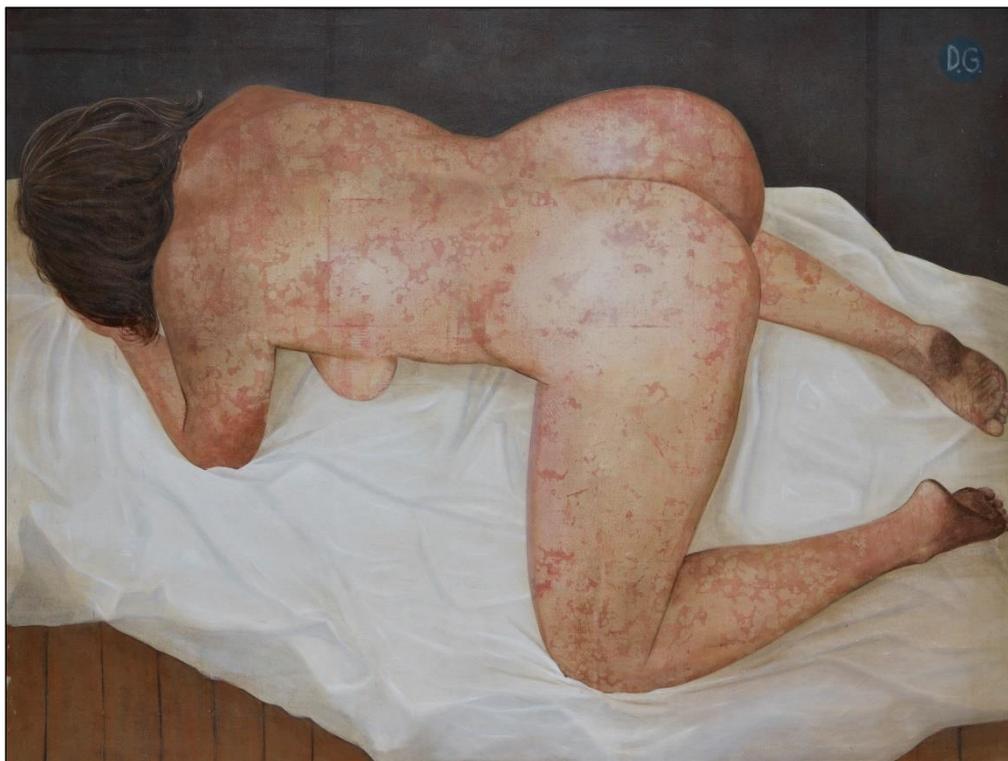
In November 2012, García inaugurated *Corpus* at the University Cultural Space of Rosario (ECU for its Spanish abbreviation)²¹, an exhibition that included paintings and drawings, digital photomontages and a video. In this opportunity, the body question appears directly in the title and crosses with the series of large nudes²² *Nobody, somebody, anybody*, a title in which any reader, whether he knows the English language or not, will recognize in each word the suffix *body*, a repetition that does not occur in other languages and that allows the artist to reinforce his work with the body and the word, with the body of the word, with the word made body. The naturalistic paintings exhibit nudes of women on a bed in undefined positions, between erotic and violent, between enjoyment and submission, as if the ultimate meaning of the works was indeterminable, which generates real unease in the viewer. On the other hand, the bodies are marked, and those marks of the bodies that are marks of the pictorial process are exposed by García with respect to *Remordimiento*, but his commentary can be used perfectly to describe these works:

Scratches, scrapes and stains that make up the texture of the paint. These marks are the product of the work process, which is made up of three stages. The first, of construction of the image, until it is completely finished is

²¹ In that building, there was a branch of the National Bank of the Argentine Republic.

²² Some of which the artist had presented the previous year at the *Nocturno* exhibition together with pieces belonging to the series *Ad astra per aspera*, Zavaleta Lab Gallery, Buenos Aires.

followed by another of stripping and erasing, destroying what was painted before”²³ (Bola de nieve Project).



08. *Nobody 2*, 2012, acrylic on canvas, 150x200 cm

Now, why is everybody missing? We believe that the answer is contained in the question, because if one analyzes García's universe, one will notice that something is always missing, that someone is always missing, that we are never all here, that the all is impossible.

Thinking about the inclusion of photographs, the artist writes: “Unlike painting, which imposes itself as present matter, as a body, and in that imposition says 'I am', photography says ‘this was’ ”. And then he adds: “Perhaps it is a personal point of view, but I have always felt, as Barthes says, ‘that somewhat terrible thing implied in

²³ He continues: “Finally, the image is reconstructed, but many traces of the process remain visible, alluding to what is a common theme in my works, the relationship of painting with time and memory. Painting as a process, which does not stop when the work is exhibited, but continues, with the deterioration produced by the years, with the restorations, with the changes of light, etc. And also painting as a register, as a physical imprint of a moment”.

all photography, the return of the dead' ”²⁴. Painting affirms a present and photography a past; but what about the image in general, in terms of absence, of negativity? We mean, can an image represent a possibility, that which does not exist yet?



09. *Telxepia*, digital photomontage, variable size, 2012

For the photomontages *Parténope*, *Leucosia*, *Telxepia*, García rescues from the internet mugshots, which are the photos taken by the police in the United States when someone is arrested and uses parts of different faces to compose other faces and thus the original becomes unrecognizable. Not only does it become unrecognizable, but also, it is lost, and the photograph one is confronted with acquires the character of a freak or a ghost, so that one's vision acquires disturbing aspects.

²⁴ D. García, *Bandido...*, p. 40. In addition to Roland Barthes, one of the authors who has most acutely addressed the issue of photography is Susan Sontag, we recovered some specific fragments that we believe serve to support the concepts involved in the work of García “All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in the mortality, vulnerability, mutability of another person or thing. Precisely because they section off a moment and freeze it, all photographs bear witness to the merciless dissolution of time [...] Like the dead relatives and friends preserved in the family album, whose presence in photography exorcises some of the anxiety and remorse caused by their disappearance, a photograph is a pseudo-presence and a sign of absence” S. Sontag. *Sobre la fotografía*. Debolsillo, Buenos Aires 2012, p. 25.

A precise summary of the artist's searches in this exhibition is written by Gilda di Crosta: "In this 'corpus', that goes from painting to digital photomontage, to music²⁵ and video, as a nomadic artist, Daniel García, to the bias between the mythical and the present, neither archaic nor postmodern, is directed to the encounter of that imaginary in which the present is indebted to a brilliance that comes from far away, from the times"²⁶.

Falsification of the Origin

Daniel García's last exhibition, *Identidades (Identities)*, took place in April 2020 at the Estudio G gallery in Rosario, where he exhibited 44 portraits of Chinese women drawn with a cubist aesthetic in which it is difficult to find a reference in reality, or that reference is lost, although the dresses of the women portrayed appear drawn in a realistic manner. The thing about this exhibition is that it becomes a difficult task to think about it without having in mind *Damas de Shangai*²⁷ (*Ladies of Shanghai*), where

²⁵ D.G. (signs his records as well as his paintings) has made four incursions into the field of music, Bop sedëli (2012), Samplazz (2012), IMPERIO (2013), Impresiones de Africa (2015). We have noticed that in each album the artist's compulsion to name is repeated, especially because of the use of some languages that are too foreign for Western canons: Swahili, Czech, Latvian, Japanese, Hausa, and at least one reference to Finnegans Wake, James Joyce's borderline novel.

We must clarify that if D.G.'s musical work appears only in a footnote, it is simply due to our inability to carry out a suitable musical analysis and not to the importance that the artist may assign to it. Although we would like to leave a question open about D.G.'s incursion into a "type" of art which, following the young Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, is defined as non-representative and non-plastic; is this the only possible way to represent the unrepresentable? We conclude the adventure with a brief fragment of the novel *The Last Encounter* by the Hungarian writer Sándor Márai which can reveal, through fiction, some of the problems we have worked on: "Konrád did indeed go pale every time he heard music. Any kind of music, even the most popular, he played as closely as if his body were really being touched. He would turn pale, his lips would tremble. The music told him something that others could not understand. The melodies probably didn't speak to the intellect. The discipline that had helped him gain his place and rank in the world, the discipline that he had voluntarily chosen for himself – like the believer who chooses guilt and punishment on his own – that discipline disappeared at such moments, and his tense and strained body relaxed". S. Márai, *El último encuentro*, Salamandra, Barcelona 2006, p. 48.

²⁶ D. García, *Bandido...*, p. 44.

²⁷ It was opened in the OSDE space in Rosario in 2018 and in 2019 it was moved to the Gachi Prieto gallery in Buenos Aires with a new assembly and some changes in the works. This simple shift (beyond the occasional modifications) makes the exhibition, as García says in his blog, "a new exhibition".

we also found portraits of Chinese women of small size although drawn with a naturalistic aesthetic.

The source of *Ladies of Shanghai* were some almanacs called *yuefenpai*, which means "calendar poster" in Chinese, on whose surface appeared drawn glamorous women by whom García was inspired. In this exhibition, there were also very colorful paintings of great size and the mentioned series of small format portraits that are the ones that in *Identities* the artist recovers and transforms.



10. *Dama de Shanghai 5*, 2018, acrylic on canvas, 210x152 cm

We could conceive both exhibitions as a single two-faced being (like a Janus), as if one exhibition depended on the other, or as if a conflict opened up between them: unity versus fragmentation, realism versus cubism, reference versus the undifferentiated; in this sense, what separates the Chinese women from the Shanghai ladies? What unites them? Are they versions, perversions, subversions?



11. *Identidades* (detail), 44 drawings on paper, 2020, 20,7x14,5 cm each

An important topic in the text that García wrote for *Identidades* is that in this exhibition something emerges from the order of copying, borrowing (borrowing from oneself), and forgery, but García incorporates it through an Eastern tradition that redeems those actions under the assumption that the origin is irremediably lost. A tradition, that of the *shanzhai*²⁸, that disregards the authentic-falsified antithesis, that does not hide its procedures, and that, to the detriment of identity, vindicates the power of variation.

Envoi: The Buoyancy that Makes Fly

Daniel García, paradoxical as it may seem, makes dispersion a program. We believe that this dispersion has less to do with the effective dissolution of meaning than with

²⁸ Concept developed by the philosopher Byung-Chul Han in the book *Shanzhai*.

the incessant exploration of new forms, new themes, new devices. An exploration that, since 1981, has become (in spite of dispersion, or precisely because of it) increasingly solid and coherent, and whose “spiritual” support would be given by the always failed attempt to find an origin, which is nothing else but the search for the essential, mythical void, that void which constitutes us.

For the last words nobody better than García, who in the same text (Heteróclito, 2008) that we quoted at the beginning of this work, establishes the bases on which his artistic project is sustained:

I have no certainties to offer. Perhaps it is interesting to question a notion of identity built (through mechanisms of exclusion and cutting) on concepts such as originality and uniqueness. The important thing for me is that these paintings do not allow the thematic or formal closure of my work, but rather always admit new developments²⁹.

Bibliography

- Blanqui A., *La eternidad por los astros*, Colihue, Buenos Aires 2002.
 García D., *Bandido*. Iván Rosado, Rosario 2015.
 García, D. *Un gato que camina solo*. Iván Rosado Rosario 2013.
 García D., *Daniel García* [blog], 2006–2020, Recuperado de <https://daniel-garcia.blogspot.com/>
 Serres M., *Variaciones sobre el cuerpo*, FCE, Buenos Aires 2011.
 Peeters B., *Derrida*. FCE, Buenos Aires 2013.
 Miras Boronat M., *Witnesses Disappearing in the Night and Vanishing in the Fog: Resnais and the Memory of the Holocaust*, “Revista de letras y ficción audiovisual” 2012, No. 3, 226–246.
 Benjamin W., *Tesis sobre el concepto de historia* (1940), in: W. Benjamin, *Iluminaciones*, (pp. 307-318), Taurus, Madrid 2018.
 Márai S., *El último encuentro*, Salamandra, Barcelona 2006.
 Sontag S., *Sobre la fotografía*, Debolsillo, Buenos Aires 2012.

Other Materials

- McMullen, K. (1983). *Ghost Dance* [película]. Reino Unido.
 Gray, J. (2019). *Ad astra* [película], Estados Unidos.
 Goethe Plus Eventos Culturales [GoetheSchuleAR] (17 June 2020). Ciclo de Puerta Abiertas: Daniel García, artista visual [archivo de video], Recuperado de <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx2tyuBmwgY>.
 Proyecto Bola de Nieve [Blog] <http://www.boladenieve.org.ar/artista/20/garcia-daniel> [2001–2020].

²⁹ D. García. *Bandido*, p.16.

Streszczenie

Prace argentyńskiego artysty Daniela Garcíi, urodzonego w Rosario w 1958 roku, obejmują głównie malarstwo i rysunek, ale z czasem włączył on do swojej praktyki inne formy i techniki lub urządzenia, takie jak książki, płyty, filmy i fotografie. W tym sensie jego praca dopuszcza kwalifikację heterogeniczności. Jednak nie tylko dorobek pozwala na taką kwalifikację, ale także różnorodność problemów, które zgłębia w swojej sztuce, nawet jeśli są powtarzane (ciało i jego reprezentacja, historia sztuki i obrazów, relacje między słowami i rzeczami, pamięć i zapomnienie). W tym artykule proponuję wstępny przegląd twórczości Garcíi, skupiający się na niektórych z wymienionych aspektów i ze stałym zamiarem nawiązania (jak robi to García w swojej pracy) relacji z kinem, filozofią i literaturą.

Słowa kluczowe: malarstwo, rysunek, książka, kino, heterogeniczność, ciało, pamięć, słowo, historia sztuki, nauki humanistyczne