

Citadels in Conflict –Dissertation Project–

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Abstract

This dissertation Citadels in Conflict wants to show how the conceptual process of photography goes from reality to representation by models, but also how representations of these models acquire a new significance, the reality of virtualism and illusion. To use installations or interact with models is to invent imaginaries –or to call memories– that could be placed on a tangible base... and later photographed.

I want to reflect on imaginary cities and the utopia of war and displacement, picturing each photo as a citadel. The constructed models accompanying this text are understood as citadels, for they include –sometimes randomly– all social, cultural and physical variables that cities have, or as “imitations of life”. A metaphor of the varied and ironic glances a desplazado could get when arriving in cities or any other urban places. Therefore, the unexpected citizen dwells inside a citadel in conflict. The phenomena of war and forced displacement are mapping new cities in Colombia in sad and iconic ways as satirized in these sixteen images.

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Key words: Colombia, conflict, displacement, photography, space.

CIUDADELAS EN CONFLICTO. Tesis de Maestría.

“Ciudades en los conflictos” es una tesis de Maestría que quiere mostrar cómo el proceso conceptual de la fotografía va de la realidad a la representación por modelos, pero también cómo las representaciones de estos modelos adquieren un nuevo significado, la realidad de virtualismo y la ilusión. Usar instalaciones o interactuar con modelos es inventar imaginarios, o llamar memorias, que podrían ser puestos sobre una base tangible para fotografiarlas después.

Quiero reflexionar sobre ciudades imaginarias y la utopía de la guerra y el desplazamiento, imaginando cada foto como una ciudadela. Los modelos construidos que acompañan este texto se entienden como fortalezas, ya que incluyen, a veces al azar, todas las variables sociales, culturales y físicas que las ciudades tienen, como “imitación de la vida”. Una metáfora de las variadas e irónicas miradas de un desplazado, se podrían obtener al llegar a las ciudades o a los lugares urbanos. Por lo tanto, el ciudadano inesperado vive dentro de una ciudadela en el conflicto. El fenómeno de la guerra y el desplazamiento forzado son la cartografía de las nuevas ciudades en Colombia, que se registran en esta obra de una manera triste y satirizada.

Palabras clave: Colombia, conflicto, espacio, desplazamiento, fotografía,

*“What is peace? Is it in the eyes of those infants,
nursing upon the dry breasts of their hungry mothers in cold huts?
Or is it in the wretched hovels of the hungry who sleep
upon hard beds and crave for one bite of the food
which the priests and monks feed to their fat pigs?”*
(Kahlil Gibran, 1966: 73).

“A laboratory is a montage”
(Guerrillero, FARC-EP).

To map the city is not only to picture it from the eye of an eagle flying across the blue sky, but also to imagine it from the mouse's perspective and its lonely gaze. In Colombia, mines explode step-by-step pushing the farmer out from his motherland by a centrifugal force, which interrupts the ancestral nurturing of happiness and peace he has traditionally shared with his family inside their malocas¹. The displaced, expelled from the countryside by violence, economic hardship, and the impossibility of doing agricultural work on mined land, now gazes at the city, not as the inquisitive flâneur who wandered through Parisian arcades in the 1900's but by error, by necessity; as a stranger who dwells in the streets and reacts dizzily to the noisy sirens and the countless dazzling encounters. Paradoxically, his/her gaze cannot reach his maize any longer. Currently, it is a dark present which finds them lost in the city that welcomed them not as a guest but as a displaced; a refugee (UNHCR, 1984: 38)². They have been migrating since they were forced to leave or face the silence of death: the perplexity of reality!

Peasants! The cane [cocaine] degenerates one; turns one into a beast, and kills! If we don't have land we cannot contemplate the future well-being of our children and families. Without land there can be no health, no culture, no education, nor security for us, the marginal peasants. In all these districts one finds plots of the majority threatened by the terrible Green Monster, which is the great Cane [Cocaine], the God of the landlords. (Taussig, 1980: 39).

For some the picture is reality. They are free to interpret reality. As Walter Benjamin said in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, "truth is not a matter of exposure which destroys the secret, but a revelation which does justice to it" (Taussig, 1999). Because of reproduction and multiplication, every image has

¹ Wood and page-made traditional Indigenes' family houses.

² After the Cartagena Declaration on Refugees the 22nd of November of 1984 (Cartagena, Colombia), the definition or concept of a refugee for use in the region, in addition to containing the elements of the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, include among refugees persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.

become reality and it is a witness of what is, what has been, and therefore of what will always remain. Photography is selected as an expressive media, not only because of its capacity to print reality on objects and spaces, but for allowing interpretation about form and concept differing to the narrative or descriptive way. Photography appears as the visual organiser of the essential substance of Architecture: space. This dissertation *Citadels in Conflict* wants to show how the conceptual process of photography goes from reality to representation by models, but also how representations of these models acquire a new significance, the reality of virtualism and illusion (Author, 2005). To use installations or interact with models is to invent imaginaries –or to call memories– that could be placed on a tangible base... and later photographed.

I want to reflect on imaginary cities and the utopia of war and displacement, picturing each photo as a citadel. The constructed models accompanying this text are understood as citadels, for they include –sometimes randomly– all social, cultural and physical variables that cities have, or as “imitations of life”. A metaphor of the varied and ironic glances a *desplazado*³ could get when arriving in cities or any other urban places. Therefore, the unexpected citizen dwells inside a citadel in conflict. The phenomena of war and forced displacement are mapping new cities in Colombia in sad and iconic ways as satirised in these sixteen images.

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Colombia has suffered for more than 40 years of constant political and armed violence with revolutionary guerrillas and paramilitary state groups’ struggling for supremacy and from drug traffic. Criminal bands and corruption erupt as a direct consequence of lack of control of the security organisms. What a pity in a country with immense riches in its ethnic, cultural and geographical diversity. What a disadvantage while having huge natural resources and a strategic geographical location in the Americas in-between two oceans (Atlantic and Pacific) and sharing borders with 5 countries. How sad it can be when a country

³ Internally displaced person in Spanish.

can bring great possibilities for its population to live with dignity, in peace and with social justice but is oppressed and caught within the “magic realism”⁴ of war, and its sad consequences for displaced populations.

This beautiful and rich country has for a long time been experiencing one of the most serious humanitarian crises. According to the report of June, 2007, from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], published on National Refugee Day, today Colombia has three million displaced persons, one million more than the year before. Colombia is the country with the second-largest number of displaced persons in the world, after Sudan, which has nearly six million displaced persons. (Muñoz, 2008).

However, presidential consultant José Obdulio Gaviria, clearly interpreting the government’s and official position on the phenomenon, reckons:

we do not have displaced people, we have migration mainly by paramilitaries and guerrilla [...] those people went to the cities and they are there as migrants, plus the high and middle class people who left the country [...] The international press about our massive displacement situation, as the highest in the World, sums all the ones who left for the last 40 years [...] the business to create a bad environment against Colombia produces reedits. (Gaviria, 2008).

Therefore, it is important to determine the various terms around the problem of refugees and displaced persons, rather than of mixed migration flows. For instance, the report 2007 Global Trends, published by the Office of the UNHCR (established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly), differentiated seven different groups, namely: (a) refugees⁵; (b) asylum-seekers; (c) internally displaced persons (IDPs)⁶; (d) refugees who have returned home

⁴ Can also be called “realismo del mágico” refers to drug-dealers.

⁵ Refugees include individuals recognized under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees; its 1967 Protocol; the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; those recognized in accordance with the UNHCR Statute; individuals granted complementary forms of protection; or, those enjoying “temporary protection”. unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4852366f2.pdf

⁶ Internally displaced persons are people or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence,

(returnees); (e) IDPs who have returned home; (f) stateless persons; and (g) other people who do not fall under any of the above categories but to whom the UNHCR's Office extends its protection and/or assistance activities. Two additional sub-categories have been added: (i) people in refugee-like situations (included under refugees); and (ii) people in IDP-like situations (included under IDPs). (UNHCR, 2008: 4).

“Migration and exile [...] may be as much about cognitive movement as they are about the physical movement of groups and individuals from one locality to another” (Cairns, 2004: 116) or “defined spatially as movement across the boundary of an areal unit” (Boyle, Halfacree & Robinson, 1998: 34). A displaced person will always be migrating from one place to another but a migrant does not necessarily have to be considered as the displaced or a refugee. Nevertheless, migrating and displaced populations have to be distinguished from the ones who left of their own volition from those who have been forced to leave their homes. In the first case, they can be grouped into the exiles, migrants, travellers, nomads and Diasporas. Mainly, they decide to move by land/air/sea to foreign countries and adapt to their cultural, social, physical and economical variables determined by their new territory. On the other hand, refugees or displaced people, “continue to be viewed as individuals out-of-place and in crisis” (Cairns, 2004: 117) who have to leave behind their land rich in “firewood, house-building materials, cordage, wrapping leaves, packing, gourds, a little corn and manioc, and many medicinal plants are also obtained from the plot, on which poultry and pigs are maintained as well” (Taussig, 1980: 86).

The migrant is defined by starting out as an emigrant and his destiny being an immigrant, departing from the village as his/her maternal space (memorised or forgotten) to the city as the ‘other place’ (the ideal and imaginary). In other words, from their place to a non-place (Groesz, 1986: 107). “The ‘em-’ and the

in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border. Desplazados, as they are called in Colombia. (Ibíd.).

'imm-' of migration seek to bind together these apparently diverging distinctions so that west and non-west, city and village, place and subject, case-study and theory, building and architecture are brought into more intimate and complex relationships" (Cairns, 2004: 184). Internally displaced people are caught in this dichotomy when they are forced to migrate from the countryside to the cities leaving behind all their belongings, goods and property, there beside their crops and have now to react to an unreal world, unique and extraordinary (fantastic if compared to the reality they were experiencing just before). In a way, their beliefs, behaviours, remembrances, feelings and emotions are now challenged and are threatened. In the understanding of space something similar happens, as architect Jean Nouvel, winner of the Pulitzer Prize 2008, explained to philosopher Jean Baudrillard in an interview; it can be recognized as an architecture which creates at the same time a place and a non-place, resulting in a kind of apparition. What is called a seduction space, an inhabited and empty object with its own reality, with a dual relation. A relation that can pass by diversion, by contradiction, by destabilization but which brings face to face the pretending reality of the world and its radical illusion (Baudrillard & Nouvel, 2006).

Contrary to Ravenstein's 'push-pull' model (Ravenstein, 1885: 48), these people are pushed out from their villages but are not pulled into the urban life at the same time, mainly, because they are not happy to move to these centres, neither to make the journey.

A refugee is not just a person who has been displaced and has lost all or most of his possessions. The refugee is in fact more akin to a child: helpless, devoid of initiative, somebody on whom any kind of charity can be practised: in short, a totally malleable creature. (Mandani, 1973).

For instance, their experience of space is not only about seeing or remembering (senses and memory), but also has to be directly interconnected with their

human activities, relationships and emotions (Author, 2005). With this I am not suggesting that the spatial perceptions have to necessarily be collective or shared with others, as individuality is not exempt from feeling or experimenting with spatial conditions. What I do agree with is the power of illusion; about tricking the eye with mediums, objects, materials or volumes which can create a virtual space or mental space. It is a way to bring up the uncanny, to persuade the senses and, for instance, to maintain territory indecipherable. In addition, it is important to consider that particular urban forces reject these populations, who face a new moral and cultural environment which can include: people, rules, pavement, cars, buildings, weather, space distribution, and others. As John A. Jackson (1986) explained in his book *Migration*, “the absorption of migrants is very dependent on the policies adopted by the host society in receiving the immigrants and the attitudes of the people most immediately affected” (p. 51). To make these photographs is to make a disruption between who comes and who receives.

In Colombian capital, Bogotá, “migration from the countryside began in a big way in the 1930s, magnified by the rural violence that has been such a recurrent theme in Colombian political life” (Gilbert, 1994: 2). In 2005-2006, 2 million people were displaced, and almost 3 million in 2006-2007. In this country, most of them (Afro-descendants, indigenous and peasant communities) are pushed to move to the main cities or as a desperate act crossing into other countries: neighbours such as Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela and Brazil⁷. According to Colombian sociologist Manuel Ramiro Muñoz⁸, the process of displacement undergoes four different stages:

1) The first phase is violent expulsion. This is carried out through intimidation, threats, or fatal violent action, such as the selective murder of leaders, or indiscriminate massacre. As a consequence to: (a) the confrontation between

⁷ www.cambio.com.co/portadacambio/785/ARTICULO-WEB-NOTA_INTERIOR_CAMBIO-4380169.html

⁸ Director of the Department of Humanities, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana de Cali, Colombia.

paramilitary groups and guerrillas combating for the routes of drugs and weapons' traffic; (b) due to the aerial spray of illicit crops; (c) as a result of the appearance of new violence associated to Paramilitarism; (d) by execution, selective deaths, threatening, persecutions and forced recruitment by armed groups. These events cause people to flee from their land and consequently to abandon their property. The people fleeing take temporary refuge in the nearest large cities. (Muñoz, 2008).

2) During the second phase, they are located in improvised shelters, while a place with basic amenities is found. They receive humanitarian aid in these places. (Ibíd.).

3) In the third phase, the government or NGA satisfy their specific needs or guaranteeing rights (relocation or returning)⁹.

4) The fourth stage: if not satisfied their necessities, displaced populations are pushed towards cities or urban locations.

This last phase is the one the photographs presented in this essay are based on: imaginary and invisible cities; sceneries and models as virtual buildings, citadels or urban areas, among others, are interpreted –satirised– as displaced persons' glances of a new world presented before their eyes... and hearts. Imagination emerges as a vital helper to construct images by the evocation of metaphors. Indeed, the creative process of the flâneur in Berlin (e.g.) was vitalized by thoughts interpreting the environment in which s/he was moving while observing and remembering. In this way, memory is shown in two spatial-temporalities, called by Susan Buck-Morrs in her studies of Walter Benjamin's

⁹ The difficulties associated with accuracy in IDPs statistics in Colombia have been highlighted in a landmark judgment by its Constitutional Court in the sentence T 025 (January, 2004), which pointed to serious discrepancies between the real magnitude of the situation and the figures of the national registration system, recognizes there are IDPs and imposes the Interior and Justice Minister the obligation to execute actions and strategies focused on a higher budget and management compromise on behalf of the displaced populations. unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4852366f2.pdf

texts the “mythic nature” as reminiscence of the past and the “wish image” as the ideal one. Thus, visualicity may extend beyond tangible objects to consider abstractions, virtualities and potentialities of imagination or memory. The glance, as a fact of seeing: the glance is visual flâneurie; to scan the horizon, the literature of urban visualicity is packed with notes on the surveillance of the present for contrail traces of the future (Shields, 2003). Gaze might also be understood as contemplative and intentional, but not always passive. The interaction could have a charge of a strong dynamics and versatility. In that order, the displaced person is violently reacting to what is facing him or her. As they arrive to the peripheral ‘apartheid’ they have to look for shelter, where life is worlds apart and tough. When visiting Berlin at the beginning of Nineteenth Century, Walter Benjamin (1925-26b) was conscious of this:

I never slept on the street in Berlin. I saw sunset and dawn, but between the two I found myself a shelter. Only those for whom poverty or vice turns the city into a landscape in which they stray from dark till sun rise know it in a way denied to me. I always found quarters, even though sometimes tardy and also unknown ones that I did not revisit and where I was not alone. (p. 316).

Nevertheless, cities cannot be discovered empirically with one glance of the human eye. That is why the photographs are like metaphors. Metropolis’ extension, scale and distribution overflow the physical capacities and only a limited –and virtual– panorama is available to glimpsers’ visual games, which include faith and dreams; desire and fears; memory and imagination. “This space of seduction, this virtual space is funded on precise strategies and on strategies of confusion” (Baudrillard & Nouvel, 2006) illusion and virtuality over reality as the initial interaction with the city as architect Jean Nouvel suggested. The confusion of these new glances is represented in each of the photographs and models or as the first idea a displaced person can deduce from what he or she is seeing. In an excerpt from *Auguries of Innocence*, William Blake said: “we

are led to believe a lie / when we see not thro' the eye" (1803/1863). Therefore, to understand the layout or geographical behaviour of a city and its architectural scenarios, people first and foremost create a mental map. The model as a map (image) is ultimately a product of (architectural) discourse. As a master discourse of proper places, it thus "collates on the same plan heterogeneous places, some received from a tradition and others produced by observation" (De Certeau, 1984). Thus, mental maps of a city are imaginary representations of what the city contains, and its design according to the individual. In this case, I act as an interpreter through the lens.

Another of the objectives of this photographic portfolio is to ask the audience to feel freely, be curious, to experiment and get used to matters of perspective, depth of field, proportions, scale, colours, materials, geometry, forms and shapes, bodies, contrast, rhythm, equilibrium, symbols, and more, while are photographed the displaced population's 'encounters' into images. W. J. T. Mitchell (2005) says that the power of images is expressed as "the way in which they seem to come alive and want things" (p. 274). The audience can react to this new story or create a new history, though. Or the image –if it has the power– can be pointing out core ideas about what is happening around displacement in Colombia and its surroundings.

Citadels in Conflict

This work Citadels in Conflict is the result of more than 5 years of a creative process in the Academy and in art contests. I wanted to reflect upon the displaced, space and conflict divided in three different but complementary stages: First, my graduation paper¹⁰ presented at the National University of Colombia. Followed by new series "Citadels – the series" developed between

¹⁰ Directed by associate professor Andrés Aristizábal, National University of Colombia.

2005-2007 and finally, the project presented for the MA in Photography and Urban Cultures¹¹ at Goldsmiths - University of London, “The Invisible Man, the Invisible City”. To introduce my work I would like to use the words of Harvard’s Art Forum curator, José Falconi (2007):

A careful use of architectural models and miniature toys in order to craft a series of tableaux that are later photographed [...] At first, the materials and the disposition of them in the photographs can be seen as almost naïve, but that first impression is quickly transformed into a disquieting sensation, largely produced by the careful use of symmetrical and rectilinear patterns in the composition. In Santiago’s photographs, formal delicateness is bleak, because it urges us to experience the containment and restriction one feels in the streets of Bogota or other major city in Colombia. Oddly, it is precisely the sense of “order” and “cleanness” that symmetry provides to the spectator, which creates the eerie sensation that accompanies each of his photographs and which, recreate the slight sense of panic one has walking the streets of some Colombian cities. Such capacity for eliciting “intrigue” out of symmetry is, by itself, a quite remarkable artistic feat, as it reveals an artist who is very aware of his choices and who is complete control of his skills.

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1. Graduation Paper

This study examined the spatial perceptions of the Ayacucho regiment and the Manizales prison for males in Manizales, Colombia, under the view of social and urban conflict and interpreted through photography as an artistic expression. Both scenarios were understood as citadels (as mentioned), for they included all social and physical variables that cities have. Nine characterisations were made which supported the composition and understanding of the pictures: context (morphology and public space), topography, security, form (symbology

¹¹ Directed by Paul Halliday, convenor of the course.



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1. 'Citadels in Conflict – glifosat'
2. 'Ayacucho Battalion'
3. 'Manizales's Prison'
4. 'Citadels in Conflict 8A – mobility'
5. 'Oh, Redemption Christ'
6. 'Mother, dance and calf'
7. 'Soñar no cuesta nada, nada!'
8. 'Chevystar, qué cheveridál / The Black Hole'
9. 'Hombresolo, kidnapping Utopia / Hombresolo, utopía de un secuestro'



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10. 'Madre Hay Una Sola / Motherland'
11. 'Can you hear us? / ¿Puedes oírme?'
12. 'Move-on, Lon-Don Berna y el último tren'
13. 'Under the sea, upside love /
Abajo del Mar, Arriba el Amor'
14. 'He who invented this Nativity was sole /
El que inventó esta Navidad estaba solo'
15. 'Zapatitos de Algodón: right or left shoe? /
¿izquierda o derecha?'
16. 'Rolling Stones, Rolling Mines'

and density), mobility, permeability, activity, order and landscape. Moreover, the methodological process for this study was supported by visits and graphic reports of both scenarios; (semi-close) interviews and mental maps of the prisoners; ground views, planes and photographs of spaces and its relation to the city (Author, 2005). The pieces included are: Ayacucho Battalion, Manizales's Prison, Citadels in Conflict 8A - mobility, Citadels in Conflict 19A - glifosat, and Oh, Redemption Christ (see the images' reference list).

Since this first stage of the project, it was necessary to define the main codes of artistic expression and place them as a base for the constant (and vital) evolution of the pieces. Mainly, those rely on the importance of the global idea, rather than on the specific theme or topic covered. In this sense, the fundamental codes can be more emphasised in some images if compared to the entire work. The mentioned signs are described along the text and support –sometimes– the explanations of the photos. Those are: plastic soldiers, horizon, scale, construction, public/ private, utopia, reflection, symbols, silence and objects.

Plastic Soldiers

I use the plastic soldiers recurrently as iconographic individuals in conflict who represent all the armed actors involved in Colombian conflict (guerrilleros, Paramilitary groups, Army soldiers and other criminals). Displaced populations do not recognize citizens dressed in “funny–fashionable–clothes” when entering the cities, they are remembering those who expelled them or appropriated by force all their camps, properties and goods. The staged models are representing institutions where citizens have no name and soldiers who are placed there as toys for leaders and their commanders, as toys for children. Just formed to play on the battlefield. I think war or spiritual impositions want to institutionalize people and their thoughts, even their feelings. Leaders want them to be mechanised and follow doctrines as bullets follow each other. Such a small

bullet leaving such a big hole in the nucleus of a family when one member is betrayed or killed, even converted or brainwashed, indoctrinated.

Consequently, scale figures are used to represent the human body and give a direct connection with scale and proportions. “The miniature is indeed among the recurring types –if perhaps not the universal type– of artwork among autodidacts” (Beardsley, 2002). The French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss thought miniatures had “intrinsic aesthetic quality” by virtue of their very dimensions. He even wondered, in 1962 in his book *The Savage Mind*, if the miniature or the small-scale model might not be the “universal type” of the work of art. As John Beardsley (2002) said:

miniatures are almost invariably appealing. Many of them –ship models, doll houses, and diminutive trains– evoke associations with fantasy or play. All are satisfyingly whole. Through reductions in scale, they allow us to see complete and at once that which we would otherwise experience only in parts. But miniatures provide still deeper satisfactions.

Horizon

The horizon in my work is not only dividing but also inviting. It is there as a synonym for hope, which suggests that peace and love can be reached, if only we walk. “Keep walking!” It claims. The compositions in the “urban models” consider space as the positive form, as the primary aspect of the image. The value of the negative (the plastic soldiers and rules / subjects and objects) is inherent to the global composition of the photograph (the positive).

1. For instance, the horizon is present as the origin of ‘Citadels in Conflict – glifosat’, from where the idea is grown, where the narcotics planes begin to fly or get lost. The piece talks about the official efforts to destroy the coca

crop in Colombia, in an attempt to reduce the flow of cocaine into the US and EU. Planes over flying the plantations have caused widespread distress for a peasantry which has cultivated coca for several years and being witness of the increment in the high levels of environmental contamination. Programmes to replace the lost income with substitute crops (e.g. rice, maize, yucca, beans) or fishing have simply proved inadequate. (Gilbert, 1994: 44).

Scale

In Egypt 3,000 B.C. the Pharaoh and the people working for him and his family (scientists, engineers, astrologists, architects, artists, i.e.) discovered that if they compared the 25-foot stone statues at the front of the temples with the human-scale statues at the very end of the chambers, they could make people believe in the monumental proportions of Tutankhamen, and at the same time, link the Pharaoh to the gods. They combined their perspective knowledge with the understanding of eclipses and the Nile floodings to trick the population into thinking that they had divine abilities and maintain power. However, in my photos (or in Colombia) how can war, terror, injustice, forced displacement or poverty be measured? Or tricked? What is the reference of scale compared to?

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The piece “Zapatitos de Algodón” plays with scale of war and satirises it as a result. Which is the real size in this utopian city provided? The dead mouse, the herd of sheep or the plastic soldier? “Little things”, could come in miniature but gigantic to spectator’s eye, pumped directly from the heart. As Lebanese poet Kahlil Gibran (1966), says: “Man’s eye is a magnifier; it shows him the earth much larger than it is” (p. 23). I agree as it is pictured exactly through the lens other than magnified by the veracity one wants to imprint on it. The subjects and objects’ proportions act as clues which are not decipherable immediately and appear there to confuse. Scale depends on the subject rather than on the object because space stands for human, time to Dali’s clocks and imagination.

2 & 3. 'Ayacucho Battalion' and 'Manizales's Prison' are also using scale and proportions as the main value for the composition and meaning of the photograph. The brick(s) and its size(s) are/is opposed to the figures and vice versa, the acrylic rulers then appear as catalyser and the real scale is not distinguished. The brick stands for soldier and prisoners residences, the green acrylic as a mountain, the yellow acrylic as a wall.

Construction

Consequently, to use installations or models is to invent imaginaries that could be placed in reality. To draw a line as a sketch or precisely in blueprints or AutoCad software is to project that line as a brick wall or a glass division. And to interpret these materials in 'true life' as scale models where an acrylic ruler, mirrors, ceramics, nails, plastic toys, wood sticks, pieces of clothes, surfaces of bricks, etc. (materials used in the models) represent the wall is also to determine a new reality. A reality which has to pass through the process of representation to become a new reality.

Furthermore, representations are always traces of the past and a statement of an event in history. They go from the event to the photograph as a transition, which suggests a relationship without creating interdependence between history and image. That is why "photographs immediately become archival and objects of interpretation quite distinct and different from the moment in which they were taken" (Burnett, 2004: 37). The succession of these events or stages obligates us to understand the process as cyclic and repetitive, infinitive if you want (Author, 2005: 132-134). The represented space remains as the total space and not a systematic one, claimed since modernity. That is to say that the responses to images are equivalent to the responses to reality and its representation; they have the same weight in our perception and construction of meaning. As W. J. T. Mitchell said in his book *What do pictures want?*: "the photographic image

is the object itself... It shares, by virtue of the very process of its becoming, the being of the model of which it is the reproduction; it is the model" (2005: 274). The relationship between the experience of space and the construction of photography could be expressed by a strict linear perspective or a simple and derivable relationship; it is a species of equivalency or mimesis.

While tradition is included within the logic of the plan, its form of representation alters its constitution. The inhabitants already know the village and its context. Spatial and geographic knowledge about the village for its inhabitants is generated through multifarious means other than plans and maps; [...] everyday practices produce and associational sense of the relative location of things; people movements are interlaced with mental, cultural and territorial charts accumulated over time. The purpose of the plan [model and the photograph] is to consolidate memory, to make history. (Cairns, 2004: 192).

Public / Private

According to Richard Sennett, people in the street are acting; they are 'stars' who perform in a film; thus, characters on my photos are playing roles in the *theatrum mundi* of my "urban models". Here citizens who could be seen as the main characters of the pictures are there performing as strangers. He believes that society is like a stage because in fact this common problem of audience has in the past (and present) frequently been solved through a common code of (un-) believable appearances (Sennett, 1977: 40). It is my purpose to present varied and iconographic-staged utopian citadels which carry the imprint of violence, corruption, inequity and injustice: "Those who live by the montage die by the montage. The montage is a strategy of survival, we cannot live without tragedy, we do not know how to live without peace, if the montage disappears there remains nothing except boredom; we need spectacle. How to educate analphabetic, alcoholic and mystic people? With icons" (Ospina, 2008).

4. "Citadels in Conflict 8A – mobility": represents a corridor in the male prison in Manizales. The prisoners have to follow rules related to order and discipline. The path is a connector between their private niches and the patios where they socialise, exercise and relax. It is their public condition from 6 am until 6 pm when they have to go back to their cells and rest for the night.

2. Citadels – the series

The project "Citadels – the series" continued the previous work I was developing into a deeper symbolism and geometrical analysis about human, politics, literature, philosophy, conflict and space. At this point, these are not dream cities of Diaspora; they are closer to nightmares as the places where they are dwelling are at the same time, spaces of inhabitation. Those cities are not seen and also not imagined as quiet meadows for their spatial practices and spatial stories. The citadels or stories, which I am presenting as photographs, are a representation –from my perspective– of the actuality they are facing. The models, constructed (physical and metaphorical) in-between the city and refugee's motherland, "are both a specific reality which represents the limit of the universalising canon, and an idealising village which represents the place of other architectural cultures" (Cairns, 2004: 200). In the village the refugee formalises space by defining his/her territory as a mixture of cultural paraphernalia, customs and languages. Therefore, the use of (plastic) animals is constant in my work like remembrances of the countryside placed within the city, used as symbols to make fun of politicians, institutions and citizenships. The plastic toys also relate to globalization and "made in China" objects 'overdosing' the shops. As Susan Sontag alleged, "no longer toy images, photographs became part of the general furniture of the environment –touchstones and confirmations of that reductive approach to reality which is considered realistic" (2000: 21).

Utopia

A citadel is also an island due to its isolation of any other embodiment or rural/urban channels of communication. A. L. Morton determined the English Utopia's importance by its condition of being separated of other lands or expressions by a body of water, not only bodily but also conceptually.

The second reason for the richness of the English Utopia is the simple one that England is an island. For it is always easier to imagine anything in proportion as it resembles what we are or know, and it is as an island it self-contained, finite, and may be remote, gives it just the qualities we require to set our imagination to work. True we shall find utopias underground, under the sea, surrounded by mountains in the heart of Africa or Asia [or South America], even on another planet or perhaps remote in time rather than space, nevertheless the vast majority of utopias are still to be found on islands. (Morton, 1969: 12).

The citadels I am proposing as glances are metaphors isolated from the displaced people's reality as there are hundreds or thousands of kilometres dividing their daily functions (carpenters, housewives, Willy¹² drivers, shop-keepers, farmers, among others) from a new environment where they carry the weight of being "out-of-place". The Algarrobo¹³ trees used as shade are now traffic lights stopping the flows of vehicles in their "new homes".

Another purposes of this work is to show the process where the photographs make us believe that it is 'make-believe', thus we are living in days where the 'real' is being replaced by imagination and dreams suggesting that there is no space for the real anymore. "Utopian architectural visions came to be seen as abstract aesthetic experiments of an architectural elite out of touch not only with the taste but also, more importantly, with the practical needs of the populace"

¹² The Jeep is a common transport system in Colombia, especially in the coffee region.

¹³ Endemic tree planted in the coffee region to give shadow to the coffee plantations.

(Dalí, 1944: 11) (Neil Leach, 1991). The spatial practices and representations of space are inversed in architectural practice because it is reduced to the “world of the image” (blueprints and renders). The work wants to stand half way between reality and representation. It wants to erase the boundaries between one and the other and ask the audience to pragmatically take decisions about the construction of space and its representation, but also to see how representation is constructing new realities: to fluctuate from the physical scenario (model) to the projected one (the image). Or go from the symbolic sphere of representation (the photograph) to the 1:72 scale-model and rational idea of space (the city)¹⁴.

For instance, the way in which the photographs are presented –lacking a border between the image and the passe-partout– wants to be coherent not only regarding the discourse of the reality of war and peace, loneliness and hope but also around its fantasy or illusory fate: it is the vulnerability of imagination over memory, the unreal over the real. Its paradox! Blurred boundaries and ambiguity are the guests to the photos in a context (frame) where the main actors are the little figures. The portfolio’s images, sized 40 cm x 60 cm of which 20 cm x 30 cm are the photograph centred, leaving the remaining (and unprinted paper) in white (or neutral tone) avoiding distracting objects, hands, colours, etc. which could interfere into the viewer’s observation. Hence, there is still the potentiality to enlarge the print or imagine it in both ideal scales: the scale 1:1 or 1:72.¹⁵ Thus, the condition of a photograph is the certainty of the model. A building drawn in scale 1:72 stands for one constructed 1:1 (1 cm in the layout is 72 cm in real life.) Consequently, to use installations or models is to invent imaginaries that could be placed in a plaza or open field. As I said, the viewer has the right –or freedom– to imagine...

¹⁴ Paragraph extracted from the essay ‘One to Seventy-two’ / Anthropology of Art II. Author (2008a: 8).

¹⁵ The plastic toy soldiers are in scale 1:72.

Reflection

The reflection in my photos is the invisible layer that divides the real from the unreal. Is the reflection in the mirror, in the image and the question: which is the image? Which is the subject? Reality of war is more close to fantasy, as it is unbelievable to think people are killed or suffering. The reflection produced in the images stresses the horizon as a dramatic element for the composition and the message. It appears always dividing the format in two, mostly at the centre of the image: depicting dreams from reality, illusion from construction, the positive over the negative (or vice-versa), portraits the good and the bad, sky and Earth, divine and profane, object and subject.

Following this division, there has always been a theological and political space. It has been there in history, a direct symbiosis between God and State, between religion and politics, and the sacred ideology and ideologies of power. In the Colombian case, this relationship has been present since the Spanish Conquest and in the Colony, but it rose after the violence in the 40's and 50's and persists until today. The notion of fascist systems of God and State reappears again and again in these periods of crusades against 'evil empires'. God is whispering to the leaders' ears? Or is power using religion to bend the crowds to their whims? (Restrepo, 2008)¹⁶.

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Is the piece "Oh, Redemption Christ" confronting the idea of Church, represented by the wine-opener as a cross, against the presence of the soldiers or warriors as the Evil? Or it is just a mantle of doubts, a trick, picturing peace and war as they appear upon our eyes?

¹⁶ Extract from Author (2008b: 5).

5. "Oh, Redemption Christ" can be described by Alan Gilbert's words: "On top of the mountains, two thousand feet above the centre of the city are two great symbols, the convent of Monserrate and the giant statue of Guadalupe. These monuments to piety once dominated the whole city. Today, they can still be seen from most parts of Bogotá, even if their religious significance has undoubtedly declined" (Gilbert, 1994: 2).

Symbols

To be symbolical sometimes can be understood as an attempt not to deal with the logic of things, nor their rational value: in a radical way, to be iconoclast. Also, to play with symbols could be risky as it has one foot on conceptual interpretation more than on aspects of quantity. I know quality is important in a work since there is room for interpretation and the audience will always be one of my targets. And that is the "freedom of speech" and "expression" every human has as right. Again, the symbols will always be accompanying my work as a fundamental state for creation. As a result, to talk about politics, conflict, kidnappings, displacement, injustice, etc. will always be interpreted in my photographs while symbolised.

6. "Mother, dance and calf" is inspired in Nicolas Poussin's "The dance around the golden calf" at the National Gallery in London. Based on metaphor and iconicity I have been directing my work of art to a certain level of confidence to feel free to create and speculate. Identity for me is the most important value of an artist, as it has to be defended.

7. "Soñar no cuesta nada, nada!" reflects towards the social and political situation a refugee faces in Colombia as direct consequence to the phenomena known as the *farc*política and *parapolítica*¹⁷. This is one of those pictures he or

¹⁷ Revolutionary and paramilitary groups which are penetrating into the State and the politics.

she gets when arriving to the urban place. This analysis includes ambition of power, ill-treat in love, greed, among others. The pig, symbol to Colombians for wealth and fraternity, is shown as a piñata¹⁸ which is ready to be divided in pieces, so everyone can get a bit in the easiest way, the one of corruption.

Silence

The white background is equal to an empty canvas. Objects and the subject give the rhythm within the format. The audience defines the pace and is invited to compose its own melody. It is the history of peace which should be written –or heard, and the plastic soldiers are there only as observers: they are gazing at us or are we gazing at them?

‘Un Fuego de Sangre Pura’ evokes the current difficult and painful times in the region of Montes de María, the home of many of the musicians, on this recording. This region has been one of the most affected by Colombia’s armed conflict, which has resulted in mined fields and displaced populations make it increasingly difficult for this music to be played in the region. Similarity, it is difficult to make the gaitas, since the plant from which they are made, cordón, grows close to the forest areas, some of the most remote and dangerous. This recording, then, is a tribute to the courage of the people of Montes de María and to the audience of their music in the midst of forced displacement and war” (Los Gaiteros de San Jacinto, 2006).

And what happens if the gaitas cannot be heard? What happens to the music and the beat in their hearts? Memories (of sounds) can scratch your soul instead of filling it when you are not strong enough to accept reality is making you blind... or deaf. When laughter cannot be heard, even a smile is welcome. Because a smile is the first step for blinking eyes that long for hope.

¹⁸ Container hung up during festivities and hit with a stick to release candy inside.

8. “Chevystar, qué cheveridá! / The Black Hole”: violence is like a black hole that swallows families’ happiness and hope. The landscape portrayed is an allegory to the camp on the one hand, and on the other, the basic unit of housing called vivienda de interés social (social housing). A privilege few of these new and poor voyagers can aspire to get. “The ‘little black man’ collapses into the stream and disappears unrepentant amid the swirling waters” (Joseph McLaughlin, 2000). For instance, the ‘lady in white’ stands in silence waiting to be gulped down by the black hole and its dark energy.

Similarly, Colombian Orlando Beltrán, after being held hostage by the FARC-EP for more than 6 years on the jungle, said it was not possible for him to adapt to the noise of cars and horns in traffic jams. If he was used to these frequencies during his duties as Senator years before and now reacts overwhelmed, we cannot imagine what could be the reaction of a peasant who had only been used to animals’ roaring and the birds’ song every morning when they arrive to metropolis by mistake?

Objects

All the pieces are sustained by the study of objects, their mechanical life and their importance to context and humans. How they come alive as living things, even showing personhood in their subjectivity as Baudrillard explained in *Le système des objets*. Pablo Neruda wrote in his Poem XV: “Like all the things are full of my soul, you emerge from the things filled with my soul / como todas las cosas están llenas de mi alma, emerges de las cosas llena del alma mía” (Neruda, 1969). Every object has its own soul. For me ‘they’ are not merely objects, ‘they’ are subjects who are having a dialogue between the figures. An object appears as a balanced weight for the subject or vice versa.

9. "Hombresolo, kidnapping Utopia / Hombresolo, utopía de un secuestro" reflects on the idea of solitude and vulnerability of a man (or woman) in captivity represented by the scale-figure but at the same time by the pliers, which in Spanish are called hombresolos. The forest of these tools or 'row of trees' symbolises the coldness of the jungle and visualises an utopian scenery reflecting the pain and absence suffered, not only by them, but also by their families and society. The monochromatic tone and contrast between materials emphasises the themes covered.

10. "Madre Hay Una Sola / Motherland": the motherland refers to displaced people's meadow; the ceramic objects represent the village as breasts, which at the same time, stand as the maloca or indigenes houses. Their migration is a direct consequence of mines planted by revolutionary groups to terrorize them to leave their places. The objects' shape is a representation of a mine, as well. "An infinitive game, an infinitive conflict made of revenge. One violent feeds into (nurtures) another act of violence, it is a circle of violence with no beginning, no end. As the circle of life, round like breasts that nurture in a union of mother and child: the motherland [and the displaced person]. Mother love is care for the child that symbolises hope and that unites it with the motherland. That is Colombia ever since in conflict" (Lübbers & Author, 2008).

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3. The Invisible Man, the Invisible City

This group of images, and developed as a complement to the MA in Photography and Urban Cultures, Goldsmiths – University of London, reflect on the ethical and legal debate on photography and artistic practices. It is complemented with photographic installations and interventions into the urban space, located in different, typical spots of London and imbued with ethnographic experience and practical exercise. The long-term project titled "The Invisible Man, the

Invisible City”, involves the production of a series of images and written texts about the nature of private and public spaces, with particular reference to artistic practices; to intervene in landmarks, places in the city linked to Arts and culture, economical and political symbols, sports and leisure scenarios, the Internet, housing sectors, religious temples and mobility paths; i.e. London Bridge Underground, Tate Modern, Batavia Mews Students’ Hall, Greenwich’s Dockyards, and Facebook as well¹⁹. I like to use the words on young artist Jasmina Cibic’s work, to describe mine:

[they] posit themselves as site-specific interventions where myths are fabricated in order to disrupt the normal flow of events; space hybridisation takes place through the use of personal poetics which insert themselves directly into the existing bureaucratic apparatus, institutions and the visual field of the casual passer-by. The spectator becomes a faux tourist and the art work within its architectural framework a souvenir object par excellence – it is namely a fetish of the Experience²⁰.

11. The 5th of November of 2007 I intervened Doris Salcedo’s ‘Shibboleth’ at the Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, which satirized silence and perplexity of kidnapping and violence in Colombia and around the World. I wanted to transform the perception of the ‘deep division’ caused by the gap, into an abyss by placing the 1:72 scale plastic soldiers in front of it. Turbine Hall visitors’ interaction with the piece ‘Can you hear us? / ¿Puedes oírme?’ was immediate and I was able to record it with my camera.

12. “Move-on, Lon-Don Berna y el último tren” was an installation I made on the 31st of December on New Year’s Eve – one of the most harried and busy days of the year. I used one of the escalators as a scenario for the intervention. Because of the mobility people could not stop and appreciate the piece, but could

¹⁹ Extract from Author (2008c: 12).

²⁰ www.jasminacibic.org & pandbshowcase.co.uk/archive/round1/visual/#%23

capture it in glances. And that was the idea: to have action and movement as the main variable. The piece symbolized violence as a station which looks how time passes and some people in Colombia (and in the World) does nothing to live in peace and harmony. As we are still waiting for the Train of Peace, we are only voyeurs.

13. "A circle of sky so blue that it seemed purple" (Borges, 1962/1964: n.p.). 'Under the sea, upside love / Abajo del Mar, Arriba el Amor' is an intervention at Goldsmiths main building's façade. The figures mimicry as dry leaves and became invisible. The amputated soldier by a mine waits for sun, answer for sadness and cold days... I strongly disagree with Umberto Eco when he said: "a man with three legs is ugly, if he has only one, he is also ugly"²¹ (Umberto Eco, 2008). I do not think to lose a leg by a mine explosion is ugly I think it is heroic.

14. "He who invented this Nativity was sole / El que inventó esta Navidad estaba solo" talks about loneliness in these Decembers, again, in Colombian jungle and inside the hearts of kidnapped people. Three generations have seen how violence persists to remain inherent in our lives and inside the borders of our country, even if you are an overseas student, the sadness follows. Using Facebook's network platform²² I tagged three hundred contacts on the photo, so everyone received the image to his profile album. The photo was accompanied by a thought already mentioned.

15. "Here the animal is all the werewolves who exist in the darkness of history and keep alive that fear without which there can be no rule –all these men keep alive the love-hate relationship with the body in its crudest and most direct form" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1987: 234). But what is more direct and crude than violence? And what is more sad and terrible than injustice and poverty?

²¹ www.revistaarcadia.com/ediciones/32/portada1.html

²² No. 1 photo sharing application on the Web. More than 14 million photos uploaded daily, more than 6 million active user groups on the site. www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics

The piece “Zapatitos de Algodón: right or left shoe? / ¿izquierda o derecha?” reflects on how violence and refugees’ displacement approaches in silence: here the animal, the wolf after getting under a sheep’s skin attacks! In Batavia Mews Student Hall, I used a dead mouse as a character before the cleaning lady could dispose of it. “I did not want to appear killing many people in some communities that we already had won their trust / No quería aparecer dando de baja a mucha gente en unas comunidades que ya nos habíamos ganado”²³, a paramilitary soldier once said.

16. ‘Rolling Stones, Rolling Mines’ talks about the mines still planted in the Colombia’s countryside. The mines exclude people and produce a territory of fear and displacement; one of rolling legs, rolling lives.

To intervene the public space and make pedestrians participants while I make the photos is also to ask them to go further and think about the roles they are playing in the city. Because an urban society which has a public geography also has certain powers of imagination, the devolution of the public and rise of the intimate have a profound effect on the modalities of imagination which prevail in that society.

The creation of a sense of public space is the adult social parallel to this psychological distinction in infancy, with parallel results: the symbol-making capacity of a society becomes that much richer, because the imagination of what is real, and therefore believable, is not tied down to a verification of what is routinely felt by the self. (Sennett, 1977: 41).

Similarly, for displaced people the promised city is imagined through stories, through fabrications by those who have already made that journey and have returned, through a strange mixture of the experience of a journey in space and its narration in language (Berger and Mohr, 1975). As Cairns suggests,

²³ www.eltiempo.com/justicia/2008-03-04/ARTICULO-WEB-NOTA_INTERIOR-3984686.html

the process of emigration radically alters places of origins. Such places are not necessarily fixed or stable or passive or mute points of departure (2004: 185).

I hope one day the presence of violence departs for ever from my life and my country's because it has put me (and my compatriots) between the wall and the sword since decades: "stop thinking about it! It has no solution!" Why feel the pressure and sadness, still? There are no crisp-sugar-coated pills for happiness: you can imagine these pills and their flavour, but cannot produce them. I reckon that to think and to feel at the same time is impossible, as it is to be in the middle of a conflict that has been there since before I was born and has directly touched three generations. How can you ask your family, your friends or the displaced people from the countryside to find out solutions when the emotions are so deeply incrustated in our minds and answers are gone?

The sixteen photographs I am presenting are not the solution; they are just a way to express disagreement and the wish that things could be better and change in the future. As shown in the portfolio, the "miniatures and microcosms are a way of picturing the cosmos; they are the eyes of the world: past, present, and still to come" (Levi-Strauss, 1968). The photographer or creator is there to interpret what those eyes could be seeing and get those glances into a photograph.

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Although, sometimes people do not see what is obvious, neither can they imagine it. If love should be obvious and be seen, thus why does war persist to exist? Displaced populations see and interpret what is not that obvious: unthinkable cities after fleeing from violence and persecution. They all know –I think– that war is not perfect because it is not based on love. The beauty of love is perfect as it excludes war. Therefore, love must be imposed so it can come and embrace war as a butterfly: gentle and unexpected... We can dream then that one-day war will only inhabit the models and displaced people will be remembered only as a glance in History.

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