Statement

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Statement

By

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“MY UTOPIA IS AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WORKS SO WELL, WE CAN RUN WILD IN IT.


WE ARE THE VANGUARD OF FANTASY.

WHERE WE LIVE IS LIBERATED TERRITORY IN WHICH FANTASY MOVES ABOUT FREELY AT ALL HOURS OF THE DAY, FROM WHICH IT MOUNTS ITS ATTACKS ON OCCUPIED TERRITORY.

MY UTOPIA IS AN ENVIRONMENT THAT WORKS SO WELL WE CAN RUN WILD IN IT.

WE ARE ALL UNDESIRABLES. WE ARE FULL OF OPTIMISM. WE ARE THE FUTURE.”

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STATEMENT

*The theocratic Republic of Gaia*, an alternative world created as a safe space of resistance, and inhabited by its rebel autonomous counterparts *The Catharas*, is experiencing great social, geological and political upheaval. My work uses a utopic-dystopic narrative construct, as a platform to investigate and reflect upon power struggles, sense of place, migration, gender, oppression, violence, and the spectactlist technological society, It draws a tension between different ‘realities’ aiming to deconstruct the language of neo-liberalism. I subvert and play with autobiographical tropes from a post-colonial perspective informed by concerns that stem from growing up during the world’s longest war, the civil war in Colombia.

BIOGRAPHICAL POETICS

DESIREs: A VERY INTIMATE MANIFESTO²

For my practice:

For my body to be functional

To be able to have less severe pain every day so I can complete the projects I have envisioned; so, that I am able to be more productive.
To be able to live in a country where I can work as an artist and have a place I can call home; a country that I can call home.

To be safe, so that I can have creative freedom in my work

To be free from censorship from the mechanisms of power

To break through the language of Neo-liberalism

To be a good communicator

To be able to show in spaces run by people with whom I can be aligned conceptually, creatively and intellectually to achieve a chemistry with depth and consciousness.

To have fun

To play

To perform

To joke above all, always.

To be taken seriously

To be in a community that works with the principle of solidarity

For my works to be SEEN, and I don’t mean seen; I mean, don’t just look at it’s packaging and at it’s aesthetic value, but see all that it is, give it a moment, think about it, experience it.

To show with artists that I feel connected to and aligned with, critically and politically.

To be involved in programs with artists that I feel deeply connected to.
OTHERNESS: WORK IN PROCESS

Foreign Body

A feeling of foreignness has accompanied me throughout my life. Foreign body, foreign place. Foreignness is not only spatial and about migration, it is where one find that certain dissonance. You can feel foreign in your own body. You can struggle to find a sense of place inside yourself. I have talked to people about this and found unexpected connections. A transgender girl told me once, she first migrated gender inside her body and then she migrated country, she identified as a double migrant. I see there are different ways in which one might find oneself at odds with one’s body. I have felt I was placed in the wrong body. Not due to a social construct, but due to biology. My body aches every second, as if I were trying to break free from it. It holds me hostage; it often takes away my autonomy. I have felt my body as an enemy, completely dissonant with my
self, with my mind, with my person. Inside me, I run at a fast speed, it runs always against my pace. I live in resistance inside of it. Sometimes I have fantasized to have the body of a cyborg; I dream of that technology; I reach for it in my mind; I long for it. I long for a body that feels like home.

Foreign Place

I was born in the Soviet Union and grew up in Colombia, I felt a foreigner everywhere. I have lived in many countries in the so-called first, second and third worlds; I haven’t once found a sense of place. Forever ‘Latina’ disconnected from my Slavic roots, forever third world, forever carrying a stigma: “you are not welcome here”. Birthplace is arbitrary and random, not of our choice, yet we are judged, categorized and qualified on the basis it. I am forever in between borders, forever stateless.

WORK: THE OTHER WORLD

The Theocratic Republic of Gaia was discovered early as a safe space where one can express openly without the censorship of the oppressive political apparatus. It is a world inside the world, and it is a real world where we can run freely. 3

Narrative

The Theocratic Republic Of Gaia, works as a critique against our contemporary status quo. A mythological world I discovered, where human beings live as machines at the mercy of a world fascist empire lead by the II Papess and the ultra-disciplined T.R.O.G. army; the Beings. The citizens of T.R.O.G, hypnotized, have forgotten what reality is and live at the mercy of unintelligible dogmas. The resistance and uprising is lead by the spirit Cathara Insurgent Women.

Catharas: Etymological Historical Background

Heretic movements, such as the Cathars, became the first “proletarian international” in history where women played an important role. The Catharas were the first “proletarian international” in history where women played an important role. Indigenous women in America had a powerful position in society before the Spanish Conquest, and they were the instigators of anti-colonial revolt. The

\[4\] Thanks to Silvia Federici for her inspirational book “Caliban and The Witch”.

4 Thanks to Silvia Federici for her inspirational book “Caliban and The Witch”.
colonization of America by the Spaniards brought the demonization of women, a practice akin to the witch-hunts in Europe.

Figure 3

**Story (from an artist’s book)**

The Theocratic Republic of Gaia *The Theocratic Republic Of Gaia* is a world living a period of imminent intense geological and social upheaval during which tensions built up over centuries will be discharged.

It is populated by colonized Trogians living under the supreme ruler: the *White Papess II*, her army: *The Beings* and the heretic *Cathara Insurgent Women* who lead the resistance and uprising of T.R.O.G.

Trogians live as machines in a massive staged fantasy. They are constantly looking for *Tetrapharmakos* (the essence of pleasure and happiness) and they
live at the mercy of a world fascist empire lead by the *White Papess II* and the T.R.O.G.’s army, the *Beings*.

Trogians, hypnotized have forgotten what reality is and live at the mercy of unintelligible dogmas and blindly follow a cult of abstract humanoids and objects.

The *Catharas* are dancing warriors, which lead the uprising of the Magical – Insurgent-Spirits that populate the Aztec territory of T.R.O.G and lead a mystical battle of resistance to the light ray weapons of the beings.
WORK: INTERDISCIPLINARY

THE ACCIDENTAL PURSUIT OF THE STATELESS

For “The Accidental Pursuit of The Stateless”, a body of work I initiated in 2014 focused on transculturality and mobility and I worked across multiple mediums such as performance, photography, video, GIF and textile.

I traveled to what I perceived was a mutant city, where east meets west. I was driven by the interest of unpacking my own conflicted feelings of sense of place -- being a Soviet born Colombian-- and my interest in the issue of migration. I researched the experiences of migrant women (cisgender and transgender) from post-colonial societies focusing specifically on Latin America, in the context of a city that is a post-soviet hybrid.

I interviewed several women who left their countries for a variety of reasons, from existential to psychological and economical, to running from political persecution, and created works as a result of this research. Each work is inspired and/or performed based on an individual story, or a collective story.

The homonymous video “The Accidental Pursuit of the Stateless”, entails performances based on several real life experiences of a fellow Colombian migrant. I worked together and became a close friend with this political refugee
who emigrated to Germany during the post-Berlin Wall turmoil in the 90’s. The first part of the film introduces the viewer to the Theocratic Republic of Gaia. It plays with critical humor, the aesthetics of colonial art tropes from the Americas, and the insurgent struggle I grew up with (The Papess, the veiled women, the guerrilla fighter). The pre-Columbian imagery and the cross are autobiographical nods to my upbringing in a rural hospital in Colombia. Situated close to the political sci-fi genre, the T.R.O.G is a parallel universe that exists in the tensions between the totalitarian state and the revolutionary Cathara Insurgency.
Figure 6

Figure 7
THE GIF: NEW MEDIA

From the body of works that stemmed from The Accidental Pursuit of the Stateless grew a stronger interest in working with video and the GIF format. Since I work using a utopia-dystopia ‘mythology’ as a platform: The Theocratic Republic of Gaia and its rebel counterparts, the Catharas, I became interested in working around the possibilities of short animations that could function as portals creating immersive environments with multiple projected GIFS playing simultaneously. Because the T.R.O.G is a realm that exists in a parallel universe interconnected with our world. For me a GIF became a medium that can also
work as a world inside a world. The internet is in itself a parallel universe, people get married, talk, buy, hire killers, buy weapons and have sex in this ‘parallel universe’. The internet is not an extensions of our material world, but a world by itself, with its own government-regulated order, its own insurgency and its own currency. I am talking about the hyper-surveiled surface with its army of bots, the deep web, the dark net and bitcoin. The GIFS are instances of a low resolution

Figure 9

poor image an, using the language of artist Hito Steyerl from her essay “In Defense of the Poor Image”, I would say that the GIF is the “lumpen proletariat in the class society of appearances, ranked and valued according to its resolution.”\(^5\) In an increasing high technological society of the disposable and insatiable thirst for the latest technological advancements, value is placed over

glossy hyper-real *hollywoodesque* aesthetics. The GIF is the destruction of that, but is also an immediate high offering instant gratification.

The GIF is the desire for the immediate and easily accessible. It is a byproduct of ‘democratic’ capitalism, as Tocqueville said: “Humans in democracy have a taste for immediate pleasure and indolent ambition”. In his book *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville talked about how people in the new democratic society would prefer to read summaries or instruction manuals instead of books, how everything had to provide immediate satisfaction. He talked about the loss of pleasure of introspection and contemplation in the high arts, literature and music, and its replacement by all their digested transformed synthesized versions to produce the most gratification in the least amount of time. The GIF is used both subversively and by corporations, it is truly populist. It is a new tool of communication; not only used in marketing, but as a tool to express emotions, as a tool to spread censored pornography, and as a tool for protest; where news that are also censored are spread across. It is a microcosm inside a microcosm, compressed in three seconds that runs rampantly. A GIF is an easy tool that any individual can use to appropriate what society wants to hide and make it viral, it could be a woman’s nipple or a bomb. The GIF is exciting, it is creative and cheap, it is liked by everybody. The porn fan, the artist, the teenager, your mom and my mom. It is a bit like tofu, it takes any flavor you put to it, it can taste like anything.
I see a world where video is being replaced by the GIF, where YouTube becomes obsolete, where images are circulated faster and faster, more ‘democratically’ and free. I see a future where this might be repressed and controlled too. But right now, we can run wild with them.

Figure 10

CATALITYC CONFESSIONAL NOISE MACHINE: INSTALLATION

I study alternatives that humanity has explored in a quest for liberation with an interest in neo-colonialism, de-colonial struggle, and in reclaiming the ‘Third World’ identity. One of the works that addresses the influence of colonialism and
neo-colonialism in the Americas, is ‘The Catalityc Confessional Noise Machine’; a site specific installation which includes: video, performance and textile. It is a ‘confessional’ portal, where the viewer enters to traditionally confess their wrong doings in this case to the White Papess, however it gets hijacked by the Cathara Insurgency who in several languages repeat:

**English:**
“The more she contemplates, the less she lives; the more she identifies with the dominant images of need, the less she understands her own life and her own desires. The externality of the spectacle in relation to the active person appears in the fact that her own gestures are no longer hers but those of another who represents them to her. This is why the spectator feels at home nowhere, because the spectacle is everywhere.”

**Italian:**
"Più contempola, meno vive; più accetta di riconoscersi nelle immagini dominanti della necessità, meno comprende la propria esistenza ed il proprio desiderio. L'esteriorità dello spettacolo rispetto alla persona attiva si manifesta in quanto i suoi stessi gesti già non sono più suoi ma di un'altra che la rappresenta. Per questo la spettatrice non trova il suo posto da nessuna parte, perché da qualunque parte c'è lo spettacolo."

**German:**
“Je mehr sie zuschaut, umso weniger lebt sie; je mehr sie sich in den herrschenden Bildern des Bedürfnisses wiederzuerkennen akzeptiert, umso weniger versteht sie ihre eigene Existenz und ihre eigene Begierde. Die Äußerlichkeit des Spektakels im Verhältnis zur tätigen Person erscheint darin, dass ihre eigenen Gesten nicht mehr ihr gehörien, sondern einem anderen, der sie ihr vorführt. Die Zuschauerin fühlt sich daher nirgenda zu Hause, denn das Spektakel ist überall.”

**Farsi:**
"Ou har che bishtar nezareh mikonad kamatar zendegi mikonad, har che bishtar mipazirad khod ra dar tasavire ghalebe niyaz bazshenasad, kamtar hasti va meil e khod ra mifahmad. Birooni boodan e namayesh nesbat be ensan e Omel dar in amr nemoodar migardad ke harakate ou digar na az one khodash, balkeh az one kase digari ast ke anhara be ou

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bazminamayanad. Az hamin roo, tamashagar hich ja ehsase khodi boodan nemikonad, zira namayesh dar hameja hast.”

**Russian:**
“Чем больше она созерцает, тем меньше она живет. Чем больше она соглашается признавать в себе господствующие в образе потребности, тем меньше она понимает собственное существование и собственные желания. Внешний характер спектакля по отношению к человеку действующему проявляется в том, что ее собственные поступки принадлежат уже не ей самой, но другой, кто ее представляет. Вот почему зритель никогда не чувствует себя дома, ибо повсюду спектакль.”

**Spanish:**
“Cuanto más contempla menos vive; cuanto más acepta reconocerse en las imágenes dominantes de la necesidad menos comprende su propia existencia y su propio deseo. La exterioridad del espectáculo respecto de la persona activa se manifiesta en que sus propios gestos ya no son suyos, sino de otra que la representa. Por eso la espectadora no encuentra su lugar en ninguna parte, porque el espectáculo está en todas.”

**Greek:**
"Όσο περισσότερο εξετάζει, τόσο λιγότερο ζει; όσο περισσότερο ταυτίζεται με τις κυρίαρχες εικόνες της ανάγκης, τόσο λιγότερο κατανοεί τη δική της ζωή και τις δικές τις επιθυμίες. Η εξωτερικότητα του θέαματος σε σχέση με το ενεργό άτομο εμφανίζεται στο γεγονός ότι οι δικές τις χειρονομίες δεν είναι πλέον δικές της, αλλά εκείνες ενός άλλου που τις αναπαριστά για αυτήν. Αυτός είναι ο λόγος που ο θεατής δεν νιώθει πουθενά σαν στο σπίτι του, γιατί το θέαμα είναι παντού."

**Basque:**
CULTURAL CONCERNS

Since post-colonial and de-colonial thought informs my practice I am interested in studying its socio-economical implications in contemporary society, and how it ties to the past and forms new meanings of the term “Third World” as an identity.
The denomination ‘Third World’ appeared for the first time in 1952, in an article titled, ‘Three Worlds, One Planet’ by Alfred Sauvy, in which he argued that reference is often made to two words in a state of confrontation, and that there is in fact a third world which is generally overlooked – and that this third world is the most significant, and in fact, in a chronological sense it is the first world.

Embracing the term for many thinkers, creative persons and culture participants, saying: I am a third world person, has shifted from derogatory to celebratory, it is a reclaiming of meaning, a reclaiming of the intellectual and artistic power that lies outside the world’s economic and cultural elites. It is the revolt of the oppressed and the denial of paternalistic scholarship. I have made pieces appropriating texts from post-colonial theoretician Frantz Fanon, such as:

“And it is clear that in the colonial countries the peasants alone are revolutionary, for they have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The starving peasant, outside the class system is the first among the exploited to discover that only violence pays. For him there is no compromise, no possible coming to terms; colonization and decolonization is simply a question of relative strength.”

and

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8 Dirlik, 133.
“Once their rage explodes, they recover their lost coherence, they experience self-knowledge through reconstruction of themselves; from afar we see their war as the triumph of barbarity; but it proceeds on its own to gradually emancipate the fighter and progressively eliminates the colonial darkness inside and out. As soon as it begins it is merciless. Either one must remain terrified or become terrifying—which means surrendering to the dissociations of a fabricated life or conquering the unity of one’s native soil. When the peasants lay hands on a gun, the old myths fade, and one by one the taboos are overturned: a fighter’s weapon is his humanity. For in the first phase of the revolt killing is a necessity: killing a European is killing two birds with one stone, eliminating in one go oppressor and oppressed: leaving one man dead and the other man free…”

The third world identity is a sentiment, which has gained strength under the circumstances of neo-colonialism; embracing it has an element of subversion. In the sea of washed-out cultural remnants, the third-world artist seeks to foster her own identification, and to challenge the aesthetics of power that surround us.

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10 Ibid
WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE AND EVERYTHING TO GAIN.
IN EITHER ONE MUST REMAIN TERRIFIED OR BECOME TERRIFYING.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


THESIS LIST OF FIGURES

1. Bodies of Water: Body as a Prison and Prison as a Body, (screen grab 1) two channel video. 2015
2. Bodies of Water: Body as a Prison and Prison as a Body, (screen grab 2) two channel video. 2015
3. Bodies of Water: Body as a Prison and Prison as a Body, (installation shot) two channel video. 2015
4. Bodies of Water: Body as a Prison and Prison as a Body, (installation detail) two channel video. 2015
THESIS SHOW

Bodies of Water: Body as a Prison and Prison as a Body

"Bodies of Water: Body as a Prison and Prison as a Body" is a 2016 two channel video installation -- with a duration of 10:06 minutes-- shown at the Hunter College Art Gallery on the occasion of the thesis show.

It employs a juxtaposition of documentary and fantasy, revealing the struggle of an artist to communicate with Earth Liberation Front political prisoner Marius Mason. A letter found by the Catharas from the Theocratic Republic of Gaia is read, making them actors and observers in the process. It explores the themes of gender migration, life inside the prison industrial complex and communication using water in its wild state as a symbol of freedom and possibility, and water contained in plastic jugs that are industrially produced as a parallel to imprisonment and containment.

The installation was the product of a body of work that was developed over the course of three years.
Thesis Figure 5