
LINE OF DESIRE.
THE WORK OF
OMAR MATADAMAS
SEEN THROUGH CORPOREALITY
AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF EVENT

CUITLÁHUAC MORENO

Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, UNAM, Ciudad de México, México
Postdoctoral Researcher in the Doctoral Program in Humanities
UAM-Xochimilco, Ciudad de México, México
cmorenor@correo.xoc.uam.mx

Abstract: This article¹ is shaped by a trajectory of back and forth on various topics, starting with a minimal review of the history of performance art theory in Mexico, then analysing the place of the philosophy of the event and corporeality in performance art, and finally exploring the strategies for making desire habitable through the work of the Mexican artist Omar Matadamas. In the first section, I discuss a series of ideas surrounding the implications of performance art in the current Mexican theoretical horizon; in the other pole I recur to the work of the artist Omar Matadamas and his series *Sicalíptico* (2017), as well as his collaboration with Grupo D3 Chok3 (“Clash Group”), to think in the proximity of politics of intimacy and desire in art created by sexual dissidents.

Keywords: Omar Matadamas, performance art, performance art theory, desire, queer art, philosophy of the event, homoerotic performance, Miroslava Salcido.

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Note: For this article, I have mainly used literature and research originally published in Spanish and translated the quotations into English myself.

“Eros moves or creeps upon its victim from somewhere outside her: orpeton. No battle avails to fight off that advance: amachanon. Desire, then, is neither inhabitant nor ally of the desirer. Foreign to her will, it forces itself irresistibly upon her from without. Eros is an enemy.”

Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*

Introduction

One of the most forceful positions and bets around performance art theory lies in pointing out the trajectory of its disappearance; to a certain extent this can be considered to be in tune with statements such as the death of art, the death of God, the death of metaphysics, etc; nevertheless, it is worth asking what is at stake in this disappearance. Nowadays we talk more than ever about performance and performativity to point out almost any activity or action. Contrary to the simplifying idea that *there is no more performance* because performance is in everything and has lost its specificity, it is fundamental to take on the precise task of investigating what is at stake in the current disappearance of the contours of performance. In my

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opinion, one of the most careful theses conceived of Miroslava Salcido's proposal, who thinks of this disappearance in the following terms: 'a hybridisation between action and ideas, the potentiation of shocked thought, the rehabilitation of action art as a philosophical act that leads to existential and historical questions that cannot be put off' (2018, p. 9). However, in order to be able to situate ourselves in front of this horizon, it is fundamental to consider what performance has been, how it has been carried out and theorised from certain non-hegemonic territories, in this case Mexico. So, we will be guided by the following questions: What are the relations between performance and the many ways in which the body has been thought of on the margins of the anatomo-political regime? What is the role of desire in this Mexican scenario in which philosophy, contemporary aesthetic theory and the artistic production of sexual dissidence meet?

These following pages aim to provide a minimal exploration of this trajectory of questions, starting from the history of performance art theory in Mexico, some proposals ascribed to the philosophy of the event and of corporeality constructed in Mexico. Finally, one of the main objectives is to review how the work of Mexican queer artist Omar Matadamas has projected related problematics in the intimate and extreme exhibition of his homoerotic longing.

1. Contemporary performance art theory in Mexico

It is not certain that speaking genealogically about performance art, in terms of a supposed conceptual unity, can help us define it more adequately or consistently today. I am pointing this out because I consider that it is difficult to delineate and locate what performance itself consists of nowadays. However, one can take as a starting point one of the definitions postulated by Richard Schechner, one of the main theorists in the field since the second half of the 20th century, along with figures such as Victor Turner, Erika Fischer-Lichte, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Diana Taylor, among others. Schechner sums up performance as human activities in enactments "spanning a continuum and overlapping spheres or domains: play-ritual-sports-performing arts (music, dance, theatre)-performances of everyday life/performativity-legal/medical practices-popular entertainments-media". (2000, p. 12).

In Mexico's horizon, we can mention no less than a plethora of studies. I am going to refer to the following research: Monica Mayer, *Rosa chillante. Mujeres y performance en México* (Screaming Pink. Women and performance in Mexico) (2004); Josefina Alcázar and Fernando Fuentes, *La historia del performance en México* (History of performance in Mexico) (2005); Dulce María de Alvarado, *Performance en*

México. 28 Testimonios, 1995-2000 (Performance in Mexico. 28 Testimonies, 1995-2000) (2013); Cuauhtémoc Medina and Olivier Debroise, *La era de la discrepancia* (The age of discrepancies) (2007); or Issa María Benítez Dueñas, *Hacia otra historia del arte en México, tomo IV* (Towards another history of art in Mexico, volume IV) (2004). These investigations and theoretical retrospectives are fundamental to understand the impossibility of articulating a single genealogy of performance in our country. But I won't discuss them here, nor the challenge that such narratives imply for anyone who tries to synthesize -or conceptually organize- the productive vastness of performance art history in our country.

Performance in Mexico has a rich, heteronomous, and complex history that goes back several decades. As it occurs in the histories of performance art in other countries and traditions, a large part of the problem comes from the opposition between a living art form which is in clear articulation with time/action, that occurs through the body as a device of presence, and the process of neutralization that happens through its historicization and even its footage, recording and archiving.

Although influences of performance practices can be found in the native cultures and indigenous peoples of the region, contemporary performance art in Mexico took shape in the 1960's, influenced by artistic movements such as Fluxus, but also by Stridentism (an avant-garde artistic trend originating in Mexico, which also emphasised idiosyncratic features of the national culture) and other late avant-garde movements. During this period, collective associations like Los Hartos ('The Jaded'), with Mathias Goeritz, Jesús Reyes Ferreira and the photographer Katy Horna, or artists like Felipe Ehrenberg, Ulises Carrión, Marcos Kurtycz, Marta Palau, under different approaches, began to explore new forms of artistic expression that challenged the traditional conventions of sculptural, literary and pictorial/figurative art, at that time representative formats of the academic artistic hegemony (Alcázar and Fuentes, 2005).

This generation's efforts were distinguished by its ephemeral, subversive, non-conformist, and participatory nature. Similarly, in the 1960's, the movement known as "La Ruptura" (The Rupture) emerged, in which figures such as José Luis Cuevas, Francisco Toledo and Alberto Gironella challenged the hegemony of Mexican muralism in cultural politics and explored innovative performance techniques. (Medina and Debroise)

Figures such as Maris Bustamante, Mónica Mayer, El No Grupo (No Group), as well as the collective Polvo de Gallina Negra (Black Hen Powder), La Colectiva Fronteriza (Border Collective), Alejandro Jodorowsky, Rocío Boliver "La congelada de uva", Teresa Serrano, Yoshua Okón, among many others, were concerned with thinking about the rough dimensions of the body, gender, identity,

spirituality, and sexual practices. Throughout this period, from the 1960's to the present, numerous performance events, groups, movements, and festivals have been organized in Mexico. These efforts have contributed to solidify, make visible and disseminate the community of performance artists throughout the country and this has facilitated the promotion of discursive exchange at an international level as well.

Whether as a discipline in the field of art, an artistic-political technique, a bodily practice, an aesthetic discursivity, an intervention in public spaces, or an archival preservation and recording of actions, performance inescapably addresses the plural and the multiple. Richard Schechner (2000) himself points out an undeniable bifurcation only in terms of performance studies: "1. as a theoretical construct; 2. as an academic discipline" (p. 11). Schechner makes it clear that the scenario is vast enough:

The field of performance studies presupposes that we live in a post-colonial world in which cultures clash, influence and even interfere with each other, energetically hybridising. These clashes are not always "politically correct" or pleasant. Populations and ideas move, pushed by wars and despotic governments, by economic forces we politely call "market", by the internet and other new communication technologies. The consequences of all this movement are by no means clear or certain (pp. 11-12).

Despite the clarity of this field, I think it is also important to consider performance from a more critical perspective, as suggested by the underground tradition that shapes the philosophy of the event. We can see that, in this scenery, performance has been, above all, plurality and multiplicity. If we change the parameter from the history of its artistic conformations to the theoretical horizon produced from philosophy, it is truly enlightening to think about performance within the philosophy of the event realm, as Miroslava Salcido has managed to do.

The philosophy of the event arises in a heterogeneous and variable tradition that encompasses the thought of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Deleuze, Sloterdijk and other figures who have made this concept a fundamental one for destabilizing the philosophical tradition. Although it is more common to place the event closer to the singularity of phenomena, it could be said that the event breaks the dichotomy into the old duality of philosophical aesthetics: phenomenon and concept. Thinking of performance as an event shows that the constitutive plurality of performance is not only an experience pertaining to phenomena as isolated acts, as a mere plurality of cases, but that every event is always plural and is debated in a hybrid and indefinable state from the realm of

materialized concepts. Or rather: the very concept of performance is multiple, dynamic, vibratory, iterative, difference and repetition: performance as event is a desiring materiality traversed by thought and concepts.

I think, for instance, of all the formations of utterances described by Michel Foucault's archaeological work, and, although I will not really dwell on them, I do want to point out that Foucault writes *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2008) in a subreptitious dialogue with pragmatics, the philosophy of science in its French and Anglo-Saxon variants, and tenuously and almost timidly, with the analytical philosophy of language. Foucault is interested in making it visible that it is not enough to analyse the enunciative conformations in language if the institutional frameworks in which any enunciation takes place are not simultaneously considered. In other words, enunciation cannot be considered in itself without taking the device of power in which it operates into account. There is no discourse without power, there is no subject of enunciation without an institutional framework that makes visible and audible what is at stake in all discursive productions. I will go into this in more detail below when I discuss the work of the Mexican artist Omar Matadamas.

Returning to the relationship and conceptual proximity between event philosophy and performance, I consider that, upon closer inspection, this relationship can overturn the categories of art theory and art history.

On this subject, I consider it useful to look at the discussions explored by the Mexican theoretician Mario Morales in his text *Adiós al arte contemporáneo, ¡Viva el arte anacrónico!* (Farewell to Contemporary Art, Long Live Anachronistic Art!) (2023). We know that the current horizon of art theory in Mexico is quite broad. The main thesis of Morales's book states that it is almost impossible to define what contemporary means in art in the face of such a plural world (p. 25). Morales is following Giorgio Agamben, Jean Baudrillard, Larry Shiner, Mark Fisher, Pierre Bordieu, among others, but above all, Georges Didi-Huberman, to insist on a demand to think anachronistically about the possibilities, not only of the image as an anachronistic device, but of art—in general—as a heterochronic event, reached by multiple times and spaces, with the intention of bursting the hegemonic reading that contemporary art “brings with it the conception of a single, globalised time” (p. 26).

However, this idea of a global narrative or unity is now unsustainable. Particularly if we consider the rupture of the unity of the Eurocentric meta-narrative that throws us into a discontinuous and dissimilar, varied, multiple and contingent horizon; which, since the last century, has been able to question the unity of a historical teleology that provides a narrative unity to its cultural project. To this end, it is essential that we contemplate the contributions and points

generated by critical theory (Benjamin, Adorno, Buck-Morss, among others) and the so-called “French post-structuralism” (Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, etc.). Both critical theory and French philosophy have had wide resonance and impact on contemporary theories and disciplines around the world. However, the reason why I make use here of performance art theorists who think from the territories and problematics that open up before the Mexican horizon of thought, such as Morales, Giménez Gatto and particularly Salcido, lies in their perspective that eludes universalisation for the sake of a philosophy of corporality close to the philosophy of the event. It is not simply a matter of using an idea of decolonial thought for the sake of being in tune with a global tendency, but of summoning voices that are thinking with subtleness and care about the hybrid horizon we inhabit.

It is this historical horizon of Modernity that is now being insistently criticized by postcolonial and decolonial theoretical strategies all over the world. Here we could include a long list of and critical development that can be articulated from the work of figures such as Gayatri Spivak to Giuseppe Campuzano, going through Achille Mbembe, Aníbal Quijano, Homi K. Bhabha, Walter Mignolo, Edward W. Said, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Mario Rufer, María Galindo, among others. But the aim in decolonial and critical strategies regarding coloniality’s traces is not merely to replace historical genealogies, nor to authenticate parallel narratives, nor simply to make room for new continuities of theoretical construction, but to throw light on the conditions of possibility of narrative hegemony while questioning its contingencies and discontinuities. And it seems to me that it is necessary to think critically about the history of performance art in Mexico in order to avoid subordinating it to historicist mechanisms.

What I would like to emphasize is already well known: that the Subject and its universal history are no longer the parameters of theories that claim to account for the singularity of the experience of the body. And the body itself has plummeted towards its collapse in terms of universality. In this sense, the body has become a subject of innovative theoretical explosion, particularly in the intellectual or artistic work of figures such as Michel Foucault, David le Breton, Jean-Luc Nancy, Monique Wittig, Carmen Sánchez, Thomas Laqueur, Judith Butler, Paul B. Preciado, Teresa De Lauretis, Fabián Giménez Gatto, Frida Gorbach, Julia Kristeva, David Cronenberg, Stelarc, Pussy Riot, Monica Mayer, Jorge Nico Reitter, Teresa Margolles and the list could go on and on, citing artists, philosophers, psychoanalysts, scientists and anthropologists alike.

It is fundamental to take into consideration a discussion that I have found clearly and solidly set out in the philosophy of Miroslava Salcido, which establishes horizons of interaction between what is implied in thinking about

performance in relation to what has been said about writing in the sphere of twentieth-century French philosophy. Salcido writes “(...) about performance art to affirm its disappearance, not “to try to preserve it” (p. 69). In *Performance. Hacia una filosofía de la corporalidad y el pensamiento subversivos* (Performance. Towards a Philosophy of Subversive Corporeality and Thought) (2019), Salcido throws a series of provocative and disturbing theses around performance as a laboratory and thought experiment (p. 39), about its philosophical staging (p. 53):

The Philosophy of Performance will be translated, then, more than as theory, as an event or happening in which the irremediable finitude of the present makes sense and the historical references serve the function of a prop for its actuality, not in terms of avant-garde or trend but of presence, that is, of the appearance of the phenomenal body of the thinker. (Salcido, p. 61).

I am challenged by her proposal of the disappearance of performance. Mainly because I consider that its relationship with the philosophy of the event and, particularly, of thought as an event, blurs the frontiers imposed by art theory categories, which are indebted to and tributary of art history as a discipline; be it a contemporary history of contemporary art, image theory or theory on visual culture.

We could say that while the theory and art history seek to stabilize the theoretical parameters of its occurrence, the philosophy of performance seeks to destabilise and produce subversive thought. Performance philosophy would seek to circumvent such categorical paralysis in that it situates thought as the very event of aesthetic and artefactual performativity. I quote a very precise passage from Salcido’s text:

Binarism, the simplifying model under which we’re used to think, is the familiar territory of definitions, of devices, of the power mechanisms inherent to certain representations that draw the boundaries between art and the philosophy of art, between the event of ideas and the material event of the works, those “objects made for their appreciation”. While cultural tradition and hegemonic discourse, black box that decides “this is theatre and this is not theatre”, “this is philosophy and this is not philosophy”, “this is theatre theory and this is not”, intellectual agonism is questionable: it must even be questioned insofar as a simplifying intellectual tradition, it leaves out the creative and creative value of indeterminacy, of crossings, of becoming and continuities. [...] The transversality, the overflow, allow us to open other fields of research and creation, other questions, and

paradigms of interpretation that, at the crossroads between thought and creation, between representation and presentation, between art, ideas and life, generate critical relations between the artistic, academic and social communities. (2019, pp. 17-18).

I deeply agree with the need to criticize and question the monopolization of discussions that come from an already outdated idea of what academic agonism could be. But I consider that it is precisely because of approaches such as this that we are able to understand that the categorial distinctions which describe products, artifacts, devices, pieces or events from the aesthetic realm can often be superfluous and reduce experiences to a mere conceptual or terminological distinction that loses the specific experience of the materialities staged in each case. This is precisely a fundamental element of what I find in the work of Mexican artist Omar Matadamas, which I will comment on a little later.

To close this first part, I will say the following. My point here is not intended to be far-fetched or a mere imposture in the face of classical or hegemonic theory with regards to performance. I only seek to say that performance does not form a disciplinary unity but a multiplicity of aesthetic, political and discursive possibilities that are not necessarily diluted in a relativistic undifferentiation, but rather that this practice can be reorganized in each case from the very materiality of each event. This is why I have found Salcido's theory/performance to be shattering and disturbing. In a bold gesture, I would also describe it as 'Unheimlich', in Freud's terminology, for it even produces vertigo, dread, denial and wandering. But this is what makes it fundamental to think about performance from its multiple possibilities and reachings, as well as its inexhaustible potential for experiential figuration as a scene of thinking.

2. Omar Matadamas and Grupo D3 Chok3: desiring production

The aesthetic proposal made by Omar Matadamas (Mexico City, 1990) extracts visual and iconographic vocabulary from homoerotic porn to intervene in contemporary art exhibition spaces, and LGBTQ+ activism platforms, as well as social networks, mostly Instagram (@omarcalamidad). His work organizes desire as raw material through drawing, production of visual art pieces in multiple formats and embroidery on sheets, bedding, and clothing, but also in performance, installations, and action art.

During an interview in March 2024, Omar Matadamas told me that one of his main methods in producing art pieces and processes is through drawing; not merely because he is interested in the final product in terms of image or representation, but because it allows him to think about the very act of continuous

line production. I consider this approach to be very close to the aspects of the blurring of the boundaries and contours of performance described by Miroslava Salcido's philosophy.

In 2017 he began the production of a series of art-pieces entitled *Sicalíptico*, which he will present in a solo exhibition that same year entitled *Espectro libidinal* (Libidinal Spectrum) in San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Mexico, from August to September. *Sicalíptico* and *Espectro libidinal* are articulated in a clear allusion to the sequence of potencies strung together around eroticism, sensuality, lustful readiness, procasticity, and even obscenity, characteristics of rhetorical mischief and sexual malice. 'Sicalipsis' and 'sicalyptic' are a pair of terms that emerge from the Spanish literary and theatrical slang of the first half of the 20th century.

Sicalíptico consists of a series of sheets and bed linen intervened from a flatbed sewing machine, in which there are mainly sketches of men's bodies in continuous line embroidery, although not necessarily under an entirely masculine visual rhetoric, but undecided and rather elusive of an expanded field of naturalist anatomy as a representational paradigm.

Matadamas was interested in drawing on his own sheets to materialize sexual longing in a very organic and conceptual way, as the first pieces in the series are made with his own sheets. They evoke the remains of bodies, fluids and sweat. However, the drawing intervenes and interrupts this materiality, which could lend itself to a materiality that is excessively obvious.

In his references there is a subreptitious allusion to the work on sexual intimacy proposed by artists such as Sophie Calle, Nan Goldin and, more overtly, Tracy Emin. But deep down it is a question of giving body to desire.



Omar Matadamas in the exhibition *Libidinal Spectrum* (2017).
Source: the artist's archive

Instead of practicing a fidelity to the anatomical device or a representational naturalism, *Sicalíptico* expands the discursive field through a movement in which the known, the “own”, the things that belong to oneself and the strange mingle. Fabián Giménez Gatto comments on part of the processes linked to the anatomical device:

Although anatomical discourse has had, throughout modernity, the last word when it comes to thinking about our corporeality, in recent years an infinite number of artists, the length and breadth of the planet, have critically approached anatomical imagery, producing a series of texts far removed from its commonplaces and its coordinates of meaning. We could speak, then, of a field that has expanded beyond the simple illustration of biomedical knowledge. From a deconstruction of the anatomical as the dominant bodily imaginary, the clinical gaze ceases to be, at least for a moment, the despotic signifier that accounts, without remains, for the totality of our embodied reality (Giménez Gatto, 2021, p. 74).

It is not, then, the anatomical body that appears in Omar Matadamas' pieces. It is an interstitial body, as many images are from his own archive of homoerotic pornography, and a lot of materials come directly from digital photographs shared in the practice of sexting with his lovers. His work deals with a desiring body, an event-body.

However, we never see the image in terms of a realm that pays tribute to what Rosalind Kraus calls ‘the photographic’ (1990.) What we do get is the displacement of a scopic regime that comes from photographic images that become trace with drawing and then embroidery on her own sheets. But what kind of image is it that we are actually seeing? It is neither a body of the anatomical device (Giménez Gatto) nor a photographic image (Krauss), what we see is a mechanical process of desire production. What the artist materializes is his own gaze, his ‘extimate’ longing, to use the concept contributed by Jacques Lacan to refer to objects or scenarios of the external reality that refer to an intimate reality: intimacy is in the most external, in our efforts to organize a space that says what we are in our inner life. More than intimacy, what we find in Matadamas' work is pure ‘extimacy’.

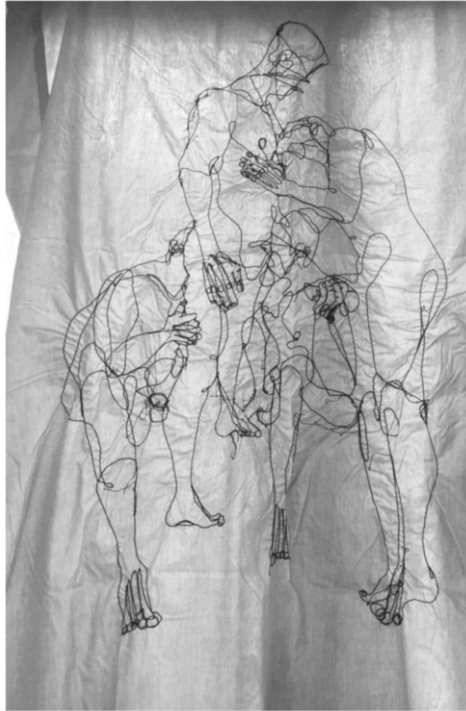
The pieces and processes that articulate *Sicalíptico* force us to position ourselves before partial objects: penises, asses, mouths, fingers, body parts reflected in the mirror and captured by smartphones, masturbatory scenes, fellatio, group sex, among other variants that allow Matadamas to compose a plane of immanence (Deleuze-Guattari), but above all, it is an event that gives an account of desire from the specific coordinates of its outline and embroidery.

The fact that they are drawings could be an indication that they are not performative works in a restrictive sense, I think, insofar as the creation of a final product is at stake. But it is not just a matter of visual representation: the image to be captured later in the sheets and pillowcases in shades of pink, which are divided into different tonalities (blush, flamingo, maillot, crepe, without reaching the chromatic range of watermelon or coral), is not necessarily the object pursued. I reiterate, the representation or the image achieved is not the finality but the very means/medium of the perverse yearning and in the aggressive and sexual desire of Matadamas' work. What is sought above all is desire itself in open tribute to the waste of Eros. In his own words, rather than drawing, what we find is the phantasmatic event of a writing process marked by excess and documented erotic abuse:

The drawing is presented as a mode of writing. In contrast, the space of the installation is offered as a fictitious documentation of haunting ghosts. The irreverent imposture in the reactivation of memories is played out in the identity dislocated by excess and abuse: we can find ourselves reflected in that spectrum where dissatisfaction dwells and its reverse: the constant forced stimulation: hunger, stupor, craving. (Matadamas, 2017)

Sicalíptico is first and foremost a processual series that allows desire to be displaced through a line of drawing. We could say that it is a diagrammatic practice in the sense in which Gilles Deleuze proposes this concept in relation to various figures of art and thought, be it Paul Cézanne, Francis Bacon or Michel Foucault. In his *Foucault* (1986), Gilles Deleuze says the following about the diagram:

The diagram is no longer an auditory or visual archive but a map, a cartography that is coextensive with the whole social field. It is an abstract machine. It is defined by its informal functions and matter and in terms of form makes no distinction between content and expression, a discursive formation and a non-discursive formation. It is a machine that is almost blind and mute, even though it makes others see and speak. If there are many diagrammatic functions and even matters, it is because every diagram is a spatio-temporal multiplicity. (Deleuze, 1986, p. 34)



Omar Matadamas. Single sheet. Untitled, from the series Sicalíptico, 2017.

But it is also diagrammatic desire insofar as it shapes a performativity that does not only occur in a discursive register of enunciation. In the plateau “November 20, 1923: Postulates of Linguistics”, Deleuze and Guattari state the following when considering the expressive components of a diagrammatic process, which would be their alternative proposal of agency to both linguistics and pragmatics. It is true that they have a certain inheritance from pragmatics, but this must be oriented first and foremost as a politics of experience and not of the production of meanings through utterances:

If the external pragmatics of nonlinguistic factors must be taken into consideration, it is because linguistics itself is inseparable from an internal pragmatics involving its own factors. It is not enough to take into account the signified, or even the referent, because the very notions of signification and reference are bound up with a supposedly autonomous and constant structure. There is no use constructing a semantics, or even recognizing a certain validity

to pragmatics, if they are still pretreated by a phonological or syntactical machine. For a true abstract machine pertains to an assemblage in its entirety: it is defined as the diagram of that assemblage. It is not language based but diagrammatic and superlinear. Content is not a signified nor expression of signifier; rather, both are variables of the assemblage. We get nowhere until the pragmatic, but also semantic, syntactical, and phonological determinations are directly linked to the assemblages of enunciation upon which they depend. (Deleuze-Guattari, 1987, p. 91)

Perhaps this quotation sounds far removed from what I have set out before in this text, but I would like to comment on it. “Postulates of linguistics” is a plateau that can provide us with a lot of material to consider the frameworks of performance outside the categories of art history or art theory, mostly because what is at stake in this approach is a composition of a problem that responds to pragmatics (from Peirce to Austin) and linguistics (from Saussure to Chomsky) as two polarities of theories of enunciative construction, that is, the production of statements of meaning. Without choosing one path or the other, Deleuze and Guattari propose a diagrammatics as an idea of the agency to desire, that is: to inhabit the trajectory of desire as experience without this being subordinated to the dichotomy between act/agent, enunciate/enunciator, discourse/discursant, signified/signifier, etc. In this sense, I also consider Matadamas’ work to be really close to the postulates on subversion explored by Miroslava Salcido: “of performance itself as an art that gives action a predominant place, placing the individual at the centre of an immanent ethic that unfolds before our eyes, beyond a reasoning and reasonable, deductive and dialectical reason”. (Salcido, p. 25)

Moreover, against the idea of the transmission of content through discourse and communication, Deleuze and Guattari criticise that dominant politics is a politics of obedience through slogans:

When the schoolmistress instructs her students on a rule of grammar or arithmetic, she is not informing them, any more than she is informing her-self when she questions a student. She does not so much instruct as “insign,” give orders or commands. A teacher’s commands are not external or additional to what he or she teaches us. They do not flow from primary significations or result from information: an order always and already concerns prior orders, which is why ordering is redundancy. (Deleuze-Guattari, p. 75)

Deleuze and Guattari think of diagrammatics as a possibility of the philosophy of the event to give rise to a line of flight of desire, which does not simply imply a theory of communication but an experience of desiring production.

I consider that *Sicalíptico* does not conform a representation of male bodies only tributary to the pornographic image model, but rather that it articulates a diagrammatic production of an experience of desire and its libidinal spectres. It is a desiring machine coming from the material composition provided by Omar Matadamas and, in that sense, it is a machinic extension of such desire. Desire is here more important than the representational and pornological purpose towards which it directs its discharge. It seems to me that Salcido contributes enormously to thinking in what sense the body is a locus of enunciation that involves both eroticism and death:

The body: power and activity, confrontation of forces, weights of weights, persistence of desire, is the underpinning of the radicality of performance as a tension between intensity and form, as an exposition of the rhizomatic relation of forces. The ephemeral nature of action art demands the observation of what lives, putting into operation the awareness of unavoidable death. (p. 121)

More than a final image, what is at stake in this series is the body as a production of a line of flight to inhabit the desire itself.

Omar Matadamas presented *Morbo* (2017), an activation of his series *Sicalíptico*, with the live visual projection of his interaction with other gay men in an adult version of a chat roulette format, at the Galería Autónoma (GAMA) of the Faculty of Arts and Design of the UNAM. On one side of the gallery, the artist and the users participate in a chat room with their personal computer cameras on, while they undress, masturbate or exchange conversations about their sexual interests, or simply switch from one chat to another. What the users are unaware of is that Omar Matadamas' screen is being projected in the gallery of the Faculty of Arts and Design as he invites them to show their penises and other body parts while they talk to each other about their sexual fantasies.

We could think of the pieces as distinct parts: *Sicalíptico*, *Espectro libidinal* and *Morbo*, and it is accurate that there are different potentials in the photographs "transcribed" to line drawing, to embroidery on sheets and in the installation-performance-masturbatory, but the three actions-pieces-series are linked at their core. *Morbo* is an activation, and in the register of the action we can see the first sheets intervened with *Sicalíptico*'s machine embroidery, which are exhibited as well

as an installation in *Espectro libidinal*. Although there is seriality and differentiation, there is also a diagrammatic trajectory of desire.

Now, to conclude, I would like to comment very briefly on the relationships between the work of Omar Matadamas as a sporadic/recurrent member of Grupo D3 Chok3 (#D3CHOK3), self-described as a collective of independent extradisciplinary action-art activism.

Grupo D3 Chok3 is a collective that taps into the potential of anonymity to carry out interventions and actions linked to the problems of minority political subjects in Mexico City.

Eric Bordeleau, in his study *Foucault Anonymity* (2018), forces us to consider that in the actions defined by conditions of anonymity there is always a possibility of constructing binding cracks in the social field, and in this way to cross institutions and collude in an organized manner between subjectivities not individualized by the devices of the State and capitalism. Anonymity is a device of intervention on the political field, but without the component of an individuality that tributes the Government: “the conception of experience as desubjectification prefigures a certain idea of the common and its production. The possibility of pursuing, crossing and traversing experience is never given. It constitutes one of the key stakes of resistance to Government by individualization”. (Bordeleau, p. 31)

We could say, without further ado, that where Matadamas’ individual work plays on a politics of intimacy/extimacy, on the other hand, in his collaboration with Grupo D3 Chok3, what we find is a desire articulated as a collective device of anonymity, that is, what Deleuze and Guattari suggest as a collective device of enunciation.

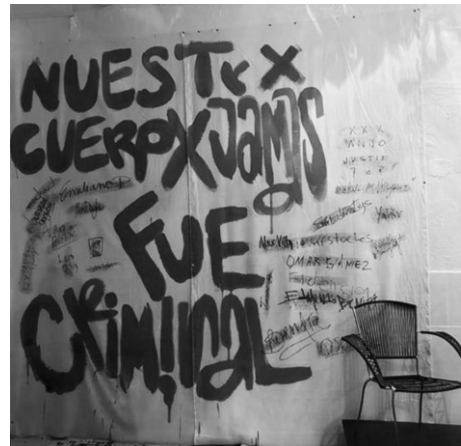
I don’t consider it possible or viable to reduce the works of Grupo D3 Chok3 to a specific type of action-art, activism/artivism. There are too many interventions, art-actions, and they are very diverse, so, for further research, the readers can check the online sources regarding them. Although currently they do not have an official website, their public accounts on social networks allow them to disseminate, record and participate in public concerns from that specific place of enunciation.

Another significant and relatively recent action was their protest against the Federal Government’s refusal to purchase monkeypox vaccines, even though Omar Matadamas did not participate in this action. The action involved a graphic intervention (stencil and graffiti), with caricatured images of anguished monkey faces, at the entrance to the CENAPRECE (National Center for Disease Control and Prevention Programmes) in Mexico City. The action openly accused the biopolitical risk to which the health system exposed populations conformed by homosexuals - although the term is problematic as it comes from 19th century

pathological theory - and trans women, who were left vulnerable during the monkeypox pandemic in October 2022.

This action is above all an act of denouncement of the persistence of mechanics of social hygienism and discrimination of minority populations, officially assigned as participants of ‘risky sexual practices’. In this intervention/installation there are biopolitical and anatomopolitical scopes, as well as a denunciation of the discrimination suffered in terms of public health policies for populations of sexual diversity.

In one of the latest actions of Grupo D3 Chok3, *Nuestrx cuerpx no es criminal* (Our body is not criminal) (19 January 2024), in which Matadamas does participate, the group takes part in a conversation with the local delegate Temístocles Villanueva, and Xavier Martínez, from the Mexican Network of People living with HIV/AIDS. The aim is to comment on the social need for the repeal of Article 159, known as the ‘Contagion Risk Law’, which has served the function to incriminate and prosecute people accused of transmitting the HIV virus. Once again, the populations affected by this are mainly men who have sex with men and transgender women, although it is not restricted to these groups. In this action, two members of the collective have their blood drawn and then paint a couple of banners on a wall with the sentence: ‘Our body was never criminal’. The use of blood activates the political potential of the ‘risk of contagion’, i.e. it highlights the stigmatizing character and the incitement to persecute the bodies of people living with HIV/AIDS in Mexico.



D3 Chok3 Group. Action registration
‘Nuestrx cuerpx no es criminal’,
January 2024

Conclusions

At this point in history, it is almost undeniable that the body, performance, and visual registries have for more than half a century articulated a powerful symbiosis that has worked as the very vehicle for discursive and experimental constructions of performance art, body-art, action-art, as well as its archiving and circulation through registers managed through different gears of visual culture. I point this out because I consider that these elements can hardly be separated if we want to account for what their assemblage entails as an aesthetic medium always organized around experience.

Although the specific aim of this text was to research the work of Omar Matadamas and his collaboration with Grupo D3 Chok3, I also addressed the theory of contemporary performance art in Mexico – one that assimilated its contingency but was not restrictive.

There is performance where there are lines of flight and production of desire, precisely in the sense of the diagrammatics that Matadamas shapes with his drawings transferred to his sheets and activated by the installation. What Matadamas' work allows us to think, and to produce in terms of experience, is that the ultimate and first reality of the body is desire as sycalypsis as the uncontainable malice of eroticism. Hence, we can hardly live without desire. However, desire is not necessarily something that should be vindicated without further ado, because although we inhabit an age that wages a constant war on desire for the sake of immediate satisfaction, we could not simply say that desire is harmless, at least not without considering that desire disarticulates and disempowers the one it traverses with its longing and its despair. It is first and foremost an experience or an event of excess and it's open to an irreducible conflict.

Ultimately, it is not a reality of desire in the sense of mundane everyday life, nor is it a reality reduced to the body as an anatomical device, without this implying that desire does not pass through it. But, again, it is not the concept of realistic desire in the sense of plausible naturalism that seems to me fundamental in Matadamas' production of desire, but his openness to that excessive and spilt disarticulation that takes place in every erotic trajectory and that his work allows us to experience.

His desiring machines reach out to us. In this case, desire is a sensual and sensitive (aesthetic) diagrammatic.

I have expressly asked the artist to provide me with both the epigraph of this text and a quotation that synthesises or machinates with his work. This shows the following order of ideas, which I use here as a corollary to this essay. I consider that it is not possible to think about the work of Omar Matadamas without considering all the overflowing hedonism and longing of it: astonishment, hunger and yearning. Camille Paglia (2001) illustrates this superbly:

Everything is melting in nature. We think we see objects, but our eyes are slow and partial. Nature is blooming and withering in long puffy respirations, rising and falling in oceanic wave-motion. A mind that opened itself fully to nature without sentimental preconception would be glutted by nature's coarse materialism, its relentless superfluity. An apple tree laden with fruit: how peaceful, how picturesque. But remove the rosy filter of humanism from our gaze and look again. See nature spuming and frothing, its mad spermatic bubbles endlessly spilling out and smashing in that inhuman round of waste, rot, and carnage. From the jammed glassy cells of sea roe to the feathery spores poured into the air from bursting green pods, nature is a festering hornet's nest of aggression and overkill. This is the chthonian black magic with which we are infected as sexual beings; this is the daemonic identity that Christianity so inadequately defines as original sin and thinks it can cleanse us of. Procreative woman is the most troublesome obstacle to Christianity's claim to catholicity, testified by its wishful doctrines of Immaculate Conception and Virgin Birth. The procreateness of chthonian nature is an obstacle to all of western metaphysics and to each man in his quest for identity against his mother. Nature is the seething excess of being. (p. 27)

And in consonance with this idea of an overabundant and excessive nature, I do not fail to subscribe to the ideas put forward by Miroslava Salcido:

Action art is an observatory of life and its ephemeral nature, therefore, to think about it from a philosophy of the body - that is, not only to think philosophically about the concept of the body but to think anchored in the becoming of existence -, making performance philosophy a performative philosophy, is already an intellectual positioning for which reason suffers from the same precariousness that sustains it organically; [...] It seems to me that art and performance philosophy go hand in hand here insofar as they go hand in hand as excessive unmasking, and this occurs in the body of the artist but also in the body of the philosopher. I think that art is not to be thanked for any kind of transcendence, for aesthetic eternities, for beauty, but for tragic truths that reveal the problem of a life that is vanishing, of an era that has kidnapped our body, of a century in which we have to constantly remake ourselves. (p. 121)

Ultimately, thoughts, like art or philosophy, are neither tangible nor objectifiable objects, even if they are grounded in the contours of a certain, always dynamic, materiality; for, above all, art and thought are always a trajectory that exceeds reason and does so precisely because they are driven and constituted by desire as circumstance, movement and destiny.

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Cuitláhuac Moreno holds a PhD in Philosophy (UNAM), he is Lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters and at the Master and PhD Programs in Philosophy, Art History, and Philosophy of Science at UNAM. Moreno has carried out a Doctoral Residency at the Université Paris 8 Saint Denis (2014-2015), and post-doctorate residencies at The Institute of Aesthetic Research/UNAM (2018-2020) and at the Humanities Doctorate of the Autonomous Metropolitan University Unidad Xochimilco. His lines of research include French Philosophy, Artistic Representation of Illness and Melancholy, and Photographic Portraiture and Visual Culture of Sexual Dissidences based in Deconstruction and Latin American Queer Thought (pensamiento marica latinoamericano). Since 2012 he has participated in the research and artistic production collective Arte+Ciencia (www.artemasciencia.org). In twelve years, the group Arte+Ciencia has organised nine international colloquia with artists and academics from all over the world, it has also presented exhibitions in prominent museums in Mexico. Cuitláhuac Moreno is a member of the National System of Researchers in Mexico.