

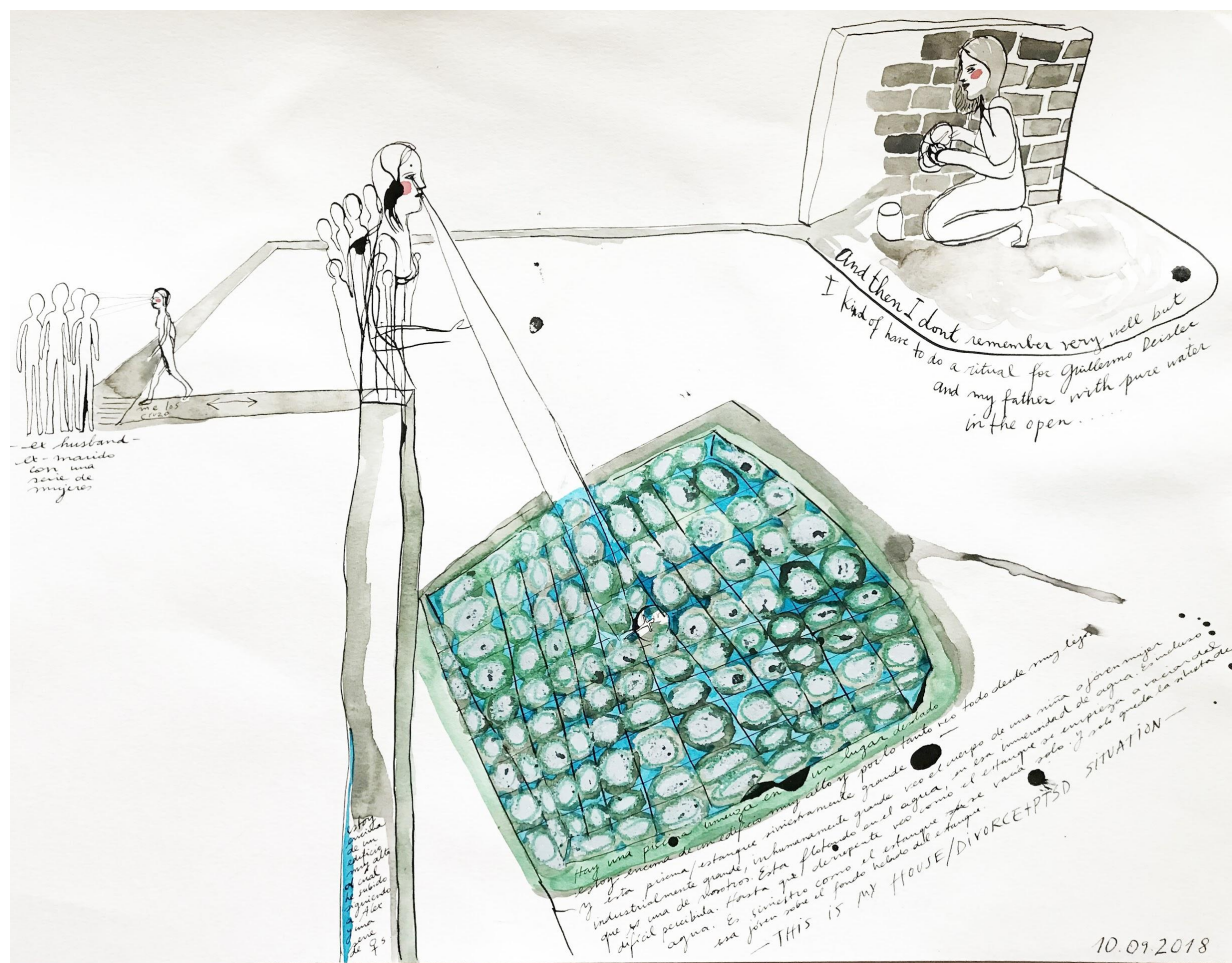
A counter catastrophic performance : how not to normalize torture

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“In the catastrophe of modernity/coloniality, lands are taken from people who are not considered people while the dispossessed, murdered, raped, and tortured non-people and everything related to them—their creations, habitats, and even self-perceptions—become the targets of endless wars.”...

“Fanon concluded that “[c]olonialism cannot be understood without the possibility of torturing, of violating, or of massacring.... Torture is an expression and a means of the occupant-occupied relationship” (1967, p. 66).”¹

In 2013 I performed a series of ritualistic performances called *La Huella* in Santiago de Chile, Geneva, Switzerland and Plovdiv, Bulgaria, where I reactivated objects from the archive of exile I inherited from my childhood. For this project I would like to do a performance called “A counter catastrophic performance : how not to normalize torture”.

For this, I will print in front of the public in a table or the floor, a series of engraving plates my father Eugenio Cornejo made after he survived prison and torture during the regime of Pinochet and was in exile in Bulgaria in the 70’s trying to process the trauma and memorialize the horrors with his art practice.

Once I finish reprinting my father engravings, I will clean the engraving plates with pure water as a ritual. During the cleaning of the engravings plates, a series of my father's documents dating from the 1970s will be shared (wich I used for the publication *PERSONAL*, a result of the exhibition *Dossier sans suite*, Standard/deluxe in 2009). Documents where my father pleads in 1979 to be recognised as a refugee and not be expelled from Europe. During the cleaning of the engraving plates, I will read one of his letters. The public can be invited to write letters to help refugees to be recognised as such. An association such as “Les Eglises au côtés de migrantes” (<http://www.eglisemigrationvd.com/wpweb/>) can be invited to collaborate with participants that can become part of the performance.

Imprints produced during the performance can be used to write the letters. The book of Valluy, Jérôme. 2009. *Rejet des exilés. Le grand retournement du droit d’asile*. Broissieux, France: Editions du croquant. can be revisited.

¹ Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. "Prologue: Decolonial Psychology as a Counter-Catastrophic Science," in *Decoloniality and Epistemic Justice in Contemporary Community Psychology*, edited by Garth Stevens and Christopher C. Sonn. Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2021. Pages vii-xiv.





"There is no psychological school that can heal the trauma perpetrated by State Terrorism on an individual", a page of the editorial project "Atlas América" done by reprinting the engravings of Eugenio Cornejo in the memorial place of Estadio Nacional, 2013.



A photograph found in my father's archive of the National Stadium, a place that became a concentration camp after the coup d'Etat of the 11th of september 1973 and he was imprisoned and torture. Unknown date.



1. My father Eugenio Cornejo at the left and Guillermo Deisler (third from left to right) in the opening of the exhibition *Graphica* in Plovdiv, Bulgaria 1977-78. Photo from the personal archive of Marisa Cornejo.



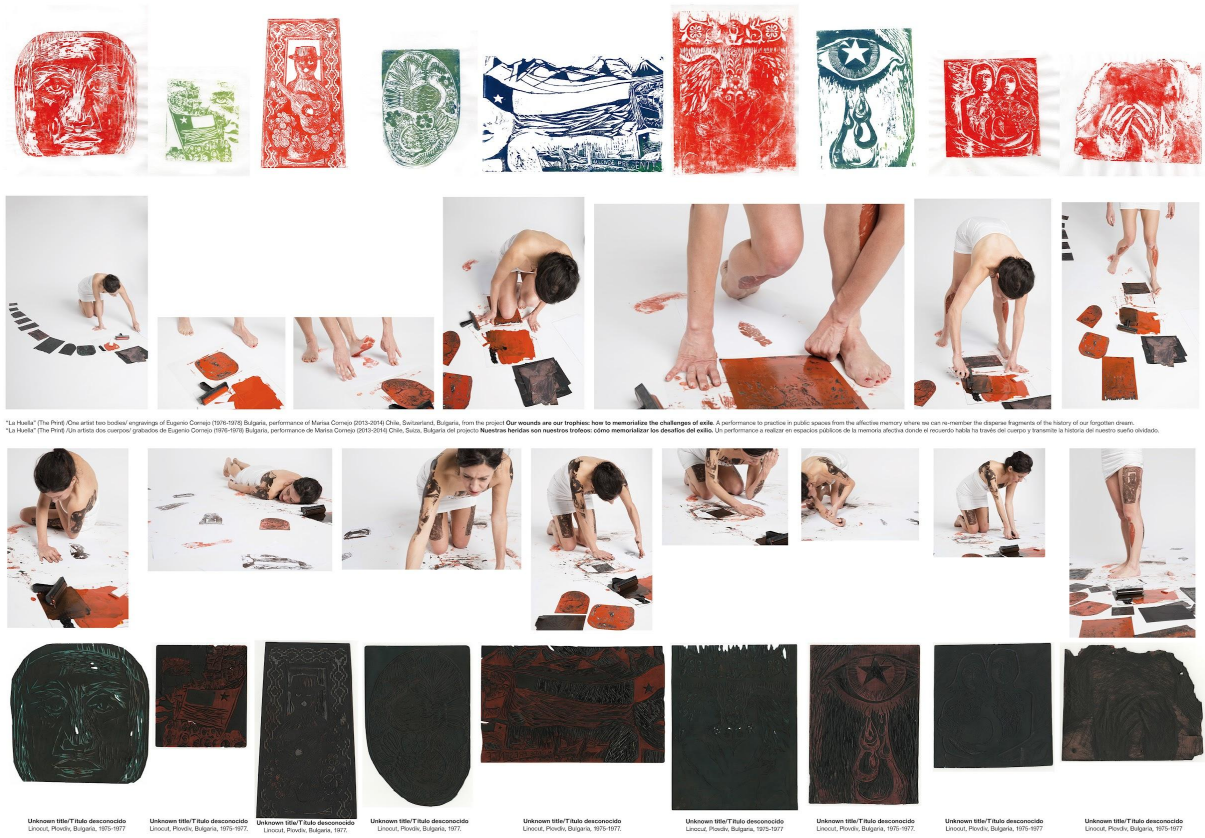
Engraving from the engraving plates done by Eugenio Cornejo in Plovdiv, Bulgaria 1977-78.



Performance "La Huella 5", train station, Plovdiv, Bulgaria, 2013.



Performance "La Huella 6" in Escotilla 8, Estadio Nacional, Santiago de Chile 2013.



Poster "La Huella", inkjet print, various dimensions, 2014.

Monsieur le Ministre,

Je m'adresse à vous en dernier recours, en souhaitant que vous pourrez intervenir et m'apporter une aide pour améliorer ma situation qui est pour le moins désespérée pour le moment.

Je suis de nationalité chilienne, je suis arrivé en Belgique en avril 79, avec ma femme et mes deux enfants de 6 et 8 ans.

J'ai été obligé de quitter le Chili en ~~novembre~~^{décembre} 73, après avoir été arrêté et emprisonné.

Ensuite, j'ai vécu quelques années avec ma famille en Argentine où la situation n'était guère plus favorable pour nous et où nous avons vécu dans l'insécurité la plus complète. Nous avons enfin quitté ce pays afin de préserver notre sécurité pour trouver asile en Bulgarie.

Nous n'avons malheureusement pas pu nous adapter dans ce pays où les difficultés pour apprendre la langue étaient trop grandes et nous barraient l'accès à une profession.

Nous sommes enfin arrivés en Belgique avec l'espoir d'y trouver la possibilité de nous réinstaller et d'y refaire notre vie.

Dès notre arrivée, nous avons introduit une demande de Statut de Réfugié Politique auprès du Haut Commissariat de l'O.N.U. Nous n'avions pas pu faire cette démarche en Bulgarie, l'O.N.U. n'y étant pas représenté.

Hélas, il y a quelques jours, le Haut Commissariat de l'O.N.U. vient de nous faire savoir que l'on avait classé notre dossier "sans suite" parce que la Belgique n'était pas notre premier pays d'accueil.

Depuis nous vivons dans la crainte de recevoir une invitation à quitter le pays.

Je me suis présenté en vain à l'Office National de l'emploi de la ville où j'habite pour demander du travail. J'étais pourtant tout à fait disposé à accepter n'importe quel emploi, même en dehors de ma qualification, j'étais professeur d'Arts Plastiques à l'Université du Chili.

En plus, on m'y a laissé entendre que je n'obtiens pas de permis de travail sans avoir le Statut de Réfugié Politique.

Quelle possibilité de faire vivre ma famille me reste-t-il ?

Il y a peu de temps, je m'étais adressé au Comité intergouvernemental pour les Migrations Européennes afin d'obtenir du travail dans un pays d'Amérique latine. Il n'y a aucune possibilité pour moi de ce côté là.

Si je dois quitter la Belgique, je ne sais quel pays pourra m'accueillir.

En espérant que vous pourrez intervenir pour m'aider à débloquer cette situation apparemment sans issue, je vous prie de recevoir, Monsieur le Ministre, l'assurance de ma considération distinguée.

Translation:

Mons (Ghlin), 23th of October, 1979

Sir Minister,

I wrote to you as a last resort, hoping that you will be able to intervene, to help me to improve my situation which at this moment is the very least desperate.

I am of Chilean nationality. I arrived in Belgium in April 79, with my wife and my two children 6 and 8 years old.

I was forced to leave Chile in November December 73, after having been persecuted and imprisoned.

Then, I lived a few years with my family in Argentina where the situation was hardly more favorable for us and where we lived in complete insecurity. We finally left this country for Bulgaria to find asylum and preserve our safety.

We, unfortunately, could not adapt to this country where the difficulties to learn the language were too large and the access to a profession was barred to us.

We finally arrived in Belgium with the hope of settling down and remaking our lives.

Upon arrival, we lodged a request for the Status of Political Refugee to the Office of the High Commission of U.N. We had not taken this step in Bulgaria as the U.N. was not represented there.

Alas, a few days ago, the Office of the High Commission of the U.N. stated to us that our dossier had been classified as "without recourse" because Belgium was not our first host country.

Since then, we have lived in fear of being forced to leave the country.

I presented myself in vain to the National Office for Employment of the city where I asked for work. I was, however, completely unable to find employment, even outside of my qualifications, I was a professor of Visual Arts at the University of Chile.

Moreover, they made it clear there that I could not obtain a work permit without having Political Refugee Status.

What possibilities remain for my family to make a life for ourselves? A while ago, I addressed the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migrations in order to obtain work in a country in Latin America. But there are no possibilities for me there.

If I must leave Belgium, I do not know which country will accept me.

I hope for your intervention in this matter with no apparent solution. Please accept my utmost consideration. Most sincerely,

Eugenio Cornejo Arancibia

Prep time needed: 1 hour

Performance time: 30 minutes

Number of participants, on stage: 1

Number of participants, off stage: 0

Number of assistants needed for preparation: 1

Number of assistants needed during performance: 1

Technical requirements and equipment: something to protect the floor from engraving ink, a microphone, a video projector and a water connection.

Connection to visual arts:

<http://marisacornejo.com/news/>

<https://vimeo.com/281779774> password : la huella

<https://vimeo.com/89353115> password : eugenio

<https://vimeo.com/273495810> password : la huella

<https://vimeo.com/279283933> password : la huella

Artists and author:

Marisa Cornejo (1971 Santiago de Chile-) & Eugenio Cornejo (1940 Santiago de Chile -2002 Puebla, México)

Eugenio Cornejo was an artist, an art teacher and a victim of prison and torture in the dictatorship of Pinochet (Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura, 2005), an unrecognized refugee who died prematurely of alcoholism, without being able to go back to his country and without receiving any reparation in democracy from the Chilean State. He represents one of the hundreds of thousands of people killed, tortured or imprisoned during the dirty wars in Latin America (Stern, Steve J., 2013). Before the damage he suffered by State Terrorism, he benefited from an education in *El Pedagógico*, Universidad de Chile, an emblematic institution built by generations of democratic efforts to improve public education. They had influence from the leading pedagogical schools of that time such as Lowenfeld and Reggio, art pedagogues influenced by the School of Frankfurt who put the development of the child's personal subjectivity and expression at the center of the resistance to sameness and alienation. He practiced this pedagogy along with decolonial pedagogies by taking his university art students to visit local mapuches loom weaving, house building, etc and learn from them. He produced a slide archive documenting this process. The shock doctrine implemented by the dictatorship imposed a tabula rasa that destroyed the memory and cultural heritage of our communities. The personal archives produced by the victims constitute a needed counter narrative to repair the lost memory.

Marisa Cornejo is an artist based in both Switzerland and France. She has a Bachelors Degree in Visual Arts from the UNAM, Mexico and a Masters Degree from the CCC, HEAD, Geneva, Switzerland. Marisa was born in Santiago de Chile in 1971 and left with her family after the coup d'Etat in 1973, to live in exile in Argentina 1973-76, Bulgaria 1977-78, Belgium 1978-80, Mexico 1980-98 where she studied dance, visual arts and collaborated in the art collective *La Panadería* in México City. In 1998, she moved to England where she became a mother and 2002 found her in Brussels, Belgium. Since 2005 she is in Geneva where she works with the themes of memory, identity and forced migration through drawing her dreams as an artist researcher.