

ROBERTO VALCÁRCEL
RENAMING REPRESSION AND REHEARSING LIBERATION
IN CONTEMPORARY BOLIVIAN ART

Valeria Paz Moscoso

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Abstract

This study analyses the invisible forms of repression in the Bolivian art system by interpreting Roberto Valcárcel's artwork in the light of Herbert Marcuse's ideas on repression and liberation as expounded in *Eros and Civilization*. My approach considers, on the one hand, Valcárcel's artwork in relation to the liberating role that Marcuse attributes to art (via phantasy, polymorphous eroticism, and Orphic paradigm). On the other, it explores the strategies devised by Valcárcel against repression, such as self-promotion, multiple texts, play, humour and unmasking certain repressive truths. My reading of Valcárcel's work via Marcuse is supported by archival research from contemporary newspapers, exhibition documentation and Bolivian art history, which have provided relevant information about the sorts of latent repression to which Valcárcel's artworks responds. This dissertation is organised in five chapters in which examples of repressive beliefs are unveiled. Chapter One examines *El Movimiento Erótico* (The Erotic Movement, 1983) and the manifold strategies used by Valcárcel to escape the traps of a presumed type of sexual liberation (sexist and genital oriented) and capitalism's culture industry. Chapter Two discusses artworks where the intentional construction of open meaning challenges the norm of a univocal creation and consumption of art. Chapter Three studies some of Valcárcel's humorous identities in contrast with the dramatic, and overly serious self-perception of Bolivian artists. Chapter Four explores Valcárcel's use of play, black humour and deceit as effective devices to escape hidden authoritarianism in society during dictatorial regimes. Chapter Five analyses how Valcárcel's work unveils the latent repression in the idealisation of indigenous heritage through play and anti-thesis.

My dissertation introduces a new topic into the study of art in Bolivia – veiled repression – at the same time that it sheds light on the potential of the artwork of Roberto Valcárcel to open new ways of historicizing and thinking about art in Bolivia.

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PREFACE

‘What is wrong with Bolivian art?’ This question was posed in 1996 as way to advertise a talk, entitled ‘Oblivion or Bolivian: what is wrong with Bolivian art?’,¹ at the ICA London, to promote the exhibition *Bolivia: Current Art* simultaneously presented in the Mall Galleries in London.² Critic and curator Gerardo Mosquera, following his visit to artists’ studios in La Paz in 2001, expressed to me a similar concern when he asked me for the reasons for the outdated ideas of the artists he met and the lack of interesting contemporary art.

My choice of topic of research was initially influenced by these questions and by my interest in gaining a more profound understanding for the lack of promotion of contemporary art (experimental art) of which Valcárcel had become an emblem. My decision to focus on the artwork of Valcárcel, one of the pioneers of contemporary art in Bolivia, is equally informed by my desire to gain insight into the closed attitude towards contemporary art which had regained currency in the 2000s, especially from 2006, after the election of Evo Morales, the first indigenous president of the country.³ Morales’s decolonial agenda was enacted in a new Constitution founded on indigenous ethic principles and which granted special and important rights to indigenous people in Bolivia.⁴ During Morales’s presidential terms (2006-2009, 2009-2014 and 2014 to present) these praiseworthy principles became, nonetheless, part of a political discourse against citizens of

¹ ICA, ‘Oblivion or Bolivian: What is wrong with Bolivian Art? [ICA Talks invitation], London, 5 February 1996.

² Arte Único and Embassy of Bolivia, *Bolivia: Current Art* (exhibition brochure), Mall Galleries, London, 1-10 February 1996.

³ This was the case particularly in La Paz where there was more political pressure on art. While I worked at the Museo Nacional de Arte in La Paz, the director (2008-2010) made clear to me his antagonist position to contemporary art. During these years contemporary initiatives consolidated in Santa Cruz de la Sierra (through Kiosko gallery and residency programs) and in Martadero and Centro Cultural y Pedagógico Simón I. Patiño in Cochabamba.

⁴ Some important rights made explicit in the new constitution are the right for indigenous people to keep their cultural, religious identity, customs and everyday practices; the right to free determination and territoriality; the right to property titles for the land they inhabit; and the right for their administrative institutions and laws to be recognized as part of the state, among many other rights. See: Asamblea Constituyente, Honorable Congreso Nacional de la República de Bolivia, Nueva Constitución Política del Estado, <www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/mesicic3_blv_constpolitica.pdf>, October 2008, accessed 31 May 2016.

European descent and their values. Government policies also privileged Andean indigenous people (particularly Aymara and Quechua) at the expense of low land ethnic groups. At the onset of the decolonial and socialist government promoted by Morales, there was a strong expectation within the art system for any ‘serious’ artist to engage with these matters and with the changes that the country was undergoing. These issues have informed the focus of my dissertation.

My choice of dissertation derives, at the same time, from a long personal interest in Valcárcel’s art and the publication of his book in 2008, documenting, without an explanatory or presentation essay, 40 years of his artwork and ideas. I further considered doing research at PhD level a unique opportunity to engage in theoretical aspects of art and my choice of Valcárcel’s artwork as a topic was sustained on the presumption that it would prove fruitful. In addition, taking into account Valcárcel’s importance in Bolivia and the nature of his reflections and questionings, I was confident that in my research I would find a theoretical framework (or at least rehearse one for myself) for looking at art in Bolivia.

Once I had established Marcuse’s ideas as a frame of reference for my study, it became even more clear that reflecting on veiled repression in society was relevant to Bolivian society and art.⁵ I found that although Valcárcel seemed like a less relevant artist around 2010 to some of his younger colleagues and to some art historians, that he still caused controversy. During the inauguration of the Bienal de Santa Cruz of 2010, a letter by The Committee for the Dignity of Art and Culture (an unknown and most likely one-off institution) circulated denouncing its curators, Cecilia Bayá and Roberto Valcárcel, for being part of a clique which poorly managed the biennial.⁶ More recently, in 2015, an image of

⁵ Bolivia continues to be a conservative and discriminating country in terms of sex, racial issues, and eroticism is defined by commercial interests. The mass media has become a very sophisticated channel of manipulation and instrument of power. Paid advertisement, in printed press, has been replaced by current government publicity in television wherein the most talented film directors are hired. Politicians dressing in indigenous attire, with hats or sandals, have become commonplace during the administration of Evo Morales. Morales himself even recently dressed up as an indigenous pre-Hispanic authority in a custom-made attire, with gold pieces, in the inauguration of his third presidential term, in Tiwanaku in 2015.

⁶ The poor management refers to the curators ignoring a recommendation of the previous biennial (which Valcárcel did not recall). El Comité por la Dignidad del Arte y la Cultura (The Committee for the Dignity of Art and Culture), letter addressed to the curators of the Santa Cruz Bienal of 2010 (Cecilia Bayá and Roberto Valcárcel). The letter was read to me and commented

Valcárcel from his book – a photograph taken when he was ‘kidnapped by aliens’ – was used in a poster published on Facebook attacking an exhibition titled ‘Curators’, presented in 2015, in Manzana Uno, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, in which he participated with four other curators.⁷ The first point of the manifesto-type text of the poster, illustrated with the image of Valcárcel above [Fig. 0.1], highlights the curators’ presumed denial of the existence of the essence of the ‘Cruceño’ or the people from Santa Cruz – a lowland, and hence non-Andean, department whose population is renowned for boasting about their Spanish and European heritage.⁸ Although the part of the exhibition with the artworks in question, presumed to be insulting to cruceños, was curated by Eduardo Ribera, Valcárcel’s face was reproduced on the poster with swastikas on his cheeks, a ‘999’ on his forehead (presumably an inverted ‘666’) and ‘R.I.P.’ written below. It is possible that the inspiration for calling the curators racist and neo-fascist, among many other things, and using Valcárcel’s image was triggered by the artist’s ironic self-representation in the exhibition as a curator wearing a llucho (indigenous wool cap from the Andean region), and an inflated cheek, as if he

by Valcárcel in: Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 14 September 2010.

⁷ The other curators were Eduardo Ribera, José Bedoya, Rodrigo Rada and Ramiro Garavito.

⁸ Santa Cruz was the stronghold of the four ‘half-moon’ departments (thus called because of their shape in the map) who have initially opposed the election of Evo Morales. The politicians and inhabitants of these lowland and valley departments – Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando and Tarija – have traditionally identified themselves with their Spanish heritage. Although the support of Evo Morales has increased in these departments throughout the years, there is still a strong sentiment against indigenous people from the Andes and to people from the highland departments. The text of the poster reads: ‘LOS CURADORES DE ARTE: CONDENADOS A LAS HORCAS CAUDINAS... Por negar cándidamente la existencia del Ser Cruceño y su realidad: por tergiversar conceptos centrales de la filosofía, la semiótica, la semántica y la lingüística: por pretender romper con la tradición sin fundamento: por lanzar teorías de arte traídas de los pelos: por inmiscuirse en terrenos que no son de su competencia: por desorientar, deseducar y desinformar a los artistas jóvenes: por subestimar a los poetas, filósofos y científicos: por negar la existencia de la verdad para difundir y pretender inculcar la suya: por practicar un pedagogismo estéril, incoherente y desordenado: por proponer paradigmas erróneos y disparatados: por distorsionar el pensamiento y la actividad teórica: por blasfemar contra la cultura y difamar a su más alta realización: el arte: por escribir perogrulladas y lugares comunes sobre el conocimiento filosófico y científico: por arrogarse la condición de "maestros" : "autoridad" en arte y pontificar dogmática e ingenuamente sobre asuntos que están fuera de su comprensión y entendimiento lógico-discursivo: por hacer gala de su supina ignorancia: por practicar un nihilismo decadente: por ser militantes clandestinos de un movimiento completamente racista y promover una teoría estética fundada en una ideología neofascista y caer en un innovacionismo simplista y un facilismo insustancial, vacuo e INTRASCENDENTE. SANTA CRUZ DE LA SIERRA - BOLIVIA.’ Published on the Facebook wall of poet Victor Paz Irusta [publication no longer available].

were chewing coca [Fig. 0.2]. Whereas it is clear that this ironic representation of the artist as an indigenous person from the highlands caused anger of those defending the essence of *cruceñidad* (and hence not the Andean indigenous identity), it is also evident that Valcárcel is still a thorn in their side and that a reflection on these motives retains relevance.⁹

⁹ Ibid.

INTRODUCTION

Researching Roberto Valcárcel's artwork is motivated by my desire to gain a better understanding of the ideas behind the provocative, eclectic, elusive and previously little studied artwork of one of the key artists in contemporary art in Bolivia.¹⁰ It seeks to define the interests, motivation and ideas behind the questions and provocations in Valcárcel's art. It attempts to offer a new understanding of the relationship between art and society, bearing in mind phenomena of historical importance in Bolivia, like the most recent military regimes (1978-1982) and the processes of emancipation and mythification of indigenous people of the last decades.

Having established that the ideas of Marcuse on repression, in *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, have influenced Valcárcel's view of the world and art, the following three questions guide this dissertation: How do the ideas of Marcuse contribute to gaining further insight into Valcárcel's art and its relationship with Bolivian history and society? What is the veiled repression that frames Valcárcel's art? How does Valcárcel's art counter this repression?

Motivated by these questions, my research investigates the art of Roberto Valcárcel in relation to an ideal of a non-repressive society and an autonomous state of being. My study seeks to answer, more specifically, how Marcuse's ideas are represented in Valcárcel's art; and from this perspective, how examples of veiled repression in Bolivian art and society are addressed in the artwork of Valcárcel. It does so in the light of the concept of repression and liberation that Marcuse theorizes in his *Eros and Civilization* (1955).

My analysis of Roberto Valcárcel's artwork takes into account Marcuse's discussion of the liberating qualities of art – imagination (phantasy),¹¹ polymorphous eroticism, and the Orphic paradigm. My study traces, at the same time, the way Valcárcel's artwork contrasts with, transcends, points to other possibilities, and unveils certain constraining suppositions that prevail in Bolivian

¹⁰ Gastón Ugalde is the other pioneer of contemporary art in Bolivia.

¹¹ Throughout my dissertation, I will use Marcuse's spelling of 'phantasy' to highlight its connection with a psychoanalytical perspective.

art and society. But the relationship between Valcárcel and Marcuse is not a one-way street. My dissertation also examines the artist's implicit reflections, dialogue, and contributions to Marcuse's proposal of art as liberating, and its usefulness in a completely different context to what the author of *Eros and Civilization* had in mind.

In each of the chapters examples of repressive ideas and beliefs, specific to the Bolivian context, are unveiled in contrast to Valcárcel's artwork. Valcárcel's artistic strategies underline the constraints of a precarious capitalist economy, vulnerable to the influence of regional and world powers; sexist and homophobic attitudes associated with authority, media, art, and dictatorship; a tendency towards a univocal view of art and overly-serious self-perceptions by artists; the repercussions of inflexible and unquestioned postcolonial attitudes; and the manipulation of facts, beliefs and desires in the mass media in the interest of profit and power.

Each chapter considers, at the same time, the artistic strategies that distance Valcárcel from making what, from his point of view, would be covertly authoritarian artworks, i.e., artworks that reproduce, without questioning, prevailing beliefs in society and art, and that lead the viewer into a particular interpretation of art. Valcárcel's 'open works of art' (polysemic and multilayered forms), ironic self-promotion, play and humour, and how he blurs the lines between reality and fiction are some of the strategies that are important in this respect.

Chapter One examines Valcárcel's idea of creating an artistic movement, *El Movimiento Erótico* (The Erotic Movement), inspired by the ideas of Marcuse. In this artwork – which functions as an emblematic example for interpreting Valcárcel's artwork – the artist's interpretation of Marcuse's ideas on repression are enunciated, as well as how he envisages strategies to transcend it, such as multiple registers, humour and play. This chapter focuses on Valcárcel's ironic self-promotion, mimicking marketing strategies – capitalist phenomena par excellence – in a precarious economy, which was in fact, in 1983, on the verge of collapse. *El Movimiento Erótico* is further interpreted taking into account the

sexualized images of women published in the press (e.g. the magazine *Semana de Última Hora*) in the years anteceding the regaining of democracy.

Chapter Two reviews Valcárcel's attempt to create non-authoritarian art, one which, according to the artist, cannot be 'reduced to' the categories accepted within the local artistic milieu. This task is addressed by taking into account the prescriptive view of art of the most influential critics writing about art in Bolivia in the 1980s. In this chapter, I specifically discuss how Valcárcel's exploration of multiple solutions and polysemy – in his *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* (A Story with Artichoke Fields) (1982) and *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales* (Radical and Eclectic Pluri-paintings) (1988) – counteracts what were then the prevailing paradigms of art.¹² I do this by examining the implicit challenge of these artworks to the unquestioned, and limiting implications of what is ultimately a univocal tendency in Bolivian art that frames the positions of critics, art historians and artists; a project that resonates, at the same time, with Marta Traba's ideas about Latin American art.

Chapter Three takes a closer look at Valcárcel's humorous and playful representation of himself bearing in mind the serious and non-humorous role commonly assigned to and assumed by artists in Bolivia. The latter role is linked to the idea of the artist-as genius, and has heroic undertones linked with the Promethean paradigm, and the tragic self-perception of Bolivian artists. These myths covertly reproduce ideas that ultimately consolidate authoritarianism in society, i.e., that not everyone is or can be creative. Whereas Valcárcel's irreverence is undoubtedly related to Dada's iconoclasm, there are further links between his humorous and playful self-representations and Marcuse's return to a polymorphous eroticism, and his proposal of Orpheus as an archetype of liberation. I further argue that Valcárcel's not taking himself seriously, in self-representations, and particularly in the multiple personalities of his *Grupo Valcárcel*, allows him the possibility of having flexible and simultaneous identities – in terms of style, ideas, myths, biography, gender, and even nationality. This implicit

¹² According to critic Carlos Salazar Mostajo, there were two tendencies in Bolivian art in the 1970s, one connected with the international trends and the other with resisting them, particularly those of the developed capitalist countries. The way Valcárcel's artwork interacts with these tendencies is discussed in Chapter Two.

questioning of the status quo, and fixed artistic identity, extends his creative impulse from the object of art to the continuous reimagining of himself.

Chapter Four explores Valcárcel's claiming his right to 'withhold the beam of light that connects him with reality' and examines his use of black humour and intentional blurring of the lines separating what is real from what is not. While the amusement implicit in the artist's games and acts of deceit, in five different examples of artworks (1979-1981), is coherent with a pleasurable way of existing, and of making art, setting the viewer in an uncomfortable position is consistent with the artist's interest in challenging viewers to make up their own minds, and to think autonomously. Deceit can also be interpreted as a parody of the cynical manipulation of facts relating to violent events in the press during military dictatorship and beyond. Valcárcel's use of black humour, during the often brutal transition to democracy (1978-1982), further places the viewer in an uneasy position by suggesting a certain complicity and delight in violence on the part of the artist, and potentially on the part of the amused viewer.

Chapter Five addresses Valcárcel's questioning of the ideological use of the indigenous legacy in the art system. In his artworks, the artist makes a point of distinguishing himself from the essentialist view latent in other artists work devoted to these themes, as well as from cultural projects which resonate with the resurgence of a Marxist Indigenismo that occurred in Bolivia in the 1980s (known as Katarismo), the emergence of CONDEPA, and the official proclamation of Bolivia as a country of culturally, and ethnically plural identity in its constitution of 1995. The form, and conceptual nature of Valcárcel's *Puerta del Sol* (Gate of the Sun, 1982) and *Cruz cuadrada* (Square Cross, 1994) unveil, in subtle, playful and direct ways, the reproduction of what is ultimately an opportunistic use of indigenous legacies by artists and gallerists.

I. Theoretical Perspective and Methodological Concerns

Marcuse's ideas provide the theoretical framework from which I interpret Valcárcel's artwork and its relation to its context. As mentioned before, my decision to examine the artwork of the artist from the perspective of Marcuse is

the result of an examination of his early work between 1978 and 1983, wherein I came across his *El Movimiento Erótico* (1983), a fictitious art movement that contains, exemplifies and expands the ideas of Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* (1955). The findings of an initial analysis of *El Movimiento Erótico* have influenced, at the same time, my reading of the artist's artwork throughout my dissertation.

1. Facts, Objectivity and Truth

In the information provided by Valcárcel in publications there are some inconsistencies in the titles and dates of his artworks, which are made clear, to the reader, to be intentional, i.e. in his claim that some dimensions are estimates and that some information is invented.¹³ This lack of precision not only reflects the fact that Valcárcel is ultimately an artist, and not an art historian or critic (as he has often been made out to be because of necessity and demand in the Bolivian context), but is consistent with a distrust and questioning of truth which are at the core of his view of the world.¹⁴ Although he has been extremely generous with information during my research, asking him questions often left me with the impression that insisting on details was counterintuitive. In his answers he often made evident he was questioning both facts and his own memory,¹⁵ and of my objective to collect data in interviews, when he would simply tell me that he did not remember, or proceeded with a 'nos inventaremos' (let's make up an answer), before a hypothetical explanation with which he equally demonstrated his capacity for offering different answers, like in his rhetorical question: 'Would you like me

¹³ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008, p. 7.

¹⁴ Valcárcel expands on this topic in different texts of his book in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2. Other references besides Marcuse are apparent in a short text titled 'El Factor cognitivo' in which Valcárcel refers to Nelson Goodman when he writes 'El reconocer estructuras consiste en gran medida en inventarlas y caracterizarlas. Comprender y crear van de la mano.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'El factor cognitivo', in Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 57. His distrust of scientific knowledge and belief in the impossibility of objectivity in understanding reality is made evident in a text inspired by the ideas of Paul Watzlawick's (*¿Es real la realidad?*) where he establishes a relation between truth and authoritarianism: 'Queridos alumnos, no se dejen engatusar con el cuento de que existe una realidad y que con ayuda de la ciencia la vamos a conocer. Lo interesante y peligroso de tal cuento es que implica que la ciencia nos lleva a la verdad y que todo lo demás es falso. Hay un carácter de totalidad, autoritarismo y absolutismo en la pretensión de que existe una ciencia. LA ciencia, EL conocimiento científico, que nos llevará a conocer LA realidad.' Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

¹⁵ This was manifested in a recurrent reference to the link between imagination and memory in conversation and in the different interviews I had with the artist between 2010 and 2015.

to give you the Freudian, Jungian or Lacanian explanation?’¹⁶ Candid, and amused comments like, ‘I notice that I am adjusting my answers to what you recently told me [that art and politics are “in” in Europe]’¹⁷ further highlighted the utopic nature of art historical fact seeking.

Valcárcel’s position regarding truth and its dangers was equally reflected in his demythologising account of his artwork, which is somewhat unusual in the context. His account of his *Retratos y naturalezas muertas* as a mere commercial endeavour is an example, among many, of his provoking frankness.¹⁸

2. Newspapers as Sources

Because repression as a theme is not evident in the artworks addressed in this study – the references to Valcárcel’s art and its context are often indirect – I have opted for looking at newspapers of the time to get a sense of the ideologies, beliefs, views of art and social conventions that have framed his art and interest in repression. Some specific events mentioned in my dissertation, which one might have expected to have had an impact on Valcárcel’s views of things – like the assassination of Che Guevara – are alluded to indirectly as examples of the type of incidents and information citizens were exposed to that resonate with his preoccupations and artworks. While my choice of looking at newspapers, between 1978 and 1983 responds initially to a desire to establish the tone of the country upon Valcárcel’s return, looking at this period in detail proved essential as I tried to imagine possible relations between artworks, and the convoluted and rapid succession of governments and tragic events. Historicizing art in such a period of rapid change (characterized by short-lived governments) proved difficult as it is evidenced in Teresa Gisbert’s establishing a direct relation between Valcárcel’s *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* and drug trafficking during the dictatorial regime of García Meza. While there are references to cocaine and the military in the artwork, *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* was not, as Gisbert suggests, ‘bravely’

¹⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

¹⁷ Valcárcel told me: ‘Me doy cuenta de que voy ajustando mis respuestas en función a lo que recientemente has dicho’. Ibid. All translations from Spanish into English are mine, unless otherwise noted.

¹⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

exhibited during the ruthless government of García Meza, but a few months later, albeit still during a military dictatorship.¹⁹ It is probable, on the other hand, that Gisbert's claim might have responded, perhaps unconsciously, to her trying to clear the artist's name from associations with the military intervention in the university, for which she felt responsible.²⁰ Gisbert's mistaken attribution proves, on the other hand, Valcárcel's scepticism towards the scientific and objective apprehension of reality, of art historians and academics.

II. Some Concepts and Definitions

1. A Summary of Marcuse's Ideas

One of the texts in *El Movimiento Erótico* can be conceived as a summary by Valcárcel of *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and as such is useful summary of Valcárcel's understanding of Marcuse's ideas [Fig. 1.4]:

ON THIS PLANET... AND PERHAPS NOT ONLY ON THIS
PLANET
ART IS THE LAST BASTION
OF EROTIC PRODUCTION
MARX
AND POLYMORPHOUS EROTICISM.²¹
FREUD

The reference to art as the 'last' bastion of a presumed confrontation indicates a moment of near defeat and should be understood, within the context of Marcuse's ideas, as the near collapse of the autonomy of human beings. In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse notes that despite the fact that the degree of repression associated with labour could be potentially decreased – as a result of the implementation of technology in work –, repression had become harder to identify in the state of prosperity and illusory freedom he witnessed in the US

¹⁹ Teresa Gisbert, 'Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX', in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, Banco Hipotecario Nacional, La Paz, 1989, p. 45.

²⁰ Gisbert, as dean of the Faculty of Architecture and Arts of UMSA, the state university in La Paz, invited Valcárcel to direct the Art Department. She expressed her regrets in this respect, in: Teresa Gisbert, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2013.

²¹ The original reads: 'En este planeta y tal vez no sólo en este planeta, el arte es el último bastión de la producción erótica y del erotismo polimorfo.'

during the aftermath of WWII.²² Taking this information into account, in my dissertation I extrapolate these ideas to analyse what a loss of autonomy for human beings could mean in Bolivia from the late 1970s to the present.

In Marcuse's discussion of repression in *Eros and Civilization*, he specifically refers to the internal restraints of the human mind. Marcuse bases his discussion of repression on psychological categories, namely, Freud's theory of the predominance of the repressive reality principle over the pleasure principle in the conformation of the ego.²³ Drawing from Freud's *Civilisation and Its Discontents*, Marcuse further recognizes repression in the need to 'work as full-time occupation', 'the discipline of monogamic reproduction' and the 'established system of law and order'.²⁴ In the Prologue to the Seix Barral edition of the book, Marcuse equally points to the invisible controls of leisure time activities, and the 'organization' of sex in advanced capitalism, topics which he further develops in his *One Dimensional Man* (1964).²⁵ Marcuse suggests that Freud's idea of an a priori repressive nature for human beings can also be counteracted, at least in theoretical terms.²⁶ Drawing on Freud's concept of phantasy (which he associates with children's games),²⁷ Marcuse proposes that art serves as a liberating option within this repressive panorama. Valcárcel's phrase 'erotic production' in *El*

²² Marcuse writes 'The existing liberties and the existing gratifications are tied to the requirements of domination; they themselves become instruments of repression' in Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998.

²³ Freud in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, cited in Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁴ Marcuse writes: "Happiness," said Freud, "is no cultural value." Happiness must be subordinated to the discipline of work as full-time occupation, to the discipline of monogamic reproduction, to the established system of law and order. 'The methodical sacrifice of libido, its rigidity enforced deflection to socially useful activities and expressions, is culture.' in Herbert Marcuse, *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁵ Marcuse mentions these invisible controls in this specific preface. It is reproduced in the Spanish edition owned by Valcárcel: Herbert Marcuse, *Eros y civilización*, Editorial Seix Barral, S.A., Barcelona, 1976, pp. 10 -12. Except for this reference, I am using the Routledge 1998 English edition of *Eros and Civilization* in all of my other references.

²⁶ Marcuse wrote: "The notions of a non-repressive civilization will be discussed not as an abstract utopian speculation. We believe that the discussion is justified on two concrete and realistic grounds: first, Freud's theoretical conception itself seems to refute his consistent denial of the historical possibility of a non-repressive civilization, and, second, the very achievements of repressive civilization seem to create the preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression. To elucidate these grounds, we shall try to reinterpret Freud's theoretical conception in terms of its own socio-historical content.' Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, p. 5.

²⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 140.

Movimiento Erótico should be understood as ‘labour’, given the reference to Marx introduced under the term. ‘Polymorphous eroticism’ is associated with Freud, in a similar way; it refers to a full eroticism, one that extends to the whole body and hence to a type of work grounded on eroticism (or the pleasure principle). The possibility of an erotic type of work and extending eroticism to the whole body, and hence beyond procreation, are important aspects of the society proposed by Marcuse: one that functions under a different principle or rather on a different sort of relation between the reality and pleasure principles.²⁸

In sum, in *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse proposes that art is a way out of repression, not only because it is a pleasurable (and hence an erotic form of labour), but one in which phantasy is activated. Marcuse explains that phantasy is fundamental for liberation because, according to Freud, it is the only mental function outside of the repressive reality principle.²⁹ The close link between phantasy and art points to the latter as the ideal horizon of freedom from the type of repression outlined by Marcuse. He further establishes a connection between phantasy and what imagination was for the Surrealists, and in particular to its potential revolutionary role when associated with freedom from the reality principle. For the author, the potential ‘liberating’ role of art lies, however, not as an instrument for transforming reality but in the possibility of pointing to a

²⁸ Marcuse explains this in the following words: ‘In the societal relations, reification would be reduced as the division of labor became reoriented to the gratification of freely developing individual needs; whereas, in the libidinal relations, the taboo on the reification of the body would be lessened. No longer used as fulltime instrument of labor, the body would be resexualized. The regression involved in this spread of the libido would first manifest itself in a reactivation of all erotogenic zones and, consequently, in a resurgence of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy. The body in its entirety would become an object of cathexis, a thing to be enjoyed – an instrument of pleasure. This change in the value and scope of libidinal relations would lead to a disintegration of the institutions in which the private interpersonal relations have been organized, particularly, the monogamic and patriarchal family.’ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 201.

²⁹ In the chapter titled ‘The Hidden Trend in Psychoanalysis’ Marcuse explains this idea: ‘With the establishment of the reality principle, the human being which, under the pleasure principle, has been hardly more than a bundle of animal drives, has become an organized ego. It strives for “what is useful” and what can be obtained without damage to itself and to its vital environment. Under the reality principle, the human being develops the function of *reason*: it learns to “test” the reality, to distinguish between good and bad, true and false, useful and harmful. Man acquires the faculties of attention, memory, and judgment. He becomes conscious, thinking *subject*, geared to a rationality which is imposed upon him from outside. Only one mode of thought-activity is “split-off” from the new organization of the mental apparatus and remains free from the rule of the reality principle: *phantasy* is protected from cultural alterations.’ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 14.

different world, of giving shape to an emancipated horizon of autonomy for the future. Marcuse explains this idea, citing Breton (in the second paragraph):

The truth value of imagination relates not only to the past but also to the future: the forms of freedom and happiness which it invokes claim to deliver the historical *reality*. In its refusal to accept as final the limitations imposed upon freedom and happiness by the reality principle, in its refusal to forget what *can be*, lies the critical function of phantasy:

To reduce imagination to slavery – even if one’s so-called happiness is at stake – means to violate all that one finds in one’s inmost self of ultimate justice. Imagination alone tells me what *can be*.³⁰

Marcuse does not elaborate further on this, except that he calls for a mythic figure of culture to replace the prevailing suffering Promethean paradigm. He points to Narcissus and Orpheus as possibilities:

If Prometheus is the culture-hero of toil, productivity, and progress through repression, then the symbols of another reality principle must be sought at the opposite pole. Orpheus and Narcissus (like Dionysus to whom they are akin: the antagonist of the god who sanctions the logic of domination, the realm of reason) stand for a very different reality.⁵ They have not become the culture-heroes of the Western world: theirs is the image of joy and fulfillment; the voice which does not command but sings; the gesture which offers and receives; the deed which is peace and ends the labor of conquest; the liberation from time which unites man with god, man with nature. Literature has preserved their image.³¹

Marcuse’s concept of Orpheus resonates with the centrality of play in Valcárcel’s art. Because of this, I focus on this figure – also emphasized by Marcuse – rather than Narcissus as Orpheus’ ‘language is song, and his work is play’.³²

For Valcárcel, liberty is, on the other hand, an unattainable ideal. Not being realizable, however, does not mean that it is a lost cause. In a text that Valcárcel wrote for an exhibition of one of his students, he took the opportunity to introduce his reflections in this respect. Deviating his attention from the

³⁰ The second paragraph is a quotation by Marcuse from André Breton, *Les Manifestes du Surréalisme* (Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1946). In *Eros and Civilization*, this quotation appears in French with an English translation and reference in footnote 12. To facilitate reading, I quote the English translation from footnote 12. Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 149.

³¹ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

³² Marcuse wrote: ‘The Orphic Eros transforms being: he masters cruelty and death through liberation. His language is *song*, and his work is *play*. Narcissus’s life is that of *beauty*, and his existence is *contemplation*. These images refer to the aesthetic dimension as the one in which their reality must be sought and validated.’ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 171.

artwork discussed, Valcárcel established the impossibility of attaining liberty while sustaining the importance of the liberation process that takes place in creative acts:³³

Total and absolute liberty does not exist. It is a myth, an illusion, utopia. What does exist is liberation, that continuous process in which you conquer more and more autonomy, independence, clarity. All truly creative acts are paradigmatic examples of liberation, both artistic and human, an act through which you come close to that chimera, to that impossible state in which you do not depend on anything, you are not subject to anyone. In art, liberation takes the shape of a constant research, formulating possibilities, trying new solutions, taking risks, experimenting, proposing hypothesis, [and] elaborating alternatives.³⁴

2. The Three ‘Rules’ of Valcárcel’s Art

El Movimiento Erótico contains three rules that I have found are intertwined in the type of representation and strategies employed by the artist in his artwork in general. I have extracted these not very well known rules from a newspaper image that illustrates a note about the Experimental Festival of Art in La Paz [Fig.1.2].³⁵ It should be noted that these rules have never had an official status for Valcárcel, and are hardly visible in the existing documentation:

Rules

1. There are no rules, no statutes, no codes or recipes. There are no strategies previously defined, no pre-judgements.

³³ I found this definition in a short presentation that Valcárcel wrote for the exhibition of painter Charo Liendo in 1996[?]. There is a typographic error in the book dating the text to 1966. My estimate of this year derives from the fact that Nota Gallery, where Liendo’s exhibition was presented, was open between 1991 and 2011. The text is reproduced in: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, pp. 178-179.

³⁴ In the presentation text of artist Charo Liendo, Valcárcel introduces what liberty means for him: ‘La libertad total y absoluta no existe. Es un mito, una ilusión, una utopía. Lo que sí existe es la liberación, ese continuo proceso en el cual vas conquistando más y más autonomía, independencia, claridad. Todo acto verdaderamente creativo es un ejemplo paradigmático de liberación, tanto artística como humana, un acto mediante el cual te acercas a esa quimera a ese estado imposible en el que no dependes de nada ni te sometes a nadie. En el arte, la liberación adquiere la forma de un constante investigar, formular posibilidades, probar nuevas soluciones, arriesgarse, experimentar, plantear hipótesis, elaborar alternativas...’ *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, pp. 178-179.

³⁵ These ‘rules’ are unknown because they were included in an ephemeral artwork, without any type of documentation. I found these rules in a black and white illustration to a short newspaper note about the Festival Experimental de Arte – where Valcárcel’s *Movimiento Erótico* was exhibited – by a group of students from the Escuela de Bellas Artes in La Paz. Anonymous, ‘Critican al festival de arte experimental’, *El Diario*, La Paz, 10 August 1983.

2. Anything [goes] that contributes to the free and playful development of the aesthetic-erotic potential of human beings (in the production, in the reproduction, in relationships, in art).

3. Anything goes that contributes to unmasking a morality, which is a subterfuge, a deceit with pretensions of truth [used] to maintain the current institutions that are the organisms of control of the current system of repression.

(The Erotic Manifesto, p. 5)³⁶

Taking to heart the idea of freedom, the first rule summons ‘no rules’, while the other two point to the general direction envisioned for art by Valcárcel. The order in which they appear seems to follow the artist’s priorities. The call to freedom of ‘no rules’ embodies, for Valcárcel the most important ideal of an autonomous existence. Rule number one also resonates with Kant’s ‘purposiveness without purpose’,³⁷ Schiller’s ‘self-given’ laws,³⁸ and with Marcuse’s Great Refusal, which he defines as ‘the protest against unnecessary repression of the order, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom – “to live without anxiety”’.³⁹

The reference in rule number two to play and creative potential is related to the ideas of Schiller from which Marcuse draws inspiration for his utopic proposal in *Eros and Civilization*. Marcuse specifically highlights Schiller’s proposal of play and display –the ‘free manifestation of potentialities’ – as the principles for a new civilisation⁴⁰. Schiller further proposes the ‘play impulse’ as a ‘vehicle for liberation’ from what he considers ‘inhuman existential conditions’.⁴¹ His idea of

³⁶ The original text reads: ‘Reglamento. 1. No hay reglamento, no hay estatutos, no hay códigos ni recetas. No hay estrategias previamente definidas, ni pre-juicios. 2. Vale todo lo que contribuya al libre y juguetón desarrollo de las potencialidades estético-eróticos del ser humano (en la producción, en la reproducción, en las relaciones, en el arte). 3. Vale todo lo que contribuya al desenmascaramiento de la moral como subterfugio un engaño con pretensiones de verdad absoluta para mantener las actuales instituciones que son los organismos de control del actual sistema represivo. (Manifiesto Erótico, p. 5).’ Anonymous, ‘Critican al festival de arte experimental’.

³⁷ Marcuse refers to how ‘purposiveness without purpose’ and ‘lawfulness without law’ as the categories of the aesthetic order which have in turn influenced Schiller’s proposal of a new kind of civilisation grounded on the play impulse. Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, 177.

³⁸ Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 191.

³⁹ Marcuse refers to the Great Refusal throughout *Eros and Civilization* and defines it in the Chapter entitled ‘Phantasy and Utopia’, Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 190.

⁴¹ Marcuse wrote ‘Schiller states that, in order to solve the political problem, “one must pass through the aesthetic, since it is beauty that leads to freedom.” The play impulse is the vehicle of

labour transformed into ‘play and display’,⁴² also lies close to Marcuse’s idea of an ‘erotic’ society. Valcárcel’s ‘art’ as ‘the last bastion for erotic production’ can thus be understood as labour transformed into play. Play, understood as role playing in children’s games, equally resonates with the importance granted to imagination by Marcuse previously discussed.⁴³ It has a relation, at the same time, with the playfulness of the mythic figure of Orpheus.⁴⁴

Linking creativity with human potential has resonances beyond Marcuse. One such reference is Joseph Beuys, an important figure in Valcárcel’s early years, who is known, among other things, for his phrase ‘everyone is an artist’. An allusion by Valcárcel to this type of thinking may be deduced from a definition of democracy that he offered in a catalogue text of 1979. Recognizing the multiple ways in which the term has been defined, Valcárcel proposed a democracy where everyone has ‘the same possibilities and capacities’.⁴⁵ A more direct reference to creativity in relation to Beuys was made by Valcárcel in an article written after a visit to Beuys’ Free International University (FIU), in 1983. In this essay, which was published in the local press, he highlighted the research undertaken by the university to define creativity as capital: ‘capital is human creativity, and creativity

this liberation. The impulse does not aim at playing “with” something; rather it is the play of life itself, beyond want and external compulsion – the manifestation of an existence without fear and anxiety, and thus the manifestation of freedom itself. Man is free only where he is free from constraint, external and internal, physical and moral – when he is constrained neither by law nor by need.²¹ But such constraint *is* the reality. Freedom is thus, in a strict sense, freedom from the established reality: man is free when the “reality loses its seriousness” and when its necessity “becomes light” (*leicht*).²² Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 187.

⁴² Marcuse: ‘Reasonably, the system of societal labor would be organized rather with a view to saving time and space for the development of individuality *outside* the inevitably repressive workworld. Play and display, as principles of civilization, imply not only the transformation of labor but its complete subordination to the freely evolving potentialities of man nature. The ideas of play and display now reveal their full distance from the values of productiveness and performance: play is *unproductive* and *useless* precisely because it cancels the repressive and exploitative traits of labor and leisure; it “just plays” with the reality.’ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 195.

⁴³ Marcuse refers to imagination as a synonym of phantasy: ‘The mental faculty exercising this freedom is that of *imagination*.’ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, 189.

⁴⁴ Marcuse wrote: ‘The Orphic Eros transforms being: he masters cruelty and death through liberation. His language is *song*, and his work is *play*. Narcissus’s life is that of *beauty*, and his existence is *contemplation*. These images refer to the aesthetic dimension as the one in which their reality must be sought and validated.’ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 171.

⁴⁵ Producciones Valcárcel (Roberto Valcárcel), ‘Fragmento de una entrevista a Roberto Valcárcel realizada por Jacinto Angel Bustillo el 6 de septiembre de 1978 (tres días antes del accidente)’ in Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19 May, 1979.

is the only true and authentic popular capital'.⁴⁶ When I asked him recently about his opinion today on Beuys' claim that 'everyone is an artist', Valcárcel responded that while he still agrees with this appreciation that 'potentially' should be added to this phrase.⁴⁷

While rule number three's call to unmask repression disguised as 'morality' cannot be traced to Marcuse's ideas about art in *Eros and Civilization*, it is in line with his thinking. Like Marcuse, Valcárcel believes that institutions reproduce repression and often exert 'surplus repression', or what can be understood as unnecessary restraints which serve the usually economic interests of certain groups.⁴⁸

Valcárcel's particular interest in so-called truths, alluded to in rule number three, echoes his commitment to counteract authoritarianism. Thus in 1996, he described the quest of his art to 'sow doubt' in the spectator:

In sum, it is about sowing doubt. Why? Because this is my mission in this world. I even dare to state this in a more polemic way: I believe that the main source of pain, the principal cause of suffering is believing in truths. Because, in the name of those truths, many have been tortured [...].⁴⁹

These rules are often, in turn, articulated with the strategies used by the artist to create artworks that, like Dadaist art, in the artist's words 'pull the cart the other way'.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Valcárcel wrote 'El verdadero capital es la capacidad humana, TODA CAPACIDAD HUMANA, inclusive la más íntima. Porque esta puede continuar desarrollándose si se libera de la estructura de poder del capitalismo y se convierte en administración autónoma. El capital es la creatividad humana, y la creatividad es el único verdadero capital popular.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'Un arte distinto (fracasado intento de entrevista a Joseph Beuys)', *Semana de Última Hora*, 1 July 1983.

⁴⁷ Valcárcel claimed: 'Todo el mundo es un artista *en potencia*'. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, 4 January 2014.

⁴⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴⁹ The original reads: 'En suma se trata de sembrar la duda ¿Por qué? Es mi misión en este mundo. Incluso me atrevo a formular de manera más polémica: yo creo que la principal fuente de dolor, la principal causa de sufrimiento de la humanidad es creer en verdades. Porque en nombre de esas verdades se ha torturado [...]'. Anonymous, 'La principal causa de sufrimiento de la humanidad es creer en verdades', *La Razón*, La Paz, 1996.

⁵⁰ This phrase has been recurrent in my interviews with the artist (2010-2014).

III. Literature Review

There are no extensive studies or publications about Valcárcel except for his own book of which he is the author.⁵¹ In addition to Valcárcel's book, a few of the artist's writings in catalogues have proved very useful, as well as a PowerPoint presentation on his life, exhibition documentation and newspaper reviews. This section provides an overview of these sources and of the brief references to Valcárcel in Bolivian art history.

1. Valcárcel on Valcárcel

Although Valcárcel's book, *Roberto Valcárcel: Works 1968-2008*, does not have the rigour of an academic publication, it is the most complete source for his artworks and ideas. It consists of two volumes, the first one includes images of Valcárcel's art (as well as of his graphic and architectural design), and the second one reproduces a selection of texts mostly published in catalogues, as well as some unpublished material. The first volume is comprehensive but not complete: it does not include images of the works *Puerta del Sol*, *Cruz Cuadrada* or *El Movimiento Erótico La Paz*, to name just a few of interest to this dissertation.⁵² The images are arranged in thematic, media and chronologic sections conceived by the artist.⁵³ One or two paragraphs precede each section. Some of these texts reproduce texts previously published in catalogues, some of which were edited for the book. The categories in which the artist classifies his artwork, the deceiving formal order of the book, and inconsistencies in the information provided is coherent with his rejection of objectivity and truth, as confirmed in a note referring to invented information:

⁵¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*.

⁵² Valcárcel wrote: 'Una selección de obras realizadas entre 1968 y el 2008. Los principales criterios de inclusión o exclusión consisten en cuánto me ha gustado y me sigue gustando una pieza, cuán significativa es para mí, o cuán representativa la considero de algún aspecto de mi trabajo.' Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 7.

⁵³ Valcárcel's classification of his artwork is manifested in the themes in which he has grouped his artworks: 'Inicio', 'Europa', 'Bolivia 1978-1980', 'Protesta', 'Objetos', 'Acciones', 'Otro Lugar', 'Rostros', 'Retratos', 'La Muerte', 'Eros', 'Cosmos', 'Alfa Centauri', 'Pluricuadros', 'Neo neo Pop', 'Multicuadros', 'Imagen=Texto', 'Texto=Imagen', 'Cantidades', 'São Paulo', 'Transfusiones', 'Neo-Objetos', 'Anfibios', 'Fotografía', 'Arquitectura', 'Diseño Gráfico', 'Obra triste' and 'Trabajos recientes'. Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid*, p. 8-9.

The criteria for classifying and ordering refer to the different stages of my artistic production, a chronological sense, which is conveniently flexible, and to thematic or iconographic affinities. These are very relative criteria because, on the one hand, there are aspects that are constant [across] in my work, and on the other, because close transversal links can be observed between diverse thematic series or chapters that are apparently different. All this data, in particular dates and measures, is approximate. In some few examples, invented.⁵⁴

Thus, in the first volume, the categorization of artworks thematically and by media is in some cases misleading. There is for instance, a category on death and another one on eroticism (with some images cropped and some others repeated) while there was no exhibition on the latter topic apart from *El Movimiento Erótico* which is not included in this section but in the ‘São Paulo’ one. Although the eclecticism of Valcárcel’s work is reflected in the numerous categories, the diversity of media and inclusion of ‘random’ objects in his exhibitions – which constituted deliberate provocations – is not reflected in the book. This is a very important aspect of his work, as he claimed early on to be against unity of theme and technique.⁵⁵ His *Víctima de Guerra* (which appears under the title *Un muerto*, ‘dead man,’ in the book)⁵⁶ was originally exhibited, for example, as a deliberate disruption of his exhibition of photographs in Emusa Gallery, in December of 1978. This intentional lack of unity within the exhibition is not reflected in the book as these artworks are reproduced in different sections. The photographs are included in the ‘Europa’ section and his *Víctima de Guerra* in the ‘Objects’ section – and not, incidentally, in the ‘Death’ section mentioned above.⁵⁷ There is also a section titled ‘São Paulo’, where he includes images he sent to the biennial (except for his *S’ullu* which is included in the Bolivia section). There is no documentation

⁵⁴ The original reads: ‘Los criterios de agrupación y ordenamiento se refieren a diversas épocas de mi producción artística, en un sentido cronológico convenientemente flexible, y a afinidades temáticas o iconográficas. Son criterios muy relativos porque por una parte existen en mi trabajo aspectos constantes a lo largo y ancho de varias épocas y, por otra, se puede constatar a menudo estrechos vínculos transversales entre diversos conjuntos temáticos o ‘capítulos aparentemente dispares.’/Todos los datos, en particular las fechas y medidas, son aproximados. En algunos pocos casos son inventados.’ Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 7.

⁵⁵ Valcárcel wrote: ‘Roberto nunca creyó en un ‘estilo propio’ ni en la ‘unidad de la obra’ ni en la pureza de la técnica.’ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 84*, La Paz, 19-30 December 1978.

⁵⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol.1, p. 86.

⁵⁷ Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol.1, pp. 24-47, and p. 87.

of the other biennials in which he participated, most importantly Bienal de La Habana, where he presented his *¿Qué es helarte?* (What is to freeze/ What is art), and where his work was most likely brought to the attention of critic Gerardo Mosquera. At the end of this volume, he includes his recent artwork, from 2008, and his creations in photography, architecture and graphic design.

The second volume of the book is comprised of texts of which a large number was published in catalogues. It includes several unpublished texts, many without information regarding when they were written.⁵⁸ These texts are usually short, one to four pages mostly, and they comprise Valcárcel's reflections and views on art: what art is, the construction of meaning and knowledge in art, and the reception of art. There is also a group of texts written for presentations of exhibitions of his own and of other artists.⁵⁹ Among these texts, his 'Curriculaske Valcarcelaske' has proved to be a central document in my research, as well as 'Anal Personality and Symmetry in Architecture', the latter included in the 'Provocative Texts' section.⁶⁰ I would have never known of the existence of his *Cruz cuadrada*, a central artwork in this dissertation, if I had not found it in this volume. The text of *Cruz cuadrada* is highlighted by the artist among those he considers that 'should not be missed' and, underlining its calculated polemic nature, it has also been classified in his book as one of his 'Provocative Texts'.⁶¹ I also found other important information in what would seem to be texts that are unrelated to my investigation. I came upon a description of the difference between freedom and liberation, for example, in the presentation text that the artist wrote for the paintings of Charo Liendo, mentioned above.⁶² In the second volume of the book, Valcárcel also underlines his lack of academic rigour:

⁵⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p 5.

⁵⁹ Volume 2 is divided in the following sections: 'Acerca del propio autor' (where he reproduces only one text, his Curriculaske Valcarcelaske); 'Definición de arte'; 'Arte y acción'; 'Significado, cognición y otros...'; 'Apreciar el arte'; 'Enseñanza del arte'; 'Textos provocativos'; 'Acerca de exposiciones'; 'Acerca de artistas'; 'La Bienal SCZ 2006' and 'Etcétera'. Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p 9-12.

⁶⁰ 'El carácter anal y la simetría en la arquitectura' (Textos Provocativos), Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 150-162. In this dissertation, I have, without intending to, made reference to most of his provocative texts. Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol.2, pp. 131-62.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 137-139.

⁶² Roberto Valcárcel, 'Camino y destino, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p 179.

I find that several ideas that appear here seem to be accurate and fundamental, and I will defend them to death, or at least until torture is unbearable. Others can be branded as very naïve, and lacking academic rigour, but as can be deduced from the texts, I have little interest in academia.⁶³

In his book, Valcárcel warns the readers that certain ideas have changed over time. Although he does not point out which, I have identified a few, like his change of mind regarding an initial position claiming the need for art to communicate – in the ‘Fragment of an Interview with Roberto Valcárcel by Jacinto Angel Bustillo 6 September 1978 (three days before the accident)’⁶⁴ – which has changed into a rejection of art having a message, as referred to, for example, in his more recent text ‘El mensaje del artista’ (The Artist’s Message), published in his book in 2008.⁶⁵ His perspective on originality seems to have changed as well. Originality was mentioned in the same interview as one of the myths that should be debunked because it prevents artists from making use of someone else’s work.⁶⁶ Although not in the same sense, he has recently emphasized that he perceives that originality seems to be the ultimate criterion in the evaluation of art in the art system, despite claims of the opposite.⁶⁷ There have also been some modifications – sort of fictitious updates of Valcárcel’s *Curriculaske Valcarcelaske* – which will be examined in terms of their relation with humour and play in Chapter Three.

Valcárcel’s alternatives to CVs, initially published in catalogues and reprinted in his book – his *Curriculum Possibilitae* and his *Curriculaske Valcarcelaske* – are key documents for gaining a better understanding on how the

⁶³ The original reads ‘Varias ideas que aparecen aquí me parecen certeras y fundamentales, y las defenderé hasta la muerte, o al menos hasta que la tortura sea insoportable. Otras, pueden ser tildadas de bastante ingenuas y carentes de rigor académico, pero, como se verá en los propios textos, la academia me interesa bastante poco.’ Roberto Valcárcel, ‘Intro’, *ibid.*, vol. 2., p. 7.

⁶⁴ A mysterious accident is referred to in several texts published in the 1979 Emusa Gallery exhibition catalogue. The accident is further discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. See: Producciones Valcárcel (Roberto Valcárcel), ‘Fragmento de una entrevista a Roberto Valcárcel realizada por Jacinto Angel Bustillo el 6 de septiembre de 1978 (tres días antes del accidente).’ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19 May, 1979.

⁶⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, ‘El mensaje del artista’ in: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2., p. 70-71.

⁶⁶ Producciones Valcárcel (Roberto Valcárcel), *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, September 2013.

artist addresses facts, the art system and himself.⁶⁸ I equally consider, in retrospect, his fictitious interview entitled ‘Fragment of an interview with Roberto Valcárcel by Juan Ángel Bustillos which took place on 6 September 1978 (three days before the accident),’ – also reproduced in the book – as a sort of initial artist statement.⁶⁹ His occasional brief descriptions of his own work, under different aliases, are equally useful tools for gaining further insight into his artwork and ideas.⁷⁰

Valcárcel’s PowerPoint presentation ‘Mi vida’ (My Life), 2012, has been another central document in my dissertation.⁷¹ This PowerPoint was projected during a talk about Valcárcel himself – and not his art, at the request of curator José Bedoya. The presentation, which the artist conceived as of a sort of ‘mockumentary’ about his life, was part of the inauguration programme of the Centro Cultural de España (Cultural Centre of Spain) in La Paz, and was also presented on a later date in Kiosko Gallery in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. It combines biographic data with ideas and art, using film language as a common thread, as well as ironic self-promotion. For instance, the PowerPoint presentation underlines repression, authoritarianism and power, among the many themes that interest Valcárcel. The projection of his *Cruce cuadrada* [Fig. 5.9] as the first slide of his presentation, while he waited for the public to arrive and settle in their seats, sought to provoke the audience by questioning the trend of adopting indigenous customs during the government of Evo Morales. Another example related to the topics addressed in this dissertation is his statement, in the same PowerPoint presentation, about his interest in why people hold different religious and ideological beliefs. A similar claim can be made for his slide about his interest in bureaucracy in terms of its relation with repression. Laughing at himself, which he does throughout the presentation, is a key aspect of my investigation as well as

⁶⁸ These CVs were originally published in catalogues of exhibitions of Valcárcel. See: Galería Emusa. *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 90*. La Paz, 8-19 May 1979 and Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel (Producciones Valcárcel), exposición 336*, La Paz, 2-13 October 1990. These CVs are also reproduced in his book: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol.1, p 12 and vol. 2, p. 15.

⁶⁹ Galería Emusa. *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 84*. La Paz, 19-30 December 1978.

⁷⁰ The most relevant example are the texts published in the catalogue of the following exhibition: Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, ‘Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva’, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

⁷¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, PowerPoint presentation document, October 2012.

the point that he makes in his final slide about his interest in ‘independent, autonomous individuals’.⁷²

There is some valuable, albeit succinct, information on the artist in a website, conceived by Valcárcel, which shows a selection of his works arranged in nine types: ‘recent works’, ‘conceptual’, ‘objectual’ [sic], ‘photography’, ‘actions’, ‘painting’, ‘drawings’, ‘graphic design’ and ‘architectural’.⁷³ In this English language only website (undoubtedly aimed at an international audience), there is a text under the title ‘Info’ by esART Foundation director Patricia Tordoir. Tordoir describes Valcárcel as the Bolivian artist with the greatest international projection. This projection should be understood as relative to the exposure that other Bolivian artists have had and taking into consideration that Bolivian art has been scantily exhibited internationally. Besides biennials, most of the exposure of Valcárcel’s artwork has been in group exhibitions of Bolivian art that have had little impact. Tordoir further defines Valcárcel as a radical eclectic (a term Valcárcel has used himself), who uses unconventional materials, with a predominantly conceptual approach, and who in the late 1970s represented ‘repressed young people under a dictatorship regime’.⁷⁴ She also characterizes Valcárcel as an artist who ‘defies preset ideas established by the market, the art critics, the galleries and the editors’ and one who ‘challenges the viewer not to use these gimmicks, but confront the oeuvre in solitude, trusting his senses, that he may even find a sense of humour in the works conveyed.’⁷⁵

I have also identified a dialogue between the artist’s view of society and some of his Facebook publications. Although a large quantity of these are publicity for the classes he gives in his studio, I have found correspondences between his publications of the emblems (eg. The Fried Egg) of his pseudo government, El Territorio Creativo Libre Independiente, and his fictitious identities, as well as the prevalence of his liking for puns.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel Works*, <www.artevalcarcel.com>, accessed 3 March 2016.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

2. Existing Documentation

The documentation on Valcárcel I have found consists mainly of exhibition material, press articles, the artist's extensive CV and letters addressed to the artist related to the latter. The catalogues of Valcárcel's single exhibitions consist of a few pages, particularly those of Emusa Gallery in La Paz, where he has exhibited most consistently (1978-1994). Although the amount of information they contain on any particular exhibition is scant, they do sometimes include an image or two (often reproduced in black and white) and some short texts. The brief presentations by Pedro Querejazu for Valcárcel's exhibitions in Arte Único Gallery and Fundación BHN Gallery catalogues (1988-1997), and his newspaper reviews in *Última Hora* constitute the largest body of writing on the artist. Querejazu's catalogue essay 'Grupo Valcárcel: One-Man-Group-Show'⁷⁶ is the most complete description of the artist's work.

Querejazu's and Teresa Gisbert's newspaper reviews published in *Última Hora*, 1983-1987, provide useful but brief references to Valcárcel's exhibitions and, on some occasions to his performances. Both authors often depict Valcárcel's art in a favourable manner even though Querejazu does not shy from being critical and making statements like 'lacks the consistency of earlier works'.⁷⁷ In 'A propósito de Amadeus'⁷⁸ Querejazu makes explicit his good opinion of Valcárcel as he compares Valcárcel with Mozart and the other artists – masters in

⁷⁶ This essay describes the different artistic personalities that make up Valcárcel's fictitious group, and hence his different types of artwork. It contains a paragraph with one of the most eloquent positive assessments of Valcárcel's art: 'La tradicionalista, provinciana y miope sociedad boliviana, inspirada en los mediocres modelos de la aculturada clase media de Miami, y en los mediocres modelos de la televisión enlatada, tiene relaciones de amor y odio con este artista, todavía desconfía, mira su producción, con suspicacia, y desperdicia su potencial artístico e intelectual.' Pedro Querejazu, 'Grupo Valcárcel: One-Man-Group-Show', Fundación BHN gallery, 19 April- 6 May, 1994.

⁷⁷ Querejazu wrote 'carece consistencia de obras anteriores' about the works presented in Emusa Gallery, 5-16 July 1983. Pedro Querejazu, 'Roberto Valcárcel. Concurso Nacional de Pintura en Homenaje al Bicentenario del Nacimiento del Libertador Simón Bolívar, *Semana de Última Hora*, 8 July 1983. In another article where Querejazu refers to Valcárcel's obtaining the Pedro Domingo Murillo Salón prize with *Franz Tamayo*, he does not hesitate to mention that his *Che Guevara* (same technique) and *Marlene Dietrich* were better artworks. Pedro Querejazu, 'Eventos plásticos: Roberto Valcárcel', *Semana de Última Hora*, 9 March 1984. These articles are reproduced in Pedro Querejazu, *Arte Contemporáneo en Bolivia, 1970-2013, Críticas, ensayos, estudios*, Libros de arte N. 4, Edited by Pedro Querejazu [personal edition], La Paz, 2013, pp. 45 and 85.

⁷⁸ Pedro Querejazu, 'A propósito de Amadeus', in *Semana de Última Hora*, 29 November 1985.

oil painting and the organizers of Bienal Bolivia (Pucara group) – as the envious Salieris.⁷⁹

The reviews by Teresa Gisbert in the same newspaper have equally proved useful, as well as several articles written by Valcárcel, and the statements made by the artist in numerous interviews over the years.

Valcárcel's complete CV and letters certifying his professional activities are also useful sources of information. The letters contain information on prizes, conferences, courses taught, certificates from the Bolivian Artists' Association (Asociación Boliviana de Artistas Plásticos/ ABAP), professional certification as architect in Bolivia, among others.⁸⁰

3. References to Roberto Valcárcel in Bolivian Art History

References made to Valcárcel can be found in broad scope survey essays on Bolivian art, usually not very long and most of which have been published locally. Art historian and conservation specialist Pedro Querejazu has portrayed Valcárcel as one of the most important artists of his generation – which he refers to as the New Generation – and has paid close attention to his work during the 1980s and 1990s. In the reference that Querejazu makes to a New Generation, in his essay on Bolivian art published in the book *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, he focuses on the contribution to Bolivian art by this group of artists and highlights the introduction of new themes and media – particularly the use of experimental art, conceptual art, ephemeral, ars povera, events, actions, performances and photography. Querejazu further underlines a subtle critique prevailing in their work, when compared to the social realism of the muralists of Generation of 52, and the fact that these artists have been educated outside of Bolivia, far from the

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ They also include invitations to biennials and recommendation letters for scholarships (for USIS Sharing Ideas and Knowledge among Artists and for the Guggenheim scholarship), Valcárcel's application to the Darmstadt scholarship, an invitation to be part of the advising committee of Emusa Gallery in 1979, a letter from art historian Teresa Gisbert clarifying that she took into account Valcárcel's autonomist position when she appointed him director of the Art Department, among others, making a total of 44 documents. I had the opportunity to look at this information in 2010.

‘obstacles of the stagnant national schools of art’.⁸¹ In this overview of Bolivian art, the ensuing reference to Valcárcel’s art is brief:

Roberto Valcárcel has opened a new course in [a type of] social analysis and critique of profound lucubration and incisive denunciation, with his tortured subjects, his equivocal young men, Che Guevara or Franz Tamayo made with tea bags, making use, to a large extent, of drawing [as foundation for his artwork].⁸²

In the image section of the same book –edited by Querejazu – the artist is equally represented in the ‘New Generation’ section with his *Franz Tamayo* with used tea bags, and his monochrome drawings and paintings on wood which Querejazu highlights for their denunciation and profound social criticism.⁸³ The emphasis on bi-dimensional artworks by Valcárcel in this section responds to the fact that this is a book mainly about painting (with a brief recount of sculpture). Hence, no images are reproduced of Valcárcel’s performances or other more conceptual and ephemeral artworks that are key from the perspective of this dissertation such as *El Movimiento Erótico*, *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* and *Puerta del Sol*.

Querejazu is one of the authors who has published more extensively, particularly in the 1990s and 2000s, on twentieth century Bolivian art. In his essays written for international exhibitions of Bolivian art and published in international biennial catalogues, Querejazu describes Valcárcel’s work in similar terms, highlighting him as one of the best draughtsmen in the country and for his use of a Düsseldorf and Darmstadt school language – a claim on which he does not expound. In these essays Querejazu includes references to more recent paintings with more colour and postmodern aesthetics that correspond to the time after democracy is regained. He similarly refers to Valcárcel as a radical eclectic,⁸⁴ using a category coined by the artist himself.⁸⁵ In the more recent

⁸¹ Querejazu writes: ‘Gran parte de los protagonistas de esta nueva generación se han formado fuera del país, lo que les permite trabajar con enfoques frescos, sin la rémora de las anquilosadas escuelas de arte nacionales’. Pedro Querejazu, ‘La Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX’, in Pedro Querejazu, (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, Banco Hipotecario Nacional, La Paz, 1989, p. 29.

⁸² The original text reads: ‘Roberto Valcárcel abrió una nueva senda en el análisis y crítica sociales de profunda elucubración y lacerante e incisiva denuncia, con sus torturados, sus muchachos equívocos, el Che Guevara o Franz Tamayo hechos con bolsas de té, valiéndose en gran medida del dibujo.’ Ibid, p. 29.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Pedro Querejazu, ‘Arte desde el corazón de América’, *Semana de Última Hora*, 7 April 1996, reproduced in Pedro Querejazu, *Arte Contemporáneo en Bolivia, 1970-2013, Críticas, ensayos, estudios*,

essays, Querejazu mentions Valcárcel when discussing recent art with a focus on identity issues in the work of Valcárcel's alias Grupo Valcárcel (Valcárcel Group) and on gender issues in his *Arcángel dinamitero* (Dynamite Archangel) and *Mickey Mouse*.⁸⁶ On a couple of occasions, Querejazu presents Valcárcel as a great pedagogue, and also, as a Marxist whom he contrasts with those left wing artists who repeat slogans without much thought⁸⁷ – and who are the enemies of Valcárcel.

In an essay published in the book edited by Querejazu (*Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*), art historian Teresa Gisbert assesses Valcárcel's work in terms of his artistry – she also refers to Valcárcel as one of the best draughtsmen of the twentieth century in Bolivia. She also makes a brief mention of Valcárcel's contribution to the history of Bolivian architecture and commends Valcárcel for his denunciation of torture and drug trafficking during military regimes. She illustrates the latter point with a description of Valcárcel's *Campo de Alcachofas*.⁸⁸ Except for her review of the latter exhibition, wherein she characterizes Valcárcel as 'the favourite rebel', and where she interprets this artwork with some detail,

p. 238.

⁸⁵ Valcárcel retrospectively calls his *Multicuadros 'Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales'* in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 232 and 236-241.

⁸⁶ Pedro Querejazu, 'El arte durante la década de los noventa en Bolivia' in *Políticas de la diferencia. Arte iberoamericano de fin de siglo*, Centro de Convenciones de Pernambuco, 3 July -15 August 2001, reproduced in Pedro Querejazu, *Arte Contemporáneo en Bolivia, 1970-2013, Críticas, ensayos, estudios*, Libros de arte N. 4, Edited by Pedro Querejazu [personal edition], La Paz, 2013, p. 391.

⁸⁷ Pedro Querejazu, 'Juan Carlos Achata', *Semana de Última Hora*, 16 April 1989, reproduced in Pedro Querejazu, *Arte Contemporáneo en Bolivia, 1970-2013, Críticas, ensayos, estudios*, p. 200.

⁸⁸ Teresa Gisbert wrote: 'Ambos, Medeiros y Calderón, pero sobre todo este último, cuya obra transforma la ciudad de La Paz, son artistas y arquitectos. Otro tanto ocurre con Roberto Valcárcel autor de una comentada residencia post-moderna. Es uno de los mejores dibujantes bolivianos de este siglo junto a Solón y Arandía; de su escuela salieron importantes artistas jóvenes como Ortuño. La obra pictórica de Valcárcel es una protesta contra la represión y el tráfico de cocaína, valientemente presentada en su exposición "Campo de Alcachofas" durante la dictadura de García Meza, gobierno marcado por la muerte del político Quiroga Santa Cruz, conocido en el ámbito intelectual por su novela "Los deshabitados". Se trata de una serie de cartones que muestran la desintegración psíquica y física producida por el uso de la pasta de coca (alcaloide = blanco; alcachofa = verde = uniforme militar), una bella adolescente se desintegra en cartones que alternan con otros pintados de blanco y verde. El autorretrato del artista y un Sagrado Corazón, ambos con ojos sanguinolentos, muestran el camino hacia el fin. Valcárcel inicia su carrera con la serie 'Los gritones' que es una denuncia a la tortura institucionalizada.' Teresa Gisbert, 'Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu, *Pintura Boliviana Siglo XX*, p. 45.

Gisbert has not written an extensive text about Valcárcel.⁸⁹ Her other texts, like the brief introduction to Valcárcel's work for the São Paulo Bienal of 1983, offer similar descriptions and analysis.⁹⁰ In two other essays about Bolivian art, she briefly mentions Valcárcel in similar terms, albeit with a brief mention to happenings, geometric art, etc.⁹¹ In these essays, she equally highlights Valcárcel's *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* as a culmination of Valcárcel's period of denunciation which she now describes also as a denunciation of drug consumption in Bolivia – and not only of drug trafficking. In a recent interview, she made clear that she still believes that the art of this period is Valcárcel's most significant work.⁹²

I found less relevant and somewhat prejudiced the international authors commissioned to write an appraisal and account of the art of Bolivia for Querejazu's book. Spanish art historian (with Chilean nationality) Leopoldo Castedo referred to Valcárcel as a Pop artist, noting that this art movement 'did not catch on in Bolivia except for sporadic examples and after a notable delay.'⁹³ Argentine poet and critic Rafael Squirru, associated with Argentine painting and former director of Cultural Affairs of the OAS in Washington DC, regrets that

⁸⁹ Gisbert wrote: 'Entre los artistas bolivianos cabe destacar a Roberto Valcárcel quien pasó a ser un artista controvertido después de haber ocupado, en 1980 y 1981, el lugar de 'rebelde preferido'. Avatares de los tiempos. Teresa Gisbert, 'Galería Emusa 1982', in *Semana de Última Hora*, 21 January 1983.

⁹⁰ Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *Catálogo Geral Bienal de São Paulo* (ed. Maria Ottilia Bocchini and Ivo Mesquita), Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 14 October-18 December 1983, p. 85.

⁹¹ Teresa Gisbert, 'Pintura Contemporánea en Bolivia' in Fundación Cultural EMUSA, *Memoria, 1974-1994*, Fundación Cultural EMUSA, La Paz, 1994 pp. 17-24 and Teresa Gisbert, 'Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu, *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 45.

⁹² Teresa Gisbert, 'Historia y Cultura en la Bolivia del Siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu, *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 45. Gisbert, Teresa, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2013.

⁹³ Castedo wrote: 'Son estas manifestaciones reflejo de la atracción de la vanguardia y de la necesidad de ponerse al día. El episodio ha excitado incluso la atracción por el "happening" o "Performance", con evidente atraso en cuanto a su iniciación por Alan Kaprow en Estados Unidos y Marta Minujín en Argentina, amén de numerosos seguidores. Dentro de mi escasa información acerca de algunos "happenings" bolivianos de Roberto Valcárcel ("Sólo de látex" y "El Arte no ha muerto", 1986) ignoro si se han considerado los innumerables realizados de antiguo en tierras quechuas y aymaras, como por ejemplo las corridas de toros apunados, la simbología de las múltiples danzas, el triunfo del cóndor con cintas de colores – símbolo de las raíz primigenia – sobre el toro – símbolo del conquistador. Creo que, al margen de indigenismos, existen en Bolivia fuentes sobradas para configurar los "happenings" más originales imaginables.' Leopoldo Castedo, 'Bolivia en el Contexto de la Pintura Latinoamericana', in Pedro Querejazu, *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 103.

the ‘popes’ (pop artists) have created followers in the American continent.⁹⁴ Squirru characterizes Valcárcel, nonetheless, as an inquiring personality who transits from ‘protesta’ (protest art) to happening and Art Déco, and highlights a deceitful simplicity in Valcárcel’s artwork that conceals a highly sophisticated taste.⁹⁵ Argentine poet and critic Raúl Santana refers to Valcárcel as an artist who uses arte povera, conceptualism, happening and pop art but whose work is closely linked to the Bolivian context.⁹⁶

Chilean artist and curator Luz Maria Williamson is the only other international author that has written about Valcárcel’s art, albeit as part of a presentation written for a group exhibition of Bolivian art in Santiago de Chile in 1996.⁹⁷ Although I have not had access to this text, I presume that her reference to Valcárcel is brief.

In his book *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico* (Contemporary Painting in Bolivia. A Historical and Critical Essay),⁹⁸ published in 1989, the same year as Querejazu’s publication, Bolivian critic Carlos Salazar Mostajo portrays Valcárcel in negative terms. In the introduction to the chapter where we would expect Salazar Mostajo to refer to Valcárcel, he points to him as the representative of a trend – associated with the US and European cultural

⁹⁴ Squirru writes: ‘Es necesario tomar conciencia de los propios límites y saber callar cuando alguna manifestación estética no nos alcanza. La condena es siempre de aire dogmático y propio de los “popes”, y aunque ha hecho escuela en nuestro continente, confundiendo sinceridad con desparpajo, quien se precie de la seriedad de su propio juicio intentará al menos huir de tales bravatas que más que ecuanimidad denotan provincianismo, e inseguridad más que confianza en la propia apreciación.’ Rafael Squirru, ‘Encuentros con el arte boliviano contemporáneo’, in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 106.

⁹⁵ Squirru wrote: ‘Nos llamó la atención la personalidad inquieta de Roberto Valcárcel, quien pasa de una pintura de protesta al mundo del “happening” y del “body art”, que lo llevan a transformarse en lo que parecen figuras del americano Segal. Sus últimas obras apuntan a una figuración donde de algún modo está presente el “art deco”, obras que en su engañosa simplicidad esconden un gusto altamente sofisticado y un encomiable dominio de sus medios expresivos.’ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁹⁶ Santana wrote: ‘Basta observar la obra de uno de los mayores exponentes vanguardistas: Roberto Valcárcel – que realizó arte povera, conceptualismo, happenings [sic], arte pop. etc. – para comprender cómo aun esos lenguajes jamás le hicieron perder de vista su contexto, al que sigue elaborando con la versatilidad que lo caracteriza.’ Raúl Santana, ‘Aproximaciones a la pintura boliviana actual’ in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 111.

⁹⁷ In his CV, Valcárcel includes a reference to Williamson’s text for the catalogue of the exhibition *El fin de los márgenes* (The End of Margins), Santiago de Chile, April 1996. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares* (Curricular data), updated 2011.

⁹⁸ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, Librería Editorial Juventud, La Paz, 1989.

penetration and its decadence – that should be avoided. Valcárcel is further portrayed as uncreative and as a mere imitator of European art.⁹⁹

Other critics have only exceptionally and briefly written about Valcárcel. For example, art critic Armando Soriano Badani, portrays Valcárcel as social critic with a redeeming intention; an artist who represents pain, injustice, violence, misery and ignorance – in the form of political prisoners.¹⁰⁰ Soriano Badani commends Valcárcel's work for his new realism of almost photographic perfection and for not being a mere submissive follower of Pop art and of the Neo-Realist School.¹⁰¹ In a slightly later study addressing art in relation to new urban *imaginaries* in the 1990s, sociologist Alicia Szmukler interprets *Grupo Valcárcel* 1994 paintings (his *Simón Bolívar*, in particular) in relation to a new conception of identity in Bolivian society. The reactions and comments of her focus group to Valcárcel's 'erotic' *Mickey cubiste* (1996), provide insight on the extremely conservative attitude towards sex around 1998.¹⁰² Finally, in a text presented in the catalogue of the São Paulo Bienal, 2004, Bolivian curator Cecilia Bayá – and one of the main promoters of Valcárcel's book – describes Valcárcel's *Escalas de Cuantificación* (Measuring Scales), which she interprets as a reflection on certain categories of thought, i.e. Behaviourism:

The choice of form and typography prevent the detection of any personal references to the author, emphasising the anonymity and absurdity of a work of art which serves as means of reflecting on things and categories of thought within which we operate.¹⁰³
[...]

⁹⁹ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, 'Situación actual' in *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, Librería Editorial Juventud, La Paz, 1989, pp. 211-212. Salazar's view of art and of Valcárcel is further discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁰⁰ 'La pintura de Valcárcel, está animada por un vigoroso impulso social de fondo crítico y de intención reivindicativa. La temática fundamental de su obra, está contenida por sutiles expresiones simbólicas, en el sentido de que sus figuras y composiciones alientan la representación de conceptos. Por ello, es fácil encontrar el dolor, la injusticia, la violencia, la miseria, la ignorancia, plasmados en obras de impresionante realismo.' Armando Soriano Badani, 'Roberto Valcárcel' in *Pintores Bolivianos Contemporáneo*, Los Amigos del Libro, Cochabamba and La Paz, 1993, p. 217.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Alicia Szmukler, *La ciudad imaginaria. Un análisis sociológico de la pintura contemporánea en Bolivia*, (colab. Mireya Herrero and Bernarda López), PIEB/ SINERGIA, La Paz, 1998.

¹⁰³ Cecilia Bayá Botti, 'Scales for the Unmeasurable', 26a Bienal de São Paulo, <issuu.com/bienal/docs/named09244/96>, accessed 3 March 2016.

Stratification through behaviour with regards to values and feelings becomes “the yardstick with which you will be measured, the purpose of which is to slot you into your right position”.¹⁰⁴

There is at least another text by Bayá, listed in Valcárcel’s CV, but I have not been able to get a hold of it.¹⁰⁵

4. Literature on Repression and Liberation

While Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilisation* provides my main source for ideas of repression throughout this dissertation, *One-Dimensional Man* (also read by the artist) has proved useful in identifying the way that repression takes place in society. Freud’s *Civilisation and its Discontents*,¹⁰⁶ the main text on which Marcuse builds his argument (and which he unpicks) is useful for understanding the author’s ideas on repression. I have also found Freud’s *Three Essays on Theory of Sexuality* helpful. Freud’s essay titled ‘Humour’ has provided important insight and has influenced my proposal to relate humour with eroticism.¹⁰⁷ Simon Critchley’s *On Humour* (2002) formed the basis for my ideas on humour as liberation.¹⁰⁸ Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment* have equally informed my reflections of Marcuse regarding the role of the culture industry in advanced capitalism.

As mentioned before, the main source of information on ‘covert’ repression in Bolivia was found in newspapers, which I reviewed between 1978 and 1983 and from which I gathered attitudes on sex, authoritarianism, sexism, etc.

5. Interviews

I have interviewed Valcárcel several times, 2010-2015, including one time via Skype, and the artist has kindly answered in written form, a last set of questions,

¹⁰⁴ Cecilia Bayá Botti, ‘Scales for the Unmeasurable’, 26a Bienal de São Paulo, <issuu.com/bienal/docs/named09244/96>, accessed 3 March 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Cecilia Bayá Botti, ‘Acerca de Roberto Valcárcel’ in *Revista Arte al Límite*, Santiago de Chile, July 2008. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares* (Curricular data), updated 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, J. Strachey (trans.), The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London, 1973.

¹⁰⁷ Sigmund Freud, ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’ in Gay, Peter, *The Freud Reader*, W.W. Norton & Company, London and New York, 1989, pp. 239-292.

¹⁰⁸ Simon Critchley, *On Humour*, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 95.

before submitting this dissertation.¹⁰⁹ I have also interviewed his students Guiomar Mesa, Efraín Ortuño and Rina Dalence; art historians Pedro Querejazu and Teresa Gisbert, gallerists Norah Claros and Patricia Tordoir from Emusa and esART, respectively; cultural promoter Marcelo Araúz from Santa Cruz de la Sierra; artist Gastón Ugalde with whom Valcárcel worked in the late 1970s and early 1980s; Carlos Salazar's daughter Laura Salazar and Valcárcel's German School friend Armando Urioste.

¹⁰⁹ The first interviews took place in 2010 in La Paz, and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a few months before my research. Three other interviews took place during research trips to Santa Cruz de la Sierra in December 2012, August 2013 and January 2014. I have also interviewed the artist, via Skype, on August 2012.

CHAPTER ONE

'EROTIC' ART WITHIN THE CULTURE INDUSTRY AND AN AUTHORITARIAN AND SEXUALLY REPRESSED SOCIETY

Introduction

This chapter examines the relation between Roberto Valcárcel's art and the idea, evoked in *El Movimiento Erótico*, of a non-repressive society and an autonomous state of being, an artwork that can be considered a sort of manifesto in this respect. It will also look at how Valcárcel interprets and expands these ideas, exemplifying how Marcuse's thought enriches an analysis of artistic creation, and in doing so, challenges prevailing beliefs in Bolivian society and art.

I will do so by focusing on the liberating potential of art in combination with humour, 'open works of art', phantasy, and negating the current status quo (Marcuse's Great Refusal). It specifically seeks to answer how the main issues which interested Marcuse – the illusory freedoms in late capitalism as manifested in the culture industry,¹¹⁰ and the organization of eroticism – can be relevant to the analysis of Valcárcel's art.

This chapter is divided in two parts. The first part explores Valcárcel's creative strategies, taking into consideration how he envisages erotic, non-authoritarian, complex and pleasurable art. The second one interprets Valcárcel's Movement in relation to the close ties between the culture industry and art in the São Paulo Bienal of the 1983 and repression of sexuality and eroticism in Bolivian art and society in the 1980s.

This chapter also considers the implications of *El Movimiento Erótico* in relation to the changes in context in which it was presented: in Emusa Gallery of La Paz, in August of 1983, and two months later, in the São Paulo Bienal.¹¹¹ The textual content of *El Movimiento Erótico* in both locations and venues reflects the

¹¹⁰ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments* (ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, tr. Edmund Jephcott), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002, pp. 94-136

¹¹¹ It was exhibited in Emusa Gallery in August of 1983 and in São Paulo from October to December of the same year.

importance of ideas as works of art, and how this undergoes a moment of transformation, reflection and expansion in Valcárcel's artwork¹¹² towards 'concepts: ideas, definitions, non-object linguistic proposals',¹¹³ as well as more theoretical works of art, and 'projects: possible and impossible works, actions, non-traditional monuments, etc.'¹¹⁴ The first exhibition of *El Movimiento Erótico* in La Paz consisted of twenty vertical sheets of cardboard paper (framed) with hand written texts with markers, drawings and pictures. Each sheet had a similar composition: a title, a box with text on the top half of the surface, and a blank space at the bottom. Cuttings were sometimes pasted at the lower part of the sheets. Each sheet was signed at the bottom right, and was standardized with a text at foot of the page suggesting it was a limited 'edition' of one issue: 'Producciones Valcárcel-Tomo 5-Vol 3-1/1-1983' [Figs. 1.1 and 1.2].¹¹⁵ The presentation in São Paulo consisted, on the other hand, of hand written texts and drawings with markers, and cut outs directly pasted on a small three-wall space in the biennial [Figs. 1.3-1.8].

I. Making Complex and Amusing Art

In *El Movimiento Erótico*, Valcárcel proclaims, propagates, and enacts Marcuse's idea of art as erotic and liberating, and what an erotic artistic and political movement, following these beliefs would look like. Marcuse considers art to be erotic because artistic work 'offers a high degree of libidinal satisfaction'.¹¹⁶ While

¹¹² This description is by Guiomar Mesa, one of the students of Saturday experimental workshop. Guiomar Mesa, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 4 January 2013.

¹¹³ This phrase is extracted from Valcárcel's definition of experimental art, published in the catalogue of the Primer Festival de Arte Experimental, reprinted in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008, p. 39.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ This specific footer is from the plate of *El Movimiento Erótico* titled 'La muerte del arte' [Fig. 1.1].

¹¹⁶ Marcuse writes: "To be sure, there is a mode of work which offers a high degree of libidinal satisfaction, which is pleasurable in its execution. And artistic work, where it is genuine, seems to grow out of a non-repressive instinctual constellation and to envisage non-repressive aims – so much so that *sublimation* seems to require considerable modification if applied to this kind of work. But the bulk of the work relations on which civilization rests is of a very different kind. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Routledge, London and New York, 1998, pp. 84-85.

Marcuse's interest lies in the possibility of a more liberated society, based on erotic principles, Valcárcel is also preoccupied with what constitutes an erotic, free, and creative – hence non-authoritarian – experience of art, both for the artist, and the viewer.¹¹⁷ The implication behind Valcárcel's reflections on Marcuse's proposal is that not all art is free, liberating or non-authoritarian.¹¹⁷

This section discusses how Valcárcel envisaged what a free experience of art would look in the second presentation of *El Movimiento Erótico* in the São Paulo Bienal of 1983 [Figs 1.3-1.8]. In this presentation, these ideas were displayed in a more visual form than in the more conceptual and pamphlet-like version of La Paz. I have chosen to analyse the São Paulo presentation because there is practically no documentation of the version of La Paz, which was dismantled and some elements reused in the Bienal version.¹¹⁸

The first part of this section describes *El Movimiento Erótico* as a complex form grounded on a commitment to a non-authoritarian (creative) experience of art while the second part explores art as a libidinal activity, achieved with the use of phantasy, humour and polymorphic eroticism; taking into account, again, these aspects both in its creation and viewing.

1. A Complex, Multi-layered and Polysemic Art

While *El Movimiento Erótico* was retrospectively described by Valcárcel as a summary of Marcuse's ideas for the non-initiated viewer, it was more than that.¹¹⁹ The São Paulo version, which will be analysed in this section, contains the main

¹¹⁷ Marcuse addresses this issue, 20 years after, in 1977, in his *Aesthetic Dimension*, which is a critique of Marxist Aesthetics. *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1977.

¹¹⁸ I was able to see one of plates (out of twenty) which has survived. The other document of La Paz is a small black and white image published in a newspaper note: Anonymous, 'Crítican al festival de arte experimental', *El Diario*, 10 August 1983. There is, on the other hand, a more complete documentation of the São Paulo version: almost complete images of the three walls, but no access to details (a close reading of several texts is not possible). Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, pp. 376-38. I have also found a black and white panoramic view of *El Movimiento Erótico* in: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *Catálogo Geral 17a Bienal de Sao Paulo* (ed. Maria Ottilia Bocchini and Ivo Mesquita), Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 14 October-18 December 1983, p. 85.

¹¹⁹ Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, 'Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva' (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

ideas of *Eros and Civilization*, but it interprets them and puts them into practice in a complex and multi-layered design [Figs. 1.3-1.8].

Made up mostly of text of different types, but also of a variety of images, drawings with markers and cut outs, the movement puts into practice one of the tactics that Valcárcel had been exploring, around 1982: making an open work of art. The key elements of this type of proposal – rehearsed, for the first time a year earlier, in his *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*– involve an intentional lack of unity in the form, theme and meaning of the artwork.

Valcárcel’s commitment to making artworks with open meaning (polysemic) is reflected in *El Movimiento Erótico* in the multiple types of registers of discourse of its texts and images. The registers range from the principles of the movement (‘citations’ of the manifesto), to jokes, musical scores, advertising, and the rhetoric of culture industry. Text and image are intertwined in polysemic ways, adding an additional level of complexity. Images and texts, set in different registers of discourse, are sometimes both in tune with each other, and with the ideas of the manifesto, and at other times in opposition, and even in direct contradiction with them; if not all of the above. The artist also adds a layer of complexity of meaning by including random elements that respond to his intention to create narrative disruptions:

[...] [while], in part, they [some elements] had a lot to do with the theme, many of them did not have anything at all to do with the theme: they were precisely chaotic, disruptor elements that were there [inaudible] out of context, let’s say; precisely to make visible that the issue was not direct, there was no rational logic [...]¹²⁰

There is, nonetheless, a crescendo in the sequence from left to right, culminating on the right wall (the movement occupied three walls in u shape), with three memorable phrases in very large and colourful letters: ‘To be is to do (Kant). To do is to be (Sartre). Do be do be do (Sinatra)’. This phrase in English – the language of the culture industry – was written on the most visible spot of the

¹²⁰ Valcárcel explained: ‘[...]en parte tenían mucho que ver con la temática pero varias otras de ellas en parte no tenían que ver con la temática, eran precisamente un elemento caótico, disruptor, que más bien estaban ahí [...] digamos, fuera de contexto, precisamente para hacer visible que la cosa no era directa, no era lógica racional [...]’. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012.

space allocated to the artist, in terms of the circulation of visitors in the biennial.¹²¹

Despite the apparent ‘lightness’ of the form, apparent in the centrality of the ‘do be do be do’ joke, *El Movimiento Erótico* in São Paulo had a complex design that challenged the viewer to actively engage in it, and to establish connections that were not obvious, between the different parts that constitute it. The complexity of its form is manifested in the way in which the phrases are of different size, colour, font and visual axis (horizontal, skewed, and mostly ascending), and in curved shape texts, which further expand the polysemic potential of the artwork. This multiplicity of visual orders in the text is also echoed in the various roles that images play. Collage images and marker drawings sometimes illustrate the principles of the manifesto, and function, at others times, as signs (taking the place of words), or concepts in the construction of jokes. For example, the ‘official souvenirs’ of the movement – glasses, a tie, a shoe and a t-shirt drawn with markers on the middle and right walls – underline the ‘existence’ of the movement. A cut out of a racing car [Fig. 1.7], referred to as ‘the erotic machine’, is at the same time an allusion to the Futurist Manifesto’s claim that a racing car is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace.¹²² The erotic doll, the torso of a mannequin dressed in what appears to be a white raincoat with a black beret and lips painted pink (by the artist) is placed on top of the phrase ‘the erotic machine’. The same image is repeated below, except that now the white of the eyes have been painted pink [Fig. 1.7]. Both of these point semantically to the official issuing of memorabilia of events (like the biennials t-shirts or pencils with its logo and so on), and to the love of dolls and mannequins by avant-garde artists. Another collage image of two women embracing, close to the phrase ‘The anarchic-aesthetic hedonism’, can be interpreted as an allusion to non-heterosexual eroticism. In a similar manner, a Roquefort cheese – with its label – can be related to the recuperation of the senses implicit in Marcuse’s polymorphous eroticism and its ‘reactivation of all erotogenic zones and,

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

consequently, in a resurgence of pregenital polymorphous sexuality and in a decline of genital supremacy.¹²³

Several cut outs equally refer to Marcuse's critique of advanced capitalism – Scroodge McDuck and US dollar notes surrounding the phrase 'oppression in the service of capital' [Fig. 1.7].¹²⁴ There is even a picture of Marx surrounded by Disney characters. While some of the images are related to the manifesto, others have opaque and ambiguous meaning or are in contradiction with its principles. Several isolated cut outs of sexualized images of young men and women, and the phrase 'Fuck me' contradict the principle of polymorphous eroticism, and seem to promote a restricted sexuality (heterosexual, genital oriented, and procreative), and hence a restrained eroticism.

As mentioned, images also sometimes operate as text – as if reciprocating the way text functions as image –, like in the greeting phrase written in English, on the column on the right, where Valcárcel paints the Bolivian flag in place of 'Bolivia':

DEAR VISITORS
 [arrow pointing left]THIS IS THE EROTIC MOVEMENT [black and white collage image of Einstein]
 PRESENTED BY ROBERTO VALCÁRCCEL [black and white collage photograph of himself?]
 FROM
 [image of the Bolivian flag]
 WE LOVE YOU ALL! [Fig. 1.8]

Images are equally used to make jokes. For example, in the phrase in which the artist summarizes Marcuse's and the movement's ideas: 'On this planet...and perhaps not only on this planet' [Fig. 1.4], the earth and the universe (or the earth, the sun and the moon) are represented with an orange, a 'globe' in the shape of a pyramid, and a globe with a gas mask – which acquires human features. The inclusion of a pyramid shaped globe and another round one with a mask equally subvert the expectation of planets having spherical shape; and the globe with a mask disrupts anticipating a third geometric form, in the light of artistic convention as they recall the basic shapes in drawing, as well as Cézanne's claim

¹²³ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid.*, p. 201.

¹²⁴ The original text reads: '...para mantener este sistema de opresión... al servicio del capital'.

that nature can be represented with the cube, the sphere and the cylinder. A cutting below of a sphere, pyramid, and cylinder reinforce the latter interpretation. The ‘not only on this planet’ section is ‘illustrated’ with drawings of different models of spaceships, a ‘photograph’ of a flying saucer as well as Albert Einstein’s face. These references to outer space allude to Valcárcel’s interest in the universe which in the following year (1984), would be materialized in an exhibition of the Interplanetary Association of Artists, another idea of an institution imagined by the artist. The allusion to an interplanetary character of the movement claim undermines, at the same time, the statement that is being made (that of an interplanetary institution), while mocking the legitimization of art via geographic categories like the biennial’s ‘internationalism’¹²⁵ or the national aspiration of institutions like the Bolivian Artists’s Association (ABAP), an affiliate of the UNESCO International Association of Artists. These references function, at the same time, as disruptive elements that open meaning while underlining, at the same time, the irrational and utopic character of the movement.

The association between Albert Einstein and Valcárcel’s movement is a repeated presence throughout the installation to which multiple meanings can be attributed. It can be, for example, a metaphor for an expansion of creativity into other disciplines, with infinite possibilities, but also to imagine and incorporate into art ideas and practices related to the universe. Repetition equally enacts a publicity tactic to sell merchandise connected with personal image. The artist’s personal identification with Einstein was highlighted, in 2012, in a presentation where the artist included the scientist in the section titled ‘Geniuses’ and where he referred to him, almost thirty years after, as one of the two scientists who have greatly influenced his view of the world (the other one was Kurt Gödel).¹²⁶ In both cases, in the *El Movimiento Erótico* and in the presentation, the inclusion of Einstein functions not only as a symbol of genius (and creative capacity), but as an icon with which the artist wants to associate his image. This was made more

¹²⁵ Although the caption of the artwork in the catalogue of the Bienal lists it as the ‘International Erotic Movement’ – in lieu of ‘Erotic movement’ – I have decided to use ‘Movimiento Erótico’ to be coherent with the artist’s use of this title in the artwork itself in São Paulo. See Figs. 1.5 and 1.8.

¹²⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, PowerPoint presentation document, October 2012.

explicit in the artist's ironic self-promotion, in the same presentation, with a humorous depiction of Einstein in what would nowadays be associated with a sexualized male body, a muscular torso with a 'six pack' stomach and low waist jeans, with the motto 'Valcárcel Productions' [Fig 1.9].

2. Play, Humour, and Song: Art as Erotic Experience

In this section, I would like to argue that *El Movimiento Erótico* not only contains the philosophy of the art movement, but it puts into practice, in important ways, the essence of what art is for Valcárcel: a pleasurable experience. These enactments are, at the same time, coherent with certain concepts discussed by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization*: phantasy, polymorphous eroticism, and Orpheus as paradigm of a liberated existence. Broadly speaking, the movement proposes to achieve freedom through art making (imagination) as it considers that changes in society can take place when it is 'ruled' by the erotic principle, in lieu of the reality principle. According to this theory, the latter would suggest the recuperation of all the senses and the body in their full potential, recovering thus the experience of pre-genital polymorphous eroticism.¹²⁷

The Manifesto Writing Game

The playfulness of the 'Do be do be do' joke is echoed in the use of another tactic linked to pleasure: phantasy. Marcuse's definition of phantasy, the only mental activity that is free, according to Freud, and one that he describes as daydreaming or children's games, is relevant in the interpretation that follows.¹²⁸ I would like to contend that in *El Movimiento Erótico*, Valcárcel is playing, as children do, a manifesto making game. First of all, the ideas that sustain the movement are proclaimed in an artwork largely made up of text as if they were following Tristan Tzara's recommendations to launch a manifesto: 'sign, shout, swear, organize prose into a form that is absolutely and irrefutably obvious'.¹²⁹ As recommended

¹²⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 201.

¹²⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *ibid*, p. 140.

¹²⁹ Tzara wrote: "To launch a manifesto you have to want: A.B.&C., and fulminate against 1, 2, & 3, work yourself up and sharpen your wings to conquer and circulate lower and upper case As, Bs & Cs, sign, shout, swear, organize prose into a form that is absolutely and irrefutably obvious,

by Tzara's manifesto (to which Valcárcel might have been referring, given his affinity with Dada), the texts included make clear what the movement wants, and what it fulminates against.¹³⁰ Thus, the ideas that sustain the movement are proclaimed in the artwork in the form of text in which the artist uses a pamphlet-like language imitating the rhetoric of political propaganda during a politically charged time; and mimicking, at the same time the tenets of avant-garde manifestos, e.g. 'Art is the last bastion...' *El Movimiento Erótico* fulminates against 'institutionalized repression;' from which Valcárcel singles out 'schools[...],barracks, biennials' and calls:¹³¹

Against organized and established repression:
against all institutions
(state/ sport/ education/ family/ military, religious)
...that repress the eroticism and creativity of the individual
...under the pretext of maintaining (bourgeois) moral values
to maintain this system of oppression
...at the service of the capital! [Fig. 1.7]¹³²

It also denounces 'intellect, reason, logic', because these are, for Marcuse, mental activities related to the reality principle:¹³³

Intellect
Reason
Logic

prove its ne plus ultra and maintain that novelty resembles life in the same way as the latest apparition of a harlot proves the essence of God.' [...]. Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto*, 1918, p.3, retrieved from <www.391.org/manifestos/1918-dada-manifesto-tristan-tzara.html#.VQv5xDpKMdU>, accessed 1 December 2014.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ The original reads: '[...] las escuelas, [...] los colegios, la iglesia, los cuarteles, el fútbol, la familia, las bienales!!!' Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 378.

¹³² The original reads: 'Contra la represión organizada e instituida: en contra de todas las instituciones (estatales/ deportivas/ educativas/ familiares/ militares/ religiosas)... que reprimen el erotismo y la creatividad del individuo...bajo pretexto de mantener los valores morales (burgueses)...para mantener este sistema de opresión...al servicio del capital!' [underlining by the artist].

¹³³ Marcuse wrote: 'With the establishment of the reality principle, the human being which, under the pleasure principle, has been hardly more than a bundle of animal drives, has become an organized ego. It strives for "what is useful" and what can be obtained without damage to itself and to its vital environment. Under the reality principle, the human being develops the function of *reason*: it learns to "test" the reality, to distinguish between good and bad, true and false, useful and harmful. Man acquires the faculties of attention, memory, and judgment. He becomes conscious, thinking *subject*, geared to a rationality, which is imposed upon him from outside. Only one mode of thought-activity is "split-off" from the new organization of the mental apparatus and remains free from the rule of the reality principle: *phantasy* is protected from cultural alterations.' Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 14.

are the best instruments

- 1) To adapt individuals
- 2) To take away their critical potential (capacity to question)
- 3) To subjugate them to the system
- 4) To kill art!
- 5) To create an illusion of [...] [Fig. 1.8]¹³⁴

El Movimiento Erótico also contains some text in diagram form (mostly illegible) that presumably sums-up Valcárcel's interpretation of the ideas of Marcuse including:

ANAL PERSONALITY
 > AUTORITHARIAN BEHAVIOURS
 >LACK OF CREATIVITY
 >FASCISM [Fig. 1.5]¹³⁵

More 'guidelines' to the followers of the movement are made available in the form of 'Rules' [Fig. 1.2] (cited in my Introduction) and a 'Plan of Action'; they both have fictional references to pages of a manifesto that does not exist except in the artwork itself:

Plan of Action:

To foment and support

- all new, odd, different, strange, non-identical things
- all absurd, meaningless, ridiculous, gratuitous, involuntary things
- all free, playful, original, unlike, indescribable things
- all happy, funny, fun, amusing things
- all spontaneous things
- all erotic things
- all non-objectified things

(Erotic Manifesto, p. 5) [Fig 1.8]¹³⁶

¹³⁴ The end of the sentence is cut-off from the image. The original reads: 'El intelecto, la razón, la lógica son los mejores instrumentos para: 1) adaptar al individuo 2) quitarle el potencial crítico (la capacidad de cuestionar) 3) someterlo al sistema) 4. matar al arte! 5) crear una ilusión de[...]'

¹³⁵ In photographs of São Paulo Bienal, the phrase is barely legible on the top left, as a starting point of the ideas that the artist develops in the central wall of the space assigned to the artist in the Bienal: 'CHARACTER ANAL>CONDUCTAS AUTORITARIAS>FALTA DE CREATIVIDAD>FASCISMO.'

¹³⁶ The original reads: 'Plan de acción: Fomentar y apoyar – todo lo nuevo, lo raro, lo diferente, lo extraño, lo no idéntico – todo lo absurdo, lo sin sentido, lo ridículo, lo gratuito, lo involuntario – todo lo libre, lo juguetón, lo original, lo distinto, lo indescrptible – todo lo alegre, lo chistoso, lo divertido, lo gracioso – todo lo espontáneo – todo lo erótico – todo lo no cosificado (Manifiesto erótico, P.5).'

Another group of texts, which can be associated with ‘guidance’ to the followers of the movement, is a list of authors with their ‘texts’:

TEXTS OF THE EROTIC MOVEMENT:

C. MARX: TEXT TEXT TEXT

S. FREUD: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

H. MARCUSE: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

M. DUCHAMP: TEXT TEXT TEXT

MAO: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

J. BEUYS: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

T.W. ADORNO: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

H. HABERMAS: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

F. HORKHEIMER: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

SAN AGUSTIN: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

L. TROTZKI: TEXT

W. REICH: TEXT TEXT

E. JONES: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT

I. CARUSO: TEXT TEXT

K. ABRAHAM: TEXT TEXT

KAMA SUTRA: TEXT TEXT TEXT

ANANGA RANGA: TEXT TEXT TEXT

SANTO TOMAS: TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT TEXT
TEXT

ETALT. [Fig 1.6]¹³⁷

In a similar way to other elements of the artwork, the above literature list is composed of a mix of serious, contradictory and arbitrary names. While it does not seem farfetched to assume that Marcuse, Freud, Duchamp, Beuys and other authors have inspired Valcárcel, it is unclear whether Trotsky, for example, has

¹³⁷ The original reads: ‘Textos del Movimiento Erótico: C. Marx: Texto texto texto S. Freud: Texto texto texto texto H. Marcuse: Texto texto texto texto texto M. Duchamp: Texto texto texto Mao: Texto texto texto texto texto J. Beuys: Texto texto texto texto T.W. Adorno: Texto texto texto texto texto H. Habermas: Texto texto texto texto F. Horkheimer [sic]: Texto texto texto texto San Agustín: Texto texto texto texto L. Trotzki[sic]: Texto W. Reich: Texto texto E. Jones: Texto texto texto texto I. Caruso: Texto texto K. Abraham: Texto texto Kama Sutra: Texto texto texto Ananga Ranga: Texto texto texto Santo Tomás: Texto texto texto texto texto Etalt.

any relation with the ideas of the movement. In addition to this, the Ananga Ranga and Kamasutra seem to point to a genital eroticism, and are hence in direct contradiction with the movement's proposal to recover a pregenital polymorphous eroticism. The irony is that texts, literally presented as 'texts', underlines both the absurdity and ambiguity of Valcárcel's proposal, an art movement that is both real, and is not real and which it is up to the viewer to decide upon. On the other hand, by not listing specific titles of texts, Valcárcel avoids being prescriptive and the art work being interpreted too literally. The artist's manifesto writing game was apparently so convincing, on the other hand, that some art students in São Paulo asked where they could sign up to be part of the movement.¹³⁸

Humour

El Movimiento Erótico enacts humour, an element that I consider key in Valcárcel's art, as jokes can be both mentally, and physically pleasurable. Although humour is not discussed by Marcuse, Freud has associated it with the pleasure principle.¹³⁹ Whereas the influence of Dada and Duchamp's irreverence was already evident in previous works – e.g. the presentation of a 'corpse' without any explanation in an exhibition of his photographs –¹⁴⁰ a love of puns is evident in the 'To be is to do (Kant)...' phrase, wherein Valcárcel wittily enacts his take on Marcuse's Orphic paradigm. Although Valcárcel is not the author of the joke that he reproduces from a postcard (or photograph?) he had bought in a flea market in Europe,¹⁴¹ it reflects, nonetheless, his playful attitude towards words (see Fig. 1.8). The text of the catchphrase of the movement is a pun in three lines, with a similar type of strategy to Duchamp's changing the order of letter, syllables or words to create

¹³⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, 26 December 2012.

¹³⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'On Humour', J. Strachey (trans.), *The Standard Edition on the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XXI*, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis. 1961.

¹⁴⁰ This 'corpse', entitled *Víctima de Guerra*, is discussed in Chapter Three and Chapter Four. The affinity of Valcárcel with Duchamp's ideas was equally manifested in a citation by Duchamp in his 1978 catalogue: Galería Emusa, Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 84', La Paz, 19-30, December 1978. Duchamp is also included him as one of the authors of the movement in the TEXTS section cited before. *Víctima de Guerra* is further discussed in Chapter Four.

¹⁴¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, 26 December 2012. Prof. Valerie Fraser has also noted that this phrase is included at the end of Kurt Vonnegut's *Dead Eye Dick*.

new meanings. Thus, in the second line, ‘To do is to be’, the position of ‘be’ and ‘do’ are inverted, in relation to the first one. The third line, in turn, is made up only these two words, ‘do’ and ‘be’, whose original meaning as verbs changes when moved from their original grammatical context, and are transformed into what at first seems like a non-sense repetition. But what appears as a ‘non-sense’ repetition of syllables, ‘Do be do be do’, acquires a musical meaning, when the name of Frank Sinatra is placed next to them, in parenthesis, and specifically refers to the final part of his ‘Strangers in the Night’. This play of words is equally reminiscent, by sound and presumed lack of meaning to the name Dada. It also brings to mind word play in the title of Marcel’s Duchamp book *Marchand du sel* – coined by splitting the syllables of his name, and rearranging them – and the many puns it contains.¹⁴² However, the relationship between Valcárcel and Marcel Duchamp is yet more remarkable for the importance that the latter artist attributes to Eros in his work, as evidenced in his pun alter ego, Rrose Sélavy – ‘Eros is life’. Valcárcel’s ‘homage’ to Duchamp and the avant-garde is further restated in *El Movimiento Erótico*’s references, before mentioned, to ‘the erotic machine’, a car with a ‘caption’ labelling it as such and the ‘erotic doll’. Duchamp’s use of a machine as metaphor for the body in his *Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors, Even* (1965-6) seems replicated in *El Movimiento Erótico*’s disjointed body, made up of text, in this case, and suggested in absence by its garments scattered on the walls: glasses, tie, t-shirt and shoe (see Fig. 1.5).

A Song for the Movement

In a similar way to humour, in the allusions that Valcárcel makes to music and song he is introducing the idea of a fuller eroticism (including aural sensations) in the arts. This extension of the artwork to the musical register was suggested in a presentation by the artist of his work, in 1999, in which he showed an image of *El Movimiento Erótico*, and instead of reading, he sang the ‘do be do be do’ phrase.¹⁴³ Valcárcel’s interest in music is further echoed in his ‘writing’ a song for the

¹⁴² Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1975.

¹⁴³ I am making this reference from my own memory. The talk was presented as part of the conference programme of the first Salon SIART in La Paz in 1999.

movement, which seems to be of impossible interpretation according to musical convention – the lines and notes are written outside the score, as if they were being moved by the music.¹⁴⁴ Although a clear detail of the image is not available, a few elements seem to point in this direction. Some absurd and impossible instructions may very well be referring to the body and appetites of the performer, for example. The notation ‘JUMP!’ is presumably asking the pianist to stop, and literally jump, in the middle of the song; in a similar way to the ‘mezzo pizza’ instruction (suggesting the interpreter to order or have a medium pizza, a playful alteration ‘mezzo piano’ and perhaps to ‘pizzicato’). The ‘UHHH!’ can be associated with a sound of pleasure (to be made by the interpreter?). The musical score also contains random elements, like a peace symbol at the end of the first line; and a note with a Bolivian flag (a new musical note?), or perhaps an ironic reference to the way the Bolivian government was only interested in narrowly nationalist culture? There is a symbol of a hammer and sickle, in lieu of the treble or bass clef, at the beginning of the penultimate line. ‘pa-pa-pa-pa-pa- pi-pa-po” lyrics in ascending and descending white notes seem to echo, at the same time, Sinatra’s ‘Do be do be do’ and Dada’s nonsense etymology. A ‘JAZZZZ’, with three zeds, in different positions could be an allusion to the culture industry, which this type of music exemplifies, according to Horkheimer and Adorno.¹⁴⁵ Finally, in this connection between art, music and playfulness the artist seems to incarnate himself as Orpheus ‘whose language is song’ and whose ‘work is play’, as mentioned before. *El Movimiento Erótico* gives shape to an Orpheus who sings to please himself, but also to one whose ‘do be do be do’, pure song and play, lure the visitor into the small space in the Bienal assigned to the artist, and wishfully into his movement.

¹⁴⁴ Valcárcel loves music. He plays piano, and during his last years of school he was part of a rock band that he named ‘Apple Pie Museum’. Armando Urioste, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 December 2013.

¹⁴⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment. Philosophical Fragments* (G. Schmid Noerr ed., E. Jephcott trans.), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2002, pp. 94-136

II. Marcuse's Critique of Capitalism in Context

The following section inquires into the relationship between the references to the culture of late capitalism (i.e. culture industry) in *El Movimiento Erótico*, and the two different contexts in which it was presented. It considers how Marcuse's critique of capitalism, particularly its subtle control of free time through the culture industries, and its delusive erotic freedoms, helps us understand Valcárcel's artwork.

1. Bienal de São Paulo and the Culture Industry

The artist's 'do be do be do' joke as the central point in the composition, establishes a clear link between the artwork and the culture industry, in the form of popular music. Now what type of relationship is established? First impressions make it look like an entertaining and easy artwork that mocks philosophy, and converts it into a catch phrase, packaging it thus, for mass consumption. There is little documentation on the 1983 biennial, but if it was anything like the one that succeeded it (in 1985), the visitors did not have much time or energy to view all the artworks in one day,¹⁴⁶ which explains Valcárcel's careful composition, despite appearances, and use of 'gimmicks' to lure visitors to the small space.

Such capital-infused biennials of the dimension of the São Paulo event tend to participate in the commodification of the art they show. Biennials are part of capitalist society, part of what Marcuse deems the system of oppression, 'a highly productive and efficient system in which he [the individual] makes a better living than before' but one in which institutions 'determine, satisfy and control' the needs, of the population.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ I found the following reference from the 1985 version: 'With 2,400 works by 700 artists from 46 countries occupying over two miles of corridors, the São Paulo biennial art exhibition has once again safeguarded its reputation as the largest single artistic event in Latin America.' Alan Riding, 'São Paulo Art Show: A Giant', *The New York Times* [website], 9 November 1985, <www.nytimes.com/1985/11/09/arts/sao-paulo-art-show-a-giant.html>, accessed 4 May 2015.

¹⁴⁷ 'The pain, frustration, impotence of the individual derive from a highly productive and efficiently functioning system in which he makes a better living than ever before. Responsibility for the organization of his life lies with the whole, the 'system,' the sum total of the institutions that determine, satisfy, and control his needs.' Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 98.

Horkheimer and Adorno, whose thinking inspired Marcuse, and whose names appear as references of the texts of *El Movimiento Erótico*, even established a connection between art, and amusement parks:

Today works of art, suitably packaged like political slogans are pressed on a reluctant public at reduced prices by the culture industry, they are opened up for popular enjoyment like parks.¹⁴⁸

Following Marcuse, mega biennials can be considered one of the many choices that ‘enrich’ the individual’s leisure time in capitalism, one which converts art into a merchandise more from which to choose, and is part of a system in which the real autonomy of individuals is deferred by these predetermined options:

In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labor but also their free time. The better living is offset by the all-pervasive control over living.[...]They have dozens of newspapers and magazines that espouse the same ideals. They have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue – which is the awareness that they could work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions.¹⁴⁹

Valcárcel’s awareness of this commodified, and potentially meaningless place occupied by art in biennials was expressed in a recent description of what he imagined were the comments of the visitors to his presentation of *El Movimiento Erótico* in São Paulo: ‘How interesting, let’s go have some pizza!’¹⁵⁰

The publicity, the memorabilia, and the catchphrases [i.e. ‘To do is to be’, etc.] of *El Movimiento Erótico*, all of these ‘gimmicks’, underline, at the same time, the inevitable commodification and objectification of art, of Valcárcel’s movement, and even the philosophy it refers to that takes place in biennials. Valcárcel’s questioning of the Bienal, was made explicit in the manifesto texts where it is included at the end of a list of the institutions that should be abolished:

[‘Destroy, fulminate, eliminate, close?]
[illegible:] primary schools!
[illegible] all- level schools!
[illegible] Church!
[illegible] barracks!

¹⁴⁸ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, ‘The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception’, p. 129.

¹⁴⁹ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 100.

¹⁵⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2012.

[illegible] football!
 [illegible] family
 [illegible] biennials!!! [Fig. 1.5]¹⁵¹

The biennial as a commodified and commodifying event is reiterated if we read the latter text in connection with another one (on another wall) which refers to institutions as ultimately repressive:

Against organized and established repression:
 against all institutions
 (state/ sport/ education/ family/ military, religious)
 ...that repress the eroticism and creativity of the individual
 ...under the pretext of maintaining (bourgeois) moral values
 to maintain this system of oppression
 ...at the service of the capital! [Fig. 1.7]¹⁵²

Valcárcel's awareness of the way the biennial swallows, with its dimensions, the art it shows – and where art with the most economic support is highlighted in presentation and promotion – is suggested not only in the deliberately seductive form that *El Movimiento Erótico* acquired in Brazil but in also in his 'issuing' of his own official souvenirs. The inevitable connection of the biennial with capitalism is equally alluded to in images of the culture industry: Scrooge McDuck, *Chiclets* chewing gum, pizza slices; which all together underline, once more, the inevitable commodified status of the movement, of the art and of the artist.

Valcárcel's understanding of the role art plays in such capital infused biennials is made equally evident in the way he addresses the visitor with a welcoming text, in English, and in a familiar register that seems out of place in an artwork. Phrases like 'Dear visitor' and 'we love you all' seem more in line with an aeroplane greeting than with an artwork [Fig. 1.8].¹⁵³ Another example is found in his slogans, like 'El arte nunca duerme' (art never sleeps), which reiterates the centrality of art in Marcuse's theoretical proposition of liberation. 'Art never

¹⁵¹ The original in Spanish reads: 'las escuelas, [...] los colegios, la iglesia, los cuarteles, el fútbol, la familia, las bienales!!!'

¹⁵² The original reads: 'Contra la represión organizada e instituida: en contra de todas las instituciones (estatales/ deportivas/ educativas/ familiares/ militares/ religiosas)... que reprimen el erotismo y la creatividad del individuo...bajo pretexto de mantener los valores morales (burgueses)...para mantener este sistema de opresión...al servicio del capital!'.

There seems to be a more direct relation as well to some references (i.e. Disney) made by Adorno and Horkheimer's in their text on the culture industry. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception'.

sleeps' could also be a reference to a citation by Duchamp regarding art in the US and France, which Valcárcel quoted in the text of his 1978 catalogue.¹⁵⁴ It recalls the use of his 'art is not dead' slogan with which the artist stamped his artworks, and made a point of distinguishing himself – albeit ironically – from traditional painting in Bolivia around those years.¹⁵⁵ In Valcárcel's 'art is not dead' slogan a reference is equally made to avant-garde manifestos of movements: Dada's 'Art is dead. Long live Dada', and to Fluxus' call to purge the world of dead art and promote live art. There are other similar phrases throughout, like the repetition of the 'catchphrase' 'art is the last bastion of [erotic production] and 'aesthetic erotic anarchic-hedonism'. Valcárcel's love of mottos and bureaucratic emblems (which recall Beuys) was most recently displayed in his 2008 'Amando hasta el final' (Loving until the end) [Fig. 1.10], semi-circled motto and 'stamp', printed on the last page of his book seems to be a similar case. In both cases, the simulation of bureaucratic seals ('El arte no ha muerto' and 'Amando hasta el final'), undoubtedly a tribute to the office aesthetics of Fluxus,¹⁵⁶ points to bureaucracy and to institutions, Marcusian systems or, in other words, the enemy of autonomy. Participating in a biennial the size of São Paulo is a bureaucratic, and expensive affair. It presumes the temporary importation of art, following rules and complying with deadlines for sending artworks, which both Ugalde and Valcárcel avoided in the 1983 biennial by producing art in situ. While the ephemeral nature of Valcárcel's artwork is coherent with his questioning of capitalism, the decision to create an artwork in situ was undoubtedly also inspired by a wish to avoid bureaucracy and transportation costs. The decision to make an ephemeral artwork in *El Movimiento Erótico* in São Paulo was informed by Valcárcel's participation in the Bienal with Ugalde in 1979. The artwork that they presented then, despite its practical form for transportation purposes – rolled

¹⁵⁴ Galería Emusa, Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 84', La Paz, 19-30, December 1978.

¹⁵⁵ Valcárcel described the meaning behind his motto in the following manner: 'Yo, Roberto Valcárcel mantengo vivo al arte porque estoy manteniendo viva la posibilidad de lo nuevo, lo otro lo raro... [Estaba] dirigido a los repetidores y conservadores del arte, que básicamente se estaban dividiendo entre los izquierdosos y ... acababan siendo unas recetas y ...que no mantenían viva la llama de mostrar lo otro.' Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December, 2012.

¹⁵⁶ Valcárcel describes his fascination with Beuys' office aesthetics at the Düsseldorf Academy in Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December, 2012.

canvases – has permanently been lost due to the bureaucratic requirements of Bolivian customs (who kept the artwork) and the inability of the artists to pay ‘re-importation’ fees.¹⁵⁷

What do the references to an artwork from Bolivia, in the greeting and the ‘captions’ on the column, in the São Paulo Bienal, mean? Bolivia was a country practically ‘outside’ of the system of capital, and completely absent in the international system of art, which the biennial represents. In 1983, a bankrupt government was facing one of the worse economic crises in the history of the country. The annual inflation was close to 60,000%, one of the highest in the history of the world,¹⁵⁸ and there was shortage of food, and petrol, among other things.

Valcárcel’s strategies to achieve visibility in the São Paulo Bienal gain a new meaning, from this point of view. An awareness of the scale of the biennial, this mega-event with business backup,¹⁵⁹ is evident in the careful design, and the visual cues that lure the viewer into the composition. Three large arrows painted on the floor to direct the visitor to the small space assigned to Valcárcel (in comparison, for example, with the one of Gastón Ugalde, which was three times larger), seem essential. And so does their pointing the eye to the right corner of the u-shaped space, which in turn guide the viewer to the memorable text, highlighted with large capital letters, and with lots of space around it: ‘To be is to do (Kant), To do is to be (Sartre), Do be do be do (Sinatra)’ [Fig. 1.3].

Valcárcel’s visual strategies respond to the artist’s awareness of how art functions in the system in which the biennial takes place. It takes into consideration the position of Bolivian art being out of the international art league, and largely unknown to the world. While there is practically no tradition of the state supporting art in general, and less outside of Bolivia, this lack was more evident when it was obvious that there were no funds for the participation of

¹⁵⁷ They were most likely sold to be used as something else, as the fabric is very useful in local commerce and transportation of goods and people in the back of open lorries. Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Jeffrey Sachs, ‘The Bolivian Hyperinflation and Stabilization’, *AEA Papers and Proceedings*, Vol. 77, n. 2, May 1987, pp. 279-283.

¹⁵⁹ Maria Otilia Bocchini and Ivo Mesquita ed., *Catalogo Geral: 17a Bienal de São Paulo*, 14 October -18 December 1983, [catalogue], <[bienal.org.br/publicacao.php?i=110630134151-7113ad0a77ef47809629dc619f03de46&n=namea77ef4&t=17%20Bienal%20de%20São%20Paulo%20\(1983\)%20-%20Catálogo](http://bienal.org.br/publicacao.php?i=110630134151-7113ad0a77ef47809629dc619f03de46&n=namea77ef4&t=17%20Bienal%20de%20São%20Paulo%20(1983)%20-%20Catálogo)>, accessed 21 May, 2015.

artists in international events. Perhaps because of these reasons (there is no research on this), Bolivia had only participated in three of the previous six biennials in the previous decade.¹⁶⁰ When it did, it was in unfavourable conditions, with ad hoc creations, in such capital infused events like biennials of the category of São Paulo.¹⁶¹ Valcárcel was aware of this, as in 1979 he had presented with Ugalde an artwork at the Bienal, which took into account the dimensions and scale of the building.¹⁶² It is most likely that the economic situation of Bolivia had a decisive influence on a choice of materials – four marker pens and collage material (from the version of La Paz, unframed and taken apart) – that could be transported with him in his aeroplane luggage. In a recent interview, Valcárcel also mentioned that, on at least one occasion, he and Gastón Ugalde were allowed to sleep at the Bienal, which allowed them to save accommodation costs, presumably during the installation of their artworks.¹⁶³ Pedro Querejazu recently justified his repeated invitation of Valcárcel and Ugalde to represent Bolivia in international biennials (São Paulo, Cuenca and Havana) on the artists' ability to respond to the demand of contemporaneity in such international events, and to make up with creativity for the lack of resources available for transportation, and installation of visually memorable artworks.¹⁶⁴

This unequal situation, in comparison with other countries who had government and private support, was negatively reinforced with the absence of curators from Bolivia in the biennial to promote the artist's work in what was becoming, since 1981, more of a 'curator's biennial'.¹⁶⁵ The text that Gisbert wrote for 1983, a paragraph about Bolivian art with a brief mention of Valcárcel, did not adequately promote Valcárcel's artwork although it can be understood

¹⁶⁰ Bolivia participated in 1971, 1973 and 1978 (The Latin American Biennial). Bolivia did not participate in 1975, 1977 and 1981 [information from Bienal Issuu catalogues online].

¹⁶¹ Pedro Querejazu, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 1 October 2013.

¹⁶² His modest participation (in size and visibility) in the 1978 version, influenced the presentation of his proposal with Ugalde in the following one – as well as Ugalde's urge to 'think big'. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December, 2012.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Pedro Querejazu, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 1 October, 2013.

¹⁶⁵ With the appointment of Walter Zanini as curator of the 1981 Bienal, a new trend was started where the role of curators in the Bienal gained increasing importance. Bolivia did not participate in the 1981 biennial, most likely because of the crisis the country was undergoing, following the violent coup of García Meza.

that this was the case because of the format of the catalogue, its text length requirements, and the fact that curators did not travel to the biennial, and hence did not see the artwork in situ (nor the version of La Paz, for that matter). However, by this time artworks were already gaining legitimacy with the support of curators who would manage the installation and produce explanatory leaflets or catalogues. Valcárcel has recently commented on this in reference to Glusberg's support for Argentinian art – that he witnessed in the biennials he participated [i.e. in 1979].¹⁶⁶ The artists could not 'compete' with their counterparts, particularly in the case of more conceptual art, like that of Valcárcel. In retrospect, the use of visibility tactics in *El Movimiento Erótico* proved successful, nonetheless. Despite missing its references, in the 2001 publication marking 50 years of the Bienal, the text referring to the 1983 biennial singled out Valcárcel's Movement as an example of an artwork that could be from anywhere in Europe:

Bolivian artist Roberto Valcárcel, executing his artwork during the setup of the exhibition, drawing, gluing, writing on the walls as though they were his unending diary, could have been an inhabitant of any part of Europe.¹⁶⁷

A couple of posterior examples of Valcárcel's use of advertisement strategies, throw further light on the artist's view of Bolivia in relation to Brazil, and by implication the economic and government apparatus behind the São Paulo Bienal. The slogan or catchphrase 'Disfrute la temperatura ambiente' (Enjoy the Room Temperature) inserted repeatedly without any explanation in the catalogue of Valcárcel's 1997 *Robo, amarelo, perde y a veces azul* exhibition is a comment on the area of influence of other market economies, like Brazil, on Bolivia.¹⁶⁸ The title's ironic wordplay with the red, yellow and green of the Bolivian flag complements the apparent light-heartedness of the 'subliminal' statement previously mentioned.

¹⁶⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December, 2012. Glusberg's Grupo Los Trece had been awarded the grand prize of the São Paulo Bienal in 1977. The group presented their work again in the Bienal in 1979 in the biennial in which Valcárcel exhibited his work with Gastón Ugalde.

¹⁶⁷ Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *Bienal 50 Anos: 1951-2001* (ed. Agnaldo Farias), Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2001, <<http://issuu.com/bienal/docs/bienal--50-anos-2001>>, accessed 2 June 2014, p. 202.

¹⁶⁸ There are no images of the artworks in the catalogue. Galería Fundación BHN, *Valcárcel* (exhibition catalogue), Fundación BHN, La Paz, 1997. I recall, however, seeing some 'flags' with text and a potpourri of everything on a wall under the title 'Garage Sale' and some artworks reproduced in Valcárcel's book. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol.1, pp. 330-333.

The artist's modification of the spelling in Spanish of red, yellow and green is a multi-layered pun. The 'English' and 'Portuguese'¹⁶⁹ spelling of 'rojo' and 'amarillo' could be argued to be a comment on the presence of US and Brazilian culture in Bolivia, mainly through consumption of television shows and *telenovelas* from both countries. Few American products were available in the early 1980s, but the extension of Brazil's economic and cultural area of influence was visible in everyday life in products with high visibility in publicity such as Volkswagen cars (assembled in Brazil), Estrela toys, Caloi bicycles and Nucita chocolates, among others.

'Disfrute la temperatura ambiente' adds another layer by ironically instructing the spectator to enjoy the 'room temperature' (as if it were a Coca Cola or Paceaña beer), of both the exhibition but also of a country, plagued with problems and in an unequal position with regard to its neighbors and, in general.¹⁷⁰ This phrase also points to the inescapable presence of advertising, capitalism and consumption, the dependence and influence of world and regional powers, in an otherwise nationalistic construction of identity and history.

While Valcárcel has used 'brands' and 'corporations', like Producciones Valcárcel to ironically represent and promote himself throughout his career, a display of his awareness of how the culture industry currently functions was made clear more recently. A brief discussion of Valcárcel's *Mi vida* (2012), a humorous and provocative PowerPoint projection about the artist, has been useful for my understanding of his work in 1983. In *Mi vida* Valcárcel tried to seduce an audience – prey of social media and other digital entertainment technology.¹⁷¹ In the presentation, Valcárcel promoted himself, his art, his ideas and his brand

¹⁶⁹ 'Amarelo' without an 'h' is the correct spelling of yellow in Portuguese.

¹⁷⁰ The idea of Bolivia as a country of losers or loss, very much ingrained in official school education, is made explicit in replacement of the 'v' of 'verde' with a 'p', hence 'perde'. Finally, while 'azud', an infant's pronunciation of the colour blue, 'azul', is most likely a reference both to Bolivia's infancy and its lack of access to the Pacific sea, lost in a war with Chile in 1879, a topic permanently on Bolivia's international agenda, and currently under demand at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Baldwin Montero, 'Bolivia demanda en La Haya obligar a Chile a negociar un acuerdo pronto y efectivo de salida soberana al mar, *La Razón* [website], 24 April 2013, <www.la-razon.com/nacional/Bolivia-obligue-dialogar-Chile-soberana_0_1820817967.html> accessed April 25, 2013.

¹⁷¹ *Mi vida* was presented in La Paz in Centro Cultural de España in October 2012 and shortly after in Kiosko Gallery in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

(Producciones Valcárcel) with images of desire, sex and sexualized men and women.¹⁷² In fact, one fifth of the slides contain not only the ‘brand’ that the artist is trying to sell – ‘Valcárcel’ or ‘Producciones Valcárcel’ – but a narrative that portrays the artist in a very attractive way. The PowerPoint presentation is a long and complex production that uses a number of devices to convey its points, such as analogue film language. Thus, following the projection of an artwork that will be discussed in Chapter Five,¹⁷³ Valcárcel’s presentation ‘officially’ began with a series of slides with the ‘sponsor captions’ of the film: ‘The Free Independent and Creative Territory, Ministry of Creative Thinking, Secretariat of Visual Culture, Under Secretariat of Confusions, Department of Pending Affairs and the Office of OTHERNESS’.¹⁷⁴ The reference to commercial film is suggested in the slides that follow: a black and white video clip of Natalie Wood and another slide with the US Eagle.¹⁷⁵ The slides that follow introduce the film’s credits, the production company and the actor: ‘Producciones Valcárcel’, ‘Presenta’, “‘Mi vida” and ‘Con Roberto Valcárcel’.¹⁷⁶

This type of narrative is used throughout the presentation, particularly in other ‘subliminal’ propaganda (where the message is repeated) with similar outcomes. There is, for example, a sequence of slides depicting a group of passengers with oxygen masks in a falling aeroplane [Fig. 1.11].¹⁷⁷ Valcárcel repeats the same slide to indicate passing of time and adds text balloons to introduce dialogue. He also moves slightly the angle of the image to suggest the falling of the plane. A similar film technique is deployed in the creation of an illusion of a car with a ‘Producciones Valcárcel’ plate approaching: four

¹⁷² The presentation was rehearsed by the artist for me in a recent interview. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December, 2012. I also obtained (from Kiosko Gallery) an audio documentation of Valcárcel’s presentation in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

¹⁷³ As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, the first slide projected reproduced an image of *Cruz cuadrada*, an artwork of polemic content in Bolivia today as it questions a prevailing lack of honesty regarding indigenous people and defends the rights of the ‘hispanobolivianos’, as the artist calls them. *Cruz cuadrada* is further discussed in Chapter Five.

¹⁷⁴ The original reads: ‘Territorio Creativo Libre e Independiente, Ministerio de Pensamiento Creativo, Secretaría de Cultura Visual, Subsecretaría de Confusiones, Departamento de Asuntos Pendientes and Oficina de asuntos de LO OTRO’. Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slide 3.

¹⁷⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slides 4 and 5.

¹⁷⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slides 6-9.

¹⁷⁷ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slides 43-45.

consecutive slides wherein a car appears in increasing dimension [Fig. 1.12].¹⁷⁸ Some other promotional advertisements take images from a *fotonovela* (photo story), and publicity. The leitmotiv in all of them is Valcárcel, or his brand, portrayed as the answer to an interrogation or simply as the object of desire. Thus, in one of the slides, a woman asks her partner ‘Tell me Pedro...do you love me?’ to which the man does not reply but silently, responds via a thought balloon: ‘Valcárcel...’¹⁷⁹[Fig. 1.13]. There are more direct sexual references in his self-publicity. A gentleman (that looks like Prince Charles) in a meeting with a military head of a state secretly thinks about ‘Producciones Valcárcel’ (indicated with a thought balloon), which he presumably ‘secretly’ associates with the oriental erotica scene on the second plane of the picture.¹⁸⁰ Another slide shows two beings (of unknown sex) dressed as ‘astronauts’ having sexual intercourse.¹⁸¹ In sum, ‘Mi vida’ illustrates Valcárcel’s preoccupation over the years with the issues addressed in *El Movimiento Erótico*, as well as his capacity to adopt attractive ways of communicating with audiences that are increasingly more immersed in the logic of the culture industry.

2. Repression in Bolivia: Sex, Art and Institutions

In the previous section we have seen how *El Movimiento Erótico* establishes an ambivalent relation with the biennial in which it is exhibited, by making a parody that serves, at the same time, to promote the movement. Valcárcel’s comment on the loss of autonomy, and commodification of art in the biennial context was made clear. What relevance do these issues have in Bolivia, in 1983? In this section I will try to answer this question by considering what *El Movimiento Erótico* suggests about Bolivian society and its relations with advanced capitalism – specifically with the culture industry – eroticism, art and institutional repression.

¹⁷⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slides 262-264.

¹⁷⁹ The original reads: ‘[Woman:] “Dime Pedro...tú me amas?” [Man with a thought balloon replies:] “Valcárcel...”’.

¹⁸⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slide 64.

¹⁸¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slide 65.

If we take a close look at what Roberto Valcárcel wrote (under an alias) retrospectively about his movement, in a catalogue text published in Bolivia in 1988, certain ideas are elucidated:

El Movimiento Erótico (São Paulo Bienal, 1983) is an artistic manifesto that proposes anarchic-hedonism as a way into an erotic-aesthetic society. The artwork occupies three wall panels, on which the artist writes, draws, paints and pastes photographs and different cuttings, giving shape to an impressive collage full of mischief but not exempt from critique and social agitation. Inspired by Marcuse's thought, Valcárcel establishes a relationship between erotic affairs, creativity and art, proposing aesthetic subversion as the only way of saving the individual from absolute alienation, from an authoritarian mentality, from fascism, and [preventing] the total annihilation of human beings as such. The artist describes this work as 'a visual summary that makes accessible to the uninitiated viewer, a complex system of thinking and relations between phenomena, which in appearance are not connected, but that are vital for humanity.'¹⁸²

What relevance do these ideas have, in 1983 Bolivia, a country whose economy is clearly not under the rule of advanced capitalism? In my discussion, I will argue that the ambiance in which *El Movimiento Erótico* was presented in La Paz was not precisely that of an erotic aesthetic society as defined by Marcuse, i.e. a society wherein there was a full practice of eroticism – one including the whole body – and a society in which art was central. In addition to the latter, certain institutions exerted a veiled authoritarianism – the press, the local art system, school, barracks, football and family – that indirectly promoted a male heterosexual, procreative eroticism.¹⁸³ Taking this idea, the movement's anarchic call to destroy institutions

¹⁸² The original reads: '1 El "Movimiento Erótico" (Bienal de São Paulo, 1983) es un manifiesto artístico que propone el anarco-hedonismo como vía a una sociedad estético-erótica. La obra ocupa tres paneles sobre los cuales el artista escribe, dibuja, pinta y adhiere fotografías y diversos recortes formando un imponente collage lleno de picardía pero no exento de crítica y agitación social. Inspirado en el pensamiento Marcusiano, Valcárcel establece la relación entre lo erótico, la creatividad y el arte, proponiendo la subversión estética como la única manera de salvar al individuo de la absoluta alienación, la mentalidad autoritaria, el facismo y la total aniquilación del ser humano como tal. El artista describe esta obra suya como "un resumen visual que hace accesible al espectador no iniciado un complejo sistema de pensamientos y relaciones entre fenómenos aparentemente desconexos pero de vital importancia para la humanidad".' This text was published in an exhibition catalogue in which the artist gathers his different trends. It includes texts about each of his artistic personas – i.e., 'Valcárcel 6' – signed by aliases. Roberto Valcárcel (under Eduardo Tejeira Davis), 'Tres descripciones, un comentario', Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

¹⁸³ The original reads: 'Contra la represión organizada e instituida: en contra de todas las instituciones (estatales/ deportivas/ educativas/ familiares/ militares/ religiosas)... que reprimen

previously referred to gains new meaning in context.¹⁸⁴ In this section I will contend, more specifically, that there is an unexpected link between the publication of pornography in the press and veiled repression. I will equally argue that Valcárcel is interested in provoking a prescriptive art system, pointing towards veiled repression through his own references and anti-references to religious and military institutions, as well as in his architectural practice.

The Media

Marcuse establishes that the apparent open sexuality of advanced capitalism in fact responds to an administration of eroticism which benefits institutional interests. A clear definition of this deceiving liberation, what Marcuse deems 'repressive desublimation', is made in his *One-Dimensional Man*, i.e., where he explains how about this alleged opening towards sexuality of late capitalism is in fact an illusion in which a limited eroticism, genital and procreative, is dictated:

...a mechanized environment seems to block such self-transcendence of the libido. Impelled in expanding the field of erotic gratification, libido becomes less 'polymorphous', less capable of eroticism beyond localized sexuality, and the *latter* is intensified.¹⁸⁵

While in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Bolivia was not at the stage of development on which Marcuse builds his argument, i.e. advanced capitalism, the newspaper *Última Hora* nevertheless projected a sexually liberal image. I will try to demonstrate that this apparent atmosphere of liberty was deceiving as the eroticism promoted was limited in its emphasis on localized and procreative sexuality. I will further argue that this type of sexuality was not only repressive but one embraced by the culture industry, its interests, and authoritarian regimes. Although the culture industry seemed remote, in comparison to its presence in other countries, its influence was reflected in the media. *El Movimiento Erótico* was presented less than a year after democracy was finally established in Bolivia and seven months after the change of a particular modus operandi of the editors of

el erotismo y la creatividad del individuo...bajo pretexto de mantener los valores morales (burgueses)...para mantener este sistema de opresión...al servicio del capital!' Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol.1, p. 377.

¹⁸⁴ The original reads: 'las escuelas, [...] los colegios, la iglesia, los cuarteles, el fútbol, la familia, las bienales!!!'. Ibid, Roberto Valcárcel, [...], p. 378.

¹⁸⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Sphere Books, London, 1968, p.70.

Última Hora, one of the most important newspapers of the time. The publication of photographs of naked women on the cover of the cultural supplement entitled *Semana de Última Hora* [Figs. 1.14 and 1.15] illustrates the particular type of eroticism society had been presumably opening up to: a sexist, and genital-oriented practice, far from the polymorphous eroticism that *El Movimiento Erótico* advocated. These images, provocatively used in Valcárcel's art, were generally not questioned; the only ironic comment regarding them that I have found is in *Aquí* weekly which promoted itself in its first issue as follows: 'If you only want paper for wrapping, don't buy "AQUÍ" [...]; [if you only want] to see naked ladies, don't buy "AQUÍ"[...]' [Fig. 1.16].¹⁸⁶

It should also be noted that the type of sexuality that was thus advocated was also male, and heterosexual. The photographs of naked women followed the agenda of the culture industry of 'perfect' bodies, with 'white' traits that had nothing to do with the majority of women in Bolivia – in a country with one of the highest percentages of indigenous populations in the continent, which then constituted the majority of the population in Bolivia. In addition to highlighting a certain type of sexuality, the newspaper's obvious profit motives, under a masquerade of sexual liberty, resonates with the link Marcuse establishes between repressed eroticism and advanced capitalism (i.e. repressed desublimation). The association between this utilization of women and US culture (culture industry) was made explicit, at the time, in the self-description of the supplement as the 'local' *Playboy* magazine for Bolivians [Fig. 1.17]. The publishing of these images on the cover of their weekly cultural supplement indicates a use of sex not only to sell more issues of the newspaper, but to 'promote' art and culture. This strategy that reveals the unimportant place that art occupied in society makes clear the urgent need to promote art making and creativity in this context; and why art is at the centre of Valcárcel's 'revolution'.

¹⁸⁶ The original reads: 'SI SOLO QUIERE...- papel de envolver: No compre "AQUI"- un periodismo rutinario: no compre "AQUI" - ver peladas: no compre "AQUI"- ignorar lo que sucede en Bolivia: no compre "AQUI". PERO SI QUIERE...-despertar del letargo político: adquiera "AQUI"- información resumida y honesta: lea "AQUI"- expresar sus ideas: inscribase a "AQUI"- hacer patria: anuncie en "AQUI".' Anonymous, *Aquí*, number 1, 17-19 March, 1979.

Newspapers like *Última Hora* also served both directly and indirectly the interests of the government regardless of their political tendencies. The sexually liberal image promoted by the newspaper conveyed an illusion of freedom during the harshest repressions, which was undeniably convenient for the authoritarian military governments. This climate of licentiousness in the printed media went uncensored during the different de facto governments of the era, even when it seemed to contradict the Christian morality promoted by the military presidents, which was, of course, another façade to justify repression. Another parallel between the authoritarian government and the press was manifested in the way they made exceptions to their usual modus operandi during major Catholic feasts. As a sign of respect to the Christian values upheld by their readers, in a predominantly Catholic country, the cultural supplement of *Última Hora* avoided the usual pornography on its cover during the week of Christmas of 1980. They replaced sexualized women with a more ‘appropriate’ image of a woman: a painting of the Virgin Mary with Child (breastfeeding), one of the masterpieces of the National Museum of Art [Fig. 1.18]. The newspaper similarly published, on Christmas Eve, a message from President García Meza indicating the suspension of the curfew, in all likelihood, so that the population could attend mass and celebrate with their families [Fig. 1.19].¹⁸⁷

During the late 1970s and early 1980s Valcárcel’s awareness of the sexism implicit in this type of objectifying representations of women was translated into artworks (sculptures with found objects) that suggested a link between women, eroticism, and the covert repression of the culture industry. One explicit example reproduced in his book is a small replica of a classical statue of a woman painted in gold, tied with a rope, inside a box [Fig. 1.20]. It is of significance that in another one of these sculptures, *El Imperio* (The Empire), Valcárcel associates sex with the US. This consists again of a box with a US eagle on top and a *Playboy* clipping of swingers (as described by the artist) pasted on the inside of the box [Fig. 1.21].¹⁸⁸ The artist’s use of these cuttings mimics not only the newspaper’s

¹⁸⁷ The suspension of the curfew is significant as in Bolivia most families celebrate Christmas on Christmas Eve. Anonymous, ‘Por esta noche fue levantado el toque de queda. Presidente dirige mensaje de Noche Buena’, *Última Hora*, 24 December 1980.

¹⁸⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 30 July 2010.

use of images of *Playboy* in their supplement but in their publicity. A case in point was an advertisement for Orient watches that introduced the photograph of a topless woman, previously published as cover of *Playboy*, in which she was asking a [male] reader for the ‘time’ [Figs. 1.22 and 1.23]. The artist’s perception of Bolivian society as sexist was equally manifested, eight months after the exhibition of *El Movimiento Erótico* in La Paz, in the catalogue of an exhibition of Valcárcel in Bremen where he referred to Bolivian women as ‘exploited housewives’, and to Bolivia as ‘machista,’ par excellence.¹⁸⁹

Despite the fact that Bolivia was far from an economy of advanced capitalism, the influence of the culture industry, and its covertly authoritarian role in the media was clear to the authoritarian regimes of the time. A good example of the government’s clumsy attempts to manipulate public opinion is a paid advertisement revealing a calculated use of the links between Bolivian society with US culture. The government of García Meza attempted to mask its involvement with drug trafficking by placing a paid advertisement in the printed press, with the photograph of an article published in *Readers’ Digest* and the heading ‘American Magazine *Readers’ Digest* Liberates the Armed Forces from Despicable Calumny of Drug Trafficking’¹⁹⁰ [Fig. 1.24]. Although this tactic seems nowadays like a very naïve attempt to manipulate public opinion – undoubtedly part of a larger campaign, censorship, and repressive actions – it is, nonetheless, revealing of the wide readership of *Reader’s Digest* and that the government seemed to believe that Bolivian readers would be easily persuaded by any ‘news’ coming from the US.

The conventional representation of women within the dichotomy virgin/whore, through the lens of religion, and its implicit male macho counterpart, unveil the sexist repressive universe that *El Movimiento Erótico* questioned. In a context where women were objects, and there was no space for any other kinds of sexuality – i.e. homosexuality – Valcárcel’s proposal in *El Movimiento Erótico* for a ‘pregenital polymorphous sexuality’ in opposition to ‘monogamous heterosexual

¹⁸⁹ Roberto Valcárcel in La Tienda Gallery, ‘el arte no ha muerto: Drawings and paintings by Roberto Valcárcel (catalogue), Bremen, 1984.

¹⁹⁰ There is no further information on this article. I suspect that it was a genuine *Readers’ Digest* article reproducing information provided by the Bolivian government. Anonymous, ‘Revista americana *Selecciones* libera a Fuerzas Armadas de infame calumnia sobre narcotráfico’, *Presencia*, 7 June 1981.

sexuality' was clearly a provocation. His sympathies lie with the aspect of Marcuse's theory that argues for a return to a liberated state of being based on a regression to a polymorphous sexuality, the stage where, according to Freud all senses and parts of the body, are explored by young children as possibilities of pleasure.¹⁹¹

Taking into consideration that Orpheus is Marcuse's paradigmatic figure for liberation, Valcárcel's art of the time represents a fuller Eros who 'protests against the repressive order of procreative sexuality' and one whose archetype has links with homosexuality:

The classical tradition associates Orpheus with the introduction of homosexuality. Like Narcissus, he rejects the normal Eros, not for aesthetic ideal, but for a fuller Eros. Like Narcissus, he protests against the repressive order of procreative sexuality.¹⁹²

Marcuse's association of Orpheus with homosexuality is of particular relevance for the discussion of sexual repression, taking into account the fact that Valcárcel is gay and that there was no space for homosexuality in Bolivian society in the 1980s. This repression of sexuality was mainly manifested in a patriarchal order, with a restrictive definition of masculinity that was reproduced by the institutions opposed by *El Movimiento Erótico* – family, religion, football, and the barracks – which Valcárcel questions and which are at the core of Bolivian society.

Although around the time of the presentation of the *El Movimiento Erótico* in La Paz, 1983, the editors of *Semana de Última Hora* (wherein Querejazu and Gisbert were writing fortnightly reviews) got rid of the sexualized images of women, the editors saw the need to make a transition by publishing images of female nudes in art,¹⁹³ like the *Venus* of Boticelli or a female nude by Bolivian painter María Esther Ballivián [Figs. 1.25 and 1.26]. As it was to be expected, all the nudes depicted on the cover of new version of the supplement were female bodies as objects to be looked at, much like what was going on with Bolivian art. The editors did gradually introduce other type of artworks, like the Virgin of Copacabana (who is of course not nude) [Fig. 1. 27], and artists like Valcárcel

¹⁹¹ Sigmund Freud, 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality' in Peter Gay (ed.), *The Freud Reader*, W.W. Norton & Company, London and New York, 1989, pp. pp. 259-279.

¹⁹² Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation*, p. 171.

¹⁹³ Pedro Querejazu, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 1 October 2013.

were occasionally highlighted, for example, on the cover with an image of one of his *Gritones* [Fig. 1.28].¹⁹⁴ They kept, nonetheless, the logic of having a striking image on the cover of the supplement, even if it was mostly unrelated to its content – or given little coverage inside the issue, despite appearances. Thus, while Valcárcel was featured on the cover, only a short text (not an article), with a general description of his artwork, was published at the foot of the credit page.

The Local Art System

In the reactions and lack of importance granted to *El Movimiento Erótico* by critics and art historians, it becomes clear that in Bolivian society there was no interest and ultimately no space for a truly creative – hence free – art. Despite the fact that Valcárcel represented Bolivia in the 1983 Bienal of São Paulo with *El Movimiento Erótico*, when it was presented for the first time a couple of months before in Emusa Gallery of La Paz, it was not considered an artwork, or at least a relevant one. The intention of the Movement, like the rest of the artworks of the Festival, was undoubtedly to challenge the expectations of what art was in Bolivia at the time. Possibly because of this, the critics did not pay much attention to it, and no texts were written about this artwork. In the text by Gisbert published in the catalogue of the Bienal, she wrote a brief general description of Bolivian painting (two paragraphs) with a formal description of Valcárcel's artwork highlighting his use (as well as that of Ugalde) of non-traditional media. She made no reference to *El Movimiento Erótico*, which she did not see in either of its venues.¹⁹⁵ In a recent interview with the author, she claimed not to remember having seen the artwork in La Paz.¹⁹⁶ Her not recalling it probably has to do with her lack of interest in this type of creations, i.e. 'experimental art'. This type of art was defined by Valcárcel himself as an art with a new approach (in terms of its theme, form and content), and new techniques (experimental use of materials, media and procedures), including different types of art to those the audience was used to,

¹⁹⁴ The fact that this *Gritón* is the one in Gisbert's collection, leads me to believe that she had an influence on the decision to publish it on the cover of *Semana de Última Hora* in 1983.

¹⁹⁵ Teresa Gisbert, 'Pintura Boliviana', Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *Catálogo Geral 17a Bienal de Sao Paulo* (ed. Maria Ottilia Bocchini and Ivo Mesquita), Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 14 October-18 December 1983, p. 31

¹⁹⁶ Teresa Gisbert, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2013.

such as actions, environments, conceptual art, projects, theoretical and interdisciplinary creations.¹⁹⁷ Gisbert's lack of enthusiasm for experimental art was equally manifested in her dismissal of one of Valcárcel's actions of the epoch in which he painted his entire body with house paint – which she described as without significance, as something 'she could have done herself'.¹⁹⁸

There were others at the time who did not regard *El Movimiento Erótico* as an artwork: a group of students from the Escuela de Bellas Artes denounced it, considering it immoral.¹⁹⁹ While *El Movimiento Erótico* used an artistic language with which the students were not familiar – hand written texts and some child-like drawings with markers, and magazine clippings – I would like to contend that there were ulterior reasons for the students' negative reactions. On the one hand, *El Movimiento Erótico* could not be taken seriously as a manifesto (one of the first manifestoes of Bolivian art), because of pre-established beliefs about what Bolivian art should be like. As the students pointed out, in *El Movimiento Erótico* there was no direct engagement (at least not one that was a clear to them) with what they perceived as the real problems of the country.²⁰⁰ On the other hand, while the student's reference to the immoral nature of the artworks had to do with the title of *El Movimiento Erótico* and its content, the students associating it with decadent capitalism was probably reinforced by Valcárcel's provocative texts, including phrases like 'anal personality', the cuttings from magazine, almanacs, and others 'consumer society' publications associated with capitalism. This connection between moral decadence (sex), and capitalism had currency in the artistic milieu of the time wherein anything negative was considered sexual and vice versa. Sexual analogies were used by influential critics and artists opposed to international trends in art. In an article about Bolivian art, critic Marta Traba, for example, referred disparagingly to what was going on in New York in 1977, as the

¹⁹⁷ Galería Emusa, *Primer festival boliviano de arte experimental, exposición 182*, La Paz, 2-13 August 1983. Also in: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, pp. 38-39.

¹⁹⁸ Teresa Gisbert, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2013.

¹⁹⁹ The note read: 'Lo que se expone en la galería EMUSA, no es arte sino expresiones de pintores como Roberto Valcárcel, que muestran la opulencia, el ridículo, la inmoralidad, los vicios de una sociedad en decadencia. Estas actitudes desvirtúan totalmente el festival de arte experimental, dijeron.' Anonymous, 'Critican al festival de arte experimental', *El Diario*, 10 August 1983.

²⁰⁰ Anonymous, 'Critican al Festival de Arte Experimental'.

‘avant-garde orgy’.²⁰¹ More recently, in 1999, in a presentation in the context of the SIART biennial (1999-2013),²⁰² artist David Angles accused artists who worked within the line of international Neo-expressionism of doing ‘masturbatory art’.²⁰³

While the Festival, in 1983, was not bringing forward any radical innovations, when we consider the history of international art, the intention of Valcárcel’s Movement in La Paz was to challenge prevailing beliefs regarding art, and thus to ensure a more solid connection with creativity and art. The artist’s view of Bolivian society, and of its closed attitude towards innovation and new ideas was recently made explicit in the note that precedes the republication – twenty-five years later – of his ‘Experimental Art’ text in his book of 2008:

To talk about ‘experimental art’ in the twenty [first] century is practically redundant: experimentation has established itself as a *sine qua non* paradigm of the avant-garde. I consider that it is pertinent, nonetheless, and not at all redundant to enumerate some of its features, in the light of the conservative character (anti-experimental) of wide sectors of society.²⁰⁴

The launching of a movement proposing an alternative view of society to the prevailing political party paradigms (and a way out of the political and economic crisis) could have seemed, on the other hand, like a much needed option in the political crisis that Bolivia was undergoing following the reestablishment of democracy in 1982: economic bankruptcy, constant strikes, and unyielding demands like the famous list of demands of the workers (*pliegos petitorios*) of the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB, the Bolivian worker’s syndicate) that were impossible to meet, in the light of the current situation. The use of a manifesto type of language in *El Movimiento Erótico* can be equally considered a parody of

²⁰¹ Marta Traba, ‘Bolivia Salida a Tierra’ in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, Banco Hipotecario Nacional, La Paz, 1989, p. 105.

²⁰² Bienal SIART was launched in 1999 as an international competition organized by the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes (former Escuela de Bellas Artes), the Museo Nacional de Arte and Unión Latina. The Dutch Embassy was its main sponsor.

²⁰³ I am citing from memory.

²⁰⁴ The original reads: ‘El decir “arte experimental” en el Siglo Veinte [sic] es prácticamente una redundancia: La experimentación se ha establecido como paradigma *sine qua non* de las vanguardias. No obstante, considero pertinente y nada redundante enumerar algunos de sus rasgos, dado el carácter conservador (= antiexperimental) de amplios sectores de la sociedad.’ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 39.

these sorts of demands and declarations, which were given wide coverage in the newspapers.

During the presentation of the Festival of Experimental Art in 1983 the left-wing members of the UDP (Unión Democrática y Popular) party in government and its followers proved to be as conservative towards sexuality as those of the right-wing military regimes. While paintings of female nudes were hypocritically accepted in Salons and the art schools, following European academic tradition, any other subjects dealing with sexuality or that could be associated with it from another perspective were definitively banned from artistic practice, and were unacceptable in society. The extent to which restrictive gender stereotypes were ingrained in society in the 1980s was evident in higher art education as well. Painter and former student Guiomar Mesa, at the art department of the state university UMSA in La Paz – where Valcárcel taught shortly before – recently illustrated this when she narrated a discussion in this regard with one of her teachers:

I used to argue with my teachers. I had a painting teacher [who used to ask] ‘what pose should the model have?’ [I answered] ‘he should lie down’. And he replied ‘Mrs. Mesa, that is not masculine, men should have a heroic pose and women a delicate one.’²⁰⁵

Considering this conservative and patriarchal paradigm of representation in Bolivian art, Valcárcel’s depiction of men as sexual objects in *El Movimiento Erótico* was not only extraordinary for the time but a direct provocation. If Valcárcel’s *El Movimiento Erótico* was not censured or closed despite its implicit references to homosexual eroticism – it stated clearly its call for a polymorphous pregenital sexuality and against heterosexual monogamous sexuality – this was simply because it was exhibited in Emusa Gallery. The gallery was one of the venues of the Experimental Festival, which was being presented, at the same time, in different institutions and places in the city and was supported by the director of Emusa Norah Claros who was at the time, head of the Department of Culture of

²⁰⁵ Guiomar Mesa’s words: ‘[...] yo me peleaba con todos mis profesores. Tenía un profesor de pintura (que preguntaba) ‘Qué pose vamos a poner?’ [Respondí] ‘Que se eche el modelo.’ Y me decía ‘Sra. Mesa eso no es varonil, los hombres tienen que tener una postura heroica y las mujeres una postura delicada.’ Guiomar Mesa, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 4 January 2013.

La Paz.²⁰⁶ In spite of Claros's support of the festival, the director of Casa de la Cultura,²⁰⁷ one of the institutions where the works were exhibited, decided to abruptly close the exhibition on display. The reason was that it included a work by Rosario Ostría, another student of Valcárcel, which was described by Efraín Ortuño, another of the artists exhibiting in the Festival, as 'a mural made up of knickers'.²⁰⁸ Claros resigned from her job at the Department of Culture, in demonstration of her disagreement with the censorship of the exhibition. Pedro Querejazu commented with outrage the closing down of the exhibition and the resignation of Claros in his fortnightly review in *Última Hora*:

Many things can be said in favour or against experimental art, but what concerns us and makes us bitter is that this incident has taken place now, within a democratic government and within a presumed rule of law. The Director of Culture of the City of La Paz, violating the constitutional right of free expression, respect towards others, and finally throwing common sense overboard, has closed an exhibition. This act is clumsy, abusive, [and] close to the acts of [ex President de facto] García Meza, and his followers. It is, moreover, scandalous that this act resulted in the exit of Senior Officer of Culture Norah Claros, while the 'closing down-exhibitions-Director' goes unfazed because she is backed by her party, from which one could expect an attitude that is more respectful and consequent with its name.²⁰⁹

While knickers were considered vulgar, in all likelihood, by the director of the Casa de la Cultura, what is clear is the impossibility to talk about sex, or garments

²⁰⁶ Efraín Ortuño, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 October 2013.

²⁰⁷ The name of the Director of Casa de la Cultura is not mentioned in the information I have found.

²⁰⁸ Ortuño recently explained that 'Rosario Ostría se mandó un mural hecho con calzones, o sea cosió uno a otro, más parecía una wiphala multicolor [...]'. There were some other provocative works in the Festival, which did not come under the eye of the director, and were not censored. Ortuño, and Ricardo Peredo Wende's installation in the Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, another venue of the exhibition, included a wedding dress, a cow's heart and a human foetus, and a stake on one of the walls of the gallery. Efraín Ortuño, *Interview with the Author*.

²⁰⁹ The original reads: 'Se pueden decir muchas cosas a favor o en contra del arte experimental, pero lo que nos preocupa y amarga es que este hecho se ha dado ahora, dentro de un gobierno democrático y de un supuesto imperio de las leyes. La Directora de Cultura de la Municipalidad Paceña, violando el derecho constitucional de la libre expresión, el respeto por los demás, y finalmente, tirando al suelo el sentido común, ha cerrado una exposición. Este hecho es torpe, arbitrario, abusivo, semejante a los hechos cometidos por García Meza y sus secuaces. Más escandaloso es todavía el hecho de que se haya producido la salida de la Oficialía Mayor de Cultura, Norah Claros, mientras tal Directora 'Cierra-exposiciones' sigue tan tranquila, porque supuestamente la respalda su partido, del que podría esperarse una actitud más respetuosa y consecuente con el nombre.' Quilicho (Pedro Querejazu), 'El cierre de una exposición', *Última Hora*, 2 September 1983, p. 14.

culturally associated with it, and particularly from the point of view of a woman. The censorship equally makes clear that, in the existing gender paradigm, an image of masculinity connected with heterosexuality, strength (a macho attitude) and procreation, prevailed. Countering this situation, Valcárcel has many representations in his artwork that subvert this perspective like those of men as objects of desire, including himself (kissing himself), couples of uncertain gender, and a white statue of Simón Bolívar with his lips painted in red (titled *Bolívar pintado* – Painted Bolívar).²¹⁰ Needless to say, they do not comply with his Catholic upbringing. Valcárcel recently told me about his first encounter with the mandates of religion regarding sex, when he asked his father what impure thoughts were, while preparing for his first communion, which he describes as an important affair at the time. His father nervously answered ‘its like when you think about being with a naked *woman*’.²¹¹

Other patriarchal and macho institutions like the military were equally a topic of concern for the artist, from early on in his career. The military institution is directly alluded to in relation to homosexuality in a text, published in a 1978 catalogue, where the fictitious narrator lets the reader know that Valcárcel once asked: How do the military repress their homoerotic tendencies?²¹² Homophobia in society, and in the military in particular, had become explicit a year before the presentation of *El Movimiento Erótico*, when Minister of Interior General Arce Gomez answered a journalist’s query regarding his links with paramilitary groups, with the following question: ‘I wouldn’t accuse you of being gay if I didn’t have any proof, would I?’²¹³ At the end of the press conference, Arce Gomez addressed again the journalist with a derogatory remark ‘I’m sorry if I have guessed correctly [your sexual orientation].’²¹⁴ To which the journalist wittily replied ‘Don’t worry, perhaps we both got it right’.²¹⁵ Upon the laughter of the

²¹⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p.198.

²¹¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2012. Italics are mine.

²¹² Galería Emusa, Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 84’, La Paz, 19-30, December 1978.

²¹³ Anonymous, ‘Cnel. Arce Gómez: “Paramilitares son idealistas...nadie puede destruirlos”’, *Presencia*, 14 May 1982.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

rest of the journalists present, Arce Gomez concluded ‘but at least mine [my ailment] will pass, yours will not.’²¹⁶

A heterosexual masculinity associated with capitalism (and other control systems like the church and family) is equally indirectly denounced in the early 1990s, in Valcárcel’s paintings of ties, looking at, and embracing one another [Figs. 1.29-1.31]. The motifs of the ties highlight the repressive beliefs that this sexist society reproduces. Thus, a tie with the colours of the Vatican, and cross, symbolizes religion; a tie with dollar signs, US capitalism. There are also ties with other motifs: a US flag, a hammer and sickle, and swastikas. These conventional motifs, and implicitly beliefs, are represented in other paintings in the form of a tie with hotdogs and another one with a penis pattern. While an allusion to homosexuality seems evident in the former ties, the artist is, at the same time and in a playful way, hinting to the use of ties as phallic symbols – in compensation for the lack of confidence in masculinity of certain men or as a manifestation of the fear of castration.

A more direct link between capitalism and a contained sexuality is suggested in Valcárcel’s Mickey Mouse series of the mid 1990s. What did this representation of a decadent emblem of the American way of life – or culture industry – mean in this context? The Mickey Mouse series uses a symbol with which the middle class identifies, to introduce sex associated with childhood, and homosexuality. It equally seeks to shock and provoke a conservative art context for whom this Mickey Mouse would mean bad taste, if not a presumed identification of the artist with the US and its culture. Mickey is also an opportunity to provoke a conservative society by introducing a sexualized image of a male figure (albeit a mouse’s) in art.

The playful dialogue that Valcárcel establishes with art history in these series, is useful for his tongue in cheek legitimization of Mickey Mouse in art. The French title of *Mickey Nudiste* [Fig. 1.32] brings to mind, the tradition of the female nude in European art wherein the sexism, and male gaze over women as objects is well expressed in the Guerrilla Girls untitled poster of 1989 that asks

²¹⁶ Ibid.

‘Do Women Have to Be Naked to get into the Met. Museum?’.²¹⁷ While the creation of an ‘undressed’ version of Mickey Mouse might be a reference to the quaint artistic nudes reproduced in *Semana de Última Hora*, the adoption of a ‘French’ title²¹⁸ has multiple meanings. It points to Mickey as an exhibitionist or someone who practices nudism, while at the same it is a wink to the pretentious use of the word ‘nude’ to depict naked bodies of women in art history. *Mickey Nudiste* could also be interpreted as a reference to Duchamp’s *Nude Descending the Staircase*, a work that not only explores movement in painting, as Futurists or Cubists might have done, but provocatively introduced, like Valcárcel with Mickey Mouse, what was in their original contexts ‘unacceptable’. Valcárcel’s nude cartoon playfully represents, at the same time, the impossible nudity of a fictitious character, hence ultimately only a symbolic nakedness. Although Valcárcel’s nude is not a ‘nude’, it is a sexualized version, nonetheless, of a fictitious children’s character, which, following the game of the entertainment industry of attributing human qualities to a mouse, has been transformed into an object of desire. From this point of view, it could also be read as an allusion to Freud’s theory of sexuality – to the fact that children are sexual beings.²¹⁹

The sexualized representation of Mickey Mouse is taken one step further in *Mickey Cubiste* [Fig. 1.33] where more tension is created by the juxtaposition of two unlikely subjects, a Mickey Mouse with an erect penis with a condom, and cubism. Valcárcel uses art conventions, cubist forms, to make more explicit the representation of a male character as a sexual object. Thus, the ‘cubist’ disfiguration of the face and ears of Mickey highlights, the sexual tension of this

²¹⁷ *Mickey Nudiste* was ironically censored in an art fair in Las Vegas in the late 1990s when it participated in a group show of Bolivian art organised by Fundación esART, one of the only institutions actively participating in international art fairs and exhibitions. The organisers claimed that they did not want to have any ‘property rights’ problems with Walt Disney Corporation. Patricia Tordoir, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 11 June 2015.

²¹⁸ While in this case the title is indeed in French, a language that Valcárcel does not speak it, but likes to playfully pretend that he does. He often does the same with other languages. His playful interest in the sound and idiosyncrasies inherent to a language is often explored in his titles of works or exhibitions as the pun on the red, yellow and green colours of the Bolivian flag in the exhibition *Robo, amarelo, perde y a veces azul*. Galería Fundación BHN, *Valcárcel*, Fundación BHN, La Paz, 1997.

²¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, ‘Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality’ in Peter Gay (ed.), *The Freud Reader*, W.W. Norton & Company, London and New York, 1989, pp. 259-279.

‘immoral’ and paradoxically impossible scene. The ‘racy’ content of the painting is further emphasized by Mickey’s big smile, and his stretching his arms to the edges of the frame, evoking thus confinement and climax, at the same time. *Mickey Cubiste*, being part of a wider series of Mickey Mouse themed paintings, introduces another joke. The artist citing his own artwork, i.e. *Mickey Nudiste*, is another ironic appropriation of art historical convention. Both titles in French further emphasize the incongruity of mixing a Disney character with art history’s highbrow and sophisticated trajectory, and its connection with a homophobic society.

The extent of the lack of openness towards sex of the audience of *El Movimiento Erótico*, in 1983 – at a moment where the country was closed to the world – can only be guessed by the prudish attitude towards Valcárcel’s *Mickey Cubiste*, thirteen years later. Sociologist Alicia Szmukler in her study of urban collective imagination in art describes how, in the late 1990s, the sexual content of Valcárcel’s painting was avoided by a mixed focus group:

Virtually nobody noticed that Mickey had an erect penis and a contraceptive. It was necessary to point this out so that reactions could be generated, which were mostly expressed by men, because women, even after making a reference to the sex of this character, would insist on the idea of the fantasy of the cartoon; namely, acting as if sex did not exist [in the picture]. The fear of talking about sexuality was greater in women and young groups, meanwhile male adults felt more relaxed.²²⁰

Architects, Art and Authoritarianism

Less than seven months before the first presentation of the *El Movimiento Erótico* in La Paz – 19 of January of the same year, 1983, – Klaus Barbie, former head of the Gestapo in Lyon (known as the Butcher of Lyon), had been arrested in La Paz and deported to France to face trial for the crimes he committed in Lyon. Barbie had lived in Bolivia since the early 1950s under a false name – Klaus Altmann –

²²⁰ The original reads: ‘Prácticamente nadie notó que Mickey tenía el pene erecto y un preservativo colocado. Fue preciso explicitar esto para generar reacciones, que fueron mayoritariamente expresadas por los hombres, pues las mujeres, incluso luego de hacer referencia al sexo de ese personaje, insistían en la idea de la fantasía del dibujo animado; es decir, actuaban como si el sexo no existiera. La aprehensión a hablar sobre sexualidad fue mayor en las mujeres y en los grupos jóvenes, mientras que los varones adultos se sintieron más relajados.’ Alicia Szmukler, *La ciudad imaginaria. Un análisis sociológico de la pintura contemporánea en Bolivia* (colab. Mireya Herrero and Bernarda López), PIEB/ SINERGIA, La Paz, 1998, p. 166.

and with the protection of various governments. Barbie is known to have worked with military government's intelligence offices and with brutal paramilitary organizations that protected drug lord Roberto Suárez. He had also been in charge of recruiting the international intelligence 'advisors' for García Meza's violent coup, 1980, and subsequent repressive government.

This context explains Valcárcel's positioning himself in the theoretical ambit of Frankfurt School authors, like Marcuse, who were trying to understand the roots of Nazism. These ideas motivated Valcárcel to look for authoritarianism in Bolivia in less apparent places and to challenge his audience about this topic in a different way. For instance, in one of the schemes of *El Movimiento Erótico* Valcárcel suggested that creativity was an essential component of non-authoritarian societies; and that Bolivians were sexually repressed, authoritarian and uncreative (as in the list presented in the Emusa exhibition: anal personality/ authoritarian behaviour/ lack of creativity/ Fascism – see Fig. 1.1).

For Valcárcel there is undoubtedly a concrete but veiled link between Bolivian society and authoritarianism. He is always keen to point to how authoritarian attitudes are reproduced in school, in religion, and in the architectural practice, to name a few examples. His questioning of authoritarianism often extends to institutions that he knows well, and have been part of his personal experience. Thus, in his presentation *Mi vida* he referred to the 'prison-like' architecture of the 'Fascist German School' he attended in La Paz.²²¹ It is rumored that the school made the students do the Nazi salute during the Third Reich. Valcárcel's position towards his alma mater reflects his negative experience in the institution where he was harassed and segregated because he was different (he was overweight and he did not play football).²²² Valcárcel's description of the school seeks to question, at the same time, an institution of

²²¹ When Valcárcel rehearsed *Mi Vida* presentation he referred to an image of his school with the following phrae: 'Este es el fascista Colegio Alemán en la calle Aspiazu, este es el patio de recreo que parece una cárcel, básicamente [...]'. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, 26 December 2012.

²²² His friend and classmate Armando Urioste confirmed this perception. Armando Urioste, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 December 2013.

privileged education, whose alumni are well placed in Bolivian society – and from which, as he has pointed out to me, he has benefitted.²²³

Around 2003 Valcárcel presented a paper at a Bolivian architecture biennial in which he was explicit about the relationship between architects, form and authoritarianism.²²⁴ In his presentation entitled ‘Anal Personality and Symmetry in Architecture’ Valcárcel established a relationship between prevailing aesthetic tendencies in architecture and authoritarianism and, most importantly – because of its provocative element – with sexuality. Written almost two decades after *El Movimiento Erótico*, this paper evidences Valcárcel’s prolonged interest in repression, and the centrality of Marcuse, Adorno and other psychoanalysts to his thinking over the years. Valcárcel wrote:

Among the authors that have most contributed to the topic that we are discussing, we have Sigmund Freud, Karl Abraham, Ernest Jones, Wilhelm Reich, Erick Fromm, Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno.²²⁵

In this text Valcárcel exemplifies the relationship between certain aesthetic choices in art with a halt in the normal development of sexuality (in the anal stage):

As example, we can mention that there exists a causal relationship between anal-retentive personality and abstract geometric painting, in the same manner that there is a causal relationship between anal-expulsive personality and the informal painting of lyric expressionism or abstract expressionism.²²⁶

²²³ In a recent interview Valcárcel explained how he believes that this type of relations helped open the doors upon his return from Germany as the director of Emusa Gallery, who had also studied in the German School, invited him to present his first exhibition. He has similarly pointed out how German School alumnus artist Alfredo La Placa, who was the director of the Museo Nacional de Arte (from 1975 on), had stayed at his grandmother’s guest house.

²²⁴ There is no reference in Valcárcel’s book as to when and where this text was read or published and Valcárcel does not remember either. I remember hearing about it, around 2003, from an architect who attended the conference in La Paz. Roberto Valcárcel. ‘El carácter anal y la simetría en la arquitectura’ in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, pp. 150-162.

²²⁵ Entre los autores que más han aportado al tema que nos ocupa se encuentran Sigmund Freud, Karl Abraham, Ernest Jones, Wilhelm Reich, Erick Fromm, Herbert Marcuse y Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno. Roberto Valcárcel. ‘El carácter anal y la simetría en la arquitectura’, *ibid.*, p. 152.

²²⁶ The original reads: ‘Como ejemplo podemos mencionar que existe una relación causal entre el carácter anal retentivo y la pintura abstracta geométrica, así como existe una relación causal entre el carácter anal expulsivo y la pintura informal del expresionismo lírico o la abstracción gestual.’, *ibid.*, p. 155.

The essay basically accuses architects (in an event organized by architects) of being complacent about authoritarian aesthetics. Having been trained as an architect, his art is not exempt from the authoritarian/ anal-personality aesthetics that he lists in the essay:

Preference for pure, simple and defined forms.
 Preference for meticulous, fine and clean forms.
 Preference for precision and exactitude.
 Preference for smooth, clean and flat colours.
 Preference for compositional plans and schemes,
*Especially for symmetry.*²²⁷

This implicit preference and display of ‘clean’ geometric forms evident in his own artwork – which at times is ironic –, like in his series of scales for ‘measuring’ feelings [Figs. 1.34-1.36], is also visible in his rare architectural designs, and particularly in the monumental Morales-Pardovalle residence in La Paz [Figs. 1.37 and 1.38.], alas, recently demolished (in 2015). The façade of this house of postmodern style references – neo-Tiwanaku, Art Déco, and Minimalism, among the ones I have detected –, is absolutely symmetric, nonetheless. The artist’s belief that there is a relationship between form and authoritarianism was somewhat ironically confirmed with the temporary letting of the house to the US Embassy in the early 2000s, as the temporary residence of the ambassador.²²⁸

From this perspective, certain images of *El Movimiento Erótico* gain a different meaning, like the clipping of the facade of a church, with symmetric design, which is, according to the movement, one of the institutions that maintain bourgeois values in the service of capitalism. In his paper on symmetry and architecture, Valcárcel made a point to include churches in his description of authoritarian architecture:

²²⁷ The original reads: ‘Preferencia por las formas simples, puras, definidas. Preferencia por lo pulcro, fino y limpio. Preferencia por la precisión y la exactitud. Preferencia por los colores lisos, limpios, planos. Preferencia por los planes y esquemas compositivos, *Especialmente por la simetría.*’ Ibid., p. 157.

²²⁸ It should be mentioned that the US embassy was also most likely interested in the house because of its strategic location behind the American School where a helicopter could land, if needed, in the light of the political turmoil in which the country was immersed at the time. In his text, Valcárcel’s refers to the existence of a direct correlation between symmetry and anal personality: ‘Se ha establecido la relación entre el uso de formas (fórmulas) simétricas y el carácter anal/autoritario de un determinado sistema social en general y del arquitecto como su agente en particular.’ Ibid., p. 159.

The absolute control of the church, expressed in symmetric and monumental cathedrals (San Peter in Rome. Saint Paul in London. Notre Dame of Paris and practically any church in the planet.²²⁹

Taking Valcárcel's ideas on architecture into consideration, the asymmetric and dynamic composition of *El Movimiento Erótico* in São Paulo can be considered a conscious attempt to steer away from authoritarian aesthetics.²³⁰ A black and white image from the biennial's catalogue suggests that Valcárcel distributed his composition in an asymmetric way along the three walls he was assigned [Fig. 1. 3].²³¹ On the first wall, the artist's summary text-collage phrase appears aligned to the right and centre of the wall; on the middle wall, the different clusters of text and image are slanted to the right (more saturated at the right bottom corner), they give the impression of converging, as if they were pulled by gravity force, to the right corner. The visual emphasis on the corner is reiterated with the arrows painted on the floor, which direct the viewer's attention to this area. On the third wall, two groups of images and slanted text are located on the left half, while the right part of the wall is occupied by the three large hand-written phrases, each in a different colour – purple, red and light blue, and each in turn with its author in a contrasting one – with large areas of white space in between the letters.

Consistent with the content of the phrase, the aesthetics of the three phrases is light and playful. The letters seem to move freely in the space along the sound of Sinatra's *Strangers in the Night* 'Do-be-do-be-do'. The words, not properly aligned, are also reminiscent of children's handwriting. The intentional chaos contrasts with the pseudo-didactic plates of the version of the *El Movimiento Erótico* in La Paz. The random and disruptive elements in both versions (but again more apparent in the São Paulo version) reflect the artist's intention of making an

²²⁹ Valcárcel wrote: 'El dominio absoluto de la iglesia expresado mediante las catedrales simétricas y monumentales (San Pedro en Roma. San Pablo en Londres. Notre Dame de París y prácticamente toda iglesia en el planeta).' Ibid.

²³⁰ According to Valcárcel there is a similar tendency in his graphic design that he characterizes as asymmetric, with strong diagonals and 'out of balance' – influenced by Russian constructivist aesthetics. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, p. 440

²³¹ This is the only image of the complete space. Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *Catálogo Geral 17a Bienal de Sao Paulo* (ed. Maria Ottilia Bocchini and Ivo Mesquita), Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 14 October-18 December 1983, p. 85.

artwork not guided by reason, at least when it comes to its form, which for Marcuse represented the reality principle and repression.²³²

Chaos can also be considered the opposite of the ‘order’ that the different military governments wanted establish (1978-1982). Even the late transition military governments that were in power a year before the presentation of *El Movimiento Erótico* in La Paz were keen to publish self-promoting advertisements with such mottos as ‘Reason convinces’.²³³ The formal ‘chaos’ of Valcárcel’s Movement echoed the social and economic chaos of the country and contradicted, at the same time, the praise of order by military presidents. It recalled by anti-thesis Banzer’ motto ‘order, peace, and progress’, and the claims, in numerous paid advertisements of the military transition regimes, governments presumed to be ‘more democratic’, like the one of Torrelio, to be combating anarchy, i.e.: extremist groups.²³⁴

From the perspective of the ideas of Marcuse, *El Movimiento Erótico*’s cluttered composition gave shape to the author’s call to abandon the dominion of reason and logic as they are the mental processes of the reality principle, which reproduce internalized repression; an idea that was made explicit in one of the texts of the movement.

A note at the end of Valcárcel’s paper about symmetry and architecture lets the reader know that he has taken the F-Scale personality test. Valcárcel adds that he is pleased to announce the results which indicate that he is a ‘whining rotter, what, from his point of view, is a very positive result:

Note: On 29 April 2005, the artist took the diagnose detection test [measuring] inclination towards fascism, or ‘F Scale

²³² Valcárcel explained: ‘Las imágenes del collage, las imágenes fotográficas, sacadas de todo lado, de todos mis archivos, juntuchas, almanaques, revistas, libros, de donde me daba la gana, en parte tenían mucho que ver con la temática pero varias otras de ellas en parte no tenían que ver con la temática, eran precisamente un elemento caótico, disruptor, que más bien estaban ahí [coladas] digamos, fuera de contexto, precisamente para hacer visible que la cosa no era directa, no era lógica racional, sino que también tenía elementos.’ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra 28 December 2012.

²³³ The original caption of the advertisement reads: ‘La razón convence...’

²³⁴ An advertisement with the photograph of Torrelio claims that his government is giving space to political parties while preventing anarchy and crisis: ‘Estamos dando una muestra de la responsabilidad institucional de este gobierno a los partidos, seguros de que estos sabrán ponerse a la altura de sus obligaciones cívicas y políticas, sin que esta alternativa sea utilizada para anarquizar el país y agravar la crisis’. Anonymous, Advertisement headed ‘¡Hablemos Claro!’, *Presencia*, 2 June 1982.

(anesi.com/fscale.htm). He got a 0.999 score out of a maximum of six points, and the phrase **‘whining rotter’** as diagnose, which freely translated means something like ‘whining rotter,’ ‘crying destructor,’ ‘unhappy destabilizer,’ or something along those lines. The artist takes this diagnosis as a compliment.²³⁵

While it is difficult to establish whether this online version of the test, from a US based personal website (of Chuck Anesi), is a correct interpretation or reproduction of the 1950 investigation on authoritarianism by Adorno and others,²³⁶ the dismissal of the author of Adorno’s ideas – which Anesi describes as ‘Freudian-Marxist mélange of pseudo-scientific speculative foolishness that is now, thank God, thoroughly discredited’ – is meaningful.²³⁷ Valcárcel’s note regarding the discrediting of the ideas of Adorno, Freud and Marx that precedes his essay was most likely a reference to Anesi’s remark and to this particular international context. These ideas seem equally relevant taking into account US policies after September 11:

In recent years, the ideas of Freud, Marx, and T.W. Adorno have been discredited by academic institutions, particularly in the US, a country wherein a terrifying return to authoritarianism, to heteronomous thinking and superstitious behaviour prevail.²³⁸

The relevance of these ideas does not seem out of place, on the other hand, at the time when Valcárcel presented this paper, in the light of the recent election of former dictator Banzer Suárez (president from 1997 until his death in 2001).

While Valcárcel’s suggesting, in the paper presented at the architecture biennial,

²³⁵ The original reads: ‘Nota: El artista se sometió el 29 de abril de 2005 a la prueba de detección diagnóstica de inclinación al fascismo o ‘escala F’ (anesi.com/fscale.htm). Obtuvo 0.999 de puntaje sobre un máximo posible de 6 puntos y, como diagnóstico, la frase **‘whining rotter’**, que traducida libremente significaría algo así como ‘podridor quejumbroso’, ‘llorón destructor’, ‘desestabilizador descontento’ o algo por el estilo. El artista toma este diagnóstico como un cumplido.’ Roberto Valcárcel. ‘El carácter anal y la simetría en la arquitectura’ p. 162. According to the online test, a score of less than 2 describes ‘a whining rotter’; between 2 and 3, ‘a liberal airhead’; between 3 and 4.5, ‘Within normal limits, an appropriate score for an American; between 4.5 and 5.5 ‘You may want to do things with your left hand’ and 5.5 or higher ‘Have trouble keeping the lint off your black shirts?’ Chuck Anesi, ‘The F Scale Test’, Anesi.com [website], 1997, <www.anesi.com/fscale.>, accessed 9 October, 2014.

²³⁶ It was posted on the website of Chuck Anesi, a website with different topics who is promoted with the motto ‘Bringing strange information to the web since 1995’. Anesi claims that his online version is the F Scale test ‘in its final form’. Chuck Anesi, ‘The F Scale Test’.

²³⁷ Chuck Anesi, ‘The F Scale Test’.

²³⁸ The original reads: ‘En años recientes, las ideas de Freud, Marx y T.W. Adorno han sido desacreditadas por la institución académica, particularmente en los EEUU. país donde impera un aterrador retorno al autoritarismo, al pensamiento heterónimo y a las conductas supersticiosas.’ Roberto Valcárcel. ‘El carácter anal y la simetría en la arquitectura’, p. 150.

that architects are sexually repressed, in a still a predominantly male field in Bolivia, and establishing a link with the anal stage of sexual development (from which a homosexual tendency could be suggested, thus putting their manhood in question) was a provocation in 2000s, it was equally or more problematic in 1983. This was made clear in a couple of the reactions, in the comments book of the gallery where the *El Movimiento Erótico* was presented, wherein two visitors were most likely disturbed by Valcárcel's references to the anal personality and authoritarianism. One comment, written in an offensive language, suggested that Valcárcel's interest in the subject of his artwork – eroticism? – was derived from his psychological traumas, i.e., his being gay.²³⁹

Valcárcel's interest in unmasking authoritarianism, explicit in his call to condemn patriarchal institutions, is a challenge to his own milieu, his family and school as authoritarian; and also a challenge to himself as an artist under the influence of the clean aesthetics and rationality of architecture, an authoritarian discipline of which he is part of, as was his father, and as were the art critics Teresa Gisbert and José de Mesa.

Taking into account the lack of importance of art in society (evidenced in the *Última Hora* supplement), Valcárcel's proposal of an aesthetic revolution in 1983 was undoubtedly a bold idea, far removed from Bolivian paradigms regarding art and politics, as is evident from the public denunciation of his *Festival Experimental*. Although, in all likelihood, it did not seem logical to propose anarchy at a moment that has retrospectively been qualified as 'anarchic' – because of the lack of authority of president Siles in managing the political pressure of different groups – proposing an 'anarchic-aesthetic hedonism' seemed like the correct prescription for Bolivian society for, as we have seen, the country had recently been under the rule authoritarianism of military regimes. The legacy of authoritarianism was latent in society in the patriarchal and homophobic nature of its institutions – media, art, school, etc. –, and in its lack of value of art, in its prescriptive art, and in the unquestioning attitude towards the effect of the culture

²³⁹ One of the comments in the Emusa Gallery visitor's book tells Valcárcel to 'Rot in your homosexuality'. Galería Emusa, *Cuadernos de Comentarios*, 1978-1984.

industry in conditioning the subjectivity of individuals. Barbie's deportation, a few months before, was undoubtedly also a motive of inspiration.

Conclusion

We have seen then how interpreting *El Movimiento Erótico* using Marcuse's ideas can be useful on different levels. It has illuminated Valcárcel's view of repression, as well as his contribution to Marcuse's view of art as liberating. Specifically, Valcárcel's reflections on the latter topic are reflected through his devising of certain non-authoritarian artistic strategies, which he uses in *El Movimiento Erótico* (multi-layered, polysemic art and asymmetry). Interpreting Valcárcel's humour and playful attitude towards art – common traits in his artwork – from the perspective of Marcuse's Orphic paradigm of culture has opened a new dimension into his work, that is, his irreverent and intentional attempts to steer away from authoritarianism. Similarly, bearing in mind Marcuse's critique of the culture industry has been useful to illustrate its repressive role in *both* more developed capitalist countries with an economy closer to what Marcuse is referring to (Brazil) as well as in bankrupt socialist Bolivia of 1983. Likewise, the concept of culture industry has revealed how Valcárcel's disconformity toward blockbuster artistic events, such as biennials, is present in his work. Considering the role of culture industry in São Paulo and La Paz has equally shed light on the concessions and restraints of art in contexts ruled by commercial interests. This perspective has also brought insight into the connections between art and the culture industry in La Paz, and it has disclosed the illusory nature of the freedoms of the art system and of what appears to be a sexually liberated society.

Taking into account Valcárcel's ideas on repression, the formal chaos of *El Movimiento Erótico* in São Paulo was interpreted as an intentional attempt to avoid symmetry and a type of aesthetics associated with authoritarian institutions and regimes. Looking at Valcárcel's art from this perspective has equally brought insight on Bolivian society as one of restricted eroticism – where both art and sexuality are restrained – and one in which restraints on eroticism serve the interests and commercial profit of institutions. Examples of images, statements

and publicity in the press prove the existence of a relationship, previously not pointed in Bolivia, between restricted sexuality (and hence eroticism), art and repression. These links have delineated, at the same time, certain authoritarian traits, in a country that although far from developed capitalism, it has tended to view it with admiration; particularly at times of political and economic turmoil where other political systems (like capitalism) seemed like desirable paradigms.

From this analysis, an important implication behind Valcárcel's *El Movimiento Erótico* is suggested: not all art is non-authoritarian, and hence liberating. Firstly, it depends on the context in which it is shown as art can hardly escape the veiled authoritarian apparatus of the art system (in large-scale biennials and in a prescriptive art history) and those of the public. Secondly, it equally depends on whether art follows a prescription or is authoritarian itself by tending to one meaning and hence not demanding an active engagement from the viewer. My analysis has also shed light on Valcárcel's contribution to countering repression by making art that is difficult and provocative. The urgency of a non-authoritarian art but also of a creative and non-prejudiced viewer, was specifically manifested in the two forms and the two emphases of *El Movimiento Erótico*: the exhibition of provocative pamphlet-like 'documentation', and less visual form of La Paz; and in the chaotic and multilayered composition of São Paulo. In both versions, beyond seeking to delineate the idea of an 'erotic' society, Valcárcel was equally – and importantly – having fun.

CHAPTER TWO

TURNING THE VIEWER INTO A POET

(UNMASKING AUTHORITARIANISM IN BOLIVIAN ART)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we have seen how in *El Movimiento Erótico*, Valcárcel made a complex artwork in terms of form, the intention behind which was for the viewer to construct meaning. This chapter takes a closer look at the implications of leaving meaning in the hands of the beholder – or what I have previously referred to as making non-authoritarian artwork. It examines Valcárcel's artwork in the light of the invisible 'prejudices' regarding art which were prevalent in Bolivia during the 1980s. My analysis of Valcárcel's artwork, in this chapter, takes as point of departure the artist's *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* (A Story with Fields of Artichokes), a 1982 exhibition that preceded *El Movimiento Erótico* by one year, in which the artist investigated making what he called 'open works of art'.

It should be noted that Valcárcel's concept of creativity is reflected in the polysemic form of his open works of art and in the artist's multiple attempts to make the viewer take an active part in the artwork or in 'turning the viewer into a poet'.²⁴⁰ The importance of creativity was made apparent from early on in his career. For example, in his fictitious interview of 1979, published in an exhibition catalogue, Valcárcel talks about the relationship between democracy and art, in terms of the links between lack of creativity and authoritarianism:

[lack of creativity] is something, which is very convenient for those who are interested in preventing people from being creative in art and in politics.²⁴¹

²⁴⁰ Valcárcel wrote: 'El arte cumple su propósito cuando obliga al espectador a convertirse en un artista y en un poeta.' Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008, p. 59.

²⁴¹ Roberto Valcárcel, 'Fragmento de entrevista a Roberto Valcárcel realizada por Juan Ángel Bustillos el 6 de septiembre de 1978 (tres días antes del accidente)' in Galería Emusa, 'Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90', La Paz, 8-19 May, 1979.

The link between creativity and Marcuse's ideas on repression was also made explicit in his *El Movimiento Erótico* wherein, as we have seen, Valcárcel calls against 'all the institutions [...] that repress the eroticism and creativity of the individual.'²⁴² Valcárcel's Movement's rule number two also called for a 'free and playful development of the aesthetic-erotic potential of human beings (in the production, in the reproduction, in relationships, in art).' And one of the plates of *El Movimiento Erótico*, in the version of La Paz, titled 'Death of Art' establishes a correlation between lack of creativity and fascism.²⁴³

In my discussion of what the artist conceives as making 'open artworks', it will also become clear that for Valcárcel, creativity means divergent thinking, and that he applies this method to make artworks that intentionally point to a number of possibilities; or to make artworks which are coherent with the idea that 'any aesthetic problem (theme) has many possible solutions (pictures)'.²⁴⁴ In this chapter, I argue that Valcárcel's view of a type of art closely linked with creativity has implications not only for art practice, but also for the way art history and criticism are conducted, and the focus and perspective in higher art education and art competitions in Bolivia at the time.

The chapter is divided in four sections. The first part of this chapter will analyse how the artist investigates making an open work of art, in his emblematic *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* (A Story with Artichoke Fields) in contrast to an art practice that is, according to the artist, 'dying of stagnation and reiteration'.²⁴⁵ The second part will examine some prejudices, which despite their best intentions, are reproduced in art history in Bolivia – and in particular in the interpretation of Roberto Valcárcel's artwork – and how Valcárcel challenges them. In the third

²⁴² The text in *El Movimiento Erótico* reads: 'Contra la represión organizada e instituida: en contra de todas las instituciones (estatales/ deportivas/ educativas/ familiares/ militares/ religiosas)... que reprimen el erotismo y la creatividad del individuo...bajo pretexto de mantener los valores morales (burgueses)...para mantener este sistema de opresión...al servicio del capital!'.

²⁴³ As discussed in Chapter One, this correlation was established via a halt in the development of sexuality in a diagram that links with arrows: 'anal personality', 'authoritarian behaviour' and 'lack of creativity and fascism'.

²⁴⁴ Roberto Valcárcel: 'Cualquier problema estético (tema) tiene muchas soluciones posibles (cuadros).' Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* [catalogue], Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

²⁴⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2013.

part, I will discuss how these premises have been kept alive, throughout the years, in the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes (ESBA, now Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes) of La Paz and how they are reproduced in Bienal Bolivia. Finally, in the fourth part, I will introduce two artworks, *Pluricadros eclécticos radicales*, and *¿Qué es belarte?*, which further contribute to understanding the way in which the artist explores making a non-authoritarian or prescriptive artwork.

I. A Story with Artichoke Fields: Expanding the Possibilities of Art

Although from early on in his career, Valcárcel expressed concern about how certain myths about art perpetuate authoritarianism in society,²⁴⁶ it is only in 1982, with his *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* [Figs. 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3] that he made an artwork that directly addressed this issue. For Valcárcel, making a non-authoritarian creation meant devising one that contained many possibilities of art making and viewing.

Historia con Campo de Alcachofas, exhibited in Emusa Gallery in 1982, consists of a series of different type of cartons and wood panels (chipboard, cardboard, compressed cardboard and corrugated cardboard), with drawings and paintings, both on the front and back, with ‘acrylic paint, markers, pencils, watercolours, tempera, latex, oil, aerosol, nail polish, wax, Nescafé, photographs, colour photocopies, cuttings from posters, calendars, magazines and diverse objects’.²⁴⁷ The panels, perforated at the corners, were exhibited attached to one another by wires at some distance from the wall for the spectator to view them from both sides, like a line of washing. The format encouraged the spectator to engage with the artwork creatively, or as Valcárcel states, to become a poet and invent his or her own ‘story with artichoke fields’. This idea was reinforced by Valcárcel’s suggesting, in the catalogue, that the way these panels were shown, and the order in which they were attached to each other in the gallery, depicted only one of the many possible ways in which the artwork could be displayed and constituted:

²⁴⁶ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19, May 1979.

²⁴⁷ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 152*, La Paz, April 6-17 1982.

A STORY WITH FIELDS OF ARTICHOKE

The previous exhibitions of Valcárcel Productions were characterized by a meticulous and elaborate display of technical, formal and thematic unity. In this exhibition, the idea of the ‘artwork’ as something closed, finite, and delimited by its physical edges is abandoned. **The idea of the open work of art is proposed:** a set of very different elements, in terms of theme, type of figuration and technique, and even deliberately incongruous. As the artist and the viewer establish [different] relationships between these elements, their meaning is modified and they acquire strange symbologies.

The whole is not equal to the sum of the parts. The number of elements is irrelevant: the open work of art may be expanded (reduced) in any moment through the addition (subtraction) of some of its physical parts or through the imagination of the viewer.²⁴⁸

From this perspective, it can be argued that *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* was made up of different pieces which were, at the same time, exchangeable and even dispensable. It is a picture, at the same time, with a variety of themes: one panel with the face of the artist (with his eyes coloured red), another one with the text ‘Alka-chofa’ (artichoke spelled with a ‘k’), and others like: a sunset, an abstract painting and a house that looks like it was drawn by a child [Fig. 2.1]. On the whole, there is also a wide range of representation styles including abstract painting and academic realism, as well as drawings with grid lines, suggestive of the aesthetics of computer technology in the 1980s. In his book, Valcárcel described the different types of representation as follows:

[Types of] Figuration: abstract expressionism, primitive symbology, real objects, expressive semi-figuration, labelling [possibly refers to texts, and

²⁴⁸ The original text in Spanish reads: ‘HISTORIA CON CAMPO DE ALCACHOFAS/ Las anteriores muestras de Producciones Valcárcel se caracterizaban por un meticuloso y elaborado despliegue de unidad técnica, formal y temática. En la presente exposición se abandona la idea de la ‘obra de arte’ como algo cerrado, finito, delimitado por sus bordes físicos. **Se propone la obra abierta:** Un conjunto de elementos muy diversos en lo que se refiere a la temática, tipo de figuración y técnica y tal vez deliberadamente incongruente. Estos elementos, al ser relacionados entre sí por el artista y por el espectador, modifican su significado y adquieren extrañas simbologías. El todo no es igual a la suma de las partes. El número de los elementos es irrelevante: La obra abierta puede ser ampliada (reducida) en cualquier momento mediante la adición (sustracción) de algunas de sus partes físicas o mediante la imaginación del espectador.’ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 152*, La Paz, April 6-17 1982. In the modified version of this text published in Valcárcel’s book, he omits the idea of adding and subtracting. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 230.

an envelop drawn indicating that it contains a story with fields of artichokes], photographic realism and others.²⁴⁹

The application of creative or divergent thinking as method – which Valcárcel currently teaches and which consists in looking for many solutions to a problem – plays a key role in *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*. The complexity of the artwork, in terms of meaning and form, is the result of the artist's investigations to expand its possibilities; and by implication that of his own artwork (with different themes and different techniques), and to demonstrate to others that many possibilities of art are possible and even may coexist. This strategy also opens meaning and enhances the existence of more possibilities of interpretation. When Valcárcel states that his previous artwork was 'characterized by a meticulous and elaborate display of technical, formal and thematic unity', Valcárcel is, in all likelihood, referring to his *Gritones*, a series of realist drawings and paintings on wood [Fig. 4.3-4.8], and silkscreens that he presented between 1979 and 1981.²⁵⁰ Although he had also exhibited sculptures with found objects among his *Gritones*, and different types of figuration in his drawings in 1979 – that do not follow the canon –²⁵¹ and in February of the same year, 1982, his own *Puerta del Sol*, his *Gritones* were, at the time, the constant and most representative artwork, in terms of quantity. These depictions of people screaming have been interpreted as representations of the psychological and physical repression during the last dictatorships in Bolivia. Thus when Valcárcel, in the same catalogue text, refers to the presumed social sense of his art prior to his *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*, he is alluding to the association of his *Gritones* with a denunciation of dictatorship:

In previous works of Valcárcel Productions the presence of a 'social sense' (even if not univocal) was obvious. In the 'Field of Artichokes' the social sense of the work lies in its non-sociability, in the (apparent?) irrationality, in the spontaneous provocation, in the impossibility of reducing it to

²⁴⁹ The original reads: 'Figuración: abstracción gestual, simbología primitiva, objetos reales, semifiguración expresiva, rotulación, realismo fotográfico y otros.' Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel*, vol. 1, p. 242.

²⁵⁰ *Gritones* (screamers) are the colloquial name that the artist and critics have used to refer to a group of works depicting people screaming and torture related scenes.

²⁵¹ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19 May 1979.

known schemes in our context. Maybe the social function of art consists in questioning our artistic taste and prejudices.²⁵²

In this manner, in *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*, Valcárcel is leaving behind a way of making art that tends to converging and univocal interpretations, to explore making polysemic artworks which questions ‘our artistic taste and prejudices.’ What were the prevailing schemes, taste and prejudices at the time in Bolivia? Taking into consideration the importance Valcárcel attributes to creativity (i.e. divergent thinking), he is referring, in general terms, to the prevalence of certain themes that revolve around national identity: the Andean landscape, indigenous themes, among others; and to the commitment of artists to one or another of the most common types of figuration: social realism, expressionism, realism, and abstraction in its different possibilities. He is referring to painting as the prevailing medium of expression, as well as to mastery of technique as the primordial quality sought in the local artistic context.²⁵³

In the version of the text reproduced in his book, Valcárcel adds one line at the end: ‘Reason: art is not dead’ with which he associates *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*.²⁵⁴ By doing so, the artist is highlighting his motivation to do artwork to stir some action into an art scene that was ‘dying of reiteration and stagnation’.²⁵⁵ Valcárcel is also referring to the tendency of artists not to change themes, technique and style. For example, Raúl Lara has often painted scenes inspired by the Carnival Oruro – his hometown – in which men of mixed Spanish and indigenous origin (cholos) dream of ‘white’ girls [Figs. 2.4 and 2.5]. The use of the same language and themes in the paintings of Gil Imaná – expressive realism inspired in Tiwanaku forms [Figs. 2.6 and 2.7] – also illustrates this idea of

²⁵² Valcárcel wrote: ‘En anteriores trabajos de Producciones Valcárcel la presencia de un ‘sentido social’ (aunque no unívoco era obvia). En el “Campo de Alcachofas” el sentido social de la obra radica en la no sociabilidad, en la (aparente?) irracionalidad, en la espontánea alevosía del trabajo y en la imposibilidad de reducirlas a esquemas conocidos en el medio. Tal vez la función social del arte consista en el cuestionamiento de nuestros gustos y prejuicios artísticos.’ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 152*, La Paz, April 6-17 1982.

²⁵³ Sculpture was practiced in a lesser degree (mainly carved stone), and there were some groups practicing ceramics in La Paz and Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

²⁵⁴ The original phrase reads: ‘Razón: el arte no ha muerto.’ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel*, vol. 1, p. 242. ‘Art is dead’ was a motto that Valcárcel used to stamp on his artwork (particularly around those years), as a sort of ‘subliminal message’ or brand with which he counters art dying of repetition. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2013.

²⁵⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2013.

keeping a signature type of painting, which is undoubtedly one of the schemes Valcárcel is questioning with his *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*.

Valcárcel indirectly referred to the ‘creative lull’²⁵⁶ in local art by including a fragment of ‘The Great Trouble with Art in this Country’ by Duchamp in his catalogue of his exhibition of 1978 in Emusa Gallery. Thus, his perception of art in Bolivia at the time is reflected in phrases cited from Duchamp – referring the US in the postwar era – such as ‘a creative lull’, ‘there is no spirit of revolt’; and artists ‘following along the paths beaten out by their predecessors’.²⁵⁷

In sum, the key idea behind *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* was to make an open work of art, one where the viewer constructs meaning (beyond traditional schemes), and is challenged to reconfigure the composition in his or her mind, and to eliminate and add elements to the artwork. It reflects an intentional dissociation from his *Gritones* but also a turn in his artwork away from predetermined meanings for artworks. While Umberto Eco’s idea of an open literary work was a possible reference in this shifting of the subject of meaning, *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* can equally be conceived like a recreation of the idea of multiple stories behind Cortazar’s novel *Rayuela*, an author the artist has read profusely.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁶ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 84*, La Paz, 19-30, December 1978. Duchamp’s text in English reads ‘The great trouble with art in this country at present, and apparently in France also, is that there is no spirit of revolt – no new ideas appearing among the young artists. They are following along the paths beaten out by their predecessors, trying to do better what their predecessors have done. In art there is no such thing as perfection. And a creative lull occurs when artists of a period are satisfied to pick up a predecessor’s work where he dropped it and attempt to continue what he was doing. When on the other hand you pick up something from an earlier period and adapt it to your own artwork an approach can be creative. The result is not new; but it is new in so much as it is a different approach.’ The English translation I am using comes from: Marcel Duchamp, ‘The Great Trouble with Art in this Country’ in Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson (ed.), *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp, Marchand du Sel*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1975, p. 123.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [email], 21 June 2015.

II. Convergent and Univocal Views of Art in Bolivian Historiography and Art Criticism

1. Gisbert and Querejazu on Valcárcel's *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*

Teresa Gisbert and Pedro Querejazu, two of the most important critics of the time, coincided in interpreting *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* as a denunciation of drug trafficking during military governments. In their reading, they completely disregarded Valcárcel's intention and catalogue statement about making an open artwork, and for the viewer to creatively activate its meaning. In the following section I will analyse the assumptions implicit in these interpretations, what the artist refers to as the 'known schemes', which he is ironically trying to subvert – albeit unsuccessfully, in these cases. Gisbert and Querejazu's interpretations, valid as any others, illustrate an approach highlighted by the artist, in which the viewer has reduced the artwork to a few images, and hence eliminated or subtracted those that did not fit:

The whole is not equal to the sum of the parts. The number of elements may be irrelevant: the open work of art may be expanded (reduced) in any moment through the addition (subtraction) of some of its physical parts or through the imagination of the viewer.²⁵⁹

The approach of these critics is ironically similar to the option of reading *Rayuela* following the order suggested by Cortazar and omitting a large part of the book. In a review of the exhibitions at Emusa Gallery that took place in 1982, art historian Teresa Gisbert, who together with her husband has specialized in colonial art of the region and whose writings cover Bolivian art history through the ages,²⁶⁰ praises *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* for its denunciation of drug trafficking with links to military governments:

His exhibition titled 'A story with artichoke fields' was assembled on cartons and pieces of venesta, which gave it an aspect of waste and rubbish. Valcárcel wanted to call attention to [and] to criticize a political moment with a lot of rubbish. Artichokes equal alkaloids, [the artist] unites

²⁵⁹ Valcárcel wrote: 'La obra abierta puede ser ampliada (reducida) en cualquier momento mediante la adición (sustracción) de algunas de sus partes físicas o mediante la imaginación del espectador.' Galería Emusa, 'Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 152', La Paz, April 6-17, 1982.

²⁶⁰ Mesa and Gisbert writing a history of art from pre-Hispanic times to the present is coherent with the fact that they were students of Spanish art historian Diego Angulo who wrote a similar history of Europe and the rest of the world.

the white of cocaine with the green of the uniforms. This is the most acerbic critique, in the art world, to what were governments implicated in drug trafficking. How does the artist develop his thesis? A model, always the same, transforms, in twenty-four sketches, from a virginal girl into a woman with a ruined face, and at the end into a punk 'vampire' with red eyes. This is the transformation operated by vice. There is a similar transformation in the self-portraits and images of Christ. In all the figures, the white of the eyes turns green – as if it were a leaf – and then red. The exhibition did not have the impact it deserved as protest and denunciation, even though it was courageously inaugurated in April of 1982.²⁶¹

Gisbert's conclusion that artichokes are metaphors for coca fields, and that there is a play of words with alkaloids, in combination with the presumed degradation of the face of a young woman whose image is repeated throughout the work, is a valid interpretation, among all the possibilities proposed by the artist. The title certainly plays an important role in her attribution of meaning as well, as does the involvement in drug trafficking of the previous government (led by president de facto García Meza) was a well known fact, as well as the ongoing power of the drug trafficking mafia, which still posed a major problem, and it was equally unclear whether the new military government was involved in this illegal business or not. While General Celso Torrelío kept his promise to recuperate democracy, it should be noted that during these years, one could never be certain that another coup would not take place, and that the government's promises to guarantee a return to democracy were honest. Although Torrelío's government was much less repressive than the infamous regime of García Meza, which preceded it, it was still a military regime. García Meza and Arce Gómez (today serving life sentences in jail for human rights crimes and drug trafficking, among other crimes), were still around. While in 1982 García Meza and Arce Gómez were no longer part of

²⁶¹ This young woman is in fact Gisbert's daughter Guiomar Mesa who was a private student of Valcárcel and a friend of his. The original text in Spanish reads: "Su exposición titulada "Historia con campo de alcachofas" estuvo montada en cartones y pedazos de venesta, lo que le daba un aspecto de desecho y basura. Valcárcel quiso puntualizar así el carácter de crítica a un momento político que tiene mucho de basura. Alcachofas igual alcaloides, une el blanco de la cocaína con el verde de los uniformes. Es la crítica mas acerba, en el mundo de la plástica, a lo que fueron los gobiernos comprometidos con el narcotráfico. ¿Cómo desarrolla su tesis el artista? Una modelo, siempre la misma, mediante veinticuatro bocetos pasa de niña virginal a mujer de rostro deshecho, y por último a 'vampira' punck [sic] de ojos rojos. Es la transformación operada por el vicio. Transformación similar presentan los autorretratos y figuras de Cristo. En todas las figuras el blanco de los ojos se vuelve verde – a manera de hoja – y luego roja. La exposición no tuvo el impacto que se merecía como protesta y denuncia, ya que fue valientemente inaugurada en abril de 1982." Teresa Gisbert, 'Galería Emusa 1982', in *Semana de Última Hora*, 21 January 1983.

the government, they still had power and links to paramilitary militias that staged violent actions against threats to their ideology. As noted in my Introduction to the dissertation, Gisbert's emphasis on the courage attributed to the artist for exhibiting this artwork (and later incorrect association with the government of García Meza) could be a premeditated way of demonstrating Valcárcel's non-allegiance with the military regime.

For this reason, Gisbert considers *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* and Valcárcel's *Gritones* (both in her collection), his most important artworks because they 'represent what the environment wants them to represent'.²⁶² It is striking that, in her review, she does not mention the artwork's flexible form, its pigments (like Nescafé) and the other images that constitute it, for example: trees, an envelope with the label 'contains a story with artichoke fields', a child-like collage butterfly glued on venesta, a comic face with the caption '1984, the year of the moustache'. In addition to this, Gisbert omits its different representation styles and ignores the artist's statement in the catalogue about making an open work of art.

Art historian Pedro Querejazu arrives to the same conclusion as Gisbert in his brief references to *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*. Querejazu leaves out of his interpretation other possibilities, as well as the theoretical intention behind the artwork. Querejazu does this in a different way, nonetheless, by pointing to Valcárcel's play on words around the elements in the term 'alcachofas' (artichokes) in the title, and the inclusion of words with the same prefix like 'Alkaseltzer' and 'alkaloid':

He [Valcárcel] has made numerous installations like: *Historia con campo de alcachofas*, 1981, with an acute tone of protest, in which he established conceptual games: artichokes= military men; artichokes= nature; Alkaseltzer= imperialist intromission; alkaloid= cocaine.²⁶³

²⁶² To my question of whether Gisbert considers *Historia con campo de alcachofas* and his *Gritones* as the most important artwork of the artist she answered: 'yo creo que sí porque representan lo que el ambiente desea que representen, aunque en el *Campo de Alcachofas* no tanto, quizás porque eran cartones no le interese a la gente.' Teresa Gisbert, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2013.

²⁶³ Querejazu wrote: 'Ha realizado numerosas instalaciones como: Campo de Alcachofas, 1981, con agudo tono de protesta, en el que hizo juegos conceptuales: alcachofas= militar; alcachofas= naturaleza; alkalaseltzer= intromisión imperialista; Alcaloide= cocaína.' Pedro Querejazu, 'Roberto Valcárcel', Fundação Bienal do Mercosul, *I Bienal do Mercosul* [catalogue], Fundação Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, 1997.

It is revealing that Querejazu chose not to include Valcárcel's *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* in the full colour image section of *Pintura Boliviana del siglo XX*, a publication that he edited and authored in 1989.²⁶⁴ The artworks with which Valcárcel is represented have a very direct relation to Bolivia and its history, and artistry in two dimensions. The themes of Valcárcel's artworks that are included in his survey are: a portrait of the intellectual and theorist of Indigenismo Franz Tamayo with used tea bags, drawings and monochrome paintings of the emblematic Illimani mountain, a young women wrapped in a blanket as if it were a straitjacket (an allusion to a young Bolivia according to its title), and one of his *Gritones*.²⁶⁵

Despite Valcárcel's catalogue statement, and the references in other catalogue texts to his interest in art and authoritarianism,²⁶⁶ both critics have chosen to interpret *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* as a denunciation. I will contend that the information omitted in their interpretation not only responds to their identification with an artwork that establishes an important questioning at the time, but was possibly also guided by their sensing that Valcárcel's installation was a conundrum, with only one answer, that required an iconographic unveiling, especially taking into account that *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* was exhibited during a military regime. Confirming the connection between Valcárcel and dictatorship, Gisbert recently renamed the category for the generation to which Valcárcel belongs to as the Generation of Despair.²⁶⁷

²⁶⁴ As pointed in the Introduction chapter, the reason why Querejazu did not include this artwork was, in all likelihood, because the publication was about paintings and no images of other experimental artworks by the artist, like his *Movimiento Erótico*, or his actions – which were very well known to Querejazu – are reproduced. Pedro Querejazu, 'La pintura boliviana del siglo XX', in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, Banco Hipotecario Nacional, La Paz, 1989.

²⁶⁵ Valcárcel and other artists of his generation are grouped in a last section of the book called 'Nueva Generación' (New Generation). Ibid.

²⁶⁶ The references are made in his texts about CVs in the catalogues of his exhibitions of 1978 and 1979 in Emusa Gallery, as well as in his reflection on the relationship between art and democracy in his 'Fragment of an Interview three days before the accident'. Galería Emusa, 'Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel, exposición 84', La Paz, 19-30 December 1978. Roberto Valcárcel, 'Fragmento de entrevista a Roberto Valcárce realizada por Juan Ángel Bustillos el 6 de septiembre de 1978 (tres días antes del accidente)', Galería Emusa, 'Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90'. La Paz, 8-19 May, 1979.

²⁶⁷ In a recent interview Gisbert took out her recently published book on Bolivian art history and read to me: 'Generación de la desesperanza [...] Roberto Valcárcel nace en 1951. Valcárcel tiene formación de arquitecto, estudió diseño y arquitectura en Alemania Federal por ello impone [?]

2. Carlos Salazar Mostajo's Rejection of Valcárcel

Notwithstanding the fact that critic Carlos Salazar Mostajo did not write about *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* and did not write much about Valcárcel at all, his ideas about art are essential in order to understand the schemes that Valcárcel was trying to debunk with his artwork. Carlos Salazar Mostajo was an influential teacher and critic – he passed away in 2004 – who directed and taught art history for almost four decades at the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes (ESBA) in La Paz, and at the Art Department of the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA).²⁶⁸ Salazar Mostajo's subsequent negative appraisal of Valcárcel is influenced by his view of art via class struggle, and by his commitment to resist US colonialism, and promote indigenous values. His position towards art is well elucidated in *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia: ensayo histórico-crítico*, a publication in which he interprets Bolivian art history according to class and following social art historians Arnold Hauser and Nicos Hadjinicolaou.²⁶⁹

Salazar Mostajo's discussion of the importance of making art to resist US cultural penetration was influenced by his political sympathies with Trotskyism, and the writings of critics from Latin America like Marta Traba and Rita Eder.²⁷⁰

un dibujo sumamente cuidadoso demostrando que es posible pintar con economía de recursos expresivos. Omite los lienzos, realizando su pintura de caballete sobre embalajes de madera incorporando a la composición los rótulos de los mismos. Su temática en la serie *Gritones* muestra la represión y tortura expresada con una técnica de fuertes contrastes propia de la fotografía, [‘la figura esa’ she says, as she points to one of Valcárcel's *Gritones*, on her wall], su pintura culmina en hacer el *Campo de Alcachofas* en el que denuncia el consumo de la droga. La serie se ha pintado a ambos lados de pequeños cartones donde la figura de una adolescente se desmaterializa y transforma hasta desintegrarse. Esta exposición representó una etapa importante en la pintura, etapa ya superada por el artista y que abandonando la pintura negra inicia los *happenings* que realiza en la ciudad de La Paz. Valcárcel deriva hacia el arte postmoderno y finalmente abandona La Paz para radicar en Santa Cruz.’ Teresa Gisbert, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2013.

²⁶⁸ Salazar Mostajo was a lecturer of Art History both at ESBA (between 1952 and 1979) and UMSA, between 1979 and 1985. He was director of ESBA between 1979 and 1980. He was also appointed director of the Art Department of UMSA in 1982 and was its academic director (between 1983 and 1989). Information extracted from Ivette Mejía Vera, ‘Warisata, el modelo de ayllu. Sistematización de Warisata Escuela-Ayllu. 1931-1940’, BA Philosophy thesis, Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, La Paz, n.d., p. 140, <www.katari.org/pdf/warisata.pdf>, accessed 26 February 2015.

²⁶⁹ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, Librería Editorial Juventud, La Paz, 1989, pp. 13-14.

²⁷⁰ Salazar Mostajo refers to a position of ‘resistance’ in Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

Traba and Salazar Mostajo shared a common ground in their rejection of the new trends in art, and their support of an identity-based art to resist the influence of what Traba defined as the ‘aesthetics of deterioration’ in *Dos décadas vulnerables*.²⁷¹ Traba’s view was sustained on the belief that culture is determined by economy, from which she concluded that the anti-art avant-garde (as she called it) corresponded to highly developed capitalism, and hence was not congruous with the economy and cultural practices in Latin American countries. The importance that Salazar grants to Traba’s ideas is reflected in the reference that he makes in the chapter of his book where he establishes his theoretical position on art:²⁷²

For Marta Traba – continues Rita Eder de Blejer – Latin America participates, because of its submission, in the cultural colonialism of an aesthetic process – that of the anti-artistic avant-garde – or in the words of the Argentine critic, those manifestations against art that have conformed an aesthetic of deterioration (already in place in Bolivia, CSM) which must be combated or resisted by Latin American artists through their ability to project a cultural identity that is their own.²⁷³

Western art and the process of disintegration to which it has been subjected are, from this point of view, the reflection of the decadence of the bourgeois conscience and of the ways of life invented by a highly developed capitalism. Latin American art has no reason to participate in a destiny that it does not share for better or worse.²⁷⁴

The note that Salazar Mostajo inserts in the paragraph above in parenthesis ‘(already in place in Bolivia, CSM)’ refers to Valcárcel, as it becomes clear in the only reference that he makes to the artist in connection with the ‘aesthetics of deterioration’:

²⁷¹ Marta Traba, *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas 1950/ 1970*, Mexico City, Siglo Veintiuno Editores Argentina S.A, Buenos Aires, 2005.

²⁷² Carlos Salazar Mostajo, ‘I. Toma de posición’ in *La pintura contemporánea de Bolivia*, pp. 11-19.

²⁷³ The original reads: ‘Para Marta Traba – sigue diciendo Rita Eder de Blejer – América Latina participa, por razones de sometimiento a un colonialismo cultural, de un proceso estético – el de las vanguardias anti-artísticas – o al decir de la crítica argentina, aquellas manifestaciones contra el arte que han conformado una estética del deterioro (introducida ya en Bolivia, CSM) que debe ser combatido o resistido por los artistas latinoamericanos a través de su capacidad de proyectar una identidad cultural propia.’ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷⁴ The original cites Rita Eder: ‘El arte occidental y el proceso de desintegración al que ha sido sometido son, desde ese punto de vista, el reflejo de la decadencia de la conciencia burguesa y de las formas de vida inventadas por un capitalismo altamente desarrollado. El arte latinoamericano no tiene por que participar de un destino que no comparte ni para bien ni para mal.’ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 16. Traba’s ideas are cited by Salazar Mostajo from an article by Mexican critic Rita Eder, reproduced in a local newspaper. The lack of books in libraries (and bookstores) at the time explains, in part, Salazar Mostajo’s use of this article as reference.

Nonetheless: how does the transference to our continent, and particularly to our country, a sort of island within Latin America [of European experimental art] take place? The answer is simple: **its appearance in our artistic amphitheatre has not required any creative effort** (Marta Traba says so as well). The renunciation of the image and the series of inherent substitutions, are custom-made because it is what is done over there (not to mention that the bourgeoisie has seized these trends, which were originally against it). Imitation is, thus, patent, and it reflects the cultural penetration that seeks to get its claw into these countries. Art that does not have the quality of the masters transforms, in our land, into opacity, emptiness, complete dryness, which misses the relation between cause and effect. Its failure can be thus explained. It is proven by the activity, which entails the signs of desperation of several of its followers. There are many examples, among them, **Raúl Mariaca**, an imitator of Dalí, without his technique or spirit, without his capacity for invention. A similar dependence [is present] in the experiments of **Roberto Valcárcel**, which are not, like he pretends, searches or creations, but dissemination of something originated, produced, chewed and digested in Europe, and whose application [according to Valcárcel] would be the recipe that saves us from our artistic ‘backwardness’ (169).²⁷⁵

This representation of the artist as a ‘mere imitator’ is ‘demonstrated’ in the only specific reference that Salazar Mostajo makes to an artwork by Valcárcel, in footnote 169, at the end of the above paragraph, where he alludes to a performance I have not been able to trace, and of which the artist has no recollection:²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ The original reads: ‘Ahora bien: ¿cómo se produce su transferencia [del arte europeo] a nuestro continente y especialmente a nuestro país, que es una especie de isla dentro de Latinoamérica? La respuesta es sencilla: **su aparición en nuestro anfiteatro artístico no ha requerido de ningún esfuerzo creador** (lo dice también Marta Traba). La renuncia a la imagen y la serie de sustituciones inherentes, se hace por encargo porque es lo que se hace allá (sin contar que la burguesía se ha apoderado de esas corrientes que inicialmente estuvieron en su contra). La imitación, es, pues, patente y es un reflejo de la penetración cultural que busca hincar la garra en estos países. El arte que origina ha de carecer del vuelo de los maestros, para convertirse, en nuestro suelo, en opacidad, vaciedad, total, sequedad, que pierde la relación de causa y efecto. De ahí su fracaso en el país. Lo prueba la actividad, que conlleva los signos de las desesperación, de varios de sus cultores. Hay muchos ejemplos, entre ellos, el de **Raúl Mariaca**, imitador de Dalí, sin su técnica ni espíritu, sin su capacidad de invención. Igual dependencia en los experimentos de **Roberto Valcárcel**, que no son, como pretende, búsquedas ni creaciones, sino divulgación de algo originado, producido, masticado y digerido en Europa, y cuya aplicación sería la receta salvadora para salir de nuestro ‘retraso’ artístico(169).’ Some phrases of the text have been highlighted in bold by the author. Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 212.

²⁷⁶ Valcárcel does recall, however, presenting the exhibition, at the request of the Goethe-Institut, the institution that organized the exhibition but he does not recall it as a performance. He has a recollection, nonetheless of his *Verde Viacha* performance in front of the Museo Nacional de Arte in 1987, which he replicated with other colours – pink and yellow – in other busy streets in La Paz and in some South American biennials. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012.

[Footnote 169]

Valcárcel presented a recent exhibition of European Dadaism of the 1920s, in a closed television circuit, half-naked from the top, which would have been original if it had not been that Francis Picabia had done the same in 1914 and with more audacity, in a conference he gave in New York.²⁷⁷

Salazar Mostajo's lack of precision regarding Valcárcel's artwork is revealing. As other writings or references to the artist by the critic do not exist, it can be deduced that his dismissal of Valcárcel's artwork was influenced by his personal knowledge of the artist and exchange of ideas with him, when they were colleagues in the Art Department of the university.²⁷⁸ Valcárcel was teaching a course on sculpture with non-traditional media,²⁷⁹ which although in the artist's retrospective appreciation was not a very radical one, it probably represented, in Salazar's eyes, a presence in the university of what Traba deemed as 'aesthetics of deterioration'.

Salazar's resistant attitude towards Valcárcel equally responded to his Marxist vision of society, and art. It reflected his view of art as a superstructure which identifies with the interests of the dominating class to which he indirectly ascribes Valcárcel:

Artistic criticism cannot evade this proposal. It must begin, then, with acknowledging that art is a product of society in a certain degree of development⁽¹⁴⁾. That [art] production tends to identify itself – like education and other forms of superstructure – with the interests of the classes that retain the means of production, which not only make it possible or permit it, but condition it so that it is the loyal instrument of its perpetuation as dominant regime.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Salazar Mostajo briefly describes this presentation in the second part of note 169: 'En una reciente exposición del dadaísmo europeo de los años 20, Roberto Valcárcel hizo la presentación de la muestra, en un circuito cerrado de televisión, desnudo de medio cuerpo arriba, lo que hubiera sido original si no fuera que Francis Picabia hizo lo mismo en 1914, y con más atrevimiento, en una conferencia dictada en New York.' Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 212.

²⁷⁸ I have not come across any other references to Valcárcel by Salazar Mostajo. Salazar Mostajo's former student José Bedoya and daughter Laura Salazar do not recall of any references made to Valcárcel by Salazar Mostajo. José Bedoya, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 20 September 2013. Laura Salazar, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 December 2013.

²⁷⁹ From 1982 to 1983, Valcárcel taught Non-traditional Media and Dissertation Methodology Research Skills. He was also an examination tutor and was shortly director of the Art Department of UMSA. Roberto Valcárcel, 'Datos curriculares' [CV updated by the artist on January 2011], p. 4.

²⁸⁰ The original reads: 'La crítica no puede eludir este planteamiento. Debe comenzar, pues, por reconocer que el arte es un producto de la sociedad en determinado grado de su desarrollo⁽¹⁴⁾. Ese producto tiende a identificarse – como la educación y otras formas de la superestructura –

3. Valcárcel Between INBO and Pucara

Salazar Mostajo's association of Valcárcel's with the dominant class and its alliances with capitalism and US imperialism, is implicit in the 'bifurcation' which he establishes in Bolivian art in 1978 into 'elitist ultramodern' art that he associated with Bienal INBO and the art of the 'people' that he linked with Pucara:

From 1978, a new bifurcation, referring to social positions, begins to crystallise between an elitist art, aristocratic-like and conservative art, despite its ultramodern poses (**performance, happening, show**), and an art originating in the people that is refreshing, despite its maintenance of cultural traditions. Two events will mark decisively the positions in question: the INBO and PUCARA biennials, which we will refer to later on.²⁸¹

Despite the fact that Valcárcel was never granted a prize in the Bienal INBO – he only participated in the last version, which was cancelled in rejection of the government's request to be represented in the jury –, there is no doubt that Salazar Mostajo is referring to him because he was, with Ugalde, one of the first artists to present, around 1980, what Salazar calls 'performance, happenings, show'. Although Valcárcel worked together with Ugalde in several actions, like *Saludo a la democracia* (Greeting Democracy) in 1982, Ugalde is not mentioned in Salazar's book. Unsurprisingly, a younger generation of artists who took part in some of Valcárcel's projects and actions, and did their own performances, are also omitted from Salazar's art history.²⁸² On the other hand, Salazar Mostajo does not explain in his book why he has chosen 1978 as the year of his bifurcation: Perhaps it responds to the beginning of the convoluted return to democracy? It is perhaps not coincidental that 1978 was the same year of Valcárcel's very

con los intereses de las clases que detentan los medios de producción, que no solamente lo hacen posible o lo permiten, sino que lo condicionan de manera que sea fiel instrumento de su perpetuación como régimen dominante.' Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 14

²⁸¹ The original text: 'Desde 1978 se empieza a cristalizar una nueva bifurcación, referida posiciones sociales, entre un arte de elite, aristocratizante y conservadora, a pesar de sus poses ultramodernas (**performance, happening, show**) y un arte proveniente del pueblo, renovador, a pesar del mantenimiento de tradiciones culturales. Dos eventos marcan decisivamente las posiciones en cuestión: las Bienales "INBO" y "PUCARA", de las que hablaremos después.' Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 213.

²⁸² Valcárcel presented an action, for example, with his students in the Centro Boliviano Americano gallery – around 1982. Sol Mateo, Efraín Ortuño, and other artists presented performances in the Dada Festival presented at the National Museum of Art in La Paz in 1987.

successful insertion into the local art scene in terms of solo exhibitions and important prizes.²⁸³

In addition to Valcárcel's practicing and disseminating the 'aesthetics of deterioration', Salazar Mostajo associated the artist with the dominant class in all likelihood because the critic was most certainly aware that the artist had been appointed director of the Art Department by Gisbert who was, at the time, considered a representative of right-wing politics.²⁸⁴ Gisbert was equally associated with the Bienal INBO, of which she had been on the jury, an event that once again represented, for Salazar Mostajo, the interests of the dominant class. More meaningfully, Salazar Mostajo's bias against Valcárcel's art is also echoed in his inaccurate depiction of Bienal INBO as an event linked to ultramodern artistic poses. Bienal INBO was mainly a painting biennial, in which many of the schemes that Valcárcel is questioning actually prevailed. While it would seem that Salazar Mostajo is referring to a phenomenon similar to Glusberg's CAyC (Centro de Arte y Comunicación) in Argentina – opposed and criticized by Marta Traba –²⁸⁵ the organisers of Bienal INBO were more interested in promoting painting, and the only prize awarded to an experimental artist was in fact to a painting by Gastón Ugalde.²⁸⁶ Other prizes of the 1977 biennial were granted to artists who worked with Bolivian themes or demonstrated traditional artistry. A hierarchy wherein painting was at the top was demonstrated by the larger amount of money granted to the five prizes in this category (40,000 pesos vs. 20,000 pesos for two prizes in drawing, and one, with

²⁸³ Valcárcel was awarded the grand prize of the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo in 1978, the most important art competition, and the first prize in the watercolour competition of the newspaper *El Diario*. He was also selected that year to take part of the Bolivian group at the 1978 Latin American art São Paulo Bienal. Valcárcel and Gastón Ugalde represented Bolivia in 1979.

²⁸⁴ Querejazu explained that this qualification of Gisbert – an unfair portrayal – is a consequence of her husband's participation in the symbolic recuperation of student-occupied UMSA (the state university in La Paz), on the onset of Banzer's dictatorship. Pedro Querejazu, *Interview with the author*, La Paz, 1 October 2013.

²⁸⁵ CAyC was a contemporary art centre established in Buenos Aires in 1968 by a group of artists under the leadership of art critic Jorge Glusberg. The institution promoted art and research from an interdisciplinary perspective and in relation to science and communication. It sponsored artists within its line of interest, and in particular groups like Grupo de los Trece (Group of Thirteen) and Grupo CAyC. ICAA, 'Qué es el CAYC What is CAYC', <Cicaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/748013/language/en-US/Default.aspx> [ICAA website], accessed 13 February 2016. Marta Traba, *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas 1950/ 1970*, pp. 141-143.

²⁸⁶ INBO, *I Bienal de Arte Pintores Contemporáneos* (catalogue), La Paz, 1975.

the same amount, in printmaking). Although Teresa Gisbert discusses Valcárcel's *Campo de alcachofas* in her essay in the book edited by Querejazu (*Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*),²⁸⁷ an artwork that would be considered as 'estética del deterioro' (aesthetics of deterioration) by Salazar Mostajo, the book is mainly about painting, as previously noted. While Valcárcel had the support of what Salazar Mostajo considers the 'official' critics, they appreciated his art for its painterly and traditional artistic qualities and not for the 'ultramodern' properties Salazar Mostajo attributes it. The importance of Bolivian themes in Bienal INBO is reflected in the jury's praise of new and positive solutions to Indigenismo and local landscape painting, which constituted the majority of the artworks.²⁸⁸ This focus can be appreciated in the granting of three of the five prizes in painting to Fernando Montes' indigenous women in the Andean landscape, Inés Córdoba's abstract Andean landscapes (a collage with fabric), and Raúl Lara's indigenous migrants as part of the urban landscape.²⁸⁹ Two of the three criteria of the INBO jury further embodied the schemes that Valcárcel was trying to challenge in his *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*: technical quality (artistry) and a univocal meaning was implied in the Bienal's recognition of artists' 'will to communicate clearly some meaning with their artwork'.²⁹⁰ Salazar Mostajo's bifurcation, moreover, responds to a vision wherein the author interprets the history of art in Bolivia according to opposing and excluding positions:

A conclusion is evident: the bifurcation of the two great currents of Bolivian painting unquestionably follows the forms that the national development against external influences is acquiring, [influences] which reverberate on artistic activity.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Teresa Gisbert, 'Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX', in Pedro Querejazu, *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 45.

²⁸⁸ INBO, *II Bienal de Arte Pintores Contemporáneos* (catalogue), La Paz, 1977.

²⁸⁹ The other prizes were awarded to Marcelo Callaú's *Siluetas II* and Alfredo Da Silva's oil painting *Alfa*. INBO, *ibid.*

²⁹⁰ The members of the jury stated in the catalogue: 'Tres fueron los aspectos que el Jurado tuvo en consideración desde un principio: 1) La calidad técnica; que el Jurado considera elemento indispensable y a partir sólo del cual un juicio valedero puede ser emitido. 2) La originalidad de la propuesta de que cada artista es capaz a través de su contribución. 3) La voluntad de comunicar claramente algún significado por medio de su propia obra.' INBO, *ibid.*

²⁹¹ The original reads: 'Una conclusión es evidente: la bifurcación de las dos grandes corrientes en la pintura boliviana obedece incuestionablemente a las formas que está adquiriendo el desarrollo nacional en la lucha contra las influencias exteriores, las cuales repercuten en la actividad artística.' Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 211

Salazar Mostajo's view is illustrated in the way he constructs a history of art marked by antithetical positions. Thus he conceives as antecedent of his 1978 bifurcation: the differences between Indianistas and Indigenistas in the 1930s; and an antagonism between abstract artists and social figurative painters in 1953.²⁹² His antagonism was made visible in his launching, together with Grupo Pucara, of Bienal Bolivia in opposition to Bienal INBO.²⁹³ The comments that both Querejazu and Salazar Mostajo make about the biennials with which they do not identify (Bolivia and INBO, respectively) further illustrate the effectiveness of the creation of this antagonistic vision. Querejazu questions Bienal Bolivia for promoting itself as free and progressive, and for granting prizes to artists associated with Grupo Pucara.²⁹⁴ Salazar Mostajo's response to the criticism of his biennial was that the official critics have attempted to disqualify a biennial of the people.²⁹⁵ This last comment was, in all likelihood, directed to Querejazu – even though his critique was not the only negative one published.²⁹⁶ In his book Salazar Mostajo does not hesitate to disqualify Bienal INBO, and to misrepresent its censorship during the regime of García Meza.²⁹⁷ The last version of the biennial was suspended by the organisers because of the demand of the military dictatorial government to appoint a representative in the jury to make sure the artists, with their artworks, would not 'offend morality and expose to irreverence certain entities which should not be made vulnerable'.²⁹⁸

²⁹² Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 213.

²⁹³ Pedro Querejazu, 'La pintura boliviana del siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del siglo XX*, p. 32.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Salazar wrote: 'La crítica que podemos llamar "oficial" por coincidir con los intereses culturales del sector privilegiado de la sociedad, no ha podido ignorar estas Bienales, ya que era imposible negar su extraordinaria aceptación popular y la presencia masiva de artistas, cuyas obras llenaron por tres veces – 1981, 1983 y 1985 – los salones, corredores y patios del Museo Nacional de Arte. [La crítica oficial] No ha podido negarlas [a las Bienales del grupo Pucara], pero su comentario ha sido malignamente negativo, hasta calificar las exposiciones como una vergüenza para el país. No cesan de exaltar, en cambio, a la Bienal "INBO", sostenida por la empresa privada, en la cual se manipula el arte con inversiones millonarias para mantener la vigencia de una élite agotada que ya nada puede ofrecer.' Salazar Mostajo, p. 249-250.

²⁹⁶ See: Gonzalo Iníiguez Vaca Guzmán, 'Ill Bienal de Arte Bolivia 85', *Hoy*, 30 November 1985.

²⁹⁷ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 250.

²⁹⁸ The original reads: 'Veladamente se arguyó que se podía ofender a la moral y someter quizás a la irreverencia – por obra de algún pintor – a entidades que no podían ser vulneradas con el trato artístico.' Anonymous, '¿Qué pasó con la Bienal INBO?', *Presencia*, La Paz, 1 January 1982.

While Querejazu did not participate in the INBO biennials, he certainly identified with its project and vision. And Salazar Mostajo knew Querejazu's position well since they had both taught in the Art Department of the state university at the same time: Salazar Mostajo Western Art History, and Querejazu Bolivian Art History. In addition to this, Querejazu's perspective on teaching a traditional chronology was opposed by Salazar Mostajo who believed in teaching from the present to the past.²⁹⁹ Querejazu had also previously worked with Gisbert and her husband José de Mesa, and because of this, he was unfairly considered in the university as an ally of right-wing politics.³⁰⁰ As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, in his essay on his book about Bolivian painting, Querejazu coins a category for recent art, which he calls 'New Generation' in which he includes Roberto Valcárcel. This category refers to the artists who started working or coincided in chronological terms with Bienal INBO.³⁰¹ In his choice of Bienal INBO as the point of departure for this art historical category, Querejazu coincides with Salazar Mostajo, but in an antithetical way; and thus 'proves' Salazar Mostajo's antagonistic vision right, which is something he did not intend, in all probability.

These different points of view, which Salazar Mostajo has made out to be antithetical are, nonetheless, visible in what were the only two publications about twentieth century art in Bolivia, both published in 1989: Querejazu's *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, and Salazar Mostajo's *La pintura contemporánea de Bolivia* [Figs. 2.8 and 2.9].³⁰² Their divergence is not only manifested in the content of the books, but also in the aspirations and budget of each. Salazar Mostajo's soft cover, pocket size, mostly black and white edition, contrasts with Querejazu's hard cover table-size luxury edition, printed in Italy, with sections of full colour images and commissioned texts from both local and international authors of renown. It includes an extract from a review by Marta Traba of Bienal INBO

²⁹⁹ Querejazu mentioned that Salazar Mostajo believed in teaching the history of art from the present to the past, and presumably with a social approach, while he believed in teaching chronologically. Pedro Querejazu, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz 1 October, 2013.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Pedro Querejazu, 'La pintura boliviana del siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, pp. 29-32.

³⁰² Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX* and Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*.

1977. Querejazu's book was published under the sponsorship of Banco Hipotecario Nacional, an institution that was part of the INBO business group. Salazar Mostajo's book was written under the sponsorship of the Art Department of the state university UMSA where he was still teaching art history.³⁰³ Despite their differences, both Querejazu and Salazar Mostajo shared an important point of departure, never directly spelled out: an ideal image of what Bolivian art should be like. The artworks chosen for the covers of their books illustrate this image, and their authors' different perspectives on art. A detail of an untitled triptych, an abstract representation of the Andes, by María Luisa Pacheco [Fig. 2.10] is featured on the cover of the INBO related publication. Pacheco's artwork complies with the INBO requirements: artistry, quality, and a presumed message (Andean landscape as symbol of Bolivia). She was also the most renowned Bolivian painter on the international scene at the time. Living in New York, her works were in important public collections (like the Guggenheim Museum) and participated in international exhibitions of Latin American artists. She had been equally highlighted by Latin American critics like Marta Traba who praised her paintings for her connection with the Bolivian landscape.³⁰⁴ It is possible that choosing a painting by María Luisa for the cover of Querejazu's book was also tribute to an artist who had passed away, and who, as artistic director of the INBO biennials, had contributed to their success.³⁰⁵ Its format and high-quality printing identifies it as an 'export' type of publication that seeks to show Bolivian painting (like Pacheco's) on an international level; hence the inclusion of the text by Marta Traba, as well as a number of other international art historians whose texts were commissioned.

The cover of Salazar Mostajo's book reflects, on the other hand, his ideal of Bolivian art: *Educación y lucha de clases* [Fig. 2.11], a mural painting by Alandia

³⁰³ Nancy Zelaya, 'La pintura contemporánea de Bolivia' [back cover of the book], in Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*.

³⁰⁴ Marta Traba, 'Bolivia salida a tierra' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 105.

³⁰⁵ The original idea behind this publication effort was to make a book about Pacheco but the sponsors postponed it when they realized that it was necessary to publish first a book on Bolivian art. Fernando Romero, 'Presentación' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 9.

Pantoja commissioned for the Monument to the Revolution of 1952³⁰⁶ with a very straightforward message. The mural illustrates the rising of the working class, the indigenous farmers and the miners, towards a literate and emancipated country represented by an indigenous woman with a book and a letter 'A' in her left hand. Because Alandía Pantoja was the official artist of the 1952 revolutionary government, this painting is about the reform in education undertaken by the regime. The selection of this image by Alandía Pantoja for the cover of Salazar Mostajo's book agrees both with the critic's commitment to education and his view of the artist as one of the most important painters in Bolivia in the twentieth century:

Miguel Alandía is the painter that represents our time, and who dominates the artistic scene in the country between 1947 and 1975, the year of his death. He is, the painter of the revolution, par excellence, a concept in which we not only include the rising of April of 1952, but the international process that leads to socialism.³⁰⁷

In addition to having an ideal of what art should be like, which is challenged by Valcárcel's *El Campo de Alcachofas*, both authors, Querejazu and Salazar Mostajo, also coincided in having Traba as an important reference in their publications, despite their radically opposed views, and Salazar Mostajo's antithetical recreation of art history. Both authors seem to agree with Marta Traba's conclusion, in her review of the 1977 INBO, that Bolivia is looking for its identity:

Obscure chronicle and without particular highlights, but a good point of departure to establish priorities for a national image that is seeking itself.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ El Monumento a la Revolución de 1952 is a monumental mausoleum where national heroes with ideological affinity with the revolution are buried. It is a landmark in La Paz and was build during the national revolutionary government (1952-1964). Miguel Alandía Pantoja and Wálter Solón Romero were commissioned to paint its interior walls.

³⁰⁷ The original reads: 'Miguel Alandía Pantoja es el pintor representativo de la nueva época, y que domina el escenario artístico del país entre 1947 a 1975, año de su muerte. Es, por antonomasia, el pintor de la revolución, concepto en el cual incluimos no solamente la gesta de abril de 1952, sino todo el proceso internacional que conduce al socialismo.' Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid*, p. 131.

³⁰⁸ The original text reads: 'Crónica oscura y sin particular relieve, pero buen punto de arranque para establecer prioridades en la imagen nacional en busca de si misma.' Marta Traba, 'Bolivia: Salida a tierra', *Semana de Última Hora*, 9 December 1983.

III. Reproducing Certain Prejudices in the Art System

1. Valcárcel's Participation in the Bienal Bolivia

While there was no space for Valcárcel's artwork in Grupo Pucara's Bienal Bolivia, since it was linked to Salazar Mostajo's view on art through the lens of class, promotion of indigenous issues and resisting imperialism, Valcárcel nonetheless participated in the second edition with two artworks. To illustrate the provocation that Valcárcel represented, I will take a look at the prizes, in the light of the discourses surrounding this event, as well as the artworks submitted by Valcárcel which, unsurprisingly, did not get any prizes or special mentions. Grupo Pucara was a group of artists founded in the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes in the early 1970s and was closely linked to Salazar Mostajo and his ideas, who at the time was the director of the institution.³⁰⁹ Some of the members of Grupo Pucara gave ceramic courses at the Escuela; the courses were open to all without curricular requirement. Although their specialty was ceramics, the group presented exhibitions in different cities of the country since 1972, which included painting and sculpture as well. From the early 1970s, the exhibitions of Pucara were presented in state, municipal and private institutions, including the most important galleries like the Museo Nacional de Arte (National Museum of Art), in 1974, and Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas in La Paz.³¹⁰ They also had a permanent exhibition space in Calle Bueno in La Paz.³¹¹ Their identification with Bolivian pre-Hispanic heritage was made visible in their concession of a non-monetary prize, the temporary possession of an original Tiwanaku *keru* (a ceramic ceremonial vase) for the winner of the Bienal – also a symbol of their anti-capitalist position; and in the reproduction of Tiwanaku motifs in their publications [Fig. 2.12 and 2.13].³¹²

³⁰⁹ According to Dioselinda Velasco, the widow of Ronald Roa, the ideas of Salazar Mostajo were key for the group. Dioselinda Velasco, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 2 September 2013.

³¹⁰ Grupo Pucara, *Grupo Pucara 1972-1980* (exhibition catalogue in mimeo format), Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*

³¹² Grupo Pucara's publications were of rather modest and precarious format: black and white pamphlet catalogues for the biennials and a mimeographed magazine.

Grupo Pucara was also interested in providing a non-elitist exhibition space for both artists and artisans. A group of artists who were part of Pucara – Ronald Roa, Jimmy Ledezma and Rocha – created the *thilíncho*, a versatile ceramic figure following Tiwanaku proportions that became widely reproduced by local artisans, in the form of nativities and souvenirs for tourists [Fig. 2.14].³¹³

Ceramicist and historian Ronald Roa was a key figure in the group. His opening of Andina Gallery in La Paz in 1986 – a project with his wife Dioselinda Velasco – illustrates his thinking. Roa's gallery followed the line of thinking of Pucara and hence reproduced the tenets of what Salazar Mostajo believed art should be like, particularly the idea to open spaces and promote art for 'the people'. The gallery was launched to promote local cultural values and to open a space to artists and artisans who, according to Roa, did not have access to the 'great salons' of art because of racial and political reasons.³¹⁴ The objective of the gallery was to promote their art and to train the artisans 'within our identity and in order to achieve a Latin American integration of true patriotic essence'.³¹⁵ Bienal Bolivia (1981-1985), once again very much within Roa's line of thinking was launched for everyone to participate without any curricular requirements, hence its embracing of non-professionals – like 'the mother and the timid young woman'.³¹⁶ But, as noted by Querejazu, there was a marked tendency to give prizes to artists related to the group.³¹⁷ Thus, prizes were granted to artists who participated in the exhibitions of Grupo Pucara, artists who gave ceramic courses in the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes which included members of the group – and to artists of rural extraction, which is equivalent to say of indigenous origin. Salazar Mostajo describes how with these qualities, Bienal Bolivia, was an event of 'the people':

And lastly, there is another aspect worth mentioning: the massive concurrence of the public, of groups that go to celebrate, with flowers and gifts, the artworks of their favourite [artists]: of the mother that never dared to exhibit her work, of the shy young woman, fearful of alternating with famous artists, of the painter of rural extraction who presents his

³¹³ Ronald Roa Balderrama, *El Thilíncho y su historia. Notable ejemplo de creación artística popular*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Ronald Roa Centro Cultural, 2011.

³¹⁴ Dioselinda Velasco de Roa, *Interview with the Author*.

³¹⁵ Idem.

³¹⁶ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 251.

³¹⁷ Pedro Querejazu, 'La pintura boliviana del siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 32.

artworks, confident that he is not going to be mocked by the organisers, of the artisan who has lived isolated in his selling point, and sees the possibility of his art being valued as a sign of national culture.³¹⁸

No prizes were granted, nonetheless, to the ‘mother who never dared to exhibit or the shy young woman’ but, in line with the biennial’s ethos, important prizes were awarded, to artists of rural and indigenous origin. For example, in 1981, both first prizes in sculpture and ceramics were granted to Victor Zapana, a former student, and teacher of sculpture, at the time at the Escuela. In 1983, Zapana was also recognized with a special mention in sculpture (when the prizes in this category were declared ‘deserted’), while Servando Mercado, an artisan and ceramic wheel instructor at the Escuela, won the prize in the category of ceramics. Having indigenous origins, Mercado and Zapana – born and raised in the village of Copacabana –³¹⁹ represented the artistic paradigm promoted by the biennial.³²⁰ Max Aruquipa, the grand prize winner of the 1981 version, was also born in the rural area, in the village of Santiago de Huata.³²¹

In a retrospective text, Salazar Mostajo pointed out that the themes of the 1981 biennial were related to either indigenous origins or depictions of physical or psychological sorrow that he interpreted as ‘a desire to overcome dictatorship’ [Figs. 2.15 and 2.16].³²² There were a few examples in the prizes, nonetheless, of abstract or more ‘neutral’ figurative art, like landscape paintings. Aruquipa’s lithograph of a hostage (*Rebén*), a monstrous figure with hands on its head, was granted one of the grand prizes [Figs 2.17]. The other grand prize was given to French artist Dominique Tebayrene (there is no information on the artist,

³¹⁸ The original reads: ‘Y por último, hay un otro aspecto digno de mención: la concurrencia masiva del público, los grupos que van a festejar, con flores y regalos, la obra de sus favoritos: de la madre que nunca se atrevió a exponer su obra, de la joven tímida, temerosa de alternar con los artistas famosos, del pintor de extracción rural que presenta sus obras seguro de que no van a merecer la burla de los organizadores, del artesano que vivió aislado en su puesto de venta y que ve la posibilidad de que su arte sea también valorado como signo de la cultura nacional.’ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *ibid.*, p. 251.

³¹⁹ Hans Christian Buechler, *Entre la Pachamama y la galería de arte*, Plural, La Paz, 2006, p. 63.

³²⁰ I have not found any information on Mercado but I believe that he was also of rural extraction.

³²¹ Elias Blanco Mamani, ‘Max Aruquipa’, *Diccionario Cultural Boliviano* [website], 23 July 2010, < elias-blanco.blogspot.com/2010/07/max-aruquipa-chambi.html >, accessed 1 May 2016.

³²² Salazar Mostajo wrote: ‘[...]el pueblo boliviano supo expresar sus anhelos libertarios en contra de las dictaduras militares vigentes[...].’ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, ‘SEGUNDA BIENAL INTERNACIONAL “BOLIVIA”’ in Grupo Pucara, *II Bienal Internacional de Arte ‘Bolivia’* (catalogue), 29 October 1983.

otherwise unknown in Bolivia) with a picture titled ‘Indian presence’, a schematic representation of a Bolivian indigenous woman seated in a presumably Andean highland landscape that looks more like the stereotypical Mexican image with a cactus, a maguey and an agave plant [Figs 2.18].³²³

Given the hostility towards Valcárcel ideas in the context of the Bienal, it is evident that the two mixed media artworks that he sent to the 1983 Bienal challenged the ideas behind Pucara’s biennial. Although the artist does not recall having participated, his name appears in a publication by Pucara,³²⁴ which I believe would not be the case if he had indeed not participated, for reasons that will become clear further on. Querejazu, who was director of the museum where the biennial was exhibited, equally mentions Valcárcel’s works in a review,³²⁵ and in his book.³²⁶ Regardless of whether Valcárcel participated or not, I believe that the following interpretation of Valcárcel’s artwork is valid. A closer look at the way Valcárcel’s specific artworks address the beliefs underlying Pucara’s ethos is helpful in the understanding the reasons the jury might have had for ignoring his work. Firstly, the biennial underlined its openness to different types of representation (figurative and abstract), different ‘themes’, as well as techniques:

The contestants may send one to three artworks, considered within the field of painting, sculpture, ceramics, drawing, print, silkscreen, mixed media, photography, and assemblages, and any other means of plastic and visual expression.³²⁷

³²³ Differently from Bienal INBO, Pucara’s biennial was open to artists from all nationalities, residing in Bolivia or not. Problematically, in terms of practicalities and legality of the matter, they were also eligible to temporary possession of the *keru*.

³²⁴ Valcárcel is included (number 113) in the list of artists that participated in the second biennial in: Grupo Pucara, ‘II Bienal Internacional de Arte Bolivia 1983’, *Pucara: Revista de Arte y Cultura*, 8 November 1983.

³²⁵ Pedro Querejazu, ‘[A] Propósito de Amadeus’, *Semana de Última Hora*, 29 November 1985.

³²⁶ Original text: ‘Una Bienal equívoca, pues utilizando el nombre del país pretendió proyectar hacia el exterior la imagen de una iniciativa oficial, y hacia adentro, la de una Bienal libre y progresista, siendo que en la práctica desecharon a la obra de ideología más avanzada como la de Valcárcel, “Sol Mateo” y Ugalde, dándose también el hecho de que en sus jurados, la vieja generación juzgó a la generación más joven. Finalmente los premios se otorgaron con frecuencia a los artistas más ligados al grupo organizador.’ Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 32.

³²⁷ The Bienal Bolivia’s Call to Artists reads: ‘Los concursantes podrán enviar de una a tres obras, consideradas dentro del campo de la pintura, escultura, cerámica, dibujo, grabado, serigrafía, técnicas mixtas, fotografía y montajes, y todo otro medio de expresión plástica y visual. Anonymo, ‘Convocatoria del Grupo “Pucara”, Segunda Bienal de Arte “Bolivia”’, *Presencia*, n.d.

The above call for openness to different techniques or media was deceptive, nonetheless. Salazar Mostajo made explicit the limits of this so-called openness in the presentation text of the catalogue of the second biennial, where he condescendingly referred to the use of ‘pyrotechnics’ in art, which can be understood as the ‘tricks’ of experimental art:

[...]Bolivian art is not a subjugated art or an alienated art [...]Bolivian artists have demonstrated that they are capable of assimilating western trends without losing their American roots. These two qualities configure their first-order creative potential and open a reliable route towards a national art that contributes to a fatherland identity. And there are no evasive attitudes or pyrotechnics in their manifestations but a reliable and vigorous art. This has, at least, been the tonic of the first biennial.³²⁸

The choice of the term ‘pyrotechnics’ refers to artworks that are ‘more show than talent,’ and refers not only to aesthetics of deterioration but, undoubtedly, to Valcárcel drawing from photography – slide projections – which he did, as in most of his art, in the artworks that he presented at the biennial. His draughtsmanship, evident in the hyperrealist quality of his *Gritones*, praised by Gisbert, was scorned by several artists who referred to him derogatively as a ‘photographer’, in the book of comments of Emusa gallery.³²⁹ Ronald Roa even went as far as to ironically describe Valcárcel’s style as ‘Kodakismo’.³³⁰

But what to make of Valcárcel’s ‘portrait’ of Che Guevara with used tea bags titled *Té Guevara* (Tea Guevara, a play of words with the sounds of Che and tea in Spanish, Fig. 2.19), an emblematic figure of the left and of the state university UMSA, or of his *Marlene* (Dietrich) with used filmstrips? [Fig. 2.20] Was making art with used tea bags a way of mocking the cult and the use of this heroic figure by the left? Or in the case of Marlene, was Valcárcel making a

³²⁸ The complete paragraph reads: ‘En efecto la total libertad de expresión de los artistas lo que no es una tautología, sino la prueba de que el arte boliviano ni es un arte sometido, ni es un arte alienado. Lo primero, porque a través de la obra de su artistas, el pueblo boliviano supo expresar sus anhelos libertarios en contra de las dictaduras militares vigentes; lo segundo, porque los artistas bolivianos demostraron que son capaces de asimilar las corrientes occidentales sin perder su raíz americana. Estas dos cualidades configuran su potencial creador de primer orden y abren una ruta segura hacia un arte nacional que contribuya a la identidad patria. Y en sus manifestaciones no hay actitudes evasivas ni pirotecnias sino un quehacer seguro y vigoroso. Esto ha sido por lo menos la tónica de la primera bienal.’ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *II Bienal Internacional de Arte ‘Bolivia’*.

³²⁹ Galería Emusa, *Cuaderno de comentarios*, 1978-1983.

³³⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

tribute to a Hollywood star, a straightforward symbol of capitalism, and of the ‘penetration’ of the culture industry? Or was Valcárcel placing them both in the same category? Did the use of poor and used materials, the tea bags and the piece of wood broken in one corner, allude to the aesthetics of deterioration so deplored by Salazar Mostajo? Was Valcárcel making fun of the term, testing the presumed openness of the biennial, by embodying the aesthetics of deterioration (using material in decay) in a context that he knew was contrary to it?

Sol Mateo, a young artist who occasionally participated in Valcárcel’s classes in his atelier also presented a complex installation with religious imagery: the cassock of a priest suspended by an umbrella inside a large box, a carnival mask pasted to one of its sides, an image of an ice cream vendor with the sign ‘flammable’ on another side.³³¹ This humorous coincidence between Sol Mateo’s work and Salazar’s reference to pyrotechnics (Salazar Mostajo’s text did not refer to the current artworks but the ones of the previous version), is further highlighted in the circle of candles and coca leaves surrounding the box. Sol Mateo did not get a prize or special mention nor did Efraín Ortuño, a former student of Valcárcel in his studio. The special mention (no prize was granted) in the mixed media category, to which both Valcárcel and Sol Mateo’s work corresponded, was awarded to Chilean artist Omar Baeza whose artwork’s title was linked to the indigenous theme: *Gestación Andina* (Andean Gestation), and for which there is no image in the catalogue. Although today Baeza is not very well known in Bolivia, he had presented an exhibition titled *Pictografías andinas* (Andean Pictographs), the same year in Casa de la Cultura, which consisted of artwork inspired by pre-Hispanic ceramics – with undeniably more thematic affinity with Grupo Pucara than Valcárcel’s art.³³²

³³¹ Valeria Paz, ‘Hacia un arte experimental’ in Michela Pentimalli, et. al, *Bolivia: Los caminos de la escultura*, Fundación Cultural Simón I. Patiño, La Paz, 2010, pp. 362-363.

³³² Pedro Querejazu briefly mentions his work in one of his fortnightly reviews: ‘Omar Baeza Cortés expone en el segundo piso de la Casa de la Cultura. Pintor chileno, nacido en Santiago en 1956, vive en Arica y trajina por todo el norte de su país. Visitó varios países como intérprete musical.//Su exhibición se titula ‘Pictografías Andinas’. La componen quince piezas pequeñas elaboradas en inspiración que él mismo declara en la decoración de la cerámica prehispánica desierto de Atacama.// Nos parece por una parte que al joven pintor le falta claridad de lenguaje pues el efecto que sus pinturas pueden causar en el espectador se diluye, por causa acaso de la excesiva mezcla de técnicas. Temáticamente se encuentra demasiado pegado a la inspiración en la cerámica lo cual le pone límites muy estrechos en sus posibilidades de expresión. Creemos que el

Other prizes of the same year were evidently within the line of Pucara, like the special mention of an Indigenista-type of painting by Peruvian artist Adolfo Sardón, an artist unknown in Bolivia, entitled *Carguyoc* [Figs 2.21]; a special mention to Zapana's sculpture of a llama (*Criatura de Los Andes* – Creature of the Andes) [Figs 2.22]; a prize to the ceramic recreation of a Keru vase by Yolanda Rivas [Figs 2.23]; and another prize to Servando Mercado for a jar in the shape of a llama with a title in Aymara *Juntuma Wallaque* [Fig. 2.24].

It seems unlikely that Valcárcel's artworks (measuring 1.30 x 180 cm each) or that Sol Mateo's proposals went unnoticed in the exhibition, particularly in contrast with what were usually small to medium dimensions of artworks in Bolivia at the time.³³³ In addition to the fact that Salazar Mostajo's views inspired the biennial, that he wrote the presentation texts in its catalogue, he was a permanent member of the jury. In the second biennial of 1983, Salazar Mostajo was accompanied in the jury by two artists with similar ideas associated with institutions where such ideas about art were equally prevalent. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, muralist Walter Solón taught and was director of the Art Department of the state university UMSA and Atilio Carrasco had been president of the Bolivian Artists' Association (ABAP) between 1979 and 1980.³³⁴ In the eyes of the jury, it probably did not help that in 1982 Valcárcel had exhibited his *Puerta del Sol*, a playful take on the Gate of the Sun of Tiwanaku, a pre-Hispanic civilization that the group took as an emblem, as can be seen in the covers of their catalogues, and in the fact that the prize was a Tiwanaku *keru*. While to an external observer it might not have been clear why Valcárcel's Che Guevara could not be part of what Salazar Mostajo deemed 'assimilating western trends without losing their American roots', the fact that it was by Valcárcel and that Salazar Mostajo had made him to be the symbol of alienation did so. Valcárcel was certainly aware of the antithetical position to his art and himself, and was most

pintor debe profundizar mucho más...' in Quilicho (Pedro Querejazu), 'Exposiciones de la semana', *Última Hora*, 3 June 1983, p. 15.

³³³ There are no dimensions included in the catalogue but I take as reference my knowledge of the works of the artists who participated.

³³⁴ Elias Blanco Mamani, 'Atilio Carrasco Núñez del Prado', *Diccionario Cultural Boliviano* [website], 23 September 2011, <eliasblanco.blogspot.com/2011/09/normal-0-21-microsoftinternetexplorer4.html>, accessed 2 May 2016.

likely not seeking to win the prize, but just to be a thorn in the side. Although Salazar Mostajo claimed there would be ‘total liberty, no discrimination in terms of modes of expression, schools or stimuli [motifs of inspiration?]’,³³⁵ the presumed traces of penetration of capitalism that Valcárcel represented, in his eyes, and that the artist made a point to include in the artworks he presented in the biennial, were out of the question.

Even though there is no way of knowing whether Salazar Mostajo had seen *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* or not – it was exhibited a year before – it is clear that in this artwork, the artist was equally questioning the types of schemes represented by the critic, and presumably the ways in which he was influencing artists. Bienal Bolivia’s nine media-based categories, perhaps with the exception of ceramics, were included in *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*: oil painting, graphic arts, watercolour, drawing, ceramics, sculpture, non-traditional technique, and photography. Although *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* is made up of bi-dimensional panels, it had a sculptural dimension as the plates were not hung to the wall but were attached to one another, and they were painted on both sides; reshaping thus the space of the gallery in a similar way as installations do. I believe that Salazar Mostajo’s lack of objectiveness with regard to Valcárcel’s artwork, and his ‘aesthetics of deterioration’ responded to an intentional combative attitude that is reflected in the name of the group under his wing. As explained, by Pucara’s director Jimmy Ledezma:

‘Pucara’ means fortress, – bastion, rampart, watchtower. And you will agree that we are, nowadays, the principal fortress of Bolivian art.³³⁶

Speaking for the group Carlos Salazar Mostajo, in the same interview, highlighted this combative attitude:

We are surrounded by incomprehension, cultural backwardness, the poverty of the context, indifference of the government. But our fortress is

³³⁵ The original text reads: ‘Las normas citadas permanecen vigentes en su totalidad para la Segunda Bienal: total libertad, ninguna discriminación en cuanto a modos de expresión, escuelas o estímulos; ningún pre-requisito curricular para los artistas. Ningún premio pecuniario, etc. El artista boliviano está ante un desafío: el de competir sin otra cosa que la manifestación de su propio talento. Con ello, la II Bienal “BOLIVIA” tendrá un éxito igual o mayor que la I. Que sea por el bien del arte boliviano.’ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *II Bienal Internacional de Arte ‘Bolivia’*.

³³⁶ The original reads: ‘[...] “Pucara” significa “fortaleza”, – bastión, baluarte, atalaya. Y convendrá usted que, hoy por hoy somos la principal fortaleza del arte boliviano.’ Grupo Pucara, ‘Saqueo y monopolio cultural’, *Pucara: Revista de Arte y Cultura*, 8 November, 1983, p. 9.

not only defensive, it mobilizes, launches attacks, brings out its militia wherever they are needed.³³⁷

Taking this attitude into account, the emphasis that Salazar Mostajo makes in the texts of the catalogue regarding Bienal Bolivia being an event where ‘total liberty’ reigned, seems like an attempt to disprove accusations of discrimination of art outside their canon, as well as of their having accepted a representative of the military government to participate in the jury of the 1981 biennial. In an interview published in their magazine, ‘Jorge’ (no surname indicated), one of the members of the group, responds to this suggestion indicating that:

[...] we accepted all sorts of artworks, so that in the biennial all the isms, were present, Surrealism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Dadaism, Abstract Expressionism, Pop-art, pure Abstraction, a bit of everything. It is false that there were preferences in that aspect.³³⁸

Another member, Danilo (Barragán) indirectly rejects this accusation by sarcastically highlighting the absurdity of believing that Pucara would assume a reactionary position.³³⁹ Another member, Ada (Carvajal), tries to disprove the rumours about accepting military government intervention by pointing out that the massive assistance of artists who would not have been accepted in the official Salons demonstrated the survival of art during dictatorship; highlighting the presence of artworks employing highly daring language that was clearly directed against fascism.³⁴⁰

Their arguments are not convincing, however, particularly taking into account that those same daring artists, that I believe Ada is referring to – David Angles and Angel Oblitas, for example –, had also participated in the Bienal INBO of 1977, during the dictatorship of Banzer, with a kindred aesthetic language [Figs. 2.25 and 2.26]. A similar claim is made by another group member,

³³⁷ The original reads: ‘Estamos situados [sitiados?] por la incomprensión, el retraso cultural, la pobreza del medio, la indiferencia del Estado. Pero nuestra fortaleza no es únicamente defensiva: se moviliza, se lanza al ataque, destaca sus milicias allá donde se las necesite.’ Grupo Pucara, *ibid.*

³³⁸ Only names, without surnames of the people interviewed are mentioned. Thus, Jorge (possibly Jorge Medina) explained: ‘[...] aceptamos toda clase de obras, de manera que en la Bienal estuvieron todos los “Ismos”, surrealismo, expresionismo, fauvismo, dadaismo, expresionismo abstracto, pop-art, abstractismo puro, de todo. Es falso que hubieran habido preferencias en ese aspecto. Grupo Pucara, ‘*Pucara: Revista de Arte y Cultura*, 8 November, 1983, pp. 13-14.

³³⁹ Grupo Pucara, *Pucara: Revista de Arte y Cultura*, 8 November, 1983, p. 14.

³⁴⁰ The original phrase: ‘un lenguaje sumamente atrevido, claramente dirigido contra el fascismo.’ *Ibid*, pp. 14-15.

Juan (no surname is provided, either), who underlines that the biennial had exhibited artists that were persecuted for their political beliefs, like Edgar Arandia, David Angles, and Diego Morales;³⁴¹ falsely suggesting that the INBO biennial was closed to them.³⁴²

Furthermore, Salazar Mostajo's inaccurate portrayal of Bienal INBO's cancellation of their event (as rejection to the intervention of the military government) seems to reflect a need to justify Bienal Bolivia's presumed acceptance of such intervention:

The official critics have not been able to deny them [the biennials of Grupo Pucara], but their comment has been malignantly negative, going to the extreme of qualifying the exhibitions as an embarrassment for the country. They don't cease to exalt, on the other hand, Bienal 'INBO', sustained by the private business wherein art is manipulated by investments worth millions [whose goal is] to keep the currency of an exhausted elite that has nothing to offer. See what happened in their biennial of 1981: a quarrel or disagreement regarding the designation of a member of the jury – the representative of the Instituto Boliviano de Cultura (Bolivian Culture Institute) – the motive for which the organizers decided to retire the exhibition; which would have ennobled their behaviour, had it not been that, little after, they took advantage of the incident to take the exhibition to the US, with the news, skilfully slipped in, that it had been prohibited by the military government of the period.³⁴³

It is obvious that no actions by Bienal INBO can be commendable for Salazar Mostajo, or at least cannot be portrayed in a positive way. Thus he does not mention that having a representative of the government in the jury of the biennial implied a blatant censorship, something that was obvious to the majority.

Similarly, instead of recognizing the importance for Bolivian art to be exhibited

³⁴¹ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁴² An artwork by Angles is reproduced in the catalogue of the second INBO biennial (1977), and the names of Diego Morales and Edgar Arandia are in the list of the artists who participated in the event. INBO, *II Bienal de Pintura Contemporánea*.

³⁴³ The original reads: 'La crítica oficial no ha podido negarlas [a las Bienales del grupo Pucara], pero su comentario ha sido malignamente negativo, hasta calificar las exposiciones como una vergüenza para el país. No cesan de exaltar, en cambio, a la Bienal 'INBO', sostenida por la empresa privada, en la cual se manipula el arte con inversiones millonarias para mantener la vigencia de una élite agotada que ya nada puede ofrecer. Véase lo sucedido con su Bienal de 1981: una rencilla o desacuerdo respecto a la designación de un miembro del jurado – el representante del Instituto Boliviano de Cultura – motivó el retiro de la exposición por parte de sus organizadores, lo cual hubiera enaltecido su conducta sino fuera que, poco después, aprovecharon el incidente para llevar la exposición a los Estados Unidos, con la noticia, hábilmente deslizada, de que había sido prohibida por el gobierno militar de la época.' Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, pp. 249-250.

outside of the country (in New York's Signs Gallery and Austin's Blanton Museum of Art), he makes it look like some sort of opportunism.³⁴⁴

On the other hand, Salazar Mostajo himself points to the low quality of the artworks of the Bienal Bolivia, explaining that this was mainly due to the fact that it was especially open to non-professionals:

It is natural that some technical flaws will be noticed, absence of professional resources, poverty of the materials, that shrewdness that Marta Traba spoke of, even immaturity.³⁴⁵

I would like to close this section by pointing out that while Valcárcel's memory of Salazar Mostajo might seem exaggerated at first, a closer reading of the critic's ideas and his view of the artist has indeed confirmed his prescribed, almost caricature-like, view of the artist:

[Valcárcel:] With time, the idea that we had completely different ideas, ideologies, and political postures crystallized. Don Carlos Salazar, in my understanding, considered me an agent of Yankee imperialism, that I was alienating Bolivian culture with my capitalist and imperialist stupid things, while he proclaimed an art from the mystic of the School of Warisata and the recuperation of the indigenous values – they weren't called that [indigenous] at the time, but they would be called so today...³⁴⁶

Given Salazar Mostajo's perception, and particularly Valcárcel as object of his artillery, the artist participation in Bienal Bolivia seems like an intentional strike back.

³⁴⁴ Edward Schumacher, 'Bolivian art banned by La Paz on tour of U.S.', *The New York Times* [website], 29 December 1981, <www.nytimes.com/1981/12/29/arts/bolivian-art-banned-by-la-paz-on-tour-of-us.html>, accessed 1 June 2015.

³⁴⁵ Salazar Mostajo wrote: 'Es natural que se adviertan defectos técnicos, ausencia de recursos profesionales, pobreza de medios, esa 'astucia' de que hablaba Traba, hasta inmadurez [...]'. Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *Pintura Boliviana contemporánea. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, p. 251.

³⁴⁶ Roberto Valcárcel explained that he met Salazar Mostajo at the Art Department of UMSA where they started to casually exchange ideas until it became clear that they had completely different ideas and ideologies. Thus, Valcárcel summarized Salazar Mostajo's view of him: 'Pero con el tiempo se fue no más cristalizando la idea de que teníamos ideas, ideologías y posturas políticas totalmente distintas, don Carlos Salazar, a mi entender, me consideraba un agente del imperialismo yanqui, que estaba alienando la cultura boliviana mediante mis estupideces capitalistas e imperialistas y él proclamaba un arte a partir de toda la mística de la Escuela de Warisata y de la recuperación de los valores, en ese tiempo no se llamaban originarios, pero hoy se llamarían así.' Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012 .

2. 'The Experimental Festival of Art is Criticised': Unconscious Reproduction of Prejudice in Art Education

In this section I will contend that the reproduction of certain unconscious (and unquestioned) prejudices about art reveal an authoritarian attitude in the Escuela de Bellas Artes (ESBA) in La Paz. We have seen that Valcárcel, with his open works of art, is trying to introduce alternatives in the early 1980s to a rather univocal, convergent and self-complacent way of making and viewing art. In this section, I will examine an example of a rather prescriptive perception of art, related to Valcárcel's artwork, in the context of the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes. Despite what, at one point, was a commendable attitude associated with the rejection of dictatorships, the social view of art assumed by students and teachers in the Escuela has tended to undermine criticality and self-questioning; and has thus contributed to what can be considered a climate of latent authoritarianism.

Although Salazar Mostajo was obliged to retire from his post as director of the Escuela in 1980, as a direct consequence of the coup of García Meza,³⁴⁷ his ideas regarding art lingered on in the Escuela. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a group of students from the Escuela went to the office of newspaper *El Diario* to publically denounce the artwork of Valcárcel, and that of his student Rina Dalence, which were part of the Festival de Arte Experimental (Experimental Festival of Art), an event organized by Valcárcel.³⁴⁸ In this section I will try to demonstrate how their statements reproduce the prevalence of the ideas of Salazar Mostajo in the Escuela. The published note explains that a group of outraged students, no names provided, from the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes,³⁴⁹ went to the offices of the newspaper to express their indignation:

A group of young students of plastic arts belonging to the National School of Fine Arts made their indignation clear, when they visited the

³⁴⁷ According to José Bedoya, Salazar Mostajo was replaced by a paramilitary. In my interview he only recalled that his surname was Centellas. José Bedoya, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2014.

³⁴⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via email], 3 May 2015.

³⁴⁹ Although the institution was originally founded in 1926 with the name Academia de Bellas Artes, its name was changed to Escuela de Bellas Artes in 1952, as a way of showing its political affiliation with the National Revolution that took place that year. It changed again its name to Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes in the mid 1990s and it has kept this new name since.

offices of EL DIARIO, in their opinions regarding the exhibition of Roberto Valcárcel and Rina Dalence, who participate in the First Bolivian Festival of Experimental Art that takes place in gallery EMUSA.

[And at the end of the note:]

‘We expect that, in future exhibitions, the board of the gallery EMUSA evaluates the artworks before exhibiting them, they concluded.’³⁵⁰

But what were the specific claims against Valcárcel and Dalence? In the same line of thinking as Salazar Mostajo, the students rejected the artworks’ presumed propagation of the decadent values of the West and capitalism:

What is exhibited in Emusa Gallery is not art but the expression of painters such as Roberto Valcárcel who show the opulence, the ridicule, the immorality, [and] the vices of a society in decadence. These attitudes completely corrupt the Festival of Experimental art, they stated.³⁵¹

It is not hard to imagine why Valcárcel and Dalence’s text-based artworks stood out, for the students, as a type of art that ‘should be combatted or resisted’. In both, text is a central component of the artwork, and there are no images created in a conventional manner in terms of technique (painting, drawing, etc.) or form of representation. As we have seen, Valcárcel’s *El Movimiento Erótico* was made of handwritten text with markers, pasted magazine cut outs and comic-like drawing. Dalence’s artwork, an invitation to the public to create a manifesto of Bolivian art, consisted of words and phrases on blocks of wood, of which unfortunately no images remain. As mentioned before, in Salazar Mostajo’s brief mentioning of Valcárcel in his book, cited prior, he associated the artist’s work with ‘no creative effort’ (no technical ability)³⁵² and the ‘renunciation of the image’.³⁵³

³⁵⁰ Original text: ‘Un grupo de jóvenes estudiantes de artes plásticas pertenecientes a la Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes, se mostraron indignados ayer al visitar la redacción de EL DIARIO cuando emitieron sus opiniones a cerca de la exposición de los artistas Roberto Valcárcel y Rina Dalence, quienes participan en el Primer Festival Boliviano de Arte Experimental, que se realiza en la galería EMUSA.[...] Esperamos que para futuras muestras el Consejo de la Galería EMUSA califique previamente las obras a exponerse’, anotaron finalmente los estudiantes.’ Anonymous, ‘Critican al Festival de Arte Experimental’, *El Diario*, 10 August 1983.

³⁵¹ The original reads: ‘Lo que se expone en la galería EMUSA, no es arte sino expresiones de pintores como Roberto Valcárcel, que muestran la opulencia, el ridículo, la inmoralidad, los vicios de una sociedad en decadencia. Estas actitudes desvirtúan totalmente el Festival de Arte Experimental, dijeron.’ Anonymous, ‘Critican al Festival de Arte Experimental’.

³⁵² Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, p. 212.

³⁵³ Ibid.

It is difficult to ignore a prescriptive attitude of the students, similar to that of Salazar Mostajo, in a sort of ‘ownership’ of the truth, manifested in their claim that ‘What is exhibited in Emusa Gallery is not art’³⁵⁴ and in their declaration that the festival was not authentic and buried the creativity of the viewers:

The students pointed out that an authentic festival of Bolivian art should treat themes related to the ‘problemática’ of the country such as education, economy, politics and religion. The exhibition of Rina Dalence and Roberto Valcárcel does not educate, orient and on the contrary, it conveys foreign habits and traditions, burying all the creativity of the spectator and of the students in general.³⁵⁵

The latent authoritarianism in the righteous attitude of the students derives from the idea of a type of art that educates and is thus about ‘education, economy, politics and religion’. In order to understand the logic of the student’s statements, in this regard, it is perhaps useful to recall that Salazar Mostajo featured Alandia Pantoja’s mural *Educación y lucha de clases* (Education and Class Struggle) [Fig. 2.8] on the cover of his book. Education and class struggle are equally the main themes of his own *Lucha de clases* (Class struggle) of 1979 [Fig. 2.27], a transportable mural painted, with the collaboration of students from the Escuela, for the Federation of Teachers of La Paz.³⁵⁶ Salazar Mostajo’s *Lucha de clases* represents what orientation and pedagogical value in art meant in the Escuela, as well as art in terms of Bolivian reality and economy, politics and religion. This mural is equally a clear illustration of the emancipatory role that Salazar Mostajo attributes to education of indigenous people. Salazar Mostajo’s excluding and dialectical view of art and history – in terms of class struggle, anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism – is expressed in the depiction of two opposing forces at each side of the painting. The themes that the students expected Valcárcel and Dalence to represent – ‘education, economy, politics and religion’ –, are depicted in the mural of Salazar Mostajo, from a Marxist perspective. The ‘oppressive side’

³⁵⁴ Anonymous, ‘Crítica al festival de arte experimental’.

³⁵⁵ The original reads: ‘Los estudiantes señalaron que un verdadero festival de arte experimental debería abordar temas relacionados a la problemática nacional, tales como educación, economía, política y religión. La exposición de Rina Dalence y Roberto Valcárcel no educan [sic], no orientan, y por el contrario, transmiten costumbres y tradiciones foráneas, sepultando toda la creatividad tanto del espectador como de los estudiantes en general.’ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Salazar Mostajo indicates that this mural was painted with the students Julio Efraín Avila, David Angles and others. Colour plate, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, no page.

(or the side of the oppressors), historic and current situation of ‘colonialism’ of the country, is represented by an eagle, a skull with a top hat (a masculine version of Guadalupe Posada’s *Catrina*?), a Spanish conqueror, a monk, a few high-rise buildings, soldiers with gas masks, machine guns and dogs, a Ku Klux Klan and a starving child; all of these symbols implicitly point to the alignment of the elite with the oppression of the US, Spanish conquest and Catholic religion. The ‘oppressed side’ rising is portrayed by workers lifting their bazookas, and emblematic national symbols like the Bolivian flag, the wiphala indigenous flag, the Illimani mountain of La Paz and the Gate of the Sun of Tiwanaku,³⁵⁷ as well as some other allegories that I have not been able to identify.

Salazar Mostajo’s promoting revolutionary ideals in his mural³⁵⁸ should be viewed, as well, in terms of a convoluted transition into democracy, marked by the effects of the Cold War. In this context, Carlos Salazar Mostajo was interested not only in teaching a certain type of art history, but also in making art to change the world and in indoctrinating his students, as described by his daughter Laura in a recent interview with the author.³⁵⁹

José Bedoya, currently curator at the National Museum of Art, was one of the students who worked on Salazar Mostajo’s mural, and was still in the Escuela at the time of the student’s press denunciation of the Festival of Experimental Art.³⁶⁰ Bedoya recently explained that although Salazar Mostajo had retired, he was certainly still a type of mythical figure in the Escuela. He equally confirmed the presence of Salazar Mostajo’s ideas in the statement published by students:³⁶¹

The reaction [to Valcárcel’s and Dalence’s artwork in the Festival] was logical and, the students of the academy [Escuela] were generally influenced – more than influenced – managed by the established groups of artists that felt attacked [by Valcárcel], and were represented in the

³⁵⁷ The Tiwanaku Gate of the Sun is a sort of ‘national’ emblem that is parodied by Roberto Valcárcel in his *Puerta del Sol* (Gate of the Sun) exhibition. See Chapter Five.

³⁵⁸ Miguel Alandía Pantoja, the ideal artist for Salazar Mostajo, was painting murals in the 1950s under the belief that he was making the revolution with art. His murals often served to propagate the political manifesto of the 1952 revolution, the Tesis de Pulacayo. Partido Obrero Revolucionario, ‘Miguel Alandía Pantoja’, Ediciones Masas, n.d., <[www.masas.nu/Boton-%20cultura/5 %20Miguel%20Alandia%20Pantoja.pdf](http://www.masas.nu/Boton-%20cultura/5%20Miguel%20Alandia%20Pantoja.pdf)>, accessed 6 March 2015.

³⁵⁹ Laura Salazar, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 December 2013.

³⁶⁰ José Bedoya, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 20 September 2013.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

academy so that their voice could be heard. And I believe that there was a teacher behind this publication in *El Diario*.³⁶²

It seems that from this perspective, reacting against this type of art meant rejecting dictatorship – what Bedoya is pointing to in the above citation when he says that it was a logical position to be taken.³⁶³ This implies that there was only one way of demonstrating a non-alliance with authoritarian governments, and that clearly, Valcárcel's way – critique of authoritarianism, following Marcuse – was not the accepted way.

Bedoya retrospectively comes to the conclusion that the students, most likely, had not been asked directly by a teacher to make a denunciation in the press but that the influence of the lecturers, followers of Salazar Mostajo – and hence largely against Valcárcel – was strong in the Escuela.³⁶⁴ Valcárcel's reflections on the invisible threads of authoritarianism and unconscious mental repression seems relevant here, as the students were not aware of being submissive – they would have most certainly argued the opposite. In addition to this, the invisible prescription of thought was complemented by Salazar Mostajo's charm, and the reinforcement of these ideas by other teachers, like Lara Centellas, a painter who had studied in the Escuela Ernesto de la Cárcova in Buenos Aires, other artists and friends:³⁶⁵

What happened is that there were, of course, [when] you went to class, students of second or third year, and the teacher [who talked and talked] throwing around that speech, and then, on top of that, your friends, let's say, [that were] from the artistic circle, would say 'but you should say something', of course, you would go and say something. [...] This still takes place today [...]³⁶⁶

Summarizing, Salazar Mostajo's restrictive view of art can be considered a covered type of repression of the students' autonomy, as they were not really free

³⁶² 'Era lógica la reacción, y generalmente los alumnos de la Academia (called Escuela de Bellas Artes at the time), eran como influidos – más que influidos –, manejados por los grupos establecidos de artistas que se sentían agredidos y que estaban representados en la Academia para dar su voz. Y yo creo que esta publicación en *El Diario* ha tenido por detrás a un docente.' Ibid.

³⁶³ Ibid.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ José Bedoya: 'Lo que pasa es que habían, claro, tu ibas a una clase, estudiantes de segundo o tercer año y el docente [hablaba y hablaba] largaba todo este rollo y encima tus amigos del entorno artístico, digamos, reforzaban eso, y decían 'pero ustedes debían decir algo', y claro ibas y lo decías. [...] Todavía pasa [...]' Ibid.

or encouraged to think for themselves. This lack of encouragement has largely prevailed in the Escuela, except for the short directorship of José Bedoya at the end of the 1990s.³⁶⁷ While their political motives might seem commendable, the inflexibility of their positions and lack of a critical attitude towards teachings reflects what Valcárcel considers a lack of creativity in Bolivian society. The artist expressed his views on this topic, in a 2005 interview in the press, in his answer to the question about whether he thought that Bolivians were creative or not:

For many reasons, many factors of historical type, causalities that are completely beyond our control, I dare saying that Bolivia – despite being mixed, and [having] diverse societies, ethnic groups and congregations – is, in general, a country that is quite rigid, stiff, inflexible. ‘To each lunatic its theme’, but each with the rigidity of a case. Among the very diverse groups, societies, and social strata, I can’t find a sector proud to be free in the sense of ‘let’s look for alternatives’ or ‘let’s find innovation and otherness’, and of ‘let’s go towards the unknown in order to evolve. They are all holding to their potty. Each one is holding on to their small place, expecting for everyone to adopt their doctrine.’³⁶⁸

The lack of a critical spirit at the Escuela and in the education system, pointed by Valcárcel responds to an unquestioned, and often unconscious, submission to ideas that although seem radical have become mainstream and represent a type of conservatism in art in Bolivia.

³⁶⁷ In 1999, in a discussion panel on contemporary Bolivian art, Benedicto Aiza, painter, former director and influential teacher at the Academia Nacional de Bellas Artes during the 1990s and 2000s, claimed that artists should be committed to class struggle. In the same panel, Max Aruquipa, engraver, teacher and director of the Academia in 2007, alluded to Marta Traba’s proposal to make an art of resistance. He further described abstract, conceptual, and hyperrealism as ‘immediate tricks’ which he contrasted with, what one can assume is for the artist ‘real’ art making: ‘the true artist must begin by working, by drenching in clay, [and] plaster, by learning to draw, by understanding the basic concepts of what it means to do art.’ Benedicto Aiza, ‘Realismo e hiperrealismo’, Ostermann, Denisse, et al., *Propuestas y tendencias del arte boliviano a fines del milenio*. Siart’ 99, Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, La Paz, 1999, p. 94.

³⁶⁸ Original text: ‘Por muchas razones, entre ellas factores de tipo histórico, de causalidades que están completamente fuera de nuestro control, me atrevo a decir que Bolivia en general es un país – pese a ser variopinto y de sociedades, étnicas y grupos diversos – bastante rígido, acartonado, inflexible. Cada loco con su tema, pero cada quien con la rigidez del caso. Entre los muy diversos grupos y sociedades y estratos del país, no encuentro un sector que se precie de ser libre en el sentido de “busquemos alternativas” y de “encontremos la novedad y lo otro”, y de “vayámonos hacia lo desconocido par desarrollarnos”.’ Todos están agarrados a su bacín. Cada uno está agarradísimo a su lugarcito, pretendiendo que todo el mundo acepte su doctrina.’ Mabel Franco, ‘En Bolivia, cada uno está aferrado a su bacín’, La Paz, *La Razón* (Tendencias), 24 July 2005.

IV. Expanding Definitions of Art: The Artist Dies so that the Viewer is Born

As a way of closing, in this section I will briefly examine how Valcárcel continued to explore, a few years after, making a non-authoritarian artwork in his *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales*³⁶⁹ (1987) and *¿Qué es belarte?* (1989). A comparison between *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* and *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales*, exhibited in the Trujillo biennial of 1987, is useful in this regard. *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales* [Figs. 2.28-2.30] are three paintings, each in its turn consisting of nine images on canvases removed from their stretchers and ‘sewn’ together. Whereas in *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* Valcárcel uses different techniques and different surfaces, in *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales* he draws and paints with the same type of pigment (acrylic and enamel paint) and uses only one type of support (canvas). In *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales* each individual canvas has a different theme and type of representation. A more radical lack of unity is achieved, nonetheless, with the incorporation of four ‘descriptive’ texts on top of each image. These texts, with the headings: title, theme, style and comment, are sort of image captions, the content of which sometimes contradicts or is completely unrelated to the images. Thus, in one of the individual canvases, the image of three buttons [Fig. 2.31] has the title ‘San Sebastian’, a ‘homoerotic’ theme, a ‘Transvanguardia style’, and the comment ‘vertigo’. Similarly, a Mickey Mouse image [Fig. 2.32] is entitled ‘Confianza en el futuro’ (Faith in the Future), its theme is ‘Juventud proletaria’ (Proletarian youth), its style is ‘Social realism’, and space for the comment section is left blank. With the introduction of these ‘captions’, the artist devised an artwork wherein the number of possible meanings, in comparison with *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*, is multiplied. Thus, for example, we have five possible different meanings if a single image is read independently from the texts, and then in relation to each one of its texts. If we then add this image and interpret it with the four texts, at the same time, we have altogether six possible interpretations.

³⁶⁹ Valcárcel refers to these artworks as *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales* in his book *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, p. 232. Closer to the time of their making Valcárcel also called them *multicuadros*; see: Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

And if we then proceed to interpret the image in relation to only two of the texts, we have seven interpretations, and so on. Then we would have, of course, to consider continuously incorporating other images and texts into our reading. More than a mathematical procedure, such approach to interpreting the work, directed at calculating the number of possible interpretations, can be considered, at the same time, an exercise that allows the viewer to rehearse, and experience the infinite number of interpretations that should be always possible in a non-prescriptive type of art.

Valcárcel's four phrase description of the individual canvases that make his *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales* equally mimics the usual classification of art in museum captions, and similar types of schematizations of meaning, which the artist wishes to replace with an active and creative experience of art. In their deceptively didactic visual characteristics – they look like educative plates – and their content, *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales* disrupt the authoritarianism of an education system where repetition is promoted, instead of creativity. Having worked as a creativity consultant, and undoubtedly motivated by personal interest, Valcárcel arrives at the conclusion that education in the school system of Bolivia does not promote creativity, at least not in the way he understands it:

Bolivia has suffered, I would say, a number of education reforms, dating back to 1828, and a series of these, including the one of the 1950s, and in all of them, in paper, or be it dead letter, creativity is mentioned as a pillar of education, and as an objective of education, a dead word, but in reality what happened is an erroneous interpretation of what creativity is. The problem of creativity in Bolivia is a semantic problem, people understand that creativity is one thing, and creativity as seen by psychologists is another thing, hence education in aesthetics in Bolivia is analogous to education in literature, which tends to repetition and memory, aesthetic education in Bolivia, in the schools is 'do a certain task', and we will teach you how to solve a technical drawing, a creation, a perspective [...]³⁷⁰

³⁷⁰ The original text reads: 'Bolivia ha sufrido, diría yo, una serie de reformas educativas, comenzando por con la de 1828 y luego una serie de ellas inclusive la de los años 50, y en todas ellas, en el papel, o sea en la letra muerta se menciona la creatividad como un pilar de la educación y como un objetivo, en la educación, palabra muerta, pero en la realidad lo que ha sucedido es una interpretación errónea de lo que es la creatividad. El problema con la creatividad en Bolivia es un problema semántico, la gente entiende por creatividad una cosa, y la creatividad en sí tal como la ven los psicólogos es otra cosa, entonces la educación en estética en Bolivia está en analogía a las educaciones en literatura, que tienden a la repetición y a la memoria, tienden a la repetición y a la ejecución de recetas, la educación estética en Bolivia, en los colegios es, haga tal cosa, y le vamos a enseñar a como se soluciona, un dibujo técnico, una creación, una perspectiva

The definition of creativity in teaching of art in the school system is replicated in the Escuela where ‘creative effort’, as Salazar Mostajo calls it, seems to be related to skilful copy (in drawing, for example) or the handling of codes and challenges of particular techniques like painting with oil or watercolours. The latent authoritarian mentality implicit in this type of definition of creativity extended, nonetheless, beyond the Escuela, which was then and has been historically one of the most important places for higher education in art in the country. Around those years, the lack of promotion of creativity was replicated in the other important institution for studying art in La Paz: the state university UMSA. An example from around the time of Valcárcel’s *Pluricadros eclécticos radicales* illustrates this point. Guiomar Mesa, daughter of art historian Teresa Gisbert, recently explained her frustration with repetition as *modus operandi* in learning when she was an art student at UMSA.³⁷¹ As a student of art, she was expected to answer the universal art history multiple choice exams, prepared by Salazar Mostajo, by remembering the exact content of the stencil copies with which he taught and this made little sense to her since the questions did not demand understanding the ideas behind the artwork, but implied remembering the exact wording of the mimeo. A question in the exam would ask, for example, whether ‘Michelangelo’s art is [a] convincing, [b] strong or [c] masterly’.³⁷² Regarding this class, she was equally shocked that independent study, and the use of the library was not encouraged, and thus she used to question Salazar Mostajo:

I would ask [Salazar Mostajo] why do we learn from a mimeograph, when we should learn from books? And he would say ‘of course, [you say that] because you have books in your house’, and I would say ‘no, the university has libraries, the Art Department has such and such books’. We used to argue, but fortunately we were only five in my class, so I decided to practice what I believed, so I would meet with my classmates in my house, I would take out the books that we had, and make them coincide with the mimeograph, I would show them, for example, images because: imagine studying from a mimeograph without a single image? I would tell myself that I wanted to learn art history well, and for my classmates to learn well,

[...]. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with Carlos Mesa in De Cerca*, PAT television station, La Paz, 20 May 1996.

³⁷¹ Guiomar Mesa, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 4 January 2013.

³⁷² Guiomar Mesa: ‘Así digamos decía “la obra de Miguel Ángel es contundente, fuerte o magistral por decirte, entonces tu tenías que acordarte qué cosa decía el policopiado.”’ Ibid.

hence we used to meet and study from those books. I found that awful. He did not have any slides, nothing, he would just give us his mimeos, and he would occasionally bring art history books, the Salvat Encyclopaedia, and show us one or two things. But I imagined that my classmates had no idea what we were talking about [in class].³⁷³

In this context, Valcárcel's *Pluricuadros*, in a similar way to *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*, seeks to challenge this lack of creativity by seeking multiple solutions in art making, which can be extended to multiple interpretations. In a text by Valcárcel (signed Laura Bassi, one of his alter egos), he has specifically connected his *Pluricuadros* with creativity in terms of divergent thinking, understood as many solutions to one problem:

'Divergent thinking' in the theory of creativity has, for Valcárcel 4, inescapable consequences for art practice:
 Any aesthetic problem (theme) has many possible solutions (pictures).
 A multi-picture is the sum of these solutions, or a solution itself
 The whole is more than the sum of the parts
 The quantity of the parts can be varied at any moment while the general frame of meaning is not altered (open artwork).
 The order of the factors does not alter the product.
 The technical or stylistic unity is detrimental and undesirable because it restricts the generation of alternative solutions (paintings), which increase the number of possible interpretations of the artwork (multi-picture).³⁷⁴

The challenge posed by *Pluricuadros* is greater than what it seems, at first sight, at least in comparison to *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*, which on a visual level seems more chaotic and diverse. The parts sewn together compress the different levels into one large piece of canvas, made up, at the same time of different canvases, with different images each, unrelated to one another, in different representation styles and with unrelated texts, sometimes unrelated one to the other. These artworks correspond more to the title Valcárcel has retrospectively

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ The original text reads: 'El "pensamiento divergente" de la teoría de la creatividad tiene para Valcárcel 4 ineludibles consecuencias en la práctica del arte: Cualquier problema estético (tema) tiene muchas soluciones posibles (cuadros). Un multicuadro es la suma de estas soluciones, o una solución de las mismas. El todo es más que la suma de las partes. La cantidad de las partes puede ser variada en cualquier momento siempre que no se altere el marco general de significación (obra abierta). El orden de los factores no altera el producto. La unidad técnica o estilística es perjudicial e indeseable porque restringe la obtención de soluciones alternativas (cuadros) que incrementen el número de interpretaciones posibles de la obra (multicuadro).' Laura Bassi, (Roberto Valcárcel), 'Roberto Valcárcel 4', Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

given them in his book (used originally to refer to the figuration style of *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*): ‘Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales’ (Radical eclectic pluri-paintings).³⁷⁵

Although no one, except for Valcárcel, has written about this artwork, we can imagine that it would not have been read by Bolivian art historians like *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*. At least, as we have seen, there is an intention on the part of the artist to move away from closed interpretations, which is reinforced, with no repetition of images to ‘guide’ the viewer, and a title that cannot be read in a reference to an obvious contextual topic.³⁷⁶ This interest in the functioning of meaning making was also reflected in his 2003 application to the Guggenheim Fellowship – one of the three submitted by the artist with no positive outcome – wherein Valcárcel claimed that he was interested, among other things, in ‘how the nearness between WRITTEN TEXTS and NON VERBAL IMAGES AND OBJECTS mutually broadens or reduces their possible meanings ...and how the **paradoxes** and **tautologies** that might result from that interaction lead to knowledge and emotions’.³⁷⁷

¿Qué es helarte? (What Is Art/ What Is to Freeze?) of 1987-1988 [Fig. 2.33] also resonates with *Pluricuadros* and *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* in that it is equally an attempt to establish the importance of making clear that it is up to an individual to choose and rehearse the different possibilities of art making and viewing. *¿Qué es helarte?* can also be considered as a similar artwork to the artworks before discussed in that it offers many simultaneous possibilities of what art can be; following thus, once again, the logic of divergent thinking. Exhibited at the

³⁷⁵ Valcárcel Roberto, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 232.

³⁷⁶ Democracy had been reestablished. The new government of Paz Estenssoro sought to control the economic crisis – international debt and hyperinflation – with drastic neoliberal measures, like the now infamous decree 21060. Following Gisbert’s logic, Valcárcel’s works might have been interpreted as postmodern and apolitical, within what Gisbert’s calls the Generation of 21060. Some of his later work is inserted in this category in: Teresa Gisbert, ‘Pintura contemporánea en Bolivia’, Fundación Cultural EMUSA, *Memoria, 1974-1994*, Fundación Cultural EMUSA, La Paz, 1994, pp. 23-24.

³⁷⁷ The complete text, originally in English reads: ‘I am interested in human feelings and emotions...how IRONY leads to INSIGHT...how INSIGHT leads to IRONY...how the nearness between WRITTEN TEXTS and NON VERBAL IMAGES AND OBJECTS mutually broadens or reduces their possible meanings...and how the **paradoxes** and **tautologies** that might result from that interaction lead to knowledge and emotions.’ Roberto Valcárcel, Guggenheim Fellowship Application, 2003.

Havana biennial of 1989, *¿Qué es helarte?* is a sort of taxonomy of types of art, artists and techniques. It consists of 32 plates of handwritten texts and drawings through which the artist offers multiple possibilities for art, as he describes:

[...]The artwork *Qué es helarte?* (New York 1987 and La Paz 1988) is generically related to the preceding artworks and it consists of 32 plates or parts in which text and images confront us with diverse possible concepts of art, from the more prejudiced to the simplistic ones ('art is copying the beauty of nature', 'everything is art') even some more sophisticated like 'art is altering the usual mechanisms of cognition' or poetic 'art is when you look at an artwork and... silence befalls'.³⁷⁸

In this artwork Valcárcel further examines what could be the essential qualities for something to be called art, instead of defining art per se, a task with disruptive implications in the light of a certain inflexibility in the local context in this regard:

Each possible definition brings us closer to the conclusion that art is in itself a multivalent phenomenon, an event that can be interpreted in the most diverse ways and a valid definition should encompass [and] include partial definitions, even definitions in contradiction with each other, which in this way defy the very principle of exclusion of most of the denominated exact sciences.

Conscious that any proposal that pretends to be more specific or to have more practical consequences would only be 'another piece of the mosaic'. Valcárcel 6 postulates that it is not of interest to define what is art but rather what are the indispensable characteristics for something to be considered a work of art. These sine qua non conditions constitute the nucleus of 'Qué es helarte' and are key for its understanding. [ROBERTO VALCARCEL 6...]³⁷⁹

³⁷⁸ The original reads: '[...]“Qué es el helarte?” (Nueva York 1987 y La Paz 1988) está genéricamente relacionada con las anteriores y consta de 32 láminas o partes en las que mediante textos o imágenes se nos confronta con diversos posibles conceptos de arte, desde los más prejuiciosos o simplistas (“arte es copiar la belleza de la naturaleza”, “todo es arte”) hasta algunos más sofisticados como “arte es alterar los mecanismos usuales de cognición” o poéticos “arte es cuando miras la obra y surge... silencio”.' Eduardo Tejeira Davis (Roberto Valcárcel), 'Roberto Valcárcel 6', Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

³⁷⁹ Valcárcel wrote: 'Cada posible definición nos acerca a la conclusión de que el arte es en sí un fenómeno multivalente, un hecho interpretable de las más diversas maneras y que una definición válida del mismo debería englobar, incluir definiciones parciales inclusive contradictorias entre sí, desafiando al propio principio de exclusión de la mayoría de las llamadas ciencias exactas. Consciente de que cualquier planteamiento que pretenda ser más específico o tener consecuencias más prácticas sería solamente “una pieza más en el mosaico”. Valcárcel 6 postula que no interesa tanto definir qué es el arte sino cuáles son las características imprescindibles para que algo sea considerado una obra de arte. Estas condiciones sine qua non constituyen el núcleo de “Qué es helarte” y son la clave para su comprensión.' Eduardo Tejeira Davis (Roberto Valcárcel), 'Roberto Valcárcel 6', *ibid.*

Although I have only had access to one third of the documentation of *¿Qué es belarte?* – in addition to the digitally altered and summarized version published in *Encuentro* magazine in 1988 – ³⁸⁰ the many ways in which its ideas describe and challenge the local art context is evident. Valcárcel’s kinship with contradiction and intentional inclusiveness in this artwork is important given what appears to be a hard to evade polarization of positions in the local context. Taking this situation into account, *¿Qué es belarte?* counteracts righteous claims in this respect, like the statement of students from the Escuela: ‘What is exhibited in Emusa Gallery is not art [...]’.³⁸¹

Some of the definitions of art contained are pertinent to Salazar Mostajo’s implicit ideal of revolutionary artist, with Alandia Pantoja as its role model [Fig. 2.34]:

Some types of artists- Part Three

c) Those who denunciate: social artists

- their intention is to reflect social reality

...before the transformation [of society] = current misery

...during the transformation = struggle, the revolution

...after the transformation = the beautiful future?

For them, art = denunciation and social transformation.

Their work allows them to articulate their petit bourgeois feelings of social guilt

Appreciation criteria: the didactic quality of their work³⁸²

This text is illustrated with a drawing of a car disrupted by expressive traces that simulate an explosion, which can be deemed a refreshing and ironic representation of the left – associated with terrorism during dictatorship –, and of the social realism and class struggle aesthetics which were, as Valcárcel points, ‘dying’ of reiteration by 1989.³⁸³

The traditional view of art by art historians (art as an expression of society) is evoked in another one of the plates [Fig. 2.35]:

³⁸⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, ‘¿Qué es el arte?’, *Encuentro*, n. 6, June 1990, pp.54-59.

³⁸¹ Anonymous, ‘Críticas al Festival de Arte Experimental’.

³⁸² The original text reads: ‘Algunos tipos de artistas- Tercera parte c) Los que denuncian: artistas sociales - su intención es reflejar la realidad social ...antes del cambio = la miseria actual...durante el cambio = la lucha, la revolución ...después del cambio = el bello futuro? Para ellos, arte = denuncia y cambio social. Su trabajo les permite articular sus sentimientos pequeño burgueses de culpabilidad social. Criterio de apreciación: claridad didáctica.’

³⁸³ In *Encuentro*, the same plate was illustrated with an image of Valcárcel’s *Retratos y naturalezas muertas* exhibition of 1980.

Art is the expression of society through the individual. Instructions for the artist: 1. Find a pair of glasses (if you don't wear one permanently) 2. Put the glasses on and take a look at society. Do you think you would be able to see society without glasses? 3. Explain what you see.³⁸⁴

In a plate about techniques, Valcárcel makes an ironic comment about the obsession with artistry and virtuosity that prevails in the artistic milieu:

Some artistic techniques:

Oil, hate, odour-oil, tempera

Chinese ink, pencil, marker, gold-sweat

Pink ink, acrylic, chalk, pastel

Martyrs' blood, watercolour, I wonder: what is it?, tears of love

Also: pyroxylin, kaolin, theine, coca-cola

Art is not technical virtuosity, it is not! [Fig. 2.36]³⁸⁵

These reference to these techniques evokes retrospectively the variety of pigments that he used in *Historia con Campo de Alcabofas*, including unusual ones like Nescafé, or nail polish.

The artist's position is also included among the possibilities in both straightforward, and poetic definitions like:

Art is creativity

Art is originality

Art is what is different

Art is what is other [Fig. 2.37]³⁸⁶

Art is when it is not something else

Apparently [Fig. 2.38]³⁸⁷

Art is when you look at an artwork and...

Silence arises [Fig. 2.39]³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ The original reads: 'Arte es la expresión de la sociedad a través de un individuo. Instrucciones para el artista: 1. Elija un par de gafas (si es que no lleva uno permanentemente puesto) [glasses with crosses, swastikas, dollar signs, hearts, happy face, hammer and sickle, [?], scales, Martini cups, question marks, square roots of three, etc.] 2. Póngase los lentes y vea la sociedad con ellos (Podría Ud. ver la sociedad sin un lente?) 3. Explique lo que ve.' Eduardo Tejera Davis (Roberto Valcárcel), 'Roberto Valcárcel 6', *ibid*.

³⁸⁵ Text in Spanish: 'Algunas técnicas artísticas: Óleo, odio, óleo-olor, ténpera. Tinta china, lápiz, marcador, oro-sudor. Tinta rosa, acrílico, tiza, pastel. Sangre de mártires, acuarela, qué será, lágrimas de amor. Además: piroxilina, caolina[?], teína, coca-cola. El arte no es virtuosismo técnico, no es!'

³⁸⁶ The original text reads: 'Arte es creatividad. Arte es originalidad. Arte es lo diferente. Arte es lo otro.'

³⁸⁷ The original reads: 'Arte es cuando no es otra cosa. Aparentemente.'

³⁸⁸ The original reads: 'Arte es cuando uno ve la obra y surge...silencio.'

Finally, some important elements in Valcárcel's art practice are included in the plate alluded to in the title *¿Qué es helarte?:* ambiguity and humour by way of an ironic play of words between *helarte* (to freeze yourself) and *el arte* (art):

Art (To freeze)
 If at twelve at night
 In wintertime
 You undress
 On top of a mountain
 And you look at the stars
 At the immensity of the universe
 And you feel cold, very cold
 Then,
 You begin to comprehend
 What is to freeze (art) [Fig. 2.40]³⁸⁹

Conclusion

Examining Valcárcel's artworks in terms of his commitment to make non-authoritarian art has shed further light on covered repression in the art system in Bolivia – particularly in art practice, art criticism, art competitions and in higher education. It has also provided a more precise understanding of its specific perspective and prejudices.

A consistency between Valcárcel's conceptual and formal investigations in the artworks examined in this chapter and the rules of *El Movimiento Erótico* – can be retrospectively established.³⁹⁰ Expanding the themes, techniques, media and commitment to one style or type of art puts in practice Valcárcel's contributing to the 'development of the aesthetic-erotic potential of human beings' (Rule 2). In the discussion of Valcárcel's art in this chapter, it has become clear that the latter task is urgent in the light of the univocal and prescriptive ways of art history and art criticism, the rhetoric of students and teachers of ESBA and UMSA, Pucara's

³⁸⁹ Original text: 'Helarte: Si a las doce de la noche/ En invierno/ Te desnudas/ En la cima de una montaña/ Y ves las estrellas / La inmensidad del universo/Y sientes frío, mucho frío/ Entonces,/ Comienzas a comprender/ Lo que es helarte.'

³⁹⁰ Rule number two mandates 'Anything [goes] that contributes to the free and playful development of the aesthetic-erotic potential of human beings' while rule number three calls for 'Anything goes that contributes to unmasking a morality, which is a subterfuge, a deceit with pretensions of truth [used] to maintain the current institutions that are the organisms of control of the current system of repression'.

Bienal Bolivia, and particularly the way the two prevailing positions on art excluded one another making it seem like only two options were possible. The righteousness behind each position, the internationalist but conservative one of the INBO group and the local and class struggle one associated with Salazar Mostajo, reminds us of Valcárcel's call to unmask a morality that serves the current system of repression (Rule 3).

While some of the more conceptual (and more rational) artworks explored in this chapter can be deemed to be far from the free and playful spirit of Marcuse's Orphic paradigm, I have argued that they introduce a much needed critical point of view to unquestioned paradigms. Although Marcuse is an important reference to Valcárcel's view of the world, the rational aspect in Valcárcel's non-authoritarian artworks can be linked to the reality principle (and hence to repression) and is in contradiction with Marcuse's view of art. With this in mind, it becomes clear that although Marcuse provides a productive framework to look at Valcárcel's work, his ideas do not constitute guidelines for the artist; they are not a prescription to which he adheres uncritically or that he keeps in mind throughout his artwork. What is constant, nonetheless, is Valcárcel's watchful attitude towards authoritarianism and his commitment to expose veiled repression. Valcárcel illustrates well this point, and particularly his rejection of authoritarianism in the art world in the following citation:

I think that art is firstly a reflection of the individual, and that in a pluralistic and non-authoritarian society there is no official code or unique or definitive content, and even less determinate aesthetics. [...] The principal function of the artist (and I insist, this has been determined by aesthetic practice throughout the history of art of the twentieth century, and not by a totalitarian expert in theory) consists in offering alternative approaches to reality or [offering] perceptual and cognitive constructions with metaphors. Formal, technical or stylistic aspects lack nowadays any relevance. As it can be appreciated, it is difficult, even in art, to liberate oneself from conservative, authoritarian and normative thinking.³⁹¹

³⁹¹ Valcárcel asserted: 'Yo opino que el arte es en primera instancia el reflejo de un individuo, y que en una sociedad pluralista y no autoritaria no existe un código oficial ni un contenido único o definitivo y menos una estética determinada. [...] La principal función del artista (y esto, insisto, lo ha determinado la praxis estética a lo largo de la historia del arte del siglo veinte, y no algún teórico totalitario) consiste en ofrecer enfoques alternativos de la realidad o reconstrucciones perceptuales y cognitivas a través de la metaforización. Aspectos formales, técnicos o estilísticos carecen hoy en día de relevancia alguna. Como se puede apreciar, hasta en el arte es difícil liberarse del pensamiento conservador, autoritario, normativo.' Juan Stream,

In my discussion, it has equally become clear that Valcárcel views Bolivian society as non-pluralistic and authoritarian and that his conceptual artworks are aimed to challenge preconditioned viewers and the prescription of art practice by art historians and critics in Bolivia; a prescriptive attitude towards art in general which neglects some of the most important issues in Valcárcel's art.

CHAPTER THREE

BEYOND PROMETHEUS, OR HAVING FUN WITH ARTISTS' MYTHS

The moment when you can laugh at authority, it ceases to exist; the moment when you can laugh at God or the great myths, they cease to be. In this sense, [in my artwork] there is a strong element of humour and irony, sometimes benevolent and, at other times, more acid. Demysticizing is not related to denouncing bad things, but to making fun of the grandiosity and authority of those myths. – Roberto Valcárcel, 1994³⁹²

Introduction

In the previous chapter we have seen how Valcárcel engages in making a non-authoritarian artwork. This chapter examines the way Valcárcel portrays himself publically and in his art in relation to his reflections on what it means to be an artist who does not subscribe to the latent authoritarianism in Bolivia's art system. It discusses specifically how, for the artist, certain myths surrounding artists and creativity contribute to the consolidation of institutionalized repression. Regardless of the positive or negative connotations of these myths – such as artists as geniuses, crazy, or bohemian, to name a few – these beliefs make creativity seem remote and unattainable. They affect, in a negative way, the value that society places on creativity and the generation of creative individuals; and hence contribute to authoritarian attitudes.³⁹³

³⁹² The original reads: 'El momento en que puedes reírte de la autoridad esta deja de serlo, en el momento en que puedes reírte de Dios o de los grandes mitos, estos dejan de serlo. En ese sentido hay un fuerte elemento de humor e ironía, a veces benevolente otras veces más ácida. La desmitificación está relacionada no con una denuncia de las maldades sino más bien con tomar a broma la grandiosidad y la autoridad de esos mitos'. Rubén Vargas, 'Diálogo con Roberto Valcárcel. Cinco por ocho no es cuarenta', *Presencia* (Puerta Abierta), 24 April 1994.

³⁹³ In 1979, in his fictitious interview three days before the accident, he established a relationship between non-creative individuals, and repression: '[lack of creativity] is something, which is very convenient for those who are interested in preventing people from being creative in art and in politics'. Roberto Valcárcel, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19 May, 1979.

Valcárcel's reflections on this topic are manifested in his art practice, in his ironic and irreverent representations of himself, and in an attitude that can be linked to Orpheus, which is the symbol of a free and playful existence for Marcuse. Valcárcel's humour and playful attitude towards himself, and artists in general, contrasts with the solemnity with which artists of the previous generation take themselves; with the often serious and melancholic view of Bolivia and its history. This playful and creative way of viewing himself is equally the reflection of an artist who amuses himself in his artwork, with stories, jokes, sounds, and puns; making art in which distances himself from the suffering and repressive Promethean paradigm.

Taking into account the Orphic paradigm, this chapter will focus on the liberating role that humour in art plays in Valcárcel's presentations and representations of himself in public, in his CVs, texts, photographs, and in his own artwork. While Marcuse's idea of liberation focuses on art's connections with phantasy (the only mental activity free from the reality principle), I would like to contend that humour can equally have a liberating role, at least in theory. Humour is coherent, on the one hand, with Orpheus' playful attitude. Humour, on the other hand, can be considered erotic in the sense that it provokes a pleasurable feeling. The origins of this feeling were explored in Freud's *Jokes and their relation to the unconscious* (1905) and restated in his essay 'Humour' (1927), the text on which I base my argument. In the latter essay Freud described humour as liberating:

It is now time to acquaint ourselves with a few of the characteristics of humour. Like jokes and the comic, humour has something liberating about it; but it also has something of grandeur and elevation, which is lacking in the other two ways of obtaining pleasure from intellectual activity. The grandeur in it clearly lies in the triumph of narcissism, the victorious assertion of the ego's invulnerability. The ego refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality, to let itself be compelled to suffer. It insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows, in fact, that such traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure. This last feature is a quite essential element of humour.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'On Humour', Strachey, James (trans.), *The Standard Edition on the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol XXI*, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis. 1961, p. 162.

The connection that Freud establishes between humour and the pleasure principle is of particular value to my study, taking into consideration that Marcuse's ideal of a free society is 'ruled' by this principle. As Freud has pointed out,

Humour is not resigned; it is rebellious. It signifies not only the triumph of the ego but also of the pleasure principle, which is able here to assert itself against the unkindness of the real circumstances.³⁹⁵

The pleasure derived from humour should be considered, at the same time, as an enactment of a polymorphous eroticism and, in its connection to pleasure, as a form of the Orphic archetype suggested in *El Movimiento Erótico's* call to 'foment and support [...] all happy, funny, fun, amusing things.'³⁹⁶

The chapter is divided in three sections. I begin by analysing the playful way in which Valcárcel presented himself in the Bolivian art system, particularly at the beginning of his career. In order to explore this topic, I take a close look at how his texts, CVs, and first exhibitions disrupt myths underlying the way in which artists see themselves, artists' associations, and even the way Valcárcel sees himself as an artist. The second part of my essay discusses the tendency in Bolivia's art history to adopt tragic symbols, and its relation and effect on a type of art practice with transcendental and mythical aspirations. I further explore the links between these paradigms and Prometheus, the symbol of repression for Marcuse. Finally, I argue that *Grupo Valcárcel's* multiple personalities are, at the same time, a clever way of exposing prevailing repressive – and unquestioned – beliefs in the art system like an unyielding nationalism, an aversion to the US and its culture, the quest for a painterly style, a certain sexism, and the transcendental role of the artist, among other topics.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 163.

³⁹⁶ The original reads: 'Plan de acción: Fomentar y apoyar – todo lo nuevo, lo raro, lo diferente, lo extraño, lo no idéntico – todo lo absurdo, lo sin sentido, lo ridículo, lo gratuito, lo involuntario – todo lo libre, lo juguetón, lo original, lo distinto, lo indescrptible – todo lo alegre, lo chistoso, lo divertido, lo gracioso – todo lo espontáneo [?] – todo lo erótico – todo lo no cosificado (Manifiesto erótico, P.5)'. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1-2, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008., vol.1, p. 378.

I. Valcárcel's 'Entry' into the Bolivian Art System

Valcárcel not taking himself seriously became evident in his first exhibitions in Bolivia, following a seven-year study sojourn in Europe. This playful presentation of himself sought to provoke his colleagues and the visitors of his exhibitions, in the light of the heroic and dramatic tone often adopted by artists, specifically those of the previous generation. This humorous attitude towards himself was often manifested in his catalogue texts, his particular versions of CVs, and in the introduction of 'odd' elements – like 'a corpse' – in an exhibition of photographs.

In 1978, in the space usually allocated to the CV of the artist in the Emusa Gallery catalogue, Valcárcel published 'Curriculum?', a statement against curricula, mixed with anecdotal information, including a reference to the creation of Producciones Valcárcel, which presented the exhibition, instead of the artist, following his 'disappearance'.³⁹⁷ Among the trivia provided, we discover personal information like the fact that the artist used to go out with Fulvia, 'the most beautiful girl in the world'.³⁹⁸ Introducing this type of data seeks to ironically demonstrate the uselessness of this information as a factor in the appreciation of art:

Someone may ask what does this exhibition have to do with the fact that Roberto used to go out with Fulvia before the exhibition. We ask what do the studies undertaken, exhibitions, awards have to do with the exhibition. The only thing that has a relation with the current exhibition are the things exhibited and people seeing them and what happens to them when they see them.³⁹⁹

The mention of Valcárcel's disappearance is, on the other hand, another ironic gesture that both demystifies and reifies the artist. In addition to this, the creation of a fictitious entity, like Producciones Valcárcel, providing both serious, banal and contradictory information, functions as a strategy that mines the authority of the artist. In this rejection of CVs, and hence artistic career, Valcárcel is also

³⁹⁷ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel: exposición 84*, La Paz, 19-30 December 1978.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ The original reads: 'Alguien podrá preguntar qué tiene que ver con esta exposición el hecho de que Roberto andase con Fulvia antes de su desaparición. Nos preguntamos qué tienen que ver con la exposición los estudios que él haya realizado, sus exposiciones, sus premios. Lo único que tiene que ver con la presente exposición son las cosas expuestas y la gente que las ve y lo que pasa en la gente cuando las ve.' Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel: exposición 84*.

demystifying his own achievements, since even though it was the start of his career, he had already exhibited at the Museo Nacional de Arte in La Paz, and earned some important prizes in local competitions, such as the grand prize of the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo of 1978.

In addition to these statements, Valcárcel humorously disrupted his own exhibition of 'black and white photographs of Europe' by presenting a 'corpse', *Víctima de Guerra* [Fig. 3.1], a bundle of clothes with shoes simulating a mutilated body – listed in the catalogue as 'Several photographs and a Victim of War.'⁴⁰⁰ The subversion of expectation produced by this act follows the typical strategy of jokes which insert unexpected content in an otherwise coherent narrative.⁴⁰¹ In this case, the joke is played on the expectations of a public accustomed to seeing paintings in exhibitions (prints, drawing or sculpture). It is not far removed, at the same time, from Marcel's Duchamp's emblematic submission of a urinal to the 1917 Society of Independents exhibition show. In the catalogue, the reference to Duchamp is made explicit in an excerpt of Duchamp's 'The Great Trouble with the Art in this Country', included beneath the succinct list of artworks (made up of two elements, as noted before):

When on the other hand you pick up something from an earlier period and adapt it to your own artwork an approach can be creative. The result is not new; but it is new in so much as it is a different approach.⁴⁰²

The ideas of Duchamp seem to resonate equally in the crossing out, with black marker, of some of the black and white photographs. Valcárcel explained in an interview that, with this gesture, he wanted to express his rejection of the retinal qualities of art.⁴⁰³ In this act, there is similarly an implied questioning of his

⁴⁰⁰ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel: exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19 May 1979.

⁴⁰¹ The element of surprise is reminiscent of Fischli & Weiss' 'find' of a corpse in a sculpture exhibition in their 1981 film *The Point of Least Resistance*.

⁴⁰² The artist's translation of Duchamp's text: 'Por otra parte, cuando se usa algo de un periodo pasado, adaptándolo al trabajo propio, se puede dar el caso de que el proceso sea creativo. El resultado no sería del todo nuevo, pero lo que sí sería nuevo es la manera diferente de abordar el tema.' Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel: exposición 84*. I am citing the English version from: Marcel Duchamp, 'The Great Trouble with Art in this Country' in Michel Sanouillet and Elmer Peterson ed., *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, Thames and Hudson, London, p. 123-126.

⁴⁰³ Anonymous, Roberto Valcárcel [sic]: 'El arte no ha...', [second page of newspaper article of unknown source], 24 December, 1978.

colleagues' obsession with artistry. The gesture of crossing out the photographs equally underlines his not taking himself seriously.

In the catalogue of the artist's exhibition in Emusa gallery of the following year, 1979, Valcárcel reiterated his rejection of CVs in a text in which he makes explicit his questioning of their role in the construction of myths that distinguish artists from the rest of human beings:

in the curriculum of an artist are implicated, in varying degrees, thoughts like:

'look how meteoric my career was, how much better than you I am, non-artist citizen'

or: 'if one day you manage to have a curriculum like this one, you will be able to paint as well as I do

or: 'with this curriculum, so florid, my artworks should be good, should they not?'

even in relatively modest cases, in which the term 'self-taught' is mentioned, one can read in between the lines the message:

'look what a rebel I am, how anti-academic'

or at least

'look how good I am without having studied, how modest'⁴⁰⁴

Valcárcel explained more precisely the connection between artists' myths that repress creativity and his particular concept of democracy in a fictitious interview he 'granted' Juan Angel Bustillos (an alter ego), in 1979, that was published in the same catalogue of the exhibition at Emusa Gallery:

I believe that what is fundamental in the type of democracy I defend, is that it is not enough for all individuals to be considered equal before the law, but that [it is essential that] they should be considered to have the same possibilities and capacities (at least when they are born, before they are blocked in certain aspects), and that those possibilities should be incentivised. This is where I establish a link between democracy and art: I believe that if one thinks of democracy as something which grants the same possibilities to all in equal terms, that we should not think in terms of 'gifted' individuals, 'genius', 'virtuosos', etc. but that we should think (and act accordingly) that we are all artists, that we can all create...⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ The original reads: 'En el currículum de un artista están implicados, en mayor o menor grado, pensamientos tales como: "mira cuán meteórica mi Carrera, cuán superior soy a ti, ciudadano no-artista" o: "si algún día logras un currículum como este podrás pintar tan bien como yo" o: "con este currículum, tan florido, mis obras tienes que ser buenas, no?" inclusive en casos relativamente modestos, en los que se menciona la palabra "autodidacta", se entrelee el mensaje: "mira cuán rebelde soy, cuán antiacadémico" o por lo menos: "mira cuán bueno soy sin haber estudiado, cuán modesto"'. Galería Emusa. *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel: exposición 90*.

⁴⁰⁵ The original reads: 'Creo que lo fundamental de la democracia que yo defiendo es el que no solo se considere a todos los individuos iguales ante la ley sino que se los considere con las

A similar facetious position towards himself was also suggested, a few years later, in his 1983 paintings representing his (presumably tragic) *Gritones*, in a style that is reminiscent of comics and children drawings [Figs. 3.2 and 3.3]. This sense of humour towards himself was equally highlighted in the catalogue of the same exhibition wherein he presented stick figure representations of his biography and his artwork [Fig. 3.4 and Fig 3.5].⁴⁰⁶

Two other mock curricula published in his catalogues, his ‘Curriculum Possibilitae’ and ‘Curriculaske Valcarcelaske’, should also be seen as demystifications of the artist and occasions for the artist to amuse himself. His ‘Curriculum Possibilitae’, of 1979, is a multiple choice option version intended for the reader to be an active constructor of meaning:

Valcárcel Productions refuses to obediently present the usual self-praising information and, in place of a curriculum vitae, proposes a curriculum where the reader decides which facts are worthy of being believed and which are not.⁴⁰⁷

It is a parody, at the same time, of what the artist seeks to counteract: the myths surrounding art and artists, and particularly the idea that artists are eccentric or extraordinary. Valcárcel’s ‘Curriculum Possibilitae’ includes the usual information, among the choices (birth, education and, ironically: death), but a lot of information that ironically confirms the belief that artists are weird and out of touch with reality:

- r.v. always has a false pimple painted in red on the tip of his nose
- r.v. always has the nail of his left hand little finger painted
- r.v. has nothing painted but uses red polish to simulate blood⁴⁰⁸

mismas posibilidades y capacidades (por lo menos al nacer, antes de ser bloqueados en ciertos aspectos) y se incentive esas posibilidades. Es aquí donde relaciono la democracia con el arte: creo que si uno piensa en la democracia como algo que dá [sic] las mismas posibilidades a todos por igual, no se debería pensar en términos de ‘dotado’, ‘genio’, ‘virtuoso’, etc. sino que se debería pensar (y actuar de acuerdo a ello) que todos somos artistas, que todos podemos crear...’ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 180*, La Paz, 5-16 July 1983.

⁴⁰⁷ The original reads: ‘producciones Valcárcel se niega a presentar obedientemente los consabidos datos autoelogiosos y propone, en lugar de un currículum vitae, un currículum en el cual el lector decide qué datos son dignos de ser creídos y cuáles no.’ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*.

⁴⁰⁸ The original reads: ‘r.v tiene siempre pintado un grano falso en la punta de la nariz/ r.v. tiene siempre pintada la uña del dedo meñique de la mano izquierda/ r.v. no tiene nada pintado pero usa esmalte rojo para simular sangre’. Ibid.

Following this logic, whether he knows Picasso or Warhol, among the choices, is something that would enhance (or the opposite, as we have seen) his esteem among his colleagues and public.⁴⁰⁹ The mention of an accident should also be read along the lines of an ironic self-mythicizing gesture:

- r.v. is shipwrecked, in 1967, aboard the ‘oriana’ in the gulf of mexico, infested with sharks
- r.v., in 1977, loses sight in his left eye, [and now] uses a crystal eye
- r.v. attempts suicide, several times, as all good artists do⁴¹⁰

It can also be interpreted as a sort of tribute, even if contradictory, to Joseph Beuys, who built a myth about himself as a survivor from an uncertain aeroplane accident. The artist’s amusement in connecting artists with accidents ironically underlines their weirdness or state of being ‘out of touch’ with reality. It was also manifested in the option of a surgery to lose weight, among the accident choices of an ‘updated’ version of his CV *Possibilitae*: ‘underwent surgery and managed to lose 45 kg.’⁴¹¹ This surgery was also referred to by Valcárcel in a public presentation where he introduced yet another significant ‘accident’, his birth at seven months in an abortion clinic, information which was reiterated in the recent *Mi vida* presentation.⁴¹² While providing absurd options of accidents removes their truth value, and hence demystifies the artist, repeating this event ironically re-mystifies himself as an extraordinary being – and one who contradicts himself. In a similar gesture, in the 2008 version, he added: ‘has a scar on his head caused by a violent act of jealousy’.⁴¹³

This tragic type of biographic data equally mimics myths surrounding biographies of some artists of Western art history, in which van Gogh has been

⁴⁰⁹ The original reads: ‘—r.v. conoce personalmente a picasso, antes de su muerte —r.v. conoce personalmente a andy warhol en 1969 —r.v. conoce personalmente a algunos de sus compañeros de la escuela primaria’. Ibid. In the version published in his book, Valcárcel adds Beuys as another choice: ‘conoce personalmente a joseph beuys en 1974’. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 12.

⁴¹⁰ The original reads: ‘— r.v. naufraga el 1967 con el ‘oriana’ en el golfo de méxico, infestado de tiburones — r.v. pierde en 1977 la vista del ojo izquierdo, usa un ojo de cristal — r.v. intenta varias veces el suicidio, como todo buen artista’. Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel: exposición 90*.

⁴¹¹ The original reads: ‘se somete a una intervención quirúrgica y logra bajar 45 kgs. de peso’. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 12.

⁴¹² Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with Roberto Valcárcel*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2012.

⁴¹³ The original reads: ‘tiene una cicatriz en la cabeza a causa de un violento acto de celos’. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 12.

attributed a starring role, but of which there are also significant local examples. Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas and Arturo Borda, considered by local art historiography as the two masters of the first half of the twentieth century, had both dramatic lives intertwined with love stories and ‘accidents’. Some of Borda’s writing (and presumably his suffering) was inspired in his unrequited love of a nun⁴¹⁴ and Guzmán de Rojas was rumoured to have had an affair with a beautiful woman named Doña Sol. Their tragic deaths links them to the myth of artists being miserable and out of touch with reality. Guzmán de Rojas, a strong and extravagant personality who practiced occultism, is claimed to have ‘influenced’ the accident of an enemy in Oscar Cerruto’s novel *La muerte mágica*.⁴¹⁵ His peculiar activities and experiments, along with his love affair, were linked to his suicide in Llojeta, a stunning mountainous landscape in La Paz that was an important motif in his oeuvre.⁴¹⁶ Borda was an alcoholic and killed himself when he drank hydrochloric acid in his desperation to soothe his thirst. The title that he chose for his book, *El Loco* (The Crazy One), has further extended his status as a mythical figure in Bolivian literature.

Valcárcel’s demystifying use of humour and play was also well exemplified in a CV named ‘Curriculaskheh Valcarcelaskheh’, first published in 1990 in the catalogue of an exhibition and reprinted in his book.⁴¹⁷ The humour of the text of this CV is obvious in the modification of language and the use of an invented language similar to dog Latin, with child-like play reminiscences, a sporadic inclusion of Spanish as if pronounced by a native Japanese, and the use of pretend Latin and Italian:

Naske ed la Paske	[Nace en La Paz/ Born in La Paz]
Estudiaske Arquitekturiliki	[Estudia Arquitectura/ Studies]

⁴¹⁴ A reference to Borda’s love of a nun is found in: José Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, ‘Arturo Borda: El hombre y su obra’ [Prologue] in Arturo Borda, *El Loco*, vol. I, Honorable Municipalidad de La Paz, La Paz, 1966, p.13.

⁴¹⁵ Oscar Cerruto, *La muerte mágica*, Ediciones Altiplano, La Paz, Bolivia, 1988.

⁴¹⁶ María Eugenia Ascarrunz, the daughter of painter María Luisa Pacheco, told me how she overheard rumours about Guzmán de Rojas in a meeting in her house: people were saying that he had killed himself in order to meet his lover in another life. I do not know the exact date of when Ascarrunz told me this story, but the approximate year was 2003, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

⁴¹⁷ Galería Emusa, *Roberto Valcárcel (Producciones Valcárcel), exposición 336*, La Paz, 2-13 October 1990. ‘Curriculaskheh Valcarcelaskheh’ is the first text that Valcárcel includes, after the introduction in the second volume of his book. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008* vol. 2, pp. 14-15.

Ed Alemaniaske + produktiviko objetiko metaforiko	architecture] [En Alemania/ In Germany] [+ producción de objetos metafóricos/ + production of metaphoric objects].
Detestaske curriculaske Pol sel	[Detesta currículos/ Hates curricula] [Por ser/ Because they are]
INNUMERABILIS ENNUMERACIONIS DE DATAE SIN SENSATAE	[Innumerables/ Numerous] [Enumeraciones/ Enumerations] [De datos sin sensatez/ Of nonsense data]
Tutti elogiosísimi, tutti frutti.	[Todos elogiosísimos, tutti frutti/ All full of praise, tutti-frutti]. ⁴¹⁸

This playful attitude towards language, with which Valcárcel represents himself, was also suggested in a pseudo-Russian, with ‘aske’ and ‘iki’ endings, in an ironic self-promoting slide (illustrated with constructivist-design uniforms) of the artist’s PowerPoint presentation *Mi vida* with titled: ‘Produktionska Valkarzký. Revolutzky Aesthetika [Fig. 3.6].⁴¹⁹ Valcárcel’s invented language equally resonates with the new spelling of indigenous names which was adapted in Latin America, and in Bolivia in particular, during the 1990s where ‘k’s replaced ‘cs’, e.g. in the new spelling of *Tivanaku* (in place of *Tiabanacu*).

II. Prometheus, Symbol of Bolivia and Artistic Paradigm

In the history of art of Bolivia, some mythic prototypes have been associated with art making. Their connection with toil and suffering evoke the link that Marcuse establishes between the reality principle (i.e. repression) and Prometheus.⁴²⁰ For example, in his history of art of the first half of the twentieth century, Villarroel Claire brought out an example with mythical overtones in the prophetic role that

⁴¹⁸ This can be translated as ‘Born in La Paz, studied architecture + the production of metaphoric objects in Germany/ He hates curricula because they are/ Numerous enumerations of nonsense data/ All full of praise, tutti-frutti’. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 15.

⁴¹⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi Vida*, PowerPoint [slide number 159].

⁴²⁰ Marcuse depicts Prometheus as ‘the culture-hero of toil, productivity and progress through repression’. See the Introduction to this dissertation and Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, pp. 161-162.

he attributed to the influential Indigenista painter, Guzmán de Rojas: ‘The artist is the prophetic hand preparing the future to which the people are predestined.’⁴²¹

In 1989, art historian Teresa Gisbert went one step further by identifying Bolivia with Prometheus, via poet Franz Tamayo’s writings:

Franz Tamayo, the most important of the Modernist poets, writes, in 1908, his ‘National Pedagogy’, a book that exalts the indigenous element as the vital force that will save Bolivia. As poet, he wrote openly Parnassian works, like ‘La Prometeida’ his most outstanding piece, which has great resonance, despite its over-elaborate language. It is the drama of the man who steals the divine fire for which he is linked by chains to a mountain where he suffers eternal torment. The protagonist of the tragedy is Psiquis who represents the spirit who is in love with Prometheus and has come from the sea to console him. The sea is the nostalgic past and the mountain the reality that binds with chains. Because of this, Prometheus is the symbol of a country that does not resign itself to the loss of its coast and more than in chains, feels identified with the mountains in the immutable eternity of the petrous; this explains the success of Tamayo and ‘La Prometeida’.⁴²²

In this citation, Gisbert was most likely thinking about the adoption of the Andean landscape as a leitmotif in the artwork of many important Bolivian artists. Arturo Borda painted the Illimani mountain of La Paz many times and, as noted before, Guzmán de Rojas, also a friend of Franz Tamayo,⁴²³ was obsessed with the mountainous Llojeta landscape. Gisbert, and her husband, art historian José

⁴²¹ If we take the word of contemporary critic Rigoberto Villarroel Claire, Guzmán de Rojas, a friend of Tamayo, impersonated more specifically the paradigm of the artist as a prophet who envisages Tiwanaku as the ideal model for Bolivian art: ‘El artista es la mano profética que prepara el porvenir a que está predestinado un pueblo; tal destino parece haber presentido el artista Guzmán de Rojas, por eso halló en Tiwanacu [sic] su ideal de arte y la “razón única de su vida”. *El Beso del Idolo*, en la transparencia de su velo, que cubre la virginidad robusta es el sueño del artista en el porvenir de su raza.’ Rigoberto Villarroel Claire, *Arte Contemporáneo. Pintores, escultores y grabadores bolivianos*, La Paz, 1952, p. 26.

⁴²² The original reads: ‘El más grande de los poetas modernistas fue Franz Tamayo quien en 1908 escribe su “Pedagogía Nacional”, libro que exalta (p. 34) el indio como la fuerza vital que salvará a Bolivia. Como poeta escribe obras francamente parnasianas como “La Prometeida” pieza cumbre que, pese a su lenguaje rebuscado, tiene aún gran resonancia. Es el drama del hombre que roba el fuego divino por lo cual es encadenado a una montaña donde sufre eterno tormento. La protagonista de la tragedia es Psiquis, que representa al espíritu, la cual enamorada de Prometeo viene desde el mar a consolarle. El mar es el pasado nostálgico y la Montaña la realidad que encadena, por ello la tragedia de Prometeo es el símbolo de un país que no se resigna a la pérdida de su litoral y se siente, más que encadenado, identificado con las montañas en la eternidad inmutable de lo pétreo; de ahí el éxito de Tamayo y de la “Prometeida”.’ Teresa Gisbert, ‘Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX’ in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, Banco Hipotecario Nacional, La Paz, 1989, pp. 34 and 36.

⁴²³ Iván Guzmán de Rojas, personal communication with the author, ca January 2010.

de Mesa, had been students in the private academy of Guzmán de Rojas.⁴²⁴ María Luisa Pacheco, one of the most respected artists at the time, made the Andes the main theme of her paintings, while renowned sculptor Marina Núñez del Prado titled her autobiography *Eternidad en Los Andes*.⁴²⁵ The connection with the land was equally emblematic for the mural painting group Anteo (Antaeus), founded in the late 1940s in the city of Sucre, and was one of the main components of what became historicized as the Generation of 52.

A ‘necessary’ identification of Bolivians with the Andes, as a consequence of the country’s loss of access to the sea – taken by Chile following the war of 1879 –, was equally highlighted in a review by Marta Traba of the Bienal INBO of 1977. In her article titled ‘Bolivia: Salida a Tierra’ (Bolivia: Access to Land), she declared that, in her assessment of the artworks, as a member of the jury of the biennial, she had been more influenced with their connection to the land, than by their artistry ‘I took into consideration much more the “access-to-land” quality of the artworks than the quality of what was exhibited.’⁴²⁶

Although the biennial had taken place in 1977, the article was printed in 1983, as a tribute to Traba, following her tragic death in an airplane accident. Her appraisal of Bolivian art did not go unnoticed, as she was one of the most influential and notorious critics of Latin American art at the time, and it was a rare occasion for an international critic to write about Bolivian art.⁴²⁷ The prologue to the publication of Traba’s review, in the newspapers of 1983, highlights the relevance of her words:

The article that we transcribe, a felt tribute to her memory, is perhaps, at the same time, the best and more substantial [article] written to date on Bolivian painting – the existing material is so scarce and poor–, it shows, once again, Marta Traba’s well-known talent as an excellent writer, visible in her essays and novels but also in her art criticism.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ Iván Guzmán de Rojas, ‘Pinacoteca Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas’, <www.neotec.cc/gallery/sala7/index_es.html>, accessed 11 January 2015.

⁴²⁵ Marina Núñez del Prado, *Eternidad en los Andes: memorias de Marina Núñez del Prado*, Editorial Lord Cochrane, Santiago de Chile, 1973.

⁴²⁶ Traba wrote: ‘Tomé mucho más en consideración la ‘salida a tierra’ que la calidad de lo expuesto’. Marta Traba, ‘Bolivia: Salida a tierra’, *Semana de Última Hora*, 9 December 1983, p. 3.

⁴²⁷ Traba is a reference often cited by the group Beneméritos de la Utopía and of artists of the Generation of 52 (e.g. Alfredo La Placa and Gustavo Lara).

⁴²⁸ The original reads: ‘El artículo que transcribimos como sentido homenaje a su memoria, a la par de ser quizá lo mejor y más substancial que se haya escrito hasta hoy sobre la pintura

Because of the importance of an international critic like Traba writing about Bolivian art, an ‘edited’ version, without some of the negative references to some Bolivian painters, was republished, in 1989, in Querejazu’s book on Bolivian painting.⁴²⁹ The influence of the ideas manifested by Gisbert and Traba seemed to have pervaded as well, a couple of decades after, in art historian Pedro Querejazu’s description of Valcárcel as Prometheus in 1994. Although Querejazu, editor of the book in which Traba’s text was published, does not necessarily mean that Valcárcel’s artwork reflects a quest for the essence of Bolivia or for its indigenous soul, or that the mountains are the answer to the suffering of Bolivians for Valcárcel, the language he uses is telling of the prevalence of Prometheus as artistic paradigm:

Roberto Valcárcel, multifaceted and solitary, is the artist who, after the Generation of 52, took up the baton of Prometheus, opening plastic alternatives and topics for Bolivian art during the last decade of the twentieth century.⁴³⁰

It is equally revealing that, in the same text, Querejazu connects Valcárcel with Nayjama, another mythical figure linked with the earth and the indigenous people, depicted in the novel with the same name by Fernando Diez de Medina as ‘the seeker of the indigenous soul and of the magic of the mountain’:⁴³¹

Valcárcel, like Nayjama is the eternal seeker of answers and options for art and man, precisely at this stage at the end of the century, characterized by the end of history and ideologies, characteristic of the post-postmodern era.⁴³²

boliviana – en realidad es tan poco y tan pobre el material existente, muestra una vez más las reconocidas dotes de excelente escritora de Marta Traba, visibles en el ensayo la novela tanto como en la crítica.’ Marta Traba, *Ibid.*

⁴²⁹ Marta Traba, ‘Bolivia: Salida a tierra’ in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 105.

⁴³⁰ The original reads: ‘Roberto Valcárcel, polifacético y solitario es quien tras la Generación del 52 ha tomado el relevo de Prometeo, abriendo alternativas plásticas, temáticas para el arte boliviano de la última década del siglo veinte’. Pedro Querejazu, ‘Grupo Valcárcel, One-man-group-show’ in Fundación BHN, *Grupo Valcárcel*, Fundación BHN, La Paz, 1994.

⁴³¹ Nayjama was referred as ‘buscador del alma india y de la magia de la montaña’ in Fernando Diez de Medina, *Nayjama*, (ed.) Rolando Diez de Medina (2003), La Paz, 1950, p. 2.

⁴³² Querejazu wrote: ‘Valcárcel, cual Nayjama, es el eterno buscador de respuestas y de opciones al arte y al hombre, precisamente en esta etapa de fin de siglo, del final de la historia y las ideologías que caracterizan a la era post-postmoderna.’ Pedro Querejazu, ‘Grupo Valcárcel, One-man-group-show’.

The links that Querejazu establishes with these myths are telling of their prevalence in Bolivia's art history, even if the author's intention was to draw attention to the artist's questioning. It is equally significant that Querejazu, in the same text, reiterated the Promethean paradigm, as accounted by Gisbert, when he established a connection between Valcárcel's *Gritones* (screamers) and Bolivia's loss of the sea:

With these resources [photography and pencil drawing on discarded pieces of wood used for packing], the artist opened a new path in the analysis and social criticism, of profound lucubration, and searing and incisive protest, denouncing with this tortured 'screamers' the persecution and oppression of the dissidents, as well as the situation of the country, strangulated and remote from the sea in his numerous artworks 'Destination Arica, Chile, in transit to Bolivia'.⁴³³

Querejazu interprets Valcárcel's recycling of pieces of wood, with shipping labels naming Chile as their destination, as allusions to the landlocked situation of Bolivia. On the other hand, the links that Querejazu establishes between the artists and these myths resonate with an existential attitude of artists towards painting and life. This take on art was reflected in painter Gustavo Lara's description, in terms of the 'drama of existence', of the paintings that took part in the travelling exhibition of Bienal INBO of 1981.⁴³⁴ The author of the article equally described the paintings of the exhibition as having a tragic tone, 'A feeling of stoicism – of fatalism – in many of the works.'⁴³⁵

But in Traba's view of art, the model of the suffering – ascetic – artist is latent, even if indirectly, in the way she portrays María Luisa Pacheco as a saint because, while living in New York, she chose the Bolivian Andes as the central motif for her paintings:

⁴³³ The text 'Destino Arica, Chile, en tránsito para Bolivia' (or fragments of it) may be seen in Valcárcel's images Figs. 6, 8 of Chapter Four. Querejazu's original text reads: 'Con estos medios el artista abrió una nueva senda en el análisis y crítica sociales de profunda elucubración y lacerante e incisiva protesta denunciando con sus torturados 'gritones' la persecución y opresión de los disidentes, así como la situación del país, estrangulado y alejado del mar, en sus numerosas obras 'Destino Arica, Chile, en tránsito para Bolivia'. Pedro Querejazu 'Grupo Valcárcel, One-man-group-show'.

⁴³⁴ Edward Schumacher, 'Bolivian Art Banned By La Paz On Tour Of U.S.', *The New York Times* [website], 29 December 1981, <www.nytimes.com/1981/12/29/arts/bolivian-art-banned-by-la-paz-on-tour-of-us.html>, accessed 1 June 2015.

⁴³⁵ *Ibid.*

For me, María Luisa Pacheco, a Bolivian painter who has lived in New York for many years, wore the halo of sanctity granted by being in the metropolis surrounded by the avant-garde orgy and continuing to envisage Bolivian landscapes, hard materials, rocks, cracks, and by her landing everyday at an imaginary Valle de la Luna (Valley of the Moon), inside the diving suit of her traditions and its most atavistic feelings.⁴³⁶

Traba's use of religious and sexual analogies in her appraisal of Pacheco – a saint surrounded by an orgy – is equally revealing as it places art making away from eroticism and particularly from the pleasure principle on which Marcuse sustains his theoretical discussion of emancipation. With Traba's depiction of Pacheco in a place of superiority in relation to artists the critic disapproves of (because of their identification with the anti art avant-garde), she contributes to the belief that artists, at least successful ones, are exceptional beings, and have implicitly higher moral standards.⁴³⁷ This view further contributed to the privileged position that Pacheco had acquired in the art history of Bolivia, a recognition rooted on her talent, without doubt, but also in her connection to the Andes and her international success.

The Promethean model is also latent in the serious and tragic attitude assumed by several of Valcárcel colleagues, particularly of the previous generation, the Generation of '52, from whom Valcárcel 'took the Promethean baton', according to Querejazu. In the photographs of himself that Valcárcel includes in his book (and in his catalogues), he is trying to undermine the serious poses adopted by these artists, which reflect more 'toil and suffering' than play, and particularly the solemn tone of their photographic portraits in their catalogues:

It surprises me and it greatly calls my attention when artists take themselves so seriously, when such loved and respected colleagues as Enrique Arnal or Don Gil Imaná, in their books – in the beginning–, even

⁴³⁶ The original reads: 'María Luisa Pacheco, pintora boliviana que hace muchos años vive en Nueva York, revestía para mi el halo de santidad que da el hecho de estar en la metrópoli rodeada de la orgia vanguardista y seguir viendo paisajes bolivianos, materiales duros, rocas, hendiduras, y aterrizando cada día en un imaginario Valle de la Luna, metida en la escafandra de sus tradiciones y su sentir mas atávico.' Marta Traba, 'Bolivia salida a tierra' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 105.

⁴³⁷ This view echoes Traba's aesthetics of deterioration thesis in *Dos décadas vulnerables*, discussed in chapter two. Marta Traba, *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950-1970*, SigloVeintiuno Editores Argentina S.A, Buenos Aires, 2005.

Don Pérez Alcalá; all of them, in the beginning of their books place a serious portrait of themselves, an ‘honourable’ portrait, a pertinent portrait.⁴³⁸

Arnal, Imaná and Pérez Alcalá were among the most notable artists of their generation and, together with La Placa and Inés Córdoba, were practically the only artists living in Bolivia with international exposure. Imaná, a member of Grupo Anteo – known for his social realist paintings – had exhibited at the Hermitage Museum in 1971,⁴³⁹ as well at other galleries in Europe. Marta Traba had also praised Arnal, among other artists from Latin America, for his refreshing exhibition in the Museo de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Museum) of Caracas.⁴⁴⁰ Pérez Alcalá, noted as one of the most important watercolourists by Salazar Mostajo, gained fame in the 1980s for obtaining prizes in the national competition of watercolour in Mexico, where he resided. According to Valcárcel, the obsession of some artists with mastering watercolour technique, particularly in Cochabamba, has acquired mythic dimensions – thus he recently suggested in an ironic simile that he established between painting with watercolour and the Eucharist.⁴⁴¹

The melancholy of a country haunted by the loss of its coast (that subsequently clings to the Andes) has been reinforced by its history of colonization, loss of territory, caudillismo and dictatorship. Valcárcel, although aware of the negative reality and negative view of things, has often chosen to make light of the subject in many of his works.⁴⁴² His untitled map of South America [Fig. 3.7], where he named the countries according to the numerous meanings that ‘estado’ (state) has in Spanish, such as nation-state, state of mind,

⁴³⁸ Valcárcel said: ‘Me sorprende y me llama mucho la atención cuando los artistas se toman tan en serio, cuando colegas tan amados y respetados como Enrique Arnal o como Don Gil Imaná en sus libros, al inicio, incluso Don Pérez Alcalá, todos ellos, al inicio del libro ponen pues un retrato serio, un retrato digno, un retrato pertinente.’ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the author*, La Paz, 10 July 2010.

⁴³⁹ Gil Imaná, *Gil Imaná: Obra 1946-2002*, Aguilar, La Paz, 2003. p. 156.

⁴⁴⁰ Marta Traba, *Ibid.*

⁴⁴¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2012.

⁴⁴² In an exceptional and early text, Valcárcel describes Bolivia as a poor country providing data of its problems in terms of poverty, education, housing, etc. Roberto Valcárcel, ‘Acerca de Bolivia y su representación en la Bienal Internacional de São Paulo’, Roberto Valcárcel and Gastón Ugalde, *BOLIVIA, XV Bienal Internacional de São Paulo 1979* [catalogue], Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 1979.

civil status, physical state, etc., exemplifies his playful approach to what otherwise seems a tragic topic. Thus, he labelled Bolivia *Estado depresivo*, the ‘depressive state’ or ‘depressive condition’, which is surrounded by *Euforia (estado anímico)*, the name given to Argentina; *Estado hipnótico* for Paraguay, *Estado de coma* (Uruguay); *Estado de sitio* (martial law) for Chile, *Soltero (estado civil)* (single – civil status) for Venezuela and liquid state for Suriname, among many others. The association of Bolivia with sorrow referred in this map transcends its frontiers. This perception was made clear by Argentinian rock group Enanitos Verdes in the 1994 hit song title ‘Lamento boliviano’ (Bolivian Lament), inspired by the nostalgic tone of Andean music – which until very recently was always played in the La Paz airport.⁴⁴³ The currency of this term was manifested in Valcárcel’s recent use of the phrase ‘lamento boliviano’ to describe the art of social realists in Bolivia.⁴⁴⁴ In 2012, the exhibition *Mar para Bolivia?* (Sea for Bolivia?) displayed a more critical attitude to the access to land issue by punctuating its title with a question mark, and including artworks with different positions (poetic, questioning, ironic, nostalgic, etc.) from Chile and Bolivia.⁴⁴⁵ Valcárcel contributed with the conceptual painting *Olvídate: Deja de rumiar lamentos y reclamos* (Forget about it – the sea – and stop ruminating laments and complaints) [Fig. 3.8].

III. Valcárcel as Orpheus – All Humour and Play

In 1994, Roberto Valcárcel presented an exhibition of Grupo Valcárcel (Valcárcel Group) in which he enacted Orphic qualities while exposing, at the same time, certain myths about artists that prevail in the Bolivian art system. The exhibition of the group, in Fundación BHN Gallery of La Paz, consisted of *multicadros*

⁴⁴³ The original version of this song is by Argentine group Alcohol Etílico. It became a widespread hit in the version of Argentine group Enanitos Verdes in which they use musical instruments (quena and zampoña flutes) from the Bolivian highlands.

⁴⁴⁴ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012 .

⁴⁴⁵ *¿Mar para Bolivia?* was presented on January 2012 at the Centro Cultural Santa Cruz in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

(multi-paintings),⁴⁴⁶ ‘collaboration’ pieces by the ‘different’ artists that are part of the group, and impersonate the types of art produced by the artist up to that point:

[Valcárcel:] An artist declares himself in possession of multiple personalities. Each of these personalities expresses itself through an artistic individual language and participates in the making of group artworks denominated *multicadros*. The Valcárcel Group paradoxically organizes one-person/ collective, ‘one-man-group-shows’.⁴⁴⁷

In this presentation of the artist as having multiple personalities, Valcárcel makes fun of himself, of certain myths associated with being an artist, and of his uneasy relationship with some artists in the milieu. Assuming different identities makes clear that the creative method used in his artwork can be fun and liberating, as it allows for the possibility of reinvention.

While Valcárcel’s joke about having a multiple personalities is useful to describe the different strands and stages of his work in terms of technique, media, topics and interests, it is, at the same time, an ironic allusion to the myth about artists not having contact with reality. This type of thinking was already present in the artist’s fictitious interview of 1979, wherein being out of touch with reality is listed as one of the beliefs that should be demythologised for art to be truly democratic:

4) It is believed that the artist is a weird lad, special, kind of bohemian, who walks in the clouds, does not have contact with reality. This myth has as consequence that the majority [of the population] avoids identifying themselves with artists. As a matter of fact, many artists make great efforts to corroborate this myth.⁴⁴⁸

Valcárcel plays along with the idea of being out of touch with reality in the catalogue of Grupo Valcárcel’s exhibition by listing the themes, style and

⁴⁴⁶ Similar works were presented in a second exhibition in Emusa Gallery. Valcárcel has retrospectively categorized these artworks as ‘multicadros’ in his book. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, pp. 284-299.

⁴⁴⁷ The original reads: ‘Un artista se declara poseedor de múltiples personalidades. Cada una de ellas se expresa mediante un lenguaje artístico propio y participa en la realización de obras grupales denominadas multicadros. El grupo Valcárcel organiza exposiciones paradójicamente unipersonales/ colectivas, los ‘one-man-group-shows’. Galería de la Fundación BHN, *Grupo Valcárcel* (exhibition catalogue), Fundación BHN, La Paz, 1994.

⁴⁴⁸ Beliefs 1 to 3 refer to three aspects of art that should be demythologized: art as an individual production, art as a unique object, and art as original. Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel: exposición 90*.

technique practiced by each of the seven artists that make up the group.⁴⁴⁹ The brief polyphonic text ‘Acerca de nuestra obra’ (About our artwork) includes texts and citations from each artist, as well as brief conceptual descriptions of their creations, and humorous statements like ‘My characters amuse me (R. Valcárcel)’ and ‘Valcárcel amuses us (Grupo Valcárcel).’⁴⁵⁰

The contribution of five of the artist’s seven personalities may be identified, for example, in each of the parts that make the *Portrait of Petruccio* (also known as *Le dog extraordinaire*) [Fig. 3.9].⁴⁵¹ The pencil portrait of a dog, realistically drawn on a wooden surface (left panel) is by Bob Martin (US), an artist known initially for his ‘torture paintings’,⁴⁵² biblical paintings and portraits.⁴⁵³ Although the theme of suffering links Martin to the Bolivian Promethean prototype, there is simultaneously a latent Orphic side that will become apparent later on in my dissertation.⁴⁵⁴ The second panel (from the left), with the dog licking its tail, in the shape of a ball, approaching the end of a bowling lane, was painted by Hans Krapplack (Germany), an artist keen on Walt Disney and colourful images,⁴⁵⁵ who paints ‘things that seem to be other things.’⁴⁵⁶ Antonio Raffaello (Italy), who ‘assembles his artwork in complex ways’,⁴⁵⁷ is the author of the panel with six plates attached to a red frame by ring screws and pins. The painting of a sausage among Dachshunds is a humorous reference to the shape and name of this breed of dogs, as well as the theme of the painting: a portrait of Petruccio, one of the artist’s dogs at the time.⁴⁵⁸ The fourth

⁴⁴⁹ Valcárcel lists the different themes of interest to each of them as well as their artistic language: Bob Martin: ‘Bíblico. Retratos. Tortura.’ Hans Krapplack: ‘Cosas que parecen ser otras cosas.’ Antonio Raffaello: ‘Varios’. Nadja Otterova: ‘Diversos. El impacto de la sorpresa.’ Max Poma: ‘El acto mismo.’ W. Moffat: ‘Arte y vida; arte y muerte, arte y arte.’ Yuri Nitram (Q.E.P.D.) ‘Amor y muerte.’ Fundación BHN, *Grupo Valcárcel*.

⁴⁵⁰ The original reads: ‘Mis personajes me divierten (R. Valcárcel)’ ‘Valcárcel nos divierte (Grupo Valcárcel)’. Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ While the artist titled this artwork *Portrait of Petruccio*, he refers to it as *Le dog extraordinaire* in his book. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p 286.

⁴⁵² Part of the description of each of these was taken from Valcárcel in: Alejandro Villena (director and producer), *Arte contemporáneo boliviano. Volumen I* [video], La Paz, filmed and edited between 1994 and 1997.

⁴⁵³ Fundación BHN, *Grupo Valcárcel*.

⁴⁵⁴ I discuss this less apparent Orphic characteristic of Valcárcel’s *Gritones* in Chapter Four..

⁴⁵⁵ Alejandro Villena (director and producer), *Arte contemporáneo boliviano. Volumen I*.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ I believe that Valcárcel had three dogs at the time. The last one of them died recently and was

panel is by the artist Nadja Otterova (Russia), who works with black and white contact images that she sets in slide frames showing images of ‘before and after’.⁴⁵⁹ Although the themes that interest her are diverse, she is particularly keen on the impact of surprise,⁴⁶⁰ which is often ironic as she sometimes, as in this case, repeats the same image. The carved rectangular purple background, on which the two identical slides are placed on the upper half of the panel, echo a purple carved line at the bottom. This composition with two squares on top and a horizontal line at the bottom make the panel look like a long rectangular grey face, which recalls, at the same time, Valcárcel’s paintings of houses in the shape of human faces, presented in Arte Único Gallery, in 1990.⁴⁶¹ The formal likeness to eyes of the two identical black and white photographs is accentuated with the high contrast of the images; in which the white spaces, simulate the whites of the eyes, creating the illusion of two eyes directing their gaze to the left of the picture. Finally, Waldo Moffat (UK), the conceptual artist of the group,⁴⁶² is the author of the last panel, at the far right, who depicts the dog with the phrase ‘Wag the tail’.

While a relation may be construed between each of the nationalities of the members of the group, and Valcárcel’s artistic citations of Constructivism and Surrealism – for example, in the case of Nadja Otterova –, these references can be understood as an ironic provocation in a milieu where Valcárcel’s links with Europe, and presumed affinity with the US, have been interpreted as a sign of his ‘alienation’.⁴⁶³ The exhibition of Grupo Valcárcel’s was in fact preceded by another one titled ‘Made in USA’ (1993), comprised of paintings which were created during a stay in Miami, when he briefly managed a gallery of Bolivian art

replaced by another one, a gift from curator Cecilia Bayá who was a puppy when I visited Valcárcel’s studio in December 2013. Dachshunds are part of a family tradition that Valcárcel made a point to highlight in: Roberto Valcárcel. *Mi vida*, p. slide 97.

⁴⁵⁹ Alejandro Villena (director and producer), *Arte contemporáneo boliviano. Volumen I*.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Arte Único, *Valcárcel* [catalogue], La Paz, 1990.

⁴⁶² Alejandro Villena, (director and producer), *Arte contemporáneo boliviano. Volumen I*.

⁴⁶³ Salazar Mostajo called Valcárcel ‘conservative, despite his ultramodern poses’ for his ‘dependence’ on European aesthetics – see Chapter Two. Some students of the Escuela de Bellas Artes equally associated Valcárcel with foreign traditions – see Chapter Two. In addition to this, I would like to note that while Y. Nitram has no nationality listed in the catalogue, in the reference in the artist’s book he appears as Japanese, and with a year and place of his death (Sao Paulo, 1991). Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1-2, vol. 1, p. 284.

in the early 1990s.⁴⁶⁴ The invention of Max Poma – a non-explicit reference to Max Aruquipa? – who does not participate in the exhibition, ironically accounts for the artist's performances. Choosing an indigenous surname for an artist linked to contemporary art is a provocation to the prevailing expectation of indigenous artists to paint or sculpt local themes, as exemplified in the prizes of the Bienal Bolivia.⁴⁶⁵ This 'paradoxical' association of Bolivian art and a 'foreign' artistic language, i.e. performance, is at the same time contrary to an art system obsessed with expressing a national identity in art, which is, according to its rationale, opposed to experimental art.⁴⁶⁶

In addition to this, selecting the US as one of the nationalities of one of the artists ironically proves 'correct' art critic Carlos Salazar Mostajo's tagging Valcárcel as an 'agent of Yankee imperialism.'⁴⁶⁷ The overwhelming presence of this anti-imperialist (read anti-US) sentiment, around those years, still has currency, and is manifested on a mural depicting Che Guevara on one of the walls near the main building of the state university in La Paz, with the motto 'All our action is a cry of war against imperialism'.⁴⁶⁸ This anti-US position of Bolivian citizens was reflected more recently in the rising of Evo Morales in the polls and in public opinion, following the US ambassador's public 'advice' to Bolivians not to vote for Morales in the elections of 2002.⁴⁶⁹

The presumed link between Valcárcel and western capitalism was also expressed by Benedicto Aiza, former teacher and director of the Escuela de Bellas Artes in the first half of the 1990s. Aiza characterized Valcárcel as an ally of

⁴⁶⁴ The Bolivian gallery in Miami was a project of Gastón Ugalde and Patricia Tordoir. It did not last long and its partners were forced to close it as they were not able to raise enough money to sustain it. Patricia Tordoir, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 11 June 2015.

⁴⁶⁵ See Chapter Two for more information and the connection of the artwork of Zapana and Mercado with indigenous topics.

⁴⁶⁶ See Chapter Two.

⁴⁶⁷ This phrase was used by Valcárcel to describe how Salazar Mostajo viewed him. See Chapter Two. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012.

⁴⁶⁸ The original text reads: 'Toda nuestra acción es un grito de guerra contra el imperialismo'.

⁴⁶⁹ Estado Plurinacional de Bolivia, 'Situación Actual - Injerencia en Asuntos Internos', Bolivian Embassy in Washington [website], <www.bolivia-usa.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=80%3Asituacion-actual&catid=91%3Arelaciones-bilaterales&Itemid=80&lang=es&limitstart=1>, accessed 15 January 2015.

Banzer's dictatorship, whose government he mistakenly claims granted the artist a scholarship to study in Germany:

While we were persecuted and tortured, the representatives of the government party [Banzer's government] granted scholarships to Europe and the US (fundamentally to Gastón Ugalde and Roberto Valcárcel). This was done in order to influence art.⁴⁷⁰

Thus, in Grupo Valcárcel, the artist as propagator of decadent values and alien traditions is embodied in German artist Hans Krapplack's kinship with Walt Disney imagery which is manifested, for example, in a cutting in *El Movimiento Erótico*, in the use of Mickey Mouse as motif of his *Pluricuadros eclécticos radicales*, and in the group of erotic Mickey Mouse paintings (including his *Mickey Cubiste* and *Mickey Nudiste*).⁴⁷¹

Valcárcel established another link with the US in a manipulated 'photograph' of himself with president Reagan and his wife, published in the catalogue of an exhibition, in 1990, with the caption 'Con Ronald y Lucy? Kathy?, Nancy!' (With Ronald and Lucy? Kathy? Nancy!) [Fig. 3.10].⁴⁷² The caption most likely alludes to Reagan's 'forgetfulness' during his declarations in the Iran-Contra scandal, by which the artist subtly 'disproves' his enthusiasm for the US.

Valcárcel's irreverence toward the importance of artists' names is materialized in his humorous and, at times, prosaic references in the choice of his alter egos. He displays, for example, a childish amusement in 'coining' names – reminiscent of his 'Curriculaske Valcarcelaske' – according to the sound of the language that corresponds to each nationality. Thus, in agreement with its sonority, Krapplack seems like an appropriate choice for a German artist, in the same way that Raffaello is a good choice for an Italian one, or Moffat for an English one. The latter name, Moffat, also indirectly alludes to the British sense of humour as the verb 'mofarse' in Spanish translates into 'to make fun of'.

⁴⁷⁰ Aiza's claim is incorrect. Valcárcel's scholarship was not granted by the Bolivian government and Valcárcel was awarded the scholarship a year before Banzer's coup. Aiza's original statement reads: 'Mientras nos perseguían y torturaban, el oficialismo estaba becando a sus pintores (fundamentalmente Gastón Ugalde y Roberto Valcárcel) hacia Alemania y Estados Unidos. Todo eso para mediatizar el arte plástico.' Elias Blanco Mamani, 'Benedicto Aiza', *Diccionario Cultural Boliviano* [website], 2 July 2010, <elias-blanco.blogspot.com/2010/07/benedicto-aiza-alvarez.html>, accessed 5 October 2013.

⁴⁷¹ See Figs. 2.32 and 1.32 and 1.33.

⁴⁷² Galería Arte Único, *Valcárcel* (exhibition catalogue), La Paz, 17 May-6 June 1990.

Krapplack is, at the same time, a reference to a colour of paint (rose madder). Loving dogs as much as the artist does, and having spent some time in Great Britain as an architecture student, Valcárcel probably knows that Bob Martin is a brand of pet products in the UK. Nitram is also a brand of charcoal based on the spelling of Martin backwards, which is, in fact, the artist's middle name. Adding another element of play, the artist conflates these pedestrian references with artistic ones. Antonio Raffaello's name is reminiscent of Anton Raphael Mengs (or Rafael Sanzio?), and Nadja of the main character of Breton's novel with the same name.

Although the inclusion of the dead artist 'Yuri Nitram (RIP)' in the group seems to be, at first, one of the arbitrary and absurd items of data that the artist is keen to include to create chaos and make the reader make up his mind, it opens, at the same time, if only symbolically, the possibilities of gender and sex within a homophobic and chauvinistic society.⁴⁷³ Thus, the playful inclusion of an artist in the group who died of Aids, whose style, theme and technique are 'love and death,'⁴⁷⁴ in tandem with a female alter ego – Nadja –, can be deemed as reference to a polymorphous sexuality. It further places him at the opposite end of artists whose mythic legacy lies partly in their embodiment of heroic macho stereotypes. For example, Miguel Alandia Pantoja, who fought in the streets, rifle in hand, during the 1952 revolution, is Carlos Salazar Mostajo's paradigm of a Bolivian artist.⁴⁷⁵ Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, considered the 'father' of Bolivian painting (a point contested by Salazar Mostajo), was keen to depict female nudes in sensuous poses.

The way each of Valcárcel's personalities also expresses themselves through different individual visual languages reflects the artist's interest in demystifying himself. Having a unique style is also closely linked with the myth of artist-as-a-genius. It is what distinguishes artists from one another; a sign of artistry, and a

⁴⁷³ Each of these personalities was also described in Fundación BHN, *Grupo Valcárcel*, Fundación BHN, La Paz, 1994; and once again in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 285.

⁴⁷⁴ Galería de la Fundación BHN, *Grupo Valcárcel*.

⁴⁷⁵ Salazar Mostajo wrote: 'Cuando se produce la insurrección de abril de 1952, Alandia Pantoja combate en las calles de La Paz fusil en mano, constituyéndose en uno de los héroes de aquellas jornadas.' Carlos Salazar, Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, Librería Editorial Juventud, La Paz, 1989, p. 133.

sort of ‘brand’ for art historical purposes and the market.⁴⁷⁶ For all those reasons, it is what sets them apart from other human beings. Taking this into account, the artist’s ‘radical eclecticism’ or his research of different languages, media and themes, is consistent with his rejection of the idea that only artists can be creative and only experts can judge or appreciate art:

5) It is believed that the artist is born, not made. This is one of the most dangerous beliefs. Through progressive schools of psychology we know that human beings have been primordially formed by the environment and not by genetic codification.⁴⁷⁷

Debunking the myth of the artist as genius contributes, at the same time, to a non-authoritarian and democratic art, wherein the viewer is empowered.

Valcárcel’s *Pluricnados eclécticos radicales* and *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* can be deemed antecedents of Grupo Valcárcel’s use of several aesthetic languages in one artwork. The overarching difference between these artworks, lies in Grupo Valcárcel’s expansion of language, from ‘mere painting’ and use of mixed media and different styles of representation, to completely different media like performance (Poma), installations (Rafaello), and even ‘love and death’ (Nítram).⁴⁷⁸

Valcárcel had already explored the idea of ‘many artists in one’, six years before, in the 1988 catalogue of an exhibition in which Producciones Valcárcel presented artworks from the artist’s different tendencies:

Producciones Valcárcel is delighted to present its first Group Exhibition, which consists of 32 artworks by six artists born in Bolivia, between 1941 and 1961, with the exception of Roberto Valcárcel 3, born in Picasso City, Pintovia [a play on the word ‘pintura’ (painting in Spanish), and, at the same time, the name he gave to his project for an art school in Santa Cruz de la Sierra].⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ According to Valcárcel, artistry is another of the myths that should be debunked as it derives in the belief that artists are exceptional beings, which they tend to believe themselves as they seek to be telluric, oneiric, universal and transcendental.] Galería Emusa. *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 90*.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁸ Galería de la Fundación BHN, *Grupo Valcárcel*.

⁴⁷⁹ The original text reads: ‘Producciones Valcárcel se complace en presentar su primera Exposición Colectiva que consta de treinta y dos obras de seis artistas nacidos entre 1941 y 1951 en Bolivia, con excepción de Roberto Valcárcel 3, nacido en Ciudad Picasso, Pintovia.’, Roberto Valcárcel in Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* [catalogue], Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

In this exhibition, the artist showed artworks in his different styles, conscious that not having a formal or thematic unity was a symptom of ‘disorientation’ in the local milieu. As a matter of fact, he has frequently exhibited diverse artworks together, from the beginning of his career, as he considered that seeking a coherent style, was one of the myths which should be debunked for art and creativity to be truly democratic or for everyone to develop and display their creativity:

7) It is believed that an artist must develop a personal style. A consequence of this myth is that multidirectional and dynamic attempts be interpreted as a symptom of artistic disorientation.⁴⁸⁰

The lack of touch with reality and ‘disorientation’ is also highlighted in the stories he makes up to grant credibility to his characters, and in the nationalities he attributes to each. Thus, we learn that Roberto Valcárcel 1’s drawings were made in the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts when he was a guest of the US government, and that Roberto Valcárcel 3, born in Pintovia, ‘studied during two months in the atelier of illustrious artist Enrique Arnal,’⁴⁸¹ and so forth. Each of the characters of Roberto Valcárcel 1 to 6 (1988) roughly corresponds to the personalities of Grupo Valcárcel (1994). And Roberto Valcárcel 5, described as an artist who ‘works amusing himself and others,’⁴⁸² embodies Orpheus, the paradigm of free existence according to Marcuse. His playful attitude is more explicitly invoked in his amusement in the story he makes up of Roberto Valcárcel 3 having symmetric fever:

During many years suffered from a strange ailment, symmetric fever, which caused itching and rosy spots on different parts of the body, always on both sides, and in a very aesthetic way.⁴⁸³

The curious portrait of the artist, to the left of the text (as is the case for each of the texts), instead of being the typical photograph of artists in catalogues, depicts a comic-like sketch of himself, wherein his symmetric ailment can be appreciated

⁴⁸⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, Galería Emusa. *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 90.*

⁴⁸¹ Roberto Valcárcel (under the alias Giancarlo Rinaldi) in Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva.*

⁴⁸² The original reads: ‘trabaja divirtiéndose y divirtiendo’. Ibid.

⁴⁸³ The original reads: ‘Durante largos años padeció de una extraña dolencia, la fiebre simétrica, que le ocasionaba escozores y manchitas sonrosadas en varias partes del cuerpo, siempre en ambos lados, y de manera muy estética.’ Roberto Valcárcel (under the alias Giancarlo Rinaldi) in Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva.*

in the spots on his cheeks, which comically echo his equally symmetric, ‘stepped cross hairstyle’ [Fig. 3.11].⁴⁸⁴ The artist carries on weaving a plausible story by attributing to this character, which is a sort of scientific or intellectual personality, the discovery of ‘Creatine’, a substance against realism, and other investigations:

After the discovery of Creatine, a powerful anti-realist substance, the artist devoted himself fully to the less profitable and more fascinating research about the relation between syntax and semantics in painting. How does an alteration in composition influence the meaning of a picture? What happens if you place a bus on a face, as if it were a mouth, or the keyboard of a piano as if they were eyelashes?⁴⁸⁵

The artist continues to have fun in the different portraits that accompany each text. Roberto 1 and Roberto 5 are portrayed, for example, in comic-like form, and the rest are presented with id type photographs of the artist, with unusual ‘attributes’. The picture of the artist as Roberto Valcárcel 6, the ‘author’ of the *El Movimiento Erótico*, depicts an expressionless artist, with a patch on his right eye and a tarantula on his lapel [Fig 3.12].⁴⁸⁶ The accident alluded to in the artist’s CV *Possibilitae* is equally insinuated in a patch on his eye. A few years later, closer to the time of the presentation of Grupo Valcárcel, the artist presented himself in a similar way in a video about Bolivian contemporary art, demarcating his personalities with different type of glasses – funny and pointy – and hats (a beret and a cap) to convey his different personalities [Figs 3.13-3.16].⁴⁸⁷

Valcárcel continues having fun with the story of Roberto Valcárcel 3, when he explains further along, that he had to ‘temporally interrupt his research in semiotics in 1951, when his activities as Pintovian spy in the neighbouring country of Escultovia – a play of words on the word for sculpture in Spanish –

⁴⁸⁴ The symmetric hairstyle in the shape of the ‘stepped’ cross symbol is equally a joke that undermines the seriousness with which indigenous heritage is taken in Bolivia, including the stepped cross, a leitmotif of Andean pre-Columbian architecture attributed. See Chapter Five for further discussion of how the artist questions the identification of the art system with this symbol.

⁴⁸⁵ The original reads: ‘Después del descubrimiento de la Creatina, ponderosa sustancia anti-realista, se dedicó de pleno a la investigación menos rentable y más apasionante de la relación entre sintaxis y la semántica en la pintura. De qué manera influye una alteración compositiva el significado de un cuadro? Qué pasa si se coloca un autobús en un rostro, a manera de boca, o un teclado de piano, a manera de pestañas?’ Roberto Valcárcel (under the alias Giancarlo Rinaldi) in Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva*.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁷ Alejandro Villena (Director and producer). *Arte contemporáneo boliviano. Volumen I*.

were discovered, and he was expelled from the International Chromatic Association.⁴⁸⁸ The coining of names of countries deriving from artistic media – Pintovia is a play on the word painting (*pintura* in Spanish) and Escultovia on sculpture (*escultura* in Spanish) – introduces, at the same time, a comment on the tensions in the local artistic ambiance. It alludes to the division of artists – traditional vs. avant-garde or revolutionary vs. decadent, etc.–, their animosity, intrigues and combative language, their taking themselves too seriously, internal politics and their eventual institutionalisation in associations like the Association of Bolivian Artists (ABAP).

Although no explicit reference is made, the references to espionage can be equally interpreted as an allusion to Valcárcel being tagged by Salazar Mostajo as a symbol of the decadent art that must be resisted, as an ‘agent of imperialism’ and as a collaborator of dictatorial regimes. This latter label refers to Valcárcel being director of the Art Department of the state university UMSA in La Paz during military dictatorship – a regime that was presumed to be a transition towards democracy and at the end of which democracy was indeed re-established. One of the first signs of good will of General Torrelio’s government (1981-1982) had been granting the state university its autonomy. This step was launched by giving back the administration of the university to the civilians, and to the governing body that had been in charge before the closing and military intervention of the university. Art historian Teresa Gisbert was then appointed dean of the Architecture, Art, Design and Urbanism Faculty, and she named Roberto Valcárcel director of the Art Department. Once democracy was fully established in 1982, a group of teachers from the Escuela de Bellas Artes, with great affinity with Salazar Mostajo and his ideas, were appointed as faculty of the university. Roberto Valcárcel and Teresa Gisbert were summoned to academic trial, accused of conspiring against the autonomy of the university – i.e., as having been appointed as academic authorities during military dictatorship. While Gisbert did not play a political role in the university, her husband art historian José de Mesa

⁴⁸⁸ The original reads: ‘Valcárcel 3 interrumpió temporalmente sus investigaciones semióticas cuando en 1951 fueron descubiertas sus actividades como espía pintovio en el vecino país de Escultovia, razón por la que fue expulsado de la Sociedad Cromática Internacional.’ Ibid.

was most likely on a black list at the university, as he had participated in a very visible taking of the university by the Falangistas (members of the Falange Socialista Boliviana party), the right wing groups that took back the university from the students during the recently installed government of Banzer, in 1971.⁴⁸⁹ The same group tried to summon Querejazu to academic trial as well, accusing him of discrimination when he failed students, and of making the students buy expensive books for his class, which he disproved by demonstrating that all the books in his bibliography were in the university's central library.⁴⁹⁰ Nancy Zelaya, the new director further informed Querejazu that no student had signed up to his class, having told the interested students, without his knowledge, that his class had been cancelled. Querejazu endured a series of boycotts, which in the end derived in his resignation, which was what the group ultimately wanted.⁴⁹¹

More recently, curator José Bedoya's proposal to include Valcárcel in a group exhibition of art during dictatorship *La luz de la memoria* (the light of memory), 2012, was rejected by the director of the Museo Nacional de Arte on the argument that an 'interventionist' should not be included.⁴⁹² While Valcárcel was found not guilty in the academic trial accusing him of collaborating with the intervention of the university by the military, this information was never made public.⁴⁹³ Director Edgar Arandía's rejection of Valcárcel in the exhibition did not respond, nonetheless, to him believing that Valcárcel had collaborated with one of the late dictatorial regimes, as he told me, in a recent interview.⁴⁹⁴ His refusal to include Valcárcel in the exhibition responded, more likely, to his links with the Art Department at UMSA where he currently teaches and where there is still to date a rejection of the type of art that Valcárcel represents. Arandía is also a member of Beneméritos de la Utopía (Utopía's Distinguished Ex-Combatants), a group of artists whose ideas are closely associated with those of Salazar Mostajo. From this perspective, Valcárcel's invention of stories with spies and intrigue in

⁴⁸⁹ Pedro Querejazu, *Interview with the author*, La Paz, 1 October 2013.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² José Bedoya, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January 2014.

⁴⁹³ Valcárcel learned this from his friend Margaret Hurtado who works at the university and made the enquiry for him. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 14 September 2010.

⁴⁹⁴ Edgar Arandía, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 8 December 2013.

the art world also evoke his experience at the state university and its climate of intrigue.

The local ambiance, with its few critics and their divided positions, is also ironically alluded to in the ‘evolution’ of the artist’s multiple personality syndrome into six aliases who sign the texts for the six versions of Roberto Valcárcel (1 to 6): Giulio Cesare Martinelli, Lucciano Bassi, Giancarlo Ranaldi, Laura Bassi, Paolo Moretti and Eduardo Tejeira Davis (Florence). The use of an alter ego to write about himself had already been introduced in the texts signed by Producciones Valcárcel, in his first exhibition, and in his fictitious interview by Juan Angel Bustillos (three days before the accident). Assuming the position of the critic is also a handy enactment in view of the absence of specialists in contemporary art in Bolivia. While some of the names used are real – they belong to close friends of the artist, like Tejeira and Bustillos –,⁴⁹⁵ most are invented.

The artist’s commitment to showing the possibility of simultaneous multiple points of view, and letting the reader decide, was rehearsed, once again, in a review written by the artist. The review of art in Bolivia in 1995, which was published in the press, is divided in short paragraphs where the artist offers different appraisals of the year according to the following critical positions: the sceptic, the euphoric, a pessimistic view of the market, an optimistic view of the market, the pessimistic critic, the optimistic critic, a fatalist vision of Cochabamba, a positive view of Cochabamba, a fatalist view of Santa Cruz and so on.⁴⁹⁶ This simultaneous tagging and embodiment of himself into what are conceived as contradictory, and often irreconcilable positions in the context – simultaneously artist and critic, figurative and conceptual artist, man and woman, etc. – is, nonetheless, crucial in an environment much accustomed to qualifying (and disqualifying) artists and critics according to labels.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ Some of these names are inspired by real people, like his friend Eduardo Tejeira in: Roberto Valcárcel. *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

⁴⁹⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, ‘De Arcángeles y otros Demonios: ¿Boom de la Pintura Boliviana?’ in *Presencia* (Anuario), la Paz, 29 December 1995.

⁴⁹⁷ A case in point was the preoccupation, in recent years (since around 2005), of whether certain artists were ‘contemporary artists’ or not. In a similar way, ‘contemporary art’ was an important topic of debate in conferences.

The creation of other associations, groups and ‘institutions’ throughout his career can be deemed an extension of Valcárcel’s attempt to distance himself from the myths surrounding artists. They equally function many times as parodies of bureaucracy in art and in society – in the system, as he calls it – which he considers repressive, as we have seen in the discussion of *El Movimiento Erótico*. The representation of Valcárcel by Producciones Valcárcel ironically establishes a sort of ‘legal’ identity similar to the Association of Bolivian Artists (ABAP), of which he made fun in his establishment and exhibition of his Interplanetary Association of Artists in Emusa Gallery in 1984. While a catalogue text claims that Producciones Valcárcel had to be founded to represent the artist after ‘the accident’, the Interplanetary Association of Artists (1984) was established after the abduction of the artist by aliens, documented in the exhibition, and reproduced in his book [Fig. 3.17-3.22].⁴⁹⁸ Documenting such an event is a parody of the administration of institutions like the ABAP and the bureaucracy that generally prevails in Bolivian society.⁴⁹⁹

The adoption of Valcárcel Productions as an alter ego is, on the other hand, an ironic comment referring to the close ties between art and the entertainment industry – record, film, television and radio – where a large group of professionals produce an event. The name of his institution can thus be interpreted as a playful reference inspired by Warhol’s Factory and similar artistic enterprises. Valcárcel has created fictitious institutions throughout his career as a way to connect with a public that has closer links to the culture industry than to art. In a similar way, each of these institutions has often included references to existing entities that exert invisible control over individuals. Thus, the artist’s numerous posts on his Facebook page, between 2010 and 2011, by the

⁴⁹⁸ Valcárcel’s account of the creation of an interplanetary association varies slightly in his book where he mentions an association of art, instead of artists. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 202.

⁴⁹⁹ In an interview, Valcárcel recently explained that bureaucracy and control are so ingrained nowadays in Bolivia that individuals are obliged to give their names and id number for every purchase they make under the government’s pretext of controlling the payment of taxes. The artist highlighted this repressive way of life in Bolivia in Marco Basualdo, ‘Valcárcel el artista, tan colla, tan cambia, tan Roberto’, *La Razón* [website], 28 April 2013, <www.la-razon.com/suplementos/escape/Valcarcel-artista-colla-camba-roberto_0_1822017882.html>, accessed 2 August, 2014. One of the slides of *Mi vida* equally highlights the artist’s interest in this topic: ‘ME INTERESAN LA BUROCRACIA Y LA CORRUPCIÓN] in Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*.

Independent, Free, Creative Territory (IFCT), are more recent cases in point. The creation of this new nation was undoubtedly a parody of the recent measures taken by the Bolivian government and, more specifically perhaps, of the controversial renewal of the constitution of the country, with its subsequent change of the name of the country from Republic of Bolivia to Pluri-national State of Bolivia. In this project, the artist invested effort and time in ‘evidencing’ the existence of his imaginary country through wall publications like ‘The Fried egg, one of the emblems of the IFCT’[Fig. 3.23]; ‘The emblematic egg in context’[Fig. 3.24]; ‘From the Self-defense Handbook of the IFCT’[Fig. 3.25]; ‘The Department of Impossible Love of the Ministry of Love of the IFCT publishes periodically examples of very difficult but not impossible love relations (...)’[Fig. 3.26] and ‘This is the British contextualized version (the very British version) of the Third Emblematic Symbol of the IFCT. It evidences the presence and currency of the 3rd Emblematic Symbol not only globally, but in an INTERPLANETARY dimension (more information in our next publication...)’[Fig 3.27]. Like many bureaucratic and political acts in Bolivia, the modification of the name of the country initially took place more in paper than in reality; its lack of meaning for the general population was recently evidenced in a recent error on the last electoral ballot for presidential elections (2014), wherein the name of the country appeared as the ‘Pluri-nominal’ [instead of Pluri-national] State of Bolivia’.

A One-man-group-show and other Paradoxes

But there is another dimension in Grupo Valcárcel of equal importance to those analysed so far. Grupo Valcárcel is an exhibition in which Valcárcel delights himself in devising paradoxical concepts, like his ‘one-man-group-show.’⁵⁰⁰ This phrase reflects the artist’s love of language games, puns, invention of words, and their sonority. It equally suggests a fascination with the English language and its use of hyphens to transform nouns into adjectives. A ‘one-man-group-show’, on the other hand, contains the idea behind the artwork: making a paradoxical

⁵⁰⁰ Querejazu highlights this idea in the title of his presentation of Grupo Valcárcel in Pedro Querejazu, ‘Grupo Valcárcel, One-man-group-show’, Fundación BHN, Grupo Valcárcel.

artwork, one that is individual and collective at the same time. Taking this into account, the pictures that make the exhibition of Grupo Valcárcel can be considered as one conceptual artwork, one where the making of the artwork is secondary to the idea behind it; except that it is not, because there is an intention of making a less dogmatic conceptual art, in terms of aesthetics, one that allows the artist ‘to sell’ conceptual art to a public that resists it. In 1988, Roberto Valcárcel (under his alias Eduardo Tejeira) described his conceptual artwork, along these lines:

And yet a more careful analysis shows us that this artist, a pupil of Joseph Beuys, does not reject traditional, beautiful forms and attractive things, but integrates them in a context that is wider and richer in meaning, attaining in this manner a more human, dialectic and less dogmatic version of conceptual art. The artwork of Valcárcel 6 can be interpreted as a didactic discourse, an aesthetic reflection, a satire and mocking instituted and institutional art, a very personal *divertimento* or, why not? a wall ornament.⁵⁰¹

From the point of view of this dissertation, the importance of this proposal lies in its ‘eroticizing’ conceptual art by making it visually stimulating and fun to look at. Eroticizing conceptual art means, in this case, complementing the rationality of conceptual art with pleasurable qualities: phantasy, humour, and sensorial delight derived from form and references to the sonority of words.

Conclusion

While Valcárcel’s use of humour, in puns, jokes, etc., discloses an identification with the avant-garde and contemporary art legacy, examining its potential disruption of authoritarianism has opened a new set of issues regarding his artwork and the local art system. The prescription of art discussed from the perspective of humour, has revealed new examples of repressive ideas like the

⁵⁰¹ The original reads: ‘Sin embargo, un análisis más detenido nos demuestra que este artista, alumno de Beuys, no rechaza lo tradicional y formalmente bello o atractivo sino que lo integra en un contexto más amplio y rico en significaciones logrando así una versión más humana, dialéctica y menos dogmática del arte conceptual. La obra de Valcárcel 6 puede ser interpretada como un discurso didáctico, una reflexión estética, una sátira y burla del arte instituido e institucional, un divertimento muy personal o, ¿por qué no? un ornato de pared. Roberto Valcárcel (under the alias of Eduardo Tejeira Davis), ‘Producciones Valcárcel, Exposición colectiva’ [catalogue], 21 September 1988, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 1988.

cliché of the artist as an eccentric, suffering heroic and virile being. The analysis of Valcárcel's humorous and irreverent attitude towards himself has further shown itself as a strategy for unmasking authoritarianism in artists' view of themselves and their art – their superior higher status over others because of their presumed higher moral standards, their geniality and even their prophetic nature – and in Bolivian art historiography.

Valcárcel's concern for the lack of creativity in Bolivian society (which he deems repressive)⁵⁰² has come up once again, as well as his commitment with developing this mental capacity – a task that can equally be associated with his idea of a more democratic and non-authoritarian society, and Joseph Beuys' claim 'everyone is an artist'.

While in Chapter One, a link was established between Valcárcel's having fun and humour, and Marcuse's Orphic paradigm, examining these ideas in Valcárcel's artwork and in Bolivian art historiography has underlined the hegemony of the Promethean paradigm of culture in the local art system. This finding points to Valcárcel's use of humour as an artistic strategy that is not only theoretically liberating, but to humour as a much-needed element in Bolivian art and society.⁵⁰³ Valcárcel's use of humour not only subverts the authority of the art system but it highlights other possibilities in a context that has been largely closed to avant-garde ideas. It has opened, at the same time, a new perspective for art historians from which to consider Bolivian art, and introduced a new element – Marcuse's ideas – for looking at humour in contemporary art.

In this chapter, I have argued that Grupo Valcárcel's art, previously interpreted as the artist's contribution to opening a rather closed view of identity (whilst pluri-multi policies were in vogue), is also an exhibition in which Valcárcel 'tells' and laughs at his own history of art. I have equally contended that this

⁵⁰² This negative relation is established in one of the plates of *El Movimiento Erótico* in La Paz. See Fig. 1.1.

⁵⁰³ When I interviewed art historian Teresa Gisbert she questioned me on the choice of my dissertation as she was not convinced that Valcárcel was still a relevant artist. The only time I saw her expression change into a smile was when I told her that I was exploring humour in opposition to the solemn and serious attitude in Bolivian art. While she had suggested in 1989 a close link between the Promethean paradigm and Bolivian culture, she seemed to agree that another viewpoint on art and society was valuable. Teresa Gisbert, *Interview with the Author*, 9 January 2013.

ironic presentation of himself as an opportunity to highlight other important myths surrounding artists, which can be considered repressive, like the idea that 'true' Bolivian artists (read indigenous artists) should only make traditional art or art related with indigenous themes. Introducing a female alter ego and a presumed homosexual one, who died of Aids, are important in a heterosexual male dominated art practice and art history – with no references to homosexual issues or artists. I have also demonstrated that Valcárcel's multiple personalities, sexes, nationalities, histories and its contradictions, in tandem with his humorous attitude towards his art, himself and artists in general, are coherent with his commitment to a non-authoritarian or non-repressive society.

The implicit challenge to art historians and viewers to view his art beyond schemes that prevail in local art (by exhibiting different styles, interests and media in one artwork) has also introduced contradiction as an important element that is practical in terms of a liberated art practice. Valcárcel's not taking himself seriously, equally allows him to be honest and self-critical and display without hesitation his contradictions, as well as other aspects of his works that many other artists in Bolivia would not disclose. Valcárcel's laughing at himself not only takes authority from himself but allows him to continuously reinvent himself, a privilege a large number of artists (particularly of the previous generations) did not allow themselves, as they were too involved with the elusive, solemn and serious task of making a contribution to Bolivian art.

CHAPTER FOUR
PLAY, BLACK HUMOUR AND DECEIT
IN TIMES OF HEIGHTENED REPRESSION (1978-1982)

Introduction

Although Bolivia was one of the first countries in the region to announce a transition into democracy in 1977, five years passed before it actually happened. After the military regime of General Banzer (1971-1978), a succession of presidents, mostly military, culminated in the 1982 election of Hernán Siles Suazo. The so-called commitment to democracy of most of the presidents who governed during this interim (1978-1982) was not sincere, and consequently a series of coups and violent incidents shaped the country's transition into democracy. In total, nine presidents and a military junta succeeded one another before democracy was re-established in 1982.⁵⁰⁴

This chapter inquires on Valcárcel's artwork during this period, which coincides with his return to the country after a seven-year stay in Europe, where coups and authoritarian regimes were common currency. It explores in detail the role of play, black humour and deceit in Valcárcel's works taking into account some of the means used to repress (the manipulation of news and control of the media), as well as some of the most shocking events and references for Bolivian citizens between 1978 and 1982. My reading of Valcárcel's artwork in this chapter delves deeper into the labeling of the artist's artwork as denunciation of dictatorship, to reflect on the way it seeks to escape the invisible mechanisms of

⁵⁰⁴ The presidents who governed the country were Juan Pereda (1978), David Padilla (1978), Wálter Guevara (democratic interim, 1979), Alberto Natusch (1979), Lidia Gueiler (democratic interim, 1970-1980), Luis García Meza (1980-1981), Junta Militar (1981), Celso Torrelio (1981-1982) and Guido Vildoso (1982). Democracy was re-established with the appointment of Hernán Siles Zuazo in 1982.

repression. In the spirit of Valcárcel's queries on repression, this chapter will look to name the more covert ways in which citizens' minds are susceptible to be manipulated, and the manner in which the artist counters this risk with different strategies. It specifically focuses on the artist's intentional blurring of the line separating what is real from what is not, particularly in his playful use of deceit and black humour in his artworks. It equally takes into consideration the control and manipulation of the press by the different governments and their use of deceiving terms to control public opinion.

The chapter analyses five different types of artworks, wherein play and black humour are common threads, and in which Valcárcel complicates explanations and the utilitarian use of the terms truth and morality. Furthermore, in these works Valcárcel often places the viewer in an uncomfortable position, wherein he or she enjoys the artist's jokes, and becomes an accomplice with him of the explicit and latent violence outside of the gallery. The analysis of these artworks is preceded by a brief reflection on the types of repression that Valcárcel is interested in unmasking and which were relevant during dictatorship.

Other Names for Repression

In 2010, in a public presentation about performance in Bolivian art, at the Alianza Francesa Gallery in La Paz, Valcárcel introduced a couple of ideas that have been helpful in my understanding of what repression meant for the artist in the period that is addressed in this chapter:⁵⁰⁵

Wanting to understand [an artwork] means keeping oneself integrated into the system. Wanting to understand means translating the things that happen into your perception of reality, in other words, coming to terms with reality. I am totally opposed to that. What I want to create is dislocation. I want for the person to be confused, to become exasperated. I want to provoke so that the person realizes that the system in which we live – today's government or whatever, I am not talking about politics, I am talking about the system – is a system that can be understood and viewed in another way, and this can only happen through dislocation. The

⁵⁰⁵ The presentation took place in a round table that was part of a larger series of talks on contemporary art organized by Fundación esART. Roberto Valcárcel, Talk presented in the Performance table organized by Fundación esART (audio file), Alianza Francesa, September, La Paz, 2010.

only way of seeing reality in another way is by not understanding anything because if you are going to do something and then you assume the famous communication, you come to terms with art. By integrating it to the language of explanation, art becomes neutralized, assimilated to the system and stops having its revolutionary power. Then, I don't want to say or communicate anything at all, and if people are desperate for explanations, desperate to integrate any odd thing into their system, they want, in other words, for things to stay the way they are. Having doubts, not having explanations is anxiogenic, causes anxiety, people become eager and ask 'what is happening with this crazy person?, what is he doing? [Please] explain, reassure me, give me back my social peace'. I say: 'I won't give it back'.⁵⁰⁶

While the above refusal of Valcárcel to explain his artwork in 2010 reflects his investigations and reflections about how to make non-authoritarian art – to make the viewer responsible for the meaning of an artwork –, I will focus in this chapter on the link between not giving explanations and disturbing the covert ways of repression of the authoritarian governments that ruled the country in these years.

What Valcárcel means by the term 'system' can be understood as what Marcuse, following Freud, calls civilisation.⁵⁰⁷ Following this, Valcárcel views the system as the way human beings order and organize their coexistence through different institutions which are ultimately repressive. Marcuse argues that these

⁵⁰⁶ The original reads: 'Querer comprender quiere decir mantenerte integrado al sistema. Querer comprender quiere decir: las cosas que suceden, traducirlas a tu percepción de la realidad, en otras palabras abuenarte con la realidad. Yo estoy totalmente opuesto a eso. Yo lo que yo quiero es crear disloque. Lo que yo quiero es que la persona se raye, se desespere. Yo quiero provocar que la persona se dé cuenta de que el sistema en el que estamos, gobierno de turno o lo que sea, no estoy hablando de política, estoy hablando del sistema, es un sistema susceptible de ser comprendido y visto de otro modo y eso solo sucede a través del disloque. La única manera de ver la realidad de otro modo es no comprendiendo nada porque si vas a hacer cualquier cosa y luego te lanzas la comunicación famosa, al abuenarte con el arte. Integrándolo al lenguaje a través de la explicación, el arte se ha neutralizado, se ha asimilado al sistema y deja de tener su poder *revolucionario*. Entonces yo no quiero en absoluto decir o comunicar nada y si la gente está desesperada por tener explicaciones está desesperada de integrar todo raro a su sistema, en otras palabras, quiere que se mantengan las cosas. El tener duda, el tener falta de explicaciones es ansiógeno, te crea ansiedad, la gente se pone ansiosa porque dice "¿Qué pasa con este loco?", "¿Qué está haciendo?", "Explicame, tranquilizame, devolveme la paz social." Yo te digo: "no te la devuelvo".' Ibid.

⁵⁰⁷ Marcuse deems the system of oppression, 'a highly productive and efficient system in which he [the individual] makes a better living than before' but one in which institutions 'determine, satisfy and control' the needs of the population: 'The pain, frustration, impotence of the individual derive from a highly productive and efficiently functioning system in which he makes a better living than ever before. Responsibility for the organization of his life lies with the whole, the 'system,' the sum total of the institutions that determine, satisfy, and control his needs.' Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 98.

institutions – which according to Freud start in the family, and continue with religion, government, school, etc. –, take new forms all the time in such unlikely arenas as leisure time activities, as discussed in Chapter One. This system, which for Freud is a necessary evil, should be called into question constantly, and a watchful attitude should be kept over new non-identified ways of control that continuously emerge, so that at least a minimal autonomy is kept by individuals. Having lived in Bolivia in the aftermath of the 1952 National Revolution, in the following dictatorships and in the divided post World War II Germany, Valcárcel is aware of what an unquestioned system can lead to. From this perspective, submissive and complacent positions within the system are ultimately, and often unawares, accomplices of brutal repression. The artist's questioning of the system upon his return to Bolivia during dictatorial regimes responds to this perception in the light of an experience of an overtly repressive society, as he declared in an interview in 1980:

R.- During my last period in Europe I developed a certain treatment of the image that I keep to date. But the theme of protest or a response to oppression or repression as such took shape upon my return to Bolivia.⁵⁰⁸

'Social peace' was a deceitful term used by different military dictators, between 1978 and 1982, to justify their acts of violence and repression. As mentioned earlier, the political slogan of president Banzer, who governed the country, between 1971 and 1977, was 'orden, paz y trabajo' (order, peace and work). Valcárcel's recalling this phrase in 2010 alludes, without a doubt, to the risk latent in the comfort implicit in explanations and what constitutes nowadays authoritarian promises of 'social peace'. A newspaper headline of the time of García Meza, followed by sub-headings that were most likely dictated by the president and minister themselves, provides a few pointers about what social peace meant, in terms of the repressive actions of the government, the climate of violence and fear during this period:

Minister of Internal Affairs:

There will not be a single detainee by 10 November

⁵⁰⁸ The original text reads: 'R.- Durante mi última época en Europa desarrollé cierto tratamiento de la imagen que mantengo hasta ahora. Pero el tema de la protesta o la respuesta a la opresión o represión como tal surgió a mi regreso a Bolivia.' Norah Claros, 'Roberto Valcárcel. Pintor insólito', *Semana de Última Hora*, June 5-10 1980.

- The Armed Forces, in its three months of government, has attained social peace, and tranquillity.
- The citizens are confident of the current situation of the country.
- Immorality has been eradicated

Front page headlines, *Última Hora*, 17 October 1980. [Fig. 4.1]⁵⁰⁹

The headline announcement that there will not be a single detainee was, without doubt, a cynical and misleading tactic for the government to clear its name, at least with those not interested in reading between the lines of the article. The text that follows explains that political exile of some prisoners would be coordinated with different international embassies; that some prisoners would be freed but it does not provide any details, and, finally, that other prisoners would be placed in different parts of the Bolivian territory (in concentration camps?).⁵¹⁰ Taking this information into account, it becomes clear that the government was trying to instil the idea that ‘social peace’, ‘tranquillity’ and ‘eradication of immorality’, referred to in the subheadings, had been re-established by getting rid of political dissidents. Another headline, published a month before, confirms a different strategy by the government to ‘dispose’ of dissidents: ‘The Government will consider applying death sentence to other crimes’,⁵¹¹ and to the following individuals (which were presumably threats to social peace): ‘agitators, plotters, extremists’.⁵¹²

Valcárcel’s *El Movimiento Erótico* rule number two calling to unmask ‘a morality, which is a subterfuge, a deceit with pretensions of truth’⁵¹³ provides further insight into how repression for Valcárcel was coloured by his living in Bolivia during these turbulent and often authoritarian years. While the government was ‘dictating’ to the press its version of the truth, ‘morality’ was a

⁵⁰⁹ The original text reads: ‘Ministro del Interior: Hasta el 10 de noviembre no habrá un solo detenido. En tres meses de gobierno las FF.AA. han logrado para el país paz y tranquilidad. Hay confianza de la ciudadanía en el acontecer nacional. Se ha erradicado la inmoralidad.’

Anonymous, ‘Ministro del Interior: Hasta el 10 de noviembre no habrá un solo detenido’, *Última Hora*, 17 October 1980. Another example published in press: Anonymous, ‘Presidente instruye ejecución de plan de moralización en la administración nacional’, *Última Hora*, La Paz, 14 October 1980.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Anonymous, ‘Gobierno considerará aplicación de pena de muerte a otros delitos’, *Última Hora* 1 September 1980.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Rule n. 3 says: ‘Anything goes that contributes to unmasking a morality, which is a subterfuge, a deceit with pretensions of truth [used] to maintain the current institutions that are the organisms of control of the current system of repression.’

handy term used to establish a connection between the actions of authoritarian regimes and Christian values, in a predominantly Catholic country; it was equally meant to instil fear in the threat against religion posed by what the different regimes called ‘extremists’. Thus, another headline, published a year before, in 1979, cited the declarations of a previous military president: ‘General Juan Pereda denounces that evil intentions attempt to destroy our values in order to impose a communist dictatorship’.⁵¹⁴

The notion of ‘truth’, on the other hand, was a term used by dictators during this time as another way to clear their names and project a favourable image. Former president Banzer ‘claimed’, for example, his ‘historical truth’ in the paid advertisements published in the press during the trial launched against him in the Congress by representative Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz – during one of the short-life lived democratic interims between 1979 and 1980 [Fig. 4.2]

Valcárcel’s non-straightforward position towards ‘truth’ and ‘morality’ seems fundamental, in the light of manipulation of these terms by a system that sustained authoritarianism during the period of transition into democracy in Bolivia. Some strategies explored in previous chapters, like phantasy (as play) and humour (in this case black humour), have a key role in blurring the lines between truth and fiction; making it difficult for the viewer to identify the artist’s position, and to regain his/ her ‘social peace’. While I have previously pointed to the liberating role that phantasy plays in art for Marcuse,⁵¹⁵ it can also be associated with the deceit of representation in art. Valcárcel’s art can be considered both a playful take on deceit in artistic tradition, and a dialogue with modern and contemporary artists who have addressed the topic of deceit in art, which are undoubtedly known by the artist, like Magritte’s *Treachery of Images* (1929) [‘Ceci n’est pas une pipe’] and Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs* (1965).⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ Anonymous, ‘Gral. Juan Pereda denuncia que aviesas intenciones pretenden destruir nuestros valores para imponer la dictadura comunista’, *Última Hora*, 7 September 1979.

⁵¹⁵ Phantasy has a liberating role in the possibility it opens to imagine alternatives, and because it is the only mental activity that lies outside of the reality principle. See: Introduction and Chapter One.

⁵¹⁶ A specific reference to Magritte is made in: Roberto Valcárcel (under the alias Eduardo Tejeira Davis), ‘Roberto Valcárcel 6’ in: Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, ‘Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva’ [catalogue], Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

In *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse adds that the essence of art resides precisely in its lack of truth (or lack of correspondence with an objective reality), ‘in terms of the actual organization of facts’.⁵¹⁷ Thus he defines the ‘truth’ of art, being that it is a materialization of phantasy or imagination, as the Great Refusal, which he describes as ‘the protest against unnecessary repression, the struggle for the ultimate form of freedom – “to live without anxiety”’.⁵¹⁸

On the other hand, the connection between phantasy, children’s games and role-playing was cleverly stated in Valcárcel’s claim to the right to withhold a connection to the real world, expressed in the note to his *Curriculaske* Valcarcelaske:

Note of the translator:

According to the Codex of THANGADARARMA, any artist, even if he is about to become 40, can withhold at will any beam of light connecting him with a real world, provided the fact that such an act is also reversible at will.⁵¹⁹

In both Valcárcel’s child-like playfulness and his claim to a right to be playful in his ‘Translator’s Note’, Valcárcel exercises, at the same time, his right to phantasy as an adult. By ‘playing’ the role of the translator of a made-up language, he is already withholding the beam of light connecting him to the real world. The note is in English (with no translation into Spanish), which makes one wonder: what was the original language? Was there an original language? The Codex of Thangadararma is another fictitious reference that ironically validates the artist’s claims. At the time when he first published his *Curriculaskeh*, in October 1990, the artist was 39 (and about to turn 40). By making reference to this age, Valcárcel is humorously hinting that he invented this rule, as well as the Codex, for himself. His claim to the right to be out of touch with reality coincides, at the same time, with Freud’s definition of this mental activity (phantasy making) in connection with children’s games:

There is an indirect reference to Kosuth’s artwork in one of his reflections of *¿Qué es helarte?* where he reflects that if art is showing reality, then the object should be exhibited instead of its representation – see: Chapter Two.

⁵¹⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 149.

⁵¹⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 149-150.

⁵¹⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 15.

With the introduction of the reality principle one mode of thought-activity was split-off: it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone. This is the act of *phantasy making* (das Phantasieren), which begins already with the games of children, and later continued as *day-dreaming*, abandons its dependence on real objects.⁵²⁰

In Valcárcel's work, there is also a connection between the detached way he engages with a serious and tragic ambiance and black humour, as defined by Breton:

Black humor is hemmed in by too many things, including stupidity, skeptical sarcasm, light-hearted jokes... (the list is long). But it is the mortal enemy of sentimentality, which seems to lie perpetually in wait – sentimentality that always appears against a blue background – and of a certain short-term whimsy, which too often passes itself off as poetry, vainly persists in inflicting its outmoded artifices on the mind, and no doubt has little time left in which to lift toward the sun, from amid the poppy seeds, its crowned crane's head.⁵²¹

Valcárcel's attitude is closely related with Breton's black humour – 'the mortal enemy of sentimentality'. The artist's self-assumed role to exasperate and question, and his dispassionate representation of violence contrasts with those of his Bolivian contemporaries who have often represented the oppressed as suffering victims and in a gesture of sympathy with their situation. Valcárcel's fictions, role playing and black humour can be equally interpreted as a parody of the sometimes clumsy, but often more cynical, manipulation of news regarding violent events during dictatorship, and more generally with what the artist calls his mission to 'sow doubt'.⁵²²

I. Valcárcel's Gritones as Liberation Games

Valcárcel's work, particularly his series of *Gritones* (Screamers) [Figs. 4.3-4.8], exhibited between 1979 and 1980, has been repeatedly interpreted as

⁵²⁰ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 140.

⁵²¹ André Breton, *Anthology of Black Humor*, City Lights Books, San Francisco, 1997, p xix.

⁵²² Anonymous, 'La principal causa de sufrimiento de la humanidad es creer en verdades', *La Razón*, La Paz, 1996.

denunciations of the repression and violence of the period.⁵²³ But while these images of shouting subjects, often blindfolded or with their hands tied, painted or drawn on used wood have been tagged as ‘arte de protesta’ – even by the artist –⁵²⁴ I would like to argue that there is a dose of dark humour and phantasy in these images, which has not been explored to date. While it might seem startling, pleasure and ‘fun’ are also important components of these artworks related to the artist’s rejection of authoritarianism.

Valcárcel’s *Gritones* were presented for the first time in May of 1979 at EMUSA Gallery, during the regime of Padilla, which had come to power by overthrowing the previous short-lived dictatorship of Pereda that had, in turn, succeeded the demise of the authoritarian government of Banzer (1971-1978). I will argue that while these images are not generally devoid of references to these events, they transcend a specific relation to them and contain more opaque references to a different type of repression. They can be read, for example, as a metaphor of the poor and illiterate, who made up 40 per cent of the population at the time.⁵²⁵ They can also allude to the artist’s concern with creativity, and specifically to the fact that not everyone had access to the same conditions to develop it, presumably through education, as he explained in the fictitious interview published in the catalogue of the exhibition.⁵²⁶ In the exhibition catalogue Valcárcel equally makes a point to highlight that by painting with Monopol (brand) house paint on found materials, he was challenging his colleagues by *demonstrating*, in his words, that it was possible to paint without Belgian or Danish paints, even in a poor country, where such imports constituted

⁵²³ Teresa Gisbert, ‘Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX’ in Pedro Querejazu, *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 25.

⁵²⁴ ‘Arte de protesta’ is a term associated with ‘canción de protesta’ [songs of protest] of the late 1960s and 1970s and their critique of the political situation in South America. Valcárcel groups these images in a section titled ‘Protesta’ in his book. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol.1, pp. 48-77.

⁵²⁵ Valcárcel provides facts and figures of education and poverty in Bolivia in the São Paulo Bienal catalogue text of 1979; a year in which he was working with this type of images. See: Roberto Valcárcel, ‘Acerca de Bolivia y su representación en la Bienal Internacional de São Paulo’ in: Roberto Valcárcel and Gastón Ugalde, *BOLIVIA: XV Bienal Internacional de São Paulo 1979* (catalogue), Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 1979.

⁵²⁶ Producciones Valcárcel (Roberto Valcárcel) ‘Fragmento de una Entrevista tres días antes del accidente in Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*.

a real luxury.⁵²⁷ But Valcárcel was alluding, at the same time, to the ubiquity of violence in everyday life as he states in the catalogue of the exhibition: ‘the shouts and suffering of the oppressed resound everywhere even in elegant art galleries.’⁵²⁸ The immanence of repression and disappearances is thus metaphorically expressed in the materials on which the artist draws and paints his *Gritones*: wooden boxes, corrugated sheeting, drawers, and pieces of furniture, among others. The phantasmal effect of the images is emphasized by the life-size (and sometimes even larger) scale of the faces, marks of transit and transportation like ‘9/19’, ‘140 KG’, red arrows pointing to how the boxes should be placed and handled, and even pieces of paper with the content or permission for transportation.

These images were, nonetheless, at the same time – and without the spectator knowing it – part of a ‘game of liberation’ for a group of young people who had fresh in their minds the oppression of the students during the military regime of Banzer. Although Valcárcel had been away in Germany during most of Banzer’s presidency – he returned to Bolivia in 1977, the year that Banzer called elections – repression was still latent and often explicit during this transition time. In a recent interview with the author, the artist associated these images with the creative, and more precisely the image-making process, of a group of artworks, of the same year, made with Gastón Ugalde, for the 1979 São Paulo Bienal.⁵²⁹ In my interview, Valcárcel explained that the process of making these images ‘was fun’, particularly going with a group of friends in a pick-up truck to the park of Mallasa, a village in the outskirts of the city of La Paz.⁵³⁰ Valcárcel further pointed out that making the photographs that constitute the base of the paintings and drawings of the *Gritones* ‘was fun’ because it encompassed staging photographic shoots, with white canvases as backdrop, and enacting situations of physical pain. Thus, Valcárcel explains, that an image of a scream was generated, for example, by someone jumping while someone else pulled his or her hair. These were, in

⁵²⁷ The text reads: ‘[...]las obras sobre madera de cajón, un intento de mostrar que se puede pintar sin tener acrílicos belgas u óleos daneses y lienzos costosos, y demostrar que los gritos y el sufrimiento de los oprimidos resuenan en todas partes, aun en las elegantes galerías de arte.’ Ibid.

⁵²⁸ Ibid.

⁵²⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 30 July 2010.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

sum, sort of staged events or premeditated happenings in order to generate vivid photos of what was a pleasurable game as well as a painful one.⁵³¹

Valcárcel retrospectively adds that it was additionally *fun* that what for him and his group of friends meant a ‘good time’ represented the opposite for the visitor of the gallery, particularly in the light of the unstable political context and recent military coups.⁵³² These type of actions, which provided a temporary space of expression outside the city and the control of the police – and temporary collective experience of liberty – was rare for a generation that was not far in time and identification with the student movements across the world. The temporary escape from a generally repressive reality and a history of repression was uncertain despite the presumed transition into democracy that was taking place in the country. The group of friends that worked with Valcárcel and Ugalde were mostly students of architecture at the state university, where the artist was teaching at the time.⁵³³ The revolutionary take-over of the university by the students in 1970 and the infamous repression against them that followed with the closing of all universities in Bolivia, between 1971 and 1972, was undoubtedly fresh in their memories. The so-called democratic transition, in which the exhibition took place, had been launched with a coup, albeit exceptionally bloodless, and a stage of siege. Coronel Juan Pereda, the fraudulent winner of elections, and self-appointed president (21 July of 1978), was candidate designated by ex-president and dictator General Banzer. One can imagine that a climate of freedom had not yet been established, particularly taking into account the fact that the new president was previously the head of the Ministry of Interior, the office in charge of intelligence, and (unofficially) of torture. Ironically enough, another coup would follow four months later, 28 November, this time by General Padilla, whose motivation for

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² It is difficult to establish with certainty whether these were made during the military government of Padilla, which lasted until August 1979, or in the couple of months previous to the opening of the Bienal of São Paulo, during the short-lived constitutional government of Guevara. In any case while these were not the most violent months of repression, they were marked by political instability and potential repression unfolding, particularly against young people, at any time. Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid.

seizing the presidency was, as he declared, to ensure the transition into a democratic government.

But what to make of ‘having fun’ and the deception mentioned by Valcárcel? These images can be deemed part of a private joke that was understood by Valcárcel and Ugalde and by the group who participated in them. Viewed as such, these re-enactments fit very well with Freud’s definition of humour as liberating and a ‘victorious assertion of the ego’s invulnerability’.⁵³⁴ The experience of bodily pleasure outside of the genital zone agrees with the artist’s call to polymorphous sexuality in his *Movimiento Erótico*, and with developing capacities beyond the limitations established in Bolivia’s conservative and sexist society.⁵³⁵ Taking into account Valcárcel’s knowledge of the avant-garde, and of surrealist publications,⁵³⁶ these actions can also be interpreted as a playful tribute and re-enactment of hysteria, which was celebrated by Aragon and Breton in *La Révolution Surréaliste* as the ‘greatest poetic discovery of the end of the 19th century’⁵³⁷ and as the ‘supreme form of expression.’⁵³⁸

Beyond the series of tortured or screaming individuals, the range of examples that Valcárcel associated with ‘fun’ includes some violence, like the action in which, dressed in a black suit, he took an electric saw and started cutting several pieces of furniture in front of an astonished audience; particularly taking

⁵³⁴ Freud wrote: ‘It is now time to acquaint ourselves with a few of the characteristics of humour. Like jokes and the comic, humour has something liberating about it; but it also has something of grandeur and elevation, which is lacking in the other two ways of obtaining pleasure from intellectual activity. The grandeur in it clearly lies in the triumph of narcissism, the victorious assertion of the ego’s invulnerability. The ego refuses to be distressed by the provocations of reality, to let itself be compelled to suffer. It insists that it cannot be affected by the traumas of the external world; it shows, in fact, that such traumas are no more than occasions for it to gain pleasure.’ Sigmund Freud, ‘On Humour’, p. 162.

⁵³⁵ See: Chapter One.

⁵³⁶ Valcárcel referred to these publications in an interview. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2013.

⁵³⁷ Breton and Aragon wrote: ‘[...]la plus grande découverte poétique de la fin du XIXe siècle[...]’, Louis Aragon and André Breton, ‘Le cinquantenaire de l’hystérie (1878-1928)’, *La Révolution Surréaliste*, N. 11, 15 March 1928, p. 20.

⁵³⁸ Breton and Aragon’s definition of hysteria: ‘Nous proposons donc, en 1928, une définition nouvelle de l’hystérie: L’hystérie es un état mental plus ou moins irréductible se caractérisant par la subversion des rapports qui s’établissent entre le sujet et le monde morale duquel il croit pratiquement relever, en dehors de tout système délirant. Cet état mental est fondé sur le besoin d’une séduction réciproque, qui explique les miracles hâtivement acceptés de la suggestion (ou contre-suggestion) médicale. L’hystérie n’est pas un phénomène pathologique et peut, a tous égards, être considérée comme un moyen suprême de expression. Louis Aragon and André Breton, *ibid.*, p. 22.

into consideration that he inadvertently cut himself, and ended up bleeding profusely, prompting an ‘accident’ that became part of his action. He has also qualified as ‘fun’ the fact that the red eyes of the female figure in his *Campo de Alcachofas* (1982) could be interpreted as possessed by the devil or as signs of drug abuse.⁵³⁹

‘Fun’ seems to lie in the ambiguity and suspension of meaning, in the tension inherent in images of violence but also in the deceit of images. The deceptive origin of these images of pain – a good time among friends, arguably with some therapeutic qualities – echoes, at the same time, a frustration with the means used to impose ideologies.⁵⁴⁰ The expressions in the *Gritones* are equally open to different interpretations, depending on the viewer’s relative open-mindedness – if a play, then they are fiction; if a game then perhaps they are laughter. An open mouth can express pain, shock, amusement, etc.

Aborcado (hung), one of Valcárcel's *Gritones* [Fig. 4.8] has an uncanny resemblance, at the same time, to an image of great significance for Valcárcel’s generation: the photograph of a dead Che Guevara by Bolivian photojournalist Freddy Alborta. The artist was 16, when the photograph of Freddy Alborta, which John Berger likened to Mantegna’s *Dead Christ* and Rembrandt’s *Anatomy Lesson* was circulated in the local press (and dispatched internationally) with a note explaining Guevara’s ‘death in combat’.⁵⁴¹ Valcárcel was surely aware of this, as he had visited an exhibition of drawings of the members of the guerrilla, a few

⁵³⁹ These descriptions are by the artist. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 26 July 2010.

⁵⁴⁰ Although both Valcárcel and Ugalde had an interest in this topic, their approach towards it has transformed throughout the years. While Valcárcel is still concerned with the manipulation of beliefs and ideas by the system, Ugalde has begun to work closely with politicians. In 2006, Ugalde was commissioned artworks for the people’s investiture of president Evo Morales in Plaza de San Francisco, one of the largest public spaces in La Paz. He then made a series of portraits with coca leaves for Evo Morales to offer as gifts – one of Che Guevara for Fidel Castro, another one of Simón Bolívar for Hugo Chávez, and so on. In June 2014, Ugalde presented an installation made for the G77 summit hosted by Morales in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

⁵⁴¹ Leandro Katz’s film, *El día que me quieras*, addresses the manipulation that took place around the making of these images by Freddy Alborta. I learned about the reference to Berger in a description of the film in Katz’s website <www.leandrokatz.com/Pages/El%20Dia%20English.html>, accessed 12 June 2015.

months before Guevara's capture.⁵⁴² This image of Che Guevara is deceitful, like the artist's *Gritones*. It depicts a body that had been prepared for public display (before it was captured by the lens of Alborta) by a nun, doctors and intelligence men so that it would be coherent with the story concocted by the Bolivian government.⁵⁴³ Che Guevara did not die in combat as the government claimed but was shot after capture. The population learned afterwards that Guevara had also been tortured before his death. Most traces of violence exerted on Guevara's body have been 'erased' in Alborta's image of a clean body with peaceful gaze that was presented to the press. The press notes of the time further explained that on his 'death bed' Guevara had recognized the failure of the guerrilla movement. The Bolivian government, who had captured and executed Guevara with US military support, was aware and anticipated, at the same time, the means that their enemies could use to manipulate information. Thus, in case the image of dead Guevara was not sufficient proof of his death to the world, his hands were cut from his body and put in formaldehyde. These would be shown to the world if Fidel Castro decided to claim the opposite.

While the 'staging' of Che Guevara's death had taken place more than a decade before, it clearly illustrates what Valcárcel and Ugalde would have understood as 'the means used to impose and maintain ideologies'.⁵⁴⁴ In a statement in the catalogue of the São Paulo Bienal of 1979, they explain how in their artwork they intend to sensitize viewers in this regard:

We have decided to present, in the XV São Paulo Bienal, a group of artworks referring to violence and repression because this topic is something that we, as sensitive individuals, and as a conscious group, cannot ignore or defer. With these artworks we seek to sensitize the spectator by questioning the means used, nowadays, to impose and maintain ideologies. We believe that our work is ARTWORK and not

⁵⁴² These drawings (from memory) were by a captured guerilla member whose surname was Roth. They were exhibited in a gallery of Congress. Armando Urioste, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 December 2013.

⁵⁴³ Reuters ['Slain Guerrilla Shown by La Paz], 'Bolivia Confirms Guevara's Death; Body Displayed', *New York Times* [website], The New York Times Company 2010, <www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/big/1009.html>, accessed 15 July 2014.

⁵⁴⁴ Roberto Valcárcel and Gastón Ugalde, *BOLIVIA: XV Bienal Internacional de São Paulo 1979*. Inés Córdova de Imaná, Willy Machicado, Hugo Rojas Lara, Gastón Ugalde, Roberto Valcárcel (catalogue), Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 1979.

political pamphleteering; we don't deny, at the same time, the resonance it may have in the social dynamics.⁵⁴⁵

Valcárcel's self-presentation, in the same catalogue, as someone interested in teaching and researching forms of visual communication confirms an interest in publicity that is reflected in his artwork.⁵⁴⁶ The military dictatorships that would follow used the press to manipulate public opinion and neutralize the violence generated by their acts.⁵⁴⁷ From this point of view, Valcárcel's images can be seen as a parody of the manipulation of information in the name of political ideology. And this is the reason why both Valcárcel and Ugalde turned away from making their art a form of political pamphleteering, as they expressed in the text of the catalogue of the Bienal.⁵⁴⁸ Thus, in their joint art project, they chose to paint onto large canvases the images of photographs they had taken in Mallasa, instead of exhibiting them more 'directly' (or making hyper-realistic depictions). The evident brutality of the 'originals' can be appreciated in the images of Ugalde and Valcárcel's work-in-progress published in the catalogue of the Bienal. An intentional relationship with publicity is established, on the other hand, in the way the banners were hung. Advertising and large-scale photos were surely out of the range of the artists' budgets and the technology they entailed was probably not

⁵⁴⁵ The original reads: 'Hemos decidido presentar en la XV Bienal de São Paulo un conjunto de obras referidas a la violencia y a la represión, debido a que esta temática es algo que nosotros como individuos sensibles y como grupo consciente, no podemos ignorar o postergar. Con estas obras pretendemos la sensibilización del espectador mediante el cuestionamiento de los medios utilizados hoy en día para imponer ideologías y mantenerlas. Pensamos que nuestras obras con [son] OBRAS DE ARTE y no panfletería política, sin negar por esto la incidencia que pueden tener en la dinámica social.' Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ The complete reference of Valcárcel and Ugalde's presentation is as follows: 'Gastón Ugalde 33 años, retornó de Canada, investigación: artes gráficas. Roberto Valcárcel. 28 años, inquietud: enseñanza e investigación de medios de comunicación visual.' Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ The assassination of Luis Espinal, only a few months after the presentation of Valcárcel and Ugalde in São Paulo, is another case of shocking violence involving torture. A similarly infamous case, less than a year after, is that of Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz during the capture of the Central Obrera Boliviana in the coup of July 1980. In January of 1981, an example of another massacre and subsequent manipulation of information took place with the assassination of a group from the MIR party at Harrington Street in La Paz. After the killings, the paramilitary arranged the scene ('prepared the show', in their words) so that it would look like a real confrontation had taken place and not a one-sided attack with machine guns. Anonymous, 'Gloria Ardaya: Así mataron a mis compañeros el 15 de enero', *Semana de Última Hora*, 3-9 December, 1982, pp. 6-9.

⁵⁴⁸ Roberto Valcárcel and Gastón Ugalde, *BOLIVIA: XV Bienal Internacional de São Paulo 1979*.

available in Bolivia at the time. It was common at the time, and well into the 1990s, for cinemas to use hand-painted banners to advertise their films.⁵⁴⁹

Valcárcel's *Gritones*, images painted and drawn from black and white photographs of staged torture, intentionally mimic the calculated production of information by the government. They reflect the artist's view on ideologies, of both left and right, as reductive and inhibiting the possibility of individuals having a mind of their own or thinking for themselves, and hence ultimately be the real subjects of a democracy. While this became evident during his stay in West Germany (and brief visit to the GDR), his concern in this respect became clear upon his return to a country polarized by politics – see reference to ideological symbols in Valcárcel's stick-figure biography [Fig. 3.4] – in which the different governments were eager to manipulate public opinion through explicit or suggested censorship and with paid publicity.

II. The Drama of the Miners: A Children's Game?

A group of artworks in which Valcárcel decided to ignore what he calls the technical academic canon of drawing was exhibited with the first groups of *Gritones* in 1979.⁵⁵⁰ I will take as an example one of these artworks, *Mineros IV* (Miners IV),⁵⁵¹ to illustrate how some of the same concerns about repression (the role of media in maintaining ideology) are addressed in a different manner – with dark humour, fun and play as strategies– and in what initially appear to be absurd and 'non-serious' pieces of artwork.

Mineros IV [Fig. 4.9] is a black pencil and watercolour drawing on paper with schematic cartoon-like human figures, repeated in different positions along the axes of three horizontal lines. These black silhouettes look more like birds on

⁵⁴⁹ Large scale photographic printing started proliferating in the early 2000's as can be appreciated by the large quantities of banners of all sizes that most businesses and private stores use nowadays in Bolivia.

⁵⁵⁰ Valcárcel in the catalogue: 'CATALOGO la presente muestra incluye dos tipos de trabajo: los dibujos sobre papel. algunos de hace rato. otros recientes. se caracterizan por la (deliberada) ignorancia de ciertos cánones técnicos. el contenido de los dibujos es a veces superficial, otras no.' Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19 May, 1979.

⁵⁵¹ *Mineros IV* is the only drawing of this group of works for which there is a record in the artist's book. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol.1, p. 43.

a wire than the miners referred to in the title. In fact, the only elements that connect them with miners are their heads in the shape of helmets – which at times also look like bird beaks – and the phrase in the text, part of this work, that says: ‘Good night Huanuni.’⁵⁵²

The tin mining village of Huanuni has traditionally been an important centre of political activity in Bolivian history. The Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), the largest and most influential workers’ syndicate in the second part of the 20th century, was founded there in 1952. ‘Good night Huanuni’ is a typical example of radio speech, the most extended medium of communication in Bolivia, with particular importance in rural areas like Huanuni. Because mining villages like Huanuni were considered a venue for subversive political activity,⁵⁵³ they were tightly controlled and suffered frequent violent attacks during periods of military dictatorship. Local miners’ radio stations also played an important role during the dictatorships. They were key, for example, in spreading word about the abuse and violence of the government of García Meza (1980-1981), and for this reason they were violently seized and closed.⁵⁵⁴

But Valcárcel’s reference to miners, in 1979, was most likely inspired in the violent takeover of several villages by the military during the festivity of San Juan in 1967. The Massacre of San Juan, as this tragic event became known, is dispassionately included in the artist’s Curriculum Possibilitae in the catalogue of the exhibition where *Miners IV* is presented: ‘r.v. was an involuntary witness of the slaughter of San Juan’.⁵⁵⁵ The seriousness of this tragic event is further countered with the other three options that seem, in comparison, banal and absurd:

⁵⁵² The original reads: ‘Buenas noches Huanuni.’

⁵⁵³ The 1952 revolution was devised with the support of the miners whose labour has historically sustained the economy of Bolivia. The founding document of the revolution, the Tesis of Pulacayo, had been signed in one such mining centre. The miners were also an important part of the militia of the revolution and of the most influential workers’ union. The story of their involvement in politics is long and continues. A confrontation between the miners took place, even in the early years of Evo Morales’ presidency (2006) where 16 were dead and hundreds wounded in an armed confrontation among different sectors of miners. Miners often currently still march in the city of La Paz, armed with explosives, interrupting vehicle circulation.

⁵⁵⁴ Anonymous, ‘Narcogolpe y radios mineras’, Katari.org [website], July 2011, <www.katari.org/articulos/2011/jul/narco.html>, accessed 18 February 2015.

⁵⁵⁵ The original reads: ‘r.v. es testigo involuntario de la matanza de san juan.’ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-19 May, 1979.

- r.v. participates in seminars of relational psychology
- r.v. is named general consul of the diminutive kingdom of istmania, frg
- r.v. collects snails and sea shells and other similar things⁵⁵⁶

During the night of the celebration of the feast of San Juan, in 1967, several mining villages, including Huanuni, were violently seized by the army, as a measure to disrupt the miners' support of Che Guevara's guerrilla. The Armed Forces took over the premises of Radio Huanuni, destroying its transmission equipment and sacking its discotheque.⁵⁵⁷ The radio seizure resulted in three deaths and an undisclosed larger number in the rest of Huanuni and surrounding villages.⁵⁵⁸ The intervention of the radio by the government was reiterated by different regimes as Radio Huanuni was a notorious station with powerful reach, and it had often been used as a medium wherein to represent the interests of the miners' syndicate against those of governments adverse to their cause.⁵⁵⁹

When *Mineros IV* was exhibited, in 1979 – roughly a decade later–, the mining centres still had an emblematic role in the mind of the population. Less than two years had passed since Domitila Barrios de Chungara, the chair of the Union of Miners' Housewives who was arrested and tortured ten years earlier during the San Juan Massacre, had moved to La Paz to initiate an emblematic hunger strike, which pressured the seven-year military government of Banzer to call elections.

⁵⁵⁶ The original reads: 'r.v. participa en seminarios de psicología relacional/ r.v. es nombrado cónsul general del diminuto reino de istmania, rfa/ r.v. colecciona caracolas y cochas [sic] marinas y cosas por el estilo'. Ibid.

⁵⁵⁷ Radio Nacional de Huanuni, 'Historia de Radio Nacional de Huanuni: Voz Sindicalista del Minero Boliviano', Radio Nacional de Huanuni [website], <www.nacionaldehuanuni.com/index.php/84-radio-rnh/131-historia-de-radio-nacional-de-huanuni>, accessed 6 February 2015.

⁵⁵⁸ Although there are no definite numbers, 27 dead and more than 80 wounded have been reported. Anonymous, 'A 48 Años de la Masacre de San Juan' Ministerio de Minería y Metalúrgica [website], www.mineria.gob.bo/?boletin_de_prensa=la-masacre-de-san-juan-67-anos-de-historia-colectiva, accessed 20 June 2015.

⁵⁵⁹ The radio was closed, and its equipment destroyed during the government of Barrientos (in which the Masacre of Catavi had taken place). During the presidency of Banzer, the radio was re-launched with new equipment (obtained in a previous government), and soon after seized by the government. The radio was seized again and its equipment destroyed, a few days after the violent coup of García Meza in 1980. For a complete account of the history and attacks suffered by the radio, see: Radio Nacional de Huanuni, 'Historia de Radio Nacional de Huanuni: Voz Sindicalista del Minero Boliviano'.

But none of the above information is referred to in *Mineros*. It is left to the spectator to establish connections between the phrase ‘Good night Huanuni’ and the ‘instructions’ that precede it and are part of the artwork:

[Top:]
 READ THIS. BEGIN BY OBSERVING THE DESIGN AFTER
 EIGHT MINUTES OF REJOICING.
 723
 READY? OK

[Right, in the middle of a dotted line:]
 CUT

[Bottom:]
 STOP AND THINK
 NOTE: IT IS POSSIBLE TO REPEAT AFTER CUTTING
 (OPTIONAL)
 NOW, GOOD NIGHT HUANUNI⁵⁶⁰

These ironic instructions, in the light of Valcárcel’s interest in having a creative audience, were in fact inspired by Julio Cortazar’s *Manual de Instrucciones*⁵⁶¹ which contains guidelines for such banal and absurd things like how to cry, how to sing, how to have fear, how to go up the stairs, how to wind up a watch, and some not so banal, as how to understand three famous paintings and how to kill ants in Rome.⁵⁶²

These instructions also point to *Mineros* as a game to play with, both as an artwork and as a topic. Firstly, its initial ‘eight minutes of rejoicing’ evidence an apparent lack of empathy with the subject, and illustrate Breton’s description of black humour as the ‘mortal enemy of sentimentality’.⁵⁶³ The light-hearted tone of the drawing contrasts, at the same time, with the often melodramatic way in which these types of motives have been depicted in Bolivian art since 1952, as either grandiloquent or expressive social realism. Miners, workers and peasants, as objects and subjects of the 1952 revolution, had also been a topic promoted by

⁵⁶⁰ The original reads, in capital letters ‘[Top] LEA ESTO. COMIENZE A OBSERVAR EL DISEÑO DESPUES DE OCHO MINUTOS DE ALGARABIA. 723 LISTO? YA. [top] CORTA [right] DETENGASE Y PIENSE. NOTA: DESPUES DE CORTAR (OPCIONAL), SE POSIBILITA UNA REPETICION. AHORA, BUENAS NOCHES HUANUNI [bottom]’.

⁵⁶¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

⁵⁶² Julio Cortázar, *Historia de Cronopios y Famas*, Alfaguara, Buenos Aires, 1996, pp. 11-28.

⁵⁶³ André Breton, *Anthology of Black Humour*.

the government in their Salons,⁵⁶⁴ and a preferred symbol of the rising proletariat in the murals commissioned by the government to the official artist Alandia Pantoja.

The allusion to a game is also suggested in the instruction to ‘cut’ along the dotted line, on the right of the drawing, a phrase, which establishes an analogy with children’s paper cutting activities. This playfulness is disrupted, at the same time, in the note in small letters, at the bottom of the drawing, which lets the viewer know, that he or she may repeat the experience.

There is a continuing provocation, on the other hand, in Valcárcel’s intentional evasion of the expectations of draughtsmanship and artistry in a very traditional milieu.⁵⁶⁵ From this point of view, the instructions below the drawing, where the viewer is asked to ‘stop and think’ can be associated with the artist’s interest in ‘non-retinal’ art – already evident in drawings with very simple forms (what he qualifies as non canonical drawings in the catalogue).⁵⁶⁶ Another layer is added to this provocation with the inclusion of a ‘drawn’ text and the diagonal smudges across the drawing that have partially erased the first words of the instructions on the top left.

The juxtaposition of a children’s game with a topic of tragic and serious connotations make for an uncomfortable coexistence of pleasure and pain. The resemblance of the miners to birds or ducks reinforces, at the same time, the possibility of a more serious ‘game’: the ‘killing game’ of miners by the government and, within a broader light, to the violent nature of society or human beings. Thus, despite appearances, there is a common thread and many parallels that bind Valcárcel’s *Gritones* with these comic-like drawings, beyond the fact that they both refer dispassionately to the targets of military repression.

The playful, and hence non-sentimental reference to Radio Huanuni, at the end of the text can be associated with Valcárcel’s interest in the ‘means used to

⁵⁶⁴ Examples of this type of artwork were exhibited and awarded prizes at the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo and at the Salón de la Revolución (National Salon of the Revolution).

⁵⁶⁵ The weight of technique in the artistic milieu was soon after exemplified in remarks by fellow artists ironically referring to Valcárcel as photographer or his style as Kodakismo, as he and Ugalde were the first ones to draw from projected photographic images [via slide projector]. See: Chapter Two.

⁵⁶⁶ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*.

impose and maintain ideologies’, alluded to before. While one can imagine that the manipulation of information by the government was evident to the radio’s usual listeners, what is less clear perhaps is that the radio as it normally functioned (when not intervened by the government) served equally the interests of the syndicate, its leaders and the different political parties. As narrated in the radio’s website, syndicate leader Celestino Gutiérrez Navarro had been killed during the assault of the radio by ‘movimientistas’ (activists of the MNR party, in government at the time) because of his political alliance to the PRA party.⁵⁶⁷

Although it is unlikely that Valcárcel recalled these events when he exhibited his *Mineros IV* in 1979 – he was nine when they took place – they illustrate the covert ways in which ideologies are imposed, via the miner’s radio station. While the radio was undoubtedly committed to defend the miners’ rights, it was also actively committed to providing them with a somewhat paternalistic political guidance, as stated by the radio itself.⁵⁶⁸ Valcárcel’s refusal to take the politically correct side of the miners (or the other one) in his drawing, as was usually the case among his predecessors and colleagues, makes this artwork opaque, and of unclear political alliance during a highly charged political era.

III. Coffins for Newborn Children

In Valcárcel’s exhibition of the following year at Emusa Gallery, in March of 1980, Valcárcel hung *Untitled*, a group of babies’ coffins, among his *Gritones*, and drawings, paintings and prints with similar topics, on his characteristic *ad hoc* materials: paper, zinc plates, corrugated carton and pieces of wood for packing.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁷ Movimientistas are members of the MNR party which seized power, following a revolution in which the miners took part as armed militia. The PRA (Partido Revolucionario Auténtico) was a party founded by Guevara, a dissident of the MNR party. Radio Nacional Huanuni’s account Gutiérrez’s death, without much detail, only mentions the interests behind his killing, not who killed him. Radio Nacional de Huanuni, ‘Historia de Radio Nacional de Huanuni: Voz Sindicalista del Minero Boliviano’, para 7.

⁵⁶⁸ This ‘guidance’ is made explicit in the account of these events in Radio Nacional de Huanuni’s website: ‘[...]nunca dejó de orientar a los trabajadores, aún en los momentos más difíciles’ in: Radio Nacional de Huanuni, ‘Historia de Radio Nacional de Huanuni: Voz Sindicalista del Minero Boliviano’.

⁵⁶⁹ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 111*, La Paz, 18 March-5 April, 1980.

The white coffins were displayed on the wall without any references and no images were reproduced in the catalogue or in the artist's book. There is no documentation of them except for a reference in the catalogue where they are listed as '2. *Untitled*. 1980. Several coffins for newborn children.'⁵⁷⁰ The exhibition where they were presented took place four months after the All Saints Day Massacre (Masacre de Todos Santos), when the recently installed government of Coronel Natusch, in just two weeks, 'matched' the number of deaths of the seven-year dictatorship of Banzer. 207 deaths were reported as casualties from the confrontations between military troops, who raided the city of La Paz with tanks and machine guns aimed at groups of students and workers.⁵⁷¹ The date chosen for the coup is emblematic in the memory of the population. It took place in the early hours of the day of a public holiday and Catholic feast that celebrates saints (which ironically are usually known for their martyrdoms), and a day before All Souls' Day. While there were no babies killed during the massacre – the victims were mainly students and other civilians who took to the streets to demonstrate their rejection of the coup – an indirect relationship with another religious feast, that takes place shortly after, on 28 December, comes to mind in relation to Valcárcel coffins: the remembrance of the massacre of innocents.

The all-pervasiveness of Catholicism as a reference in Bolivian society was echoed in the use of religious rhetoric by the government to explain and justify this period of hardship. Catholicism's foundation on suffering, and the need to endure sacrifices in order to gain a better future (heaven) was suggested, for example, a year later, in the 1980 Christmas Eve's message of president García Meza: 'We are facing difficult times that require work, discipline and a spirit of sacrifice.'⁵⁷² The association of politicians with religion (particularly in cases where

⁵⁷⁰ The reference reads '2. Sin título 1980. Varios ataúdes de niños recién nacidos'. Ibid.

⁵⁷¹ 'The Bolivian Human Rights Commission declared yesterday that 207 civilians were killed, 201 wounded and 211 missing after detention by security forces in the week following the coup.' Anonymous, 'Leader of Coup in Bolivia to Quit Presidency Today', *The Washington Post*, 16 November 1979.

⁵⁷² García Meza's original message: 'Atravesamos tiempos difíciles que exigen trabajo, disciplina y espíritu de sacrificio. [...] Pasad [sic] felices la Noche Buena, y después, a trabajar con tesón y con constancia que es la mejor manera de ser cristianos y de honrar el prodigio del nacimiento del Señor. Esta oportunidad es propicia para señalar que el gobierno de reconstrucción nacional de las Fuerzas Armadas, abraza los valores inmanentes y eternos de nuestra sociedad cristiana. Aspiramos a la reorganización institucional de la Nación, política, económica y socialmente, para

a self-legitimising was urgently needed) evidences their awareness of its value in the manipulation of minds, in the light of a large Catholic and Christian devotion in the country.⁵⁷³ The headline of former dictator Banzer's paid advertisement during his trial exemplifies this rhetoric 'Gral. Banzer: May God and the people judge my acts'.⁵⁷⁴

Although the exhibition with the coffins did not take place during the two-week presidency of Natusch, but in the subsequent and also short-lived democratic government of Lidia Gueiler, the resonance of death still lingered in the ambience. Natusch did not seize the media – an 'error' from which the later president García Meza would undoubtedly learn – but tried to manipulate public opinion with paid advertisements in the press to validate his presidency. Their content made references to his version of the events with headings like 'The truth of Natusch',⁵⁷⁵ and others citing letters of support (mainly from associations related to Beni, the region where he was from).⁵⁷⁶ Despite these desperate efforts, Natusch did not gain real support from the population who took to the streets to make public their rejection of his coup. In the light of this pressure, Natusch resigned after being in office for only 16 days. Lidia Gueiler, former head of the Congress during the previous democratic interim, assumed the presidency of the country and granted citizens back all the liberties corresponding to a democracy. As a consequence, the massacre had an extensive retrospective coverage, particularly in the end of the year special editions of the newspapers. The account

que todos los bolivianos alcancen la plenitud de sus derechos, y satisfagan sus necesidades espirituales y materiales.' Anonymous, 'Por esta noche fue levantado el toque de queda. Presidente dirige mensaje de Noche Buena', *Última Hora*, 24 December 1980.

⁵⁷³ Although there is no data for 1980, the data of the 1992 national census is useful. It indicates almost 90% of the population at the time was Christian, with Catholicism representing the majority of that figure. Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 'Censo Nacional de Vivienda y Población – 1992', Instituto Nacional de Estadística [website], <<http://www.ine.gob.bo/censo/censo1992.aspx>>, accessed 14 February 2015.

⁵⁷⁴ Anonymous, 'Gral. Banzer: Que Dios y el pueblo juzguen mis actos', *Última Hora*, 4 April 1979.

⁵⁷⁵ Anonymous, 'Mensaje del Presidente de la República: Coronel Alberto Natusch Busch', *Última Hora*, 7 November 1979.

⁵⁷⁶ Several letters were published in *Última Hora*, 10-15 November 1979.

of the events was extremely graphic and included images not only of the dead and wounded in the streets but also of the morgue of La Paz.⁵⁷⁷

In addition to this somber atmosphere, the fact that a democratic government was in place did not, however, stop repressive violent acts. Valcárcel's definition of democracy as a 'fragile illusion, delicate, pleasant...', in the last line of a four-strophe text in the catalogue, echoes the political uncertainty of the moment and its violence.⁵⁷⁸ 21 March 1980, a few days before the opening of the exhibition, anonymous groups of paramilitaries tortured and brutally assassinated Luis Espinal, an influential Jesuit priest, political activist and cultural promoter. Espinal, a clear enemy of Banzer and the military, was one of the leaders of the hunger strike that prompted the transition into democracy. He had recently launched the independent weekly publication *Aquí*, where he took a critical position towards the military, and particularly towards Banzer who was undergoing a trial in Congress.⁵⁷⁹ He was also founder of the Asamblea de Derechos Humanos in Bolivia (The Human Rights Chapter in Bolivia), in 1976. This dark episode of Bolivian history, led by infamous Minister of Interior Arce Gómez – currently serving life imprisonment for drug trafficking and other crimes – was one of the most shocking of the cold-blooded actions of these groups.⁵⁸⁰ The details of the autopsy were reported in the press,⁵⁸¹ and the

⁵⁷⁷ A photograph with the following caption was published in the press: 'La poblada morgue de La Paz: los mudos testigos'. Anonymous, 'Un excepcional documento para la historia: Tres actores del drama del 1º de noviembre relatan qué pasó en esas cruciales horas', *Semana de Última Hora*, 4 January 1980.

⁵⁷⁸ Rumours of coups coincided with the exhibition. Anonymous, 'Rumors of Military Coup as Bolivia Prepares Election', *The Associated Press*, April 10 1980.

⁵⁷⁹ A torn photograph of the face of Banzer was published on the cover of the first number of *Aquí*, number 1, 17-19 March, 1979.

⁵⁸⁰ Arce Gómez serves prison in Bolivia following an initial 'extradition' to the US where he was found guilty and served 20 years in a Florida prison for drug trafficking. In 2009, he was deported to Bolivia, where he is serving 30 years for human rights crimes. His name was recently included in a trial held in Italy regarding the deaths of Italian citizens in relation with Plan Condor. Agencia EFE, 'Luis Arce Gómez va a juicio por el Plan Cóndor', 11 February 2015, *Los Tiempos* [website], < www.lostiempos.com/diario/actualidad/nacional/20150211/luis-arce-gomez-va-a-juicio-por-el-plan-condor_290949_641814.html>, accessed 19 February 2015.

⁵⁸¹ Anonymous, 'Autopsia: Antes de su victimación Espinal fue torturado' in: 'Repudio general por el asesinato de L. Espinal', *Última Hora*, 24 March 1980.

population's disapproval of Luis Espinal's violent death was expressed in a massive attendance of his funeral.⁵⁸²

Although other artworks exhibited by Valcárcel alongside the coffins for newborn babies seemed to follow the same line of the previous exhibition, the drawings on corrugated sheeting stand out for their particular poignancy [Fig. 4.10], as well as the group of prints with linoleum on corrugated cardboard [Fig. 4.11].⁵⁸³ The effect of the negative space on these prints without ink underlines the absence of the dead and disappeared. The idea of a person's face, a body actually touching the corrugated cardboard, evokes, at the same time, torture – if we can imagine an actual face 'being stamped'.

Although recently Valcárcel associated these coffins with his 'exotic' (outsider) situation on his return to Bolivia after a seven-year stay in Europe, his 'collecting' children coffins (as he refers to them)⁵⁸⁴ is, nonetheless, a reference to the presence of violence in the mind of the population. This somber mood was reflected in the paragraphs he wrote for the catalogue of the exhibition:

photographic images (black and white)
 drawn with pencil
 or painted with oil base Monopol [house paint brand]
 or printed with linoleum but without ink
 (photography as medium,
 as reference,
 not as an end)

tied hands,
 a hanged man,
 a blindfolded person,
 screaming,
 (metaphors of the pain, impotence,
 of our daily suffering)⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸² Luis Espinal had also been one of the promoters of Emusa Gallery where Valcárcel exhibited his artwork. In Mabel Franco, 'Norah Claros, el arte de tejer la vida', *La Razón*, 9 September 2102. <la-razon.com/suplementos/escape/Norah-Claros-arte-tejer-vida_0_1682831781.html>, accessed 11 December 2013.

⁵⁸³ One of the artworks – of unknown title –, in which the snapshot of tied hands has been painstakingly drawn on wood, exemplifies well the continuation of this type of images in Valcárcel's line of work. The work is reproduced, with the caption 'Amarrado', in Valcárcel's book. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol.1, pp. 50 and 65.

⁵⁸⁴ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012.

⁵⁸⁵ The original reads: 'imágenes fotográficas (blanco y negro)/ dibujadas a lápiz/ o pintadas con Monopol al óleo/o impresas con linóleo pero sin tinta/(la fotografía como medio,/como

While the above paragraph may be interpreted along the lines of the concept of repression according to Freud and Marcuse – i.e. a repressed existence is inevitable or an a priori condition of human beings –, in the third and fourth paragraphs Valcárcel establishes a more direct relationship with the critical moment:

arise/ emerge/ appear
and blend
with wood from drawers,
packing cardboard,
corrugated sheeting,
old and discoloured pieces of plank
poor materials
(like our bankrupt
country)

apparition images,
ubiquitous images
like the pain, violence and ignorance
...the Bolivian tragedy⁵⁸⁶

A relation between these coffins with the topic of violence outside the gallery was established by Valcárcel in an interview that took place three months after the exhibition, in which he explains that including objects in the gallery was a way of making more ‘real’ the theme alluded to in his other ‘representations’:

[The artist – referring to himself] simply took objects [like the coffins] existing in society and transposed them to an exhibition room. The foundation was spontaneous. But the explanation, after the presentation of these objects, is that to include [these coffins] within an exhibition of pictures, which are ultimately fictitious, – objects that are not a representation but a presentation, which highlights and increases, in itself, the character of reality that the other pictures may be showing.⁵⁸⁷

referencia,/no como finalidad)// manos amarradas,/ un ahorcado, /una persona con los ojos vendados,/ gritando/ (metáforas de dolor, de impotencia, del sufrimiento nuestro cotidiano).’ Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 111*, La Paz, 18 March-5 April, 1980.

⁵⁸⁶ The original reads: ‘surgen, emergen, aparecen/ y se mimetizan/ en madera de cajones/en cartones de embalaje/ en zinc corrugado/ en tabloncillos viejos y descoloridos:/ materiales pobres/ (como en el país nuestro/ en bancarrota)// imágenes-aparición/ imágenes ubicuas/ como el dolor y la violencia y la ignorancia/ – la tragedia boliviana// la libertad: una ilusión, efímera/ la democracia: una ilusión frágil, delicada, agradable...’ Ibid.

⁵⁸⁷ The original reads: ‘Simplemente tomó objetos existentes en la sociedad y los traspuso a la sala de exposición. El fundamento espontáneo. Pero la explicación, posterior de la presentación de estos objetos, es la de incluir dentro de una muestra de cuadros que al fin y al cabo son ficticios, – objetos que no sean una representación sino una presentación en si que realza y acrecienta el carácter de realidad que pudiera estar mostrando los otros cuadros.’ This comment

Given the dramatic situation of Bolivia, alluded to by Valcárcel in the catalogue text, it might not be too farfetched to say that there was nothing more remote from this scenario than humour. But what to make of the caskets, clearly in bad taste, exhibited in one of the most important galleries of the moment?

The baby coffins were, on the one hand, an incongruous element, which broke and reinforced, at the same time, the tragic tone of the drawings and engravings alongside which they were exhibited. One could imagine, for example, the possibility of the dead themselves (dead babies?), not their phantoms, literally hung on the wall inside the gallery. From this point of view, they escape being mere art objects and underline the reference to the 'killing game' played by the military and paramilitary. From another point of view, hanging the coffins on the wall demonstrates, in a conservative artistic environment, that ready-made objects, like these, can also be works of art. Exhibiting these coffins was undoubtedly a joke, at the same time, in which the artist employs the same 'technique' as *Víctima de Guerra* by introducing an unexpected and gruesome element into an otherwise 'conventional' exhibition of art. The coffins themselves acquire a disturbing quality when treated as 'beautiful' objects of art, neatly aligned on the wall with proper gallery lighting. Their 'clean' and minimalistic aesthetics contrast with their morbid meaning, the violence and repressive environment outside of the gallery. There is, at the same time, another possible reading. As mentioned before, in the catalogue of a previous exhibition, Valcárcel had expressed a concern for the lack of opportunity in Bolivia for people to develop their creativity.⁵⁸⁸ From this point of view, the coffins function as a metaphor of this other type of repression in a country where the creativity of its citizens is arrested (hence they become 'dead' soon after being born), as he claims in the 1979 fictitious interview.⁵⁸⁹ The coffins could be, at the same time, a more direct reference to the extremely high index of children mortality in Bolivia.

applies to the exhibition of the coffins in Emusa Gallery, although it specifically refers to the exhibition in the Museo Nacional de Arte, where the coffins were also apparently presented. Norah Claros, 'Roberto Valcárcel. Pintor insólito' [interview], *Semana de Última Hora*, June 5-10, 1980.

⁵⁸⁸ Producciones Valcárcel (Roberto Valcárcel) 'Fragmento de una Entrevista tres días antes del accidente', Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel: exposición 90*.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

Making a retrospective interpretation, a relation could be established with abortions and miscarriages if we take into consideration the artist's own birth at seven months in what was rumoured to be an abortion clinic in La Paz.⁵⁹⁰

While the way Valcárcel presents his coffins leaves their meaning open, their ambivalence and paradoxical presence is relevant in the light of the context of the ideas that animate this dissertation. Among the references to death in the artist's work, coffins stand out as a recurrent motif. Valcárcel's predilection for coffins might equally respond to his interest in psychoanalysis.⁵⁹¹ The duality eros/ thanatos is reflected, for example, in including a thematic 'category' for this type of works under the section 'Muerte' (Death) of his book, which is followed by 'Eros'.⁵⁹² Albeit in different ways, coffins have introduced themselves sporadically in his exhibitions of recent decades. An early example was the one sent to a group exhibition with the theme 'boxes' in the early 1980s,⁵⁹³ and the child size or 'dwarf size' versions (as Valcárcel refers to them) of the coffins of Freud, Marx, Einstein and Kant [Figs. 4.12-4.15] where, according to his words, he 'buried the greatest landmark figures of Western heritage'.⁵⁹⁴ Valcárcel's *Caja roja* (Red Box) – now part of the collection of the Museo Nacional de Arte of La Paz – constitutes another example of an artwork with a coffin. *Caja roja* is the artist's version of the Last Supper and it is made of a coffin set as a table in the middle of six 'dwarf' chairs, all painted in red, each with eating utensils.

A mix of humour and pleasure was also displayed in subsequent exhibitions of coffins where he creates striking images, using bright colours and a clever display of the caskets in space. In the *Artefacto* group exhibition in Santa Cruz de la Sierra of 1996, where each artist was assigned a room of the house where the Museo de Historia Regional is located, Valcárcel hang, from the ceiling, a coffin painted in bright green. The suspension of the casket, by invisible treads, at 'funeral level', granted it a realistic effect, which at the same time was

⁵⁹⁰ Valcárcel includes this reference in *Mi vida*, as rehearsed by Valcárcel in: Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

⁵⁹¹ Valcárcel's interest in psychoanalysis was a recurrent theme in my interviews (2010, 2012, 2013 and 2014).

⁵⁹² Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, pp.167-185 and pp. 186-201.

⁵⁹³ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

⁵⁹⁴ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012.

counteracted by its cheerful bright green colour – an ironic tribute to the tropical and festive city in which it was presented, most likely. During the same year, a similar association of pleasure with death was latent in his *Círculo cromático* (chromatic wheel) [Fig. 4.16], presented in a group show of Bolivian art, in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo of Santiago de Chile in 1996. This installation, which Valcárcel humorously suggests to be his ‘contribution’ to the theory of colour,⁵⁹⁵ was made up of real size coffins painted in the different tones of the chromatic wheel. The resulting image is a frankly cheerful and playful portrayal of death (or a ‘deadly’ or morbid representation of the chromatic wheel); an erotic one, nonetheless, if we consider its appeal to the sense of sight like an experience of polymorphous eroticism.⁵⁹⁶

Valcárcel’s coffins, exhibited with detachment in a playful and visually attractive way, contrast with the only two other examples of coffins and death by Bolivian artists that I have come across and, in general, with the treatment of death in local art. A coffin with crosses was included, for example, in an exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Arte, in 2004, the theme of which was Black October, the 2003 revolts in El Alto and La Paz that culminated in 67 deaths and the resignation of president Sánchez de Lozada.⁵⁹⁷ The meaning of the coffin painted in black with crosses on top, exhibited exactly a year after the uprisings, was clear: to highlight the deaths of civilians during the confrontations that took

⁵⁹⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, pp. 180-181.

⁵⁹⁶ As discussed in Chapter One, polymorphous eroticism alludes to bodily pleasure beyond genital pleasure and beyond procreative intercourse.

⁵⁹⁷ 67 dead and 450 wounded were reported: CBDHDD, ‘Contra la impunidad y en busca de justicia para las víctimas de octubre 2003’, October 2009, < www.derechoshumanosbolivia.org/archivos/biblioteca/contra_la_impunidad.pdf>, accessed 16 February, 2015. Black October is the name given to a social and political crisis that took the form of a siege of the city of La Paz by the inhabitants of El Alto – in a recreation of the 1781 siege by Tupac Katari. The crisis was caused by the outcome of two previous crises (Febrero Negro and the Sorata crisis), the general inconformity with the president, and a series of conflated demands and interests. It was first initiated with a strike against a new directive for tax paying in El Alto – a city of indigenous migrants where both one of the poorest and richest property prices of Bolivia are found. The rejection of the president was fed, less than a month before, by the armed intervention of the nearby village of Sorata to release visiting tourist ‘under siege’; and at the beginning of the year, by the arrogance of the Sánchez de Lozada in handling a conflict between the students of Colegio Ayacucho, the strike of the police forces, and the following intervention of the army to secure the wave of riots, assaults and destruction that were taking place in the centre of La Paz. Several other demands contributed to a widespread rejection of the president, both partisan and of the general population, gaining notorious importance the claim for Bolivian gas not to be exported through Chile and coca growers’s right to cultivate coca in Chapare, Cochabamba.

place during the attempt of president Sánchez de Lozada to lift the siege of La Paz. The inauguration of the exhibition on the date in which a session in Congress (a block away from the museum) was scheduled to discuss the initiation of a trial against Sánchez de Lozada – for the deaths during Black October – further highlighted the political intention behind the exhibition.⁵⁹⁸ Similarly, ca 2002, former leader of Pucara Ronald Roa – who in the 1980s adamantly opposed installations and other neo avant-garde forms – presented a sort of replica of mausoleum, as a protest to the clandestine selling of his family's lot in the cemetery.⁵⁹⁹

After all these possible interpretations, including Valcárcel's claims a posteriori, we are left with the problem of whether it makes sense to connect the coffins for new-borns to the times, and hence to close its interpretation, or to leave it open to all the multiple possibilities. It soon becomes clear that both options function and that it is up to the viewer to decide. This suspension of meaning is precisely what the artist meant when he referred, in 2010, to his intention to create dislocation and sow doubt.⁶⁰⁰

IV. Some Portraits and 'Dead Natures'

In May of 1981, in the middle of the sombre dictatorship of General García Meza, Valcárcel exhibited in Emusa gallery several silkscreens [Figs. 4.17- 4.22] made with the same photographic negatives that he used for his *Gritones* during the previous years (1979 and 1980).⁶⁰¹ While these images were for the artist a natural continuation of his previous artwork – connected with fun, play and black humour – they proved, nonetheless, unattractive to the public. The exhibition, a joint project with photographer Felipe Sanjinés, was motivated by the idea of

⁵⁹⁸ The session of Congress concluded with the authorization of a trial against Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada and his ministers. For further and updated information on the development of the case, see: Agencias/ Miami (EEUU), 'Un juez autoriza proceso contra Goni y Sánchez Berzaín en EEUU, *Página Siete* [website], 22 May 2014, <www.paginasiete.bo/nacional/2014/5/22/juez-autoriza-proceso-contragoni-sanchez-berzain-eeuu-22148.html>, accessed 8 February, 2015.

⁵⁹⁹ Anonymous, nt., *El Deber*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 15 July 1995.

⁶⁰⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, Talk presented in the Performance table organized by Fundación esART (audio file).

⁶⁰¹ Galería Emusa. *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel*. 111, La Paz, May 5-16, 1981.

gaining money by selling the artist's well-received *Gritones* at low prices.⁶⁰² The enterprise resulted, alas, in a commercial failure and ended up distancing the two parties involved.⁶⁰³

This section unfolds the irony of the lack of success of this enterprise, particularly in the light of the ambiguity of the images in relation to fiction and reality. While Valcárcel enjoyed doing artworks where the line between reality and fiction was blurred, and it was clear to the artist that these silkscreens were reproductions of photographs of staged enactments – involving a complex process and set-up – their ‘representation’ (hence illusory) quality was lost in the eyes of the public.

On the one hand, the transferring of the images into silkscreen format [25 x 25 cm] required printing the negatives with high contrast. The resulting flatness of the images, along with the fact that they were multiple prints instead of unique artworks, diminished, without doubt, the interest of new potential buyers – most likely, the public that the artist was aiming at – and the few traditional collectors. The lack of success of this project, on the other hand, is telling of a public, which despite Valcárcel's intentions and provocations, valued him for his artistic technique, i.e. his excellent and detailed draughtsmanship. Taking this into account, it becomes clear that their previous buying of Valcárcel's images of suffering could have equally derived from the recurrence of images of martyrdom in colonial painting, a type of art that had gained a privileged status by the time in Bolivia, as a result of the research of art historians José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert.⁶⁰⁴

From another point of view, the references to violence in the prints had an increased explicitness, in the light of the escalation of violence at the time. The silkscreens were presented only ten months after García Meza had come to power with a violent coup in which renowned politician Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz –

⁶⁰² Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert have almost singlehandedly researched colonial art. The Museo Nacional de Arte was founded by them with a collection of colonial art. Their most important publication on colonial art is *Holguín y la Pintura Virreinal en Bolivia* (currently out of print with many editions sold out). José de Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Holguín y la Pintura Virreinal en Bolivia*, Librería Editorial ‘Juventud’, La Paz, 1977.

who was leading the trial against the former president and dictator Hugo Banzer Suárez – was assassinated during the seizure by the paramilitary of the worker’s union COB (Central Obrera Boliviana). The heightened repression during the regime of García Meza became explicit in Minister of Interior Arce Gómez’s infamous sarcastic recommendation to his political enemies to carry their wills with them at all times.

These images, devoid of artistic qualities – in the eyes of an audience with traditional values –, resembled, at the same time, the black and white photographs published in the press at that time. It can be argued that this type of images, in the printed press and television – which had only began broadcasting in colour a few months before – were what the population associated with the news. The printed press and radios played a key role in communicating independent news to the population, and for this reason they were often intervened by the government. Canal 7 (Channel 7), the main television station, was a governmental branch used to serve its interests. The university stations had noticeably less transmission power, less resources, and were soon taken over by the Ministry of Interior during García Meza’s regime.

The pun on the literal meaning in the title of the exhibition, ‘naturalezas muertas’, which literally translates to ‘dead natures’, further underlined the irony of exhibiting these images during this time. The documentation type grouping of the images in the catalogue of the exhibition, stripped of any emotions, exemplifies well, at the same time, the ubiquity of violence during the regime of García Meza [Figs. 4.23-4.24]. Taking into account this lack of emotion, Valcárcel’s motto ‘VALCARCEL PRODUCTIONS. ART IS NOT DEAD’⁶⁰⁵ placed as a ‘caption’, under images of presumed torture and repression accentuated the pervading black humour of these silkscreens, while, highlighting, at the same time, their association with death.

⁶⁰⁵ The artist’s use of this slogan was adopted upon his return to Bolivia in 1977. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August, 2013. At the end of an interview that took place in 1978, three years before the exhibition, when asked if he would like to add anything Valcárcel stated that ‘(...)art is not dead. Despite the fact that today more importance is given to money than to the spirit: to matter, to technique, to “development”, to consumption. Despite the current stagnation of art, as a renewing force of repercussion and social transcendence, art is not dead.’ ‘Roberto Valcárcel [sic]: El arte no ha...’, [second page of newspaper article of unknown source], 24 December, 1978.

The increased control of the press during this period can be appreciated, on the other hand, in a short review of *Retratos y naturalezas muertas* published in the evening newspaper *Última Hora*.⁶⁰⁶ A sort of self-censorship is suggested in the formal, abstract and art historical focus of the text that contrasts with the violence of the two images by Valcárcel, reproduced in the newspaper: a hanged man and a blindfolded person screaming [Fig. 4.25].⁶⁰⁷

In 40 silkscreens of a mixed technique combining photography and graphic arts, Valcárcel demonstrates, once again, his handling of human psychology in the interpretation of expression and gesture.⁶⁰⁸

This appraisal of Valcárcel's work, in terms of the genre of portrait painting, not only tried to argue for the artist's talent but also intentionally ignored the violence with which these images could be associated during the regime of García Meza. The reason behind the lack of references to political repression is most likely an act of self-censorship on the part of the newspaper or, alternatively, and perhaps at the same time, a device to publish 'sensitive' material within the highly repressive environment described above.⁶⁰⁹ If the latter was the case, it was exemplified in the use of verbose language, which seems counterintuitive to the common lexicon of printed media:

The anatomy depicted in detail, [and] the first grand plane support the attitude or final consequence of a movement that was cut, they appear not as a static presence but as a demonstration of a result, still under the effects of the previous movements, of the immediate antecedent which originated the scream or the facial expression. Thus, the action extends, instead of stopping in a frozen plane, it comes from a place (the past) and goes towards another one (the suggested future), making its course visual.⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁶ The offices of several newspaper and radio stations, even international agencies, like AFP, were seized and temporarily closed.

⁶⁰⁷ Anonymous, 'Retratos y naturalezas muertas en exposición de Roberto Valcárcel', *Última Hora*, La Paz, 13 May 1981.

⁶⁰⁸ The original reads: 'En 40 serigrafías por técnica mixta de fotografía y arte gráfica, Valcárcel muestra una vez más su manejo de la psicología humana a través de la interpretación del gesto y del ademán.' Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ Radios and press suffered intervention, destruction of their equipment and censorship. One of the first measures that the government took, from its onset, was to seize and control of two of the most popular radios – Panamericana and Fides – and the miners' radios. A few months after the coup, the Catholic Church newspaper *Presencia* was temporarily closed.

⁶¹⁰ The original reads: 'La anatomía en detalle, el gran primer plano apoyan la actitud o la consecuencia final de un desplazamiento o el corte en seco de un movimiento, aparecen no con una presencia estática sino como la muestra de un resultado, todavía con efectos referidos al

One could argue that these sentences were, for the anonymous reviewer, a metaphor of the political situation and specifically the country's ongoing interrupted transition into democracy. On this assumption, the extended action referred to in the text could be the continuous attempt to hold power by ex-dictator Banzer, and surrogates like García Meza since the start of the transition towards democracy in 1978.

The exhibition was preceded by another one, a few months earlier, also during the government of García Meza, where Valcárcel presented paintings and drawings on wood and kraft paper, which were also reviewed in *Última Hora*, and judging by the language, by the same anonymous author:

Expressive faces, dramatic gestures and themes that transmit critical concepts about the internal and external conflicts of man, emerge in these pictures of great expressive richness and highly original artistic sketches. Although the centre of the exhibition is the physical and spiritual figure of man, sometimes secluded as example of that content, like in the case of the Apostles, the landscape is not missing, especially in the drawing of a marginal zone of the city where the author shows us that he is a master not only of faces, in the manner of psychological portraits (even though he shows indefinite faces) to which he adds collective feelings, but that he is a skilled landscape artist.⁶¹¹

The reviewer's interpretation of the exhibition – illustrated with a photograph of a blindfolded *Gritón* drawn on a drawer, a screaming face on a piece of furniture and a landscape (on kraft paper?),⁶¹² in terms of both the 'internal and external conflict of man' and 'the physical and spiritual figure of man' – place the artwork

motivo anterior, al antecedente inmediato que dio origen al grito o al visaje. Así en vez de detenerse como en un plano congelado, la acción, se prolonga, viene de una parte (pasado) y va a otra (futuro sugerido) haciendo visual todo su transcurso.' Anonymous, 'Retratos y naturalezas muertas en exposición de Roberto Valcárcel', *Última Hora*, 13 May 1981.

⁶¹¹ The original reads: 'Expresivos rostros, ademanes dramáticos y temas que transmiten conceptos críticos sobre los conflictos internos y externos del hombre, surgen en estos cuadros de gran riqueza expresiva y de apunte artístico muy original. Aunque la muestra se centra en la figura física y espiritual del hombre, recogido a veces hasta como ejemplo de ese contenido, como en el caso de los Apóstoles no falta el paisaje, especialmente el dibujo de una zona marginal de la ciudad, donde el autor nos muestra que no sólo es un maestro de los rostros, al modo de un retrato psicológico (aunque él muestra rostros indeterminados) a los que les añade sentimientos colectivos, sino que es un hábil paisajista.' I believe there should be a full stop after 'Apóstoles' and I am interpreting this sentence as if there was one. Anonymous, 'Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel', *Última Hora*, 19 November 1980.

⁶¹² Although the captions of the 'portraits' lists them as untitled works, they are referred to *Minero* (miner) and as *Grito n. 65* (Scream # 65) in: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, pp. 50, 61 and 67. *Suburbano* (suburban) is not reproduced in the book.

in a level of abstraction that was necessary for ‘saving’ both the newspaper and the artist. Equally significant is the religious analogy that the author establishes (in the reference to the Apostles), wherein he suggests that Valcárcel’s ‘*Gritones*’ are removed from everyday repression and political violence. Of equal importance is the author’s claim that although Valcárcel demonstrates a high skill in the genre of portraiture, these images are not portraits of specific people. Even though these images did not depict the public figures whose torture and assassination had deeply moved the population – Espinal and Quiroga Santa Cruz, in particular – they were, nonetheless, portraits of individuals (i.e. José Luis Lora, el Loncho, Ninoska, etc.) who were the artist’s friends. They could very well equally represent the hundreds of people detained and tortured, whose faces were not known to the general population.

The self-censorship of the press is understandable in terms of the declarations of García Meza, three months before, in which he claimed, as reproduced in the headlines, that ‘The government will guarantee public safety, freedom and human rights. And it will not allow that the social peace in which our country currently lives is altered.’⁶¹³ The apparent ‘good will’ of the president in the first phrase of the declaration is counteracted (and any doubts cleared) by its forceful ‘not allowing’ the interruption of ‘social peace’, a term whose definition was becoming increasingly clear to the population. Previous efforts of the government to install ‘social peace’ in the country had included the intervention, closing and destruction of equipment of radio stations and newspapers (radios Fides, Panamericana and Huanuni, and newspaper *Presencia*), the temporary imprisonment and ousting of international journalists, the death of influential opinion and political leaders, like Quiroga Santa Cruz, and of the leaders of leftist MIR party; as well as the forced exile and seclusion of the rest of the dissidents in concentration camps.

Some artists with a clear political engagement were closely watched during this time. Only seven months had passed since the violent detention of painter

⁶¹³ Anonymous, ‘El gobierno garantizará la seguridad, la libertad y los derechos humanos. Y no permitirá que la paz social en la que vive actualmente nuestro país sea alterada’, *Última Hora*, 2 February 1981.

Diego Morales, an artist with political visibility as the leader of the worker's union of the Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore (institution from which he was dismissed) and with an explicit 'disrespect' of the military and other authority figures in his paintings.⁶¹⁴ As noted in Chapter Two, around the time of Valcárcel's exhibition, the Bienal INBO had been suspended by its organizers in response to the government's demand to ensure the 'propriety' of the works, via a representative on the jury.⁶¹⁵

Valcárcel's art was not censored despite the repeated coverage granted to *Retratos y naturalezas muertas* in the printed press, particularly in *Presencia* [Figs. 4.26-4.29], albeit and understandably without much text. But why did that happen? My hypothesis is that the government was, at the time, trying to desperately clear its name from drug trafficking, following an embarrassing interview titled 'The Minister of Cocaine' with Minister Arce Gómez in US television programme *60 Minutes*.⁶¹⁶ In a recent newspaper interview, ex-president García Meza, serving 30-year sentence in the high security prison of Chonchocoro, claimed that the US pressured him to dismiss Arce Gómez.⁶¹⁷ One such desperate attempt of the government to clear its image was exemplified in the paid advertisement, a month

⁶¹⁴ The artworks of Morales's exhibition at the Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas gallery were confiscated and the artist was imprisoned and tortured. Shortly after, he managed to escape from a house where he was confined in El Alto and he obtained exile from the Embassy of Switzerland, a country in which he lived for many years. For more information, see: Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 'Resolución n° 33/82', Organization of American States [website], 8 March 1982, <www.cidh.oas.org/annualrep/81.82sp/Bolivia7824.htm>, accessed 9 February 2015.

⁶¹⁵ Anonymous, 'Ministro de Educación: se realizará la exposición INBO', *Última Hora*, 20 February 1981.

⁶¹⁶ Arce Gómez announced that he was travelling to the US and Brazil to clear his name, and that of the government, from defamation by *The Washington Post*, *Newsweek*, and Brazil's *Revista Veja*. He was unsuccessful in his attempts to make public declarations in both countries (ignored by US media and 'boycotted' by Brazilian journalists) except that he caught the attention of influential investigative reporter Mike Wallace who later portrayed him in his *60 Minutes* show as 'The Minister of Cocaine'. For more information on this, see: Latin American Bureau, 'La mafia en el poder' in *Narcotráfico y Política: Militarismo y Mafía en Bolivia* [online book originally published in 1982], electronically edited by Equipo Nizkor and Human Rights, 5 June 2001, <www.derechos.org/nizkor/bolivia/libros/cocacoup/cap2.html>, accessed 10 February 2015.

⁶¹⁷ García Meza has proved to be a great manipulator of facts and his statements should be taken with a grain of salt. I believe, nonetheless, that his statement regarding the removal of Arce Gómez is highly feasible, considering the great pressure that the US has put on Bolivia throughout its history. Carlos Corz, 'Exdictador Luis García Meza: "Si yo hubiese matado, estuviera arrepentido,"' *La Razón* [website], 30 July 2013, <www.la-razon.com/index.php?url=/seguridad_nacional/Exdictador-Luis-Garcia-Meza-arrepentido_0_1879012147.html>, accessed 16 February 2015.

after Valcárcel's exhibition, mentioned in Chapter One, wherein the government published a paid advertisement with the heading 'Reader's Digest Liberates the Armed Forces of Dishonourable Defamation of Drug Trafficking'.⁶¹⁸ This advertisement was part, at the same time, of a broader campaign that had included, for example, paid publicity in the printed press portraying a more 'friendly' image of the Armed Forces with images of children and soldiers of indigenous origin [Figs. 4.30-4.32].

From this information, we can deduce that Valcárcel benefited from the regime's ignorance, despite what could be considered explicit references to torture in his artwork within a context in which many crimes against human rights were still taking place. His *Gritones* did not fit exactly what the government literally considered offensive or subversive, as per the Ministry of Education declarations regarding its forced participation in the Bienal INBO, which should have taken place around the same time:

Finally, the Minister of Education Coronel Guillermo Escobar, in an exclusive interview with our newspaper, expressed that his office does not put any obstacles when an expression or manifestation of art takes place in the country, as an authority it will guard that no one offends the country and its authorities, that does not signify in anyway the existence of any kind of censorship, with dialogue and exchange of ideas and opinions, we believe that misunderstandings can be resolved, he pointed out.⁶¹⁹

A comparison with persecuted artist Diego Morales' paintings, which demonstrated a clear disrespect of the country's authorities, proves useful in understanding what constituted 'offending the country and its authorities'. *Títeres del Imperialismo* (Puppets of Imperialism), one of the paintings that was confiscated (a photograph was recently included in the catalogue of an exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Arte)⁶²⁰ included grotesque depictions of the military, among

⁶¹⁸ Anonymous, 'Revista americana Selecciones libera a Fuerzas Armadas de Infame calumnia sobre narcotráfico', *Presencia*, 7 June 1981.

⁶¹⁹ The original: 'Finalmente, el Ministro de Educación Cnl. Guillermo Escobar en entrevista exclusiva con nuestro diario, expresó que su despacho no pone ni pondrá trabas cuando se trate de una expresión o manifestación de arte a realizarse en el país, simplemente, como autoridad velará porque en ningún momento se ofenda al país y a sus autoridades, sin que ello signifique de ninguna manera censura alguna, con dialogar e intercambiar ideas y opiniones, creemos que se pueden allanar malos entendidos', señaló.' Anonymous, 'Ministro de Educación: se realizará la exposición INBO', *Última Hora*, 20 February 1981.

⁶²⁰ Edgar Arandía et. al., *Beneméritos de la Utopía: la estética del compromiso*, Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2012, p. 97.

them one of explicit ‘offensiveness’. *Títeres del Imperialismo* depicted president Lidia Gueiler’s advisor Guillermo Bedregal as a puppet sticking his tongue up to lick a penis placed at the centre of stage curtains made of the US flag fabric [Fig. 4.33]. Another figure with puppet strings, a military man, is depicted under the first puppet (supporting one of his legs) and with his face close to his genitals. To the right of the first civilian man, president Gueiler also sticks her tongue up towards the stage curtain penis. The face of the US ambassador Paul H. Boeker can be seen, on top of the curtains, holding the strings of the characters of the show. In a recent text about this artwork writer Adolfo Cárdenas claims that the exhibition ‘was confiscated to be exhibited in the barracks and state offices as an example of what the artworks by ‘anarchists, separatists and atheists’ looked like.⁶²¹

It could also be argued that Emusa Gallery itself was not on the black list of the intelligence officers because of its links with businessman Mario Mercado, and his presumed right-wing orientation. Complementing my hypothesis, I believe that the artist benefitted not only from the ignorance of the military authorities, but also from the fact that despite the content of his artwork, the regime was not monitoring art but individuals who had a high visibility and were linked to governmental institutions. As pointed before, Diego Morales had been the leader of the worker’s union in a government institution (Museo Nacional de Etnografía y Folklore). Trotskyist Carlos Salazar Mostajo was another visible example since he was the director of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, a government institution that was under the tutelage of the Ministry of Education. José Bedoya, then leader of the student union of the Escuela de Bellas Artes, was also briefly detained as reprisal for refusing to give the union funds to the military director appointed by the regime.⁶²²

⁶²¹ Cardenas wrote: ‘Una de las víctimas de esta política de terror fue el artista plástico Diego Morales quien inaugurara una muestra en el salón “Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas”. Esta exposición fue secuestrada en su totalidad por “inteligencia del ejército” para exhibirla en cuarteles y dependencias del estado como la obra de “anarquistas disociadores y ateos”. Adolfo Cárdenas, ‘Diego Morales: la muerte del Pegaso’ in: Edgar Arandia, et. al, *Beneméritos de la Utopía: la estética del compromiso*, Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2012, p. 87.

⁶²² Bedoya decided to spend this money on a new floor for the sculpture studio, and on a gift for Salazar Mostajo from the students. He was released from the offices of the Ministry of Interior, a few hours after, when General Rico Toro, a high rank officer (the Minister himself?) recognized him as the nephew of Bolivian businessman Gonzalo Bedoya. José Bedoya, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 20 September 2013.

Despite the connections that can be established between Valcárcel's 'dead natures' and the heightened repression of the time, the artist nowadays refers to these silkscreens as mainly a commercial project. His account for historical purposes to the author of a dissertation (and the only study) of his work is, undoubtedly intentionally provocative. He shows no qualms in exhibiting his prosaic and practical interests, what would otherwise be qualified as his non-politically correct attitude and behaviour during one of the most repressive regimes in the history of Bolivia. With this attitude towards himself, he demonstrates, on the other hand, a commitment to autonomy, even if it means being historicized as being against democracy, as a commercial, opportunistic or capitalist artist, as an enemy of human rights, etcetera.

V. The Artist's 'Accident': Black Humour and Violent Self-representations

But what should we make of the images in which Valcárcel represents himself with violence or physical aggression to his body? There are numerous examples throughout his career, as well as during the time of the transition from democracy to dictatorship.

We have already established that both Valcárcel's *Víctima de Guerra* [Fig. 3.1] and his *Untitled* coffins for new-borns may be references to himself, to the accident referred to in catalogue texts and in his multiple choice curriculum. We have seen in Chapter Three how the artist also portrayed himself as dead in one of his multiple personalities: Yuri Nitram (Japan) who died from Aids in São Paulo, in 1991. There is another accident, this time a real one, the documentation of which Valcárcel enjoys showing: the image of himself with a patch on his head and left eye, which he published as a sort of illustration of his CV Possibilitae in his book [Fig. 4.34 and 4.35].⁶²³ When I asked about what this photograph was about, Valcárcel explained that it was taken after a real 'accident', possibly around the time of the exhibition, when a friend of his, under the influence of LSD, hit

⁶²³ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 10.

him with a metal rod (putting his life at risk). In the 2012 *Mi vida* presentation, Valcárcel went one step further and playfully showed a gruesome detail (in a two-slide sequence) of what was presumably under the patch: a bruised, bloodshot and fleshy eye [Fig. 4.36 and 4.37].⁶²⁴

There seems to be a certain narcissistic pleasure in making references to an accident and in publishing images of self-aggression. In 1981, in a group exhibition with the theme of portraits, during the regime of García Meza, Valcárcel exhibited a hyper-realistic drawing of himself with no arms [Fig. 4.38], which stood out from those of other artists who left out any references to violence in their artworks and were more eager to play within the conventions of portraiture. In his book he equally includes a photograph of himself in a strange pose, again appearing as having no arms in front of his 'Good Games' text on a wall [Fig. 4.39]. Another type of accident was suggested in the already mentioned version of himself in a wheelchair, where he appeared partially paralysed [Fig. 4.41]. The idea of the accident took yet another twist in his 1984 presumed kidnapping by extra-terrestrials [Fig. 4.40] as we found out in a recent PowerPoint presentation of his life.⁶²⁵

We have already seen how humour can be liberating and what Breton draws from Freud's definition of humour, but there is another idea of humour by Freud, which is meaningful to my reading of Valcárcel's artwork in terms of repression. In *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, Freud distinguishes two types of jokes.⁶²⁶ Innocent jokes, defined simply as those that provoke an explosion of laughter, and tendentious jokes, which are in turn divided into obscene and hostile jokes. According to Freud, in both types of tendentious jokes, the lifting of certain inhibitions liberates pleasure. While in obscene jokes the inhibitions of talking about sex are removed, in hostile jokes the restraints on

⁶²⁴ The photograph in the PowerPoint is exactly the same except that it is inverted. Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slides 292-293.

⁶²⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slide 102. The photograph of his 'abduction' by aliens is also reproduced in his book as a 'self-portrait'.

⁶²⁶ This was brought to my attention by: Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'Surrealist Black Humour: Masculine/Feminine' in *Papers of Surrealism*, Issue 1, winter 2003. See Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*, trans. James Strachey, W.W. Norton, New York, 1963, p. 134.

expressing feelings of aggression are cancelled.⁶²⁷ From this perspective, we can assume that Valcárcel's hostile jokes display in fact feelings of aggression, which, from a Freudian perspective, are common to all human beings.⁶²⁸ Something similar can be said of the sexual connotations of Valcárcel's Mickey Mouse jokes (if we associate them with obscene jokes), discussed in Chapter One. Freud's definition of hostile jokes resonates with the artist's images of violence. The implication is that in these types of jokes the restraints about one's feelings of aggression are cancelled. They are, in other words, a way of covertly displaying aggression, which otherwise would be unacceptable. In the artist's self-representations with elements of violence there is, at the same time, a symbolic self-aggression and an eroticizing of the self because the artist enjoys making and displaying these images in public, without doubt.

In addition to this, if we go along with Freud's conception of humour, humour directed at oneself can be liberating if we consider that when one directs humour at others (making fun of others) one exerts a role close to that of a paternal or authoritarian figure:

If we turn to the situation in which one person adopts a humorous attitude towards others, a view which I have already put forward tentatively in my book on jokes will at once suggest itself. This is that the subject is behaving towards them as an adult does towards a child when he recognizes and smiles at the triviality of interests and sufferings which seem so great to it.

Thus the humorist would acquire his superiority by assuming the role of the grown-up and identifying himself to some extent with his father, and reducing the other people to being children.⁶²⁹

From this we can draw that humour directed at oneself is non-authoritarian. As Freud pointed out, it offers an alternative perspective of the super ego, as non-repressive and comforting, which the psychoanalyst came to at the end of his intellectual trajectory, and although it precedes *Eros and Civilization*, it was not taken into consideration by Marcuse in the latter study.

⁶²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (tr. D. McLintock), London: Penguin Books, 2002 [1941], pp. 45-51.

⁶²⁹ Sigmund Freud, 'On humour', pp. 233-234.

Conclusion

Examining Valcárcel's artwork from the transition towards democracy period (1978-1982) has introduced further links between what he describes as 'fun' and Marcuse's theory of liberation in *Eros and Civilization*. I have specifically argued that phantasy (in the forms of play and deceit) and black humour can be useful to blur the lines of truth and morality, particularly during a time where different authoritarian regimes dictated truths and rightfulness to its citizens.

Two seemingly antithetical interpretations have been proposed. On the one hand, I have interpreted Valcárcel's art as a parody of what is happening outside, of the way reality is represented and manipulated in the mass media, as well as an opportunity to enact freedom. On the other hand, from my analysis of Valcárcel's artwork in terms of black humour and phantasy, it was established that the relationship between Valcárcel's artwork and violence is elusive.

In my discussion, it has also become clear that Valcárcel's motivations and reflections on this topic transcended the moment in which they took place. Valcárcel's questioning of repression is linked to the perspective, which derives from Freud via Marcuse, that there is always a latent repression. Valcárcel's interest in this topic responds to an inherent watchful attitude towards authoritarian attitudes, which can be considered to be, nonetheless, a way of contributing to counter the possibility of a brutal external repressive reality.

My analysis has made visible what the repressive system can look like in Bolivia in examples in the press, and in their indirect relation with Catholic culture and its values. Valcárcel's replication of media strategies (in photographic black and white images) to express, promote and mythicize himself have equally been interpreted as strategies to counter repression. My analysis of these artworks from the perspective of black humour has revealed that not only phantasy making but its opposite, what Valcárcel calls 'presentation' – in opposition to representation, exemplified in Valcárcel's babies' coffins, for example – as an important element whose intention is to place the viewer in an uncomfortable situation, and hence challenge submissive attitudes. This presentation 'technique' supposes, at the

same time, a deviation from Marcuse's theory, and its foundations; particularly its basis on art as phantasy making.

Another aspect that has been disclosed in this chapter – and which is not taken into account by Marcuse but that is coherent with his view of repression – is that a certain type of humour (tendentious jokes and jokes directed at one self) can be liberating if we take into account Freud's revision of his model of the mind. It has been suggested that Freud's second thoughts about the repressive nature of the superego – equally not addressed in Marcuse's theory in *Eros and Civilization* – have a potential to turn around and expand Marcuse's theory in promising ways.

Valcárcel's playful and presumably cold attitude toward violent events can also be considered an intentional self-exposure of the violent nature of the artist and, by extension, of all human beings from the perspective of Freud. The blunt display of the artist as an anti-example of righteousness, implicit in the artworks analysed in this chapter, has become clear throughout the years and is evident in some of his interview answers and self-analysis in psychoanalytic terms. This lack of sentimentality, even towards himself, also distinguishes Valcárcel from the attitude that has prevailed in Bolivian art. While Valcárcel's opaque and ironic attitude towards certain themes has gained him many detractors, it has granted him, at the same time, the possibility of engaging in liberating acts without the limitations that society and the art system covertly impose on artists.

CHAPTER FIVE

PLAY AND ANTITHESIS AS STRATEGIES TO COUNTER INDIGENOUS MYTHS

Introduction

This chapter discusses how Valcárcel's artwork unmasks and challenges idealised and, at times, invented qualities attributed to indigenous people in Bolivia. More specifically, it analyses how Valcárcel disrupts these idealisations in the art world through play and critical thinking. By closely examining *Puerta del Sol* (Gate of the Sun), 1982, and *Cruz cuadrada* (Square Cross), 1994, two artworks that irreverently refer to emblems of pre-Hispanic heritage – the Tiwanaku Gate of the Sun and the pre-Hispanic stepped cross –, I argue that Valcárcel's irreverence attests to his aim of debunking authoritarian institutions and the veiled repression exerted by them.

Valcárcel's *Puerta del Sol* and *Cruz cuadrada* make visible how indigenous heritage has been used as a symbol of an idealised origin of Bolivian history and culture by artists and politicians alike. The ruins of what is presumably the main ceremonial centre of Tiwanaku, a civilisation dating from 300 BC that disappeared for uncertain reasons around 1100 AD⁶³⁰ were only rediscovered and brought to the attention of Bolivian researchers and government during the 20th century. Since then, Tiwanaku iconography has become one of the most utilised symbols of a renewed Bolivian identity. Tiwanaku has also been used in key political moments of Bolivian history that span from the celebration of the centenary of Bolivia's independence (1925) to, more recently, the presidential ceremonies of Evo Morales, the first indigenous leader of the country.⁶³¹

⁶³⁰ A severe drought is one of the most widely accepted theories for the end of Tiwanaku civilisation.

⁶³¹ Evo Morales was elected president in 2006, and has been subsequently re-elected two more consecutive times. In 2012, vice-president of Bolivia, Alvaro García Linera, also celebrated his

Tiwanaku has been a recurrent motif of inspiration in many important buildings in La Paz, the city where Valcárcel was born and where he lived for many decades.⁶³² For example, Emilio Villanueva – eminent architect and responsible for much of the modern shape of the city of La Paz – designed a football stadium in Neo-Tiwanaku style (1928), which was demolished in 1974. A replica of the semi-subterranean temple of Tiwanaku, which is still standing, was then built in front of the stadium as a permanent site for Monolito Bennett – a monolith effigy that had been brought from Tiwanaku into the city of La Paz in 1933.⁶³³ Villanueva's most cited work is the Monoblock (1948), the main building of the state university of La Paz UMSA, whose design emulates the proportions of Tiwanaku. Teresa Gisbert describes the pre-Hispanic inspiration of this example of functionalist architecture of the 1940s, in the following manner:

He [Villanueva] also sought indigenous qualities when he designed the building of Universidad Mayor de San Andrés [UMSA] in a style that recalls Tiwanaku culture. For this building he sought [to emulate] the proportions of a monolith and for the entrance the proportions of the Gate of the Sun. This is the most successful approximation in architecture to vernacular cultures.⁶³⁴

All of these buildings were inspired by the findings and rediscovery of Tiwanaku by Arthur Posnansky, who designed his own house, currently the Museo Nacional de Arqueología, in Neo-Tiwanaku style. Until a recent renovation of the airport, it was impossible to evade the presence of Tiwanaku for the visitor of La Paz as she or he was greeted by an airport whose main building (built in 1965) had the shape of the Gate of the Sun. Considering all these examples, it is not surprising that Valcárcel would have taken notice of the significance of Tiwanaku iconography in

wedding ceremony in Tiwanaku. During the ceremony, he wore a jacket decorated with indigenous motifs, instead of his usual suit and tie, while his bride wore a dress inspired by Guamán Poma de Ayala's illustrations.

⁶³² Valcárcel was born in La Paz in 1951. He lived there from his birth until 1988 with periods abroad (Montevideo: 1959-1960 and Darmstadt, 1971-1977). Since 1988 he has lived in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

⁶³³ Monolito Bennett, named after American archaeologist Wendell Bennett, was brought to La Paz in 1933 to ensure its conservation as it was thought that it was at risk in its site. In 2002, it was taken back to its original site in Tiwanaku.

⁶³⁴ Gisbert wrote: 'El también buscó valores indígenas proyectando el edificio de la Universidad Mayor de San Andrés en un estilo que recuerda la cultura tiahuanacota. Buscó para este edificio las proporciones de un monolito y para el ingreso las proporciones de la Puerta del Sol. Es la más lograda aproximación, en arquitectura, a las culturas vernaculares.' Teresa Gisbert, 'Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 46.

Bolivian architecture and culture; particularly, taking into account that he is an architect and the son of an architect whose professional activity coincided in time with that of Emilio Villanueva.

Throughout my analysis it will become clear that Valcárcel's interest in indigenous issues has less to do with the topic itself, than with how these matters have been uncritically accepted. And, how an invisible mandate to address indigenous legacy in culture has tended to delimit creativity in art, and, ultimately, serve the aims of political parties. Thus, I argue that the prescription of Tiwanaku and indigenous legacy as ideals in Bolivian art constitutes a concealed form of subjugation as artists end up creating artworks 'at the service' of certain cultural and political institutions.

While play is an essential quality of the artworks of Valcárcel that I will analyse in this chapter, I will also focus on anti-thesis as an important tool for institutional critique. These strategies can be seen as part of the artist's interest in unmasking beliefs that end up being repressive. These artworks resonate with Marcuse's term the Great Refusal, which he defines as the negation of the repressive order⁶³⁵ – which in this case should be understood as the predominantly indigenous vocation of art. This tendency towards a univocal approach of indigenous themes limits creativity (divergent thinking) which, as I have previously mentioned, is essential for Valcárcel's conception of a non-repressive society.⁶³⁶

Early on in his career, Valcárcel demonstrated an affinity with dialectical logic when he modified his own artwork according to a thesis-antithesis-synthesis reasoning.⁶³⁷ In 1978 Valcárcel explained that he used this reasoning when he crossed out his photographs of Europe [Fig. 5.1]:

There are many photographs crossed out – with an x, Chinese ink – and some that are not crossed out. The crossed out photographs were taken around here and there, in Italy, in Turkey. The themes: monuments,

⁶³⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, pp. 149-150.

⁶³⁶ Producciones Valcárcel, 'Fragmento de una entrevista realizada por Juan Ángel Bustillos (tres días antes del accidente)' in Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 90*, La Paz, 8-9 May, 1979.

⁶³⁷ Anonymous, 'Roberto Valcárcel [sic]: El arte no ha...?', [second page of newspaper article of unknown source], 24 December, 1978. All references to this topic have been taken from this article.

architecture. The ‘modus’ [operandi]: good compositions. They are calm photographs, with a touristic elegance, let’s say. They have been crossed out to denote our rejection of a content lacking relevance, of a thematic exclusively photogenic, of that sickly-sweet aesthetics. We have not burned or destroyed them because it would be a bit absurd to deny the existence of that European beauty, even the most chauvinist and xenophobe of Bolivians would succumb to its charms. We do not deny that beauty. We accept it as something given, something that exists. We include it in the artwork. But at the same time, we make a comment about it by crossing it out. Perhaps the following explanation will make things clear: 1) Thesis: a ‘pretty’ picture of a pretty subject is taken, considering the composition, balance, format [and] contrast. The photograph is developed and enlarged, the image is controlled and manipulated in order to obtain an ‘aesthetic’ result. 2) Antithesis: The sickly-sweet photograph is crossed out rejecting, in a demonstrative way, the latter superficial beauty. The treatment is by hand, personal, unique, impulsive, and with a strong contrast with the elegance and impersonal aspect of photography. 3) Synthesis: we obtain, as result, a complex and ambiguous image that contains both honey and bile. We believe that life is like that. [We come across] Both soft and hard spots. An integral image is real because it reflects the complexity of life itself.⁶³⁸

While the primary function of crossing out the photographs that made up his first exhibition in La Paz, in 1978, was to deny a certain type of art (what Duchamp would call ‘retinal art’), Valcárcel manifests an awareness of the implication of that gesture in what he implies is a chauvinistic context. This evidences, at the same time, Valcárcel’s position regarding European culture, from the beginning of his career, and an artistic practice, which tends to always keep in mind the antithesis of any postulate. In the following sections, in my analysis of Valcárcel’s artworks,

⁶³⁸ Valcárcel explained: ‘Hay varias fotografías tarjadas – con una equis, con tinta china – y algunas sin tarjar. Las fotografías tarjadas fueron tomadas por ahí, en Italia, en Turquía. Los temas: Monumentos, arquitectura. El ‘modus’: Bien compuestas. Son fotos tranquilas, con una gran elegancia turística diríamos. Han sido tarjadas para denotar nuestro rechazo a ese contenido carente de relevancia, esa temática exclusivamente fotogénica, esa ‘estética’ dulzona. No se las ha quemado o destruido porque sería un poco absurdo al negar la existencia de esa belleza europea, ante cuyos encantos sucumbe hasta el mas chauvinista y xenófobo de los bolivianos. No negamos esa belleza. La aceptamos como algo dado, algo existente. La incluimos en la obra. Pero al mismo tiempo hacemos un comentario acerca de ella, poniendo esas equis. Tal vez aclare un poco más la imagen la siguiente explicación: 1) Tesis: Se toma una foto ‘bonita’ de un tema bonito, considerando la composición, el equilibrio, el formato, los contrastes. Se revela y amplía la foto, se controla, manipula la imagen para así lograr algo ‘estético’. 2) Antítesis: Se tarja la foto dulzona, rechazándola demostrando esa belleza superficial. El trato es a mano, personal, único impulsivo y contrasta fuertemente con lo elegante e impersonal de la fotografía. 3) Síntesis: Como resultado obtenemos una imagen compleja, ambigua, que incluye tanto la ‘miel’ como la ‘hiel’. Creemos que la vida es así. Pisablando, pisaduro. Una imagen integral es real, ya que refleja la complejidad de la vida misma.’ Anonymous, ‘Roberto Valcárcel [sic]: El arte no ha...’.

it will become clear how he has created antithetical art as a way of denying an invisible repressive state of affairs in art institutions and local art practice.

I. **Playing with a Non-official National Symbol: *Puerta del Sol* at the Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas**

Roberto Valcárcel's exhibition *Puerta del Sol* (Gate of the Sun), presented in 1982 at the Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, could be considered the 'antithesis' of certain beliefs surrounding Tiwanaku and artistic practice in Bolivia. Although it re-creates one of Tiwanaku's most emblematic symbols, *Puerta del Sol* is not about this pre-Hispanic gate but about how this civilisation has been mystified and granted a status of national symbol, which has been uncritically reproduced in art practice. It is a disruption of Tiwanaku as a mystic centre, as the origin of Bolivian identity and art, as eternal and unique, among other qualities.

Around the time of the exhibition of *Puerta del Sol*, a new emblematic ritual was created in Tiwanaku by the Katarista political movement:⁶³⁹ the celebration of the Aymara New Year on the 21 of June winter solstice (in the southern hemisphere).⁶⁴⁰ The Tiwanaku archaeological site has held a particular symbolism for this movement as the latter was launched at the site, in 1973, with the reading of the Tiwanaku Manifesto – a foundational document denouncing the exploitation and cultural oppression of the indigenous people and demanding a radical change in society and in the state.⁶⁴¹

The celebration of the Aymara New Year has grown and evolved, since then, converting Tiwanaku into an important tourist attraction on this date. The

⁶³⁹ Katarismo is a political movement launched in 1973 to defend the rights of indigenous people. It was named after the 18th century indigenous revolt leader Tupac Katari. The new parties influenced by Katarismo participated in the presidential elections of 1978, 1979 and 1980.

⁶⁴⁰ Sandra Cáceres Copa, 'La invención de la tradición en el Año Nuevo Aymara' in *El Colectivo*, number 3, La Paz, January 2010, p. 74.

⁶⁴¹ Silvia Rivera cites the first paragraph of the manifesto: 'El Manifiesto comienza recogiendo la frase del Inca Yupanqui en las cortes españolas a fines de la colonia: "Un pueblo que oprime a otro no puede ser libre", y prosigue: "Nosotros los campesinos quechuas y aymaras, lo mismo que los de otras culturas autóctonas del país, decimos lo mismo. Nos sentimos económicamente explotados y cultural y políticamente oprimidos. En Bolivia no ha habido una integración de culturas sino una superposición y dominación, habiendo permanecido nosotros en el estrato más bajo y explotado de esa pirámide4.'" Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa 1900-1980*, La Mirada Salvaje, La Paz, 2010, p. 182.

importance it has acquired and the underlying political gain, was further evidenced in the declaration of the Aymara New Year as a national holiday in 2010. Researcher Sandra Cáceres has examined the fictive nature of the recent construction of this ritual as fact.⁶⁴² Cáceres pointed out that the manipulated photograph of the sun passing through the Gate of the Sun, widely reproduced by the press in the early 1980s, was an important part of the making of this myth.⁶⁴³ Cáceres explains that the image reproduced by the press was a photomontage by artist-photographer Sabino Pinto after which the myth that the sun passes through the gate as it rises on each winter solstice was generated.⁶⁴⁴ Without checking the facts, the image was printed in the local press with a reference to the Aymara New Year and no mention of its artistic origin.⁶⁴⁵ Sociologist Silvia Rivera has highlighted another fictive element in this ritual: the imposition of the cult of the sun, a specific Inca devotion, onto the Aymara people,⁶⁴⁶ who are currently the majority of the inhabitants of the village of Tiwanaku. This manipulation of fact and fiction was set within a context where indigenous legacy was embraced in political discourse following the re-establishment of democracy in Bolivia in 1982 and the reappearance of Kataristas who had gone underground during the dictatorship of Hugo Banzer (1971-1978).

On the other hand, the mysticism surrounding Tiwanaku is well ingrained in Bolivian art history. The gallery⁶⁴⁷ where *Puerta del Sol* was exhibited was named after the painter Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas (1899-1950), the main leader and protagonist of the Indigenismo movement in Bolivia. In some of his best known artworks of the late 1920s, Guzmán de Rojas depicted Tiwanaku as a symbol of

⁶⁴² Cáceres, *Ibid.*

⁶⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁵ The newspaper most likely believed that the image was real. It is possible that the editors did not know about Sabino Pinto's work and the fact that he frequently used photomontage in his artworks. For example, in the early 1990s, Sabino Pinto represented Bolivia in the Havana Biennial with a photomontage of the city of La Paz superimposed with images of indigenous people marching into the Ánimas mountainous landscape in the outskirts of La Paz.

⁶⁴⁶ Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 'La invención del año nuevo Aymara' in *La Razón* [website], 12 August 2012, <www.la-razon.com/suplementos/tendencias/invencion-Ano-Nuevo-Aymara_0_1666633439.html>, accessed 17 December 2012.

⁶⁴⁷ Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas was the first public gallery to exhibit artists' works in the 1950s. Most renowned artists, particularly those of the 'Generación del 52', have presented exhibitions in this space.

the energy that metaphorically gives life to the protagonists of a ‘new’ Bolivia, an idea which had gained particular visibility around the country’s centenary of independence in 1925.

In the painting *El beso del ídolo* (The Kiss of the Idol) [Fig. 5.2], a presumably virginal and practically naked woman, in indigenous attire, represents the idea of a new Bolivia that was recurrent in intellectual circles around the time. The idol that kisses the woman is one of the monolith statues of Tiwanaku who has risen from its petrified state for the occasion. This kiss takes place amid other monoliths who witness the scene from the background and in front of two Tiwanaku style vases. Similarly, in *El triunfo de la naturaleza* (The Triumph of Nature, Fig. 5.3), one of Guzmán de Rojas’ best known paintings, he establishes a similar analogy. An indigenous naked man is rising with his female counterpart – the new citizens of the country – from a stela with the image at the centre of the Gate of the Sun of Tiwanaku. Further references to the indigenous world are made in the stylization of the features of the female figure – slanted eyes and high cheek bones – a characteristic of Guzmán de Rojas, and in the stone idol and *awayos* (indigenous textiles) on which she reclines. The ritual connotations of these paintings reflect, at the same time, the painter’s interest in occultism. According to the artist’s son, Iván, between 1946 and 1949, Guzmán de Rojas devoted time to the study of esoteric knowledge, astrology, and alchemy.⁶⁴⁸ The latter was an attempt to reproduce a secret technique used by Da Vinci, which he claimed that he had discovered during his investigations at the National Gallery of London in 1946.⁶⁴⁹ The emblematic place of Tiwanaku symbols in these paintings by

⁶⁴⁸ Iván Guzmán de Rojas, ‘Pinacoteca Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas’, Neotec [website], nd., <www.neotec.cc/gallery/sala7/index_es.html>, accessed 17 June 2015.

⁶⁴⁹ Iván Guzmán de Rojas narrates his father’s trip to London in his website: ‘Viaja invitado por el British Council para permanecer un año en Inglaterra con el propósito de conocer directamente el movimiento artístico de Gran Bretaña e intercambiar conocimientos en técnicas de restauración de cuadros antiguos en relación a los trabajos de reparación de daños causados por la guerra que terminó el año anterior. [...] Tiene acceso a fotografías infrarrojas y de rayos X de cuadros del Renacimiento. Llega a la conclusión que estos cuadros no fueron pintados al óleo sino con una técnica de reacciones químicas que él llamo “coagulatoria”. Sus apuntes sobre esta teoría le fueron substraídos por un colega becado que se sirvió de prácticas hipnóticas. Esta experiencia esotérica, la pérdida de sus cuadernos de apuntes y las condiciones de ambiente muy depresivo que reinaba en esa época de invierno en Londres le desencadenaron una crisis nerviosa. Interrumpió su estadía en Inglaterra y partió de retorno en abril de 1947.’ Ibid.

Guzmán de Rojas' is also coherent with the centrality of indigenous motifs in his works and his proposal of Tiwanaku as Bolivia's artistic language:

Let us learn to speak an ethnic language, [which is] our own, the great art of Tiwanaku, then we will know how to express our motifs, our feelings [which we need in order] to produce a national art, otherwise we will continue playing the fools, being [Bolivian] Indians expressing ourselves in a laughable French gypsy slang, who cannot manage to make our feelings understood and who do not notice our betraying monolithic faces.⁶⁵⁰

In these paintings, Guzmán de Rojas also depicts strong and healthy bodies which resonate with the influential ideas of Franz Tamayo who had proposed, in *Creación de la pedagogía nacional* (The Creation of a National Pedagogy, 1910), the new Bolivian citizen to be composed of the strong moral and physical will of the indigenous people and the intelligence of the criollos.⁶⁵¹

While for contemporary art historian Villarroel Claire, *El beso del ídolo* represents 'the dream of the artist in the future of his race', a similar statement can be made for *El triunfo de la naturaleza*. Both of these paintings represent the mystical awakening of a mestizo Bolivian identity that is renewed and brought back to life with the energy of its indigenous ancestry.⁶⁵² For Tamayo, both indigenous energy and bodies were essential components of the new ideal citizen of Bolivia, as Javier Sanjinés has pointed out:

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of *Creación de la pedagogía nacional* was the anticolonial tone that Tamayo gave to his discourse. Refusing to imitate the rationalist methods of European positivism, Tamayo aimed to reclaim the vital indigenous energy of Bolivia. Tamayo's anticolonialism, a precursor to the nationalist rhetoric of later decades, assumed the necessity

⁶⁵⁰ The original text reads: 'Aprendamos a hablar en un idioma étnico, el nuestro, el gran arte de Tiwanaku, entonces sabremos expresar nuestros motivos, nuestros sentimientos para producir Arte Nacional, de lo contrario seguiremos haciendo el ridículo de ser indios expresándonos en un risible "cató" francés, sin conseguir hacer comprender nuestros sentimientos y sin reparar siquiera en nuestras delatadoras caras monolíticas...' Iván Guzmán de Rojas, 'Pinacoteca Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas'.

⁶⁵¹ See: Javier Sanjinés C., 'Tamayo, observador: negociando lo "letrado" con lo visual' in: Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri (ed.), *Propuestas y tendencias del arte boliviano a fines del milenio*, SIART'99, La Paz, 2002, p. 22-23 and Franz Tamayo, *Creación Pedagogía Nacional*, Editorial Juventud, 1986.

⁶⁵² The original quote: 'El artista es la mano profética que prepara el porvenir a que está predestinado un pueblo; tal destino parece haber presentido el artista Guzmán de Rojas, por eso halló en Tiwanaku su ideal de arte y la "razón única de su vida". *El Beso del Ídolo*, en la transparencia de su velo, que cubre la virginidad robusta es el sueño del artista en el porvenir de su raza.' in Rigoberto Villarroel Claire, *Arte Contemporáneo. Pintores, escultores y grabadores bolivianos*, La Paz, Academia Nacional, 1952, p. 26.

of constructing an original identity. This presumption fused the notion of the autochthonous with the idea that Bolivia's indigenous roots were the source of its energy and vitality.⁶⁵³

Guzmán de Rojas has been referred to as the most influential figure in Bolivian art between 1930 and 1950.⁶⁵⁴ The prevalence of his ideas and beliefs, as well as those of other intellectuals, like Emilio Villanueva, who also was a friend of his,⁶⁵⁵ are reflected in the artworks and views of some of the artists of the time. For example, in her autobiography, renowned sculptor Marina Núñez del Prado qualified Tiwanaku as a 'talisman anchored in the heights of the Andes'.⁶⁵⁶ She visited the site during the winter equinox, around 1930,⁶⁵⁷ with a committee of intellectuals and specialists including painter Guzmán de Rojas, then director of the Academia de Bellas Artes.⁶⁵⁸ Following the instructions of archaeologist Arthur Posnansky, the committee waited for the first ray of the sun to fall on one of the angles of the gate. The mystical language that Núñez del Prado used to narrate her experience is particularly telling of the place that Tiwanaku has occupied (and still entertains) in the imagination of several Bolivian artists:

Mystery put its hand on our throats, it seemed like we were going to witness the birth of the gods. Reflections of an ancient golden colour skirted the soft hills. The monoliths of Kalasasaya, upright like the remains

⁶⁵³ Javier Sanjinés, *Mestizaje Upside Down: Aesthetic Politics in Modern Bolivia*, University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, c 2004, p. 53.

⁶⁵⁴ Gisbert describes Guzmán de Rojas as the 'referee of taste' in Teresa Gisbert, 'Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX', p. 37 in Pedro Querejazu, *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*. Pedro Querejazu provides, on the other hand, a more detailed account of his professional relevance and influence: 'Guzmán de Rojas, hombre de personalidad dominante y apasionado, tan pronto llegó al país se convirtió en el personaje artístico más importante. Fue nombrado Director General de Bellas Artes, y fue docente largos años en la Academia de Bellas Artes de La Paz. Desde allí impuso al indigenismo como estética nacional. Pedro Querejazu, 'La pintura boliviana del siglo XX' in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 23.

⁶⁵⁵ Teresa Gisbert, *ibid.*, p. 45.

⁶⁵⁶ The original text reads: 'Para mí, Tiawanaku [sic] no es una ciudad arqueológica en ruinas, es un talismán anclado en las alturas de Los Andes [...].' Marina Núñez del Prado, *Eternidad en Los Andes*, p. 30.

⁶⁵⁷ Although Núñez del Prado mentions the equinox as the time of her visit, this is probably a mistake because the date of her visit was 21 June, which does not coincide with the equinox in the Southern Hemisphere (which takes place in December) but with the winter solstice. Although she does not mention the year of this visit, I believe it probably took place in the early 1930s, as the reference to this trip is included in her book following her account of her acting in *Wara Wara*, a film released in 1930.

⁶⁵⁸ The committee, presided by archaeologist Arthur Posnansky, included Valentín Ventalló from the Spanish Embassy, collector and 'archaeology expert' Coronel Federico Diez de Medina, poet Yolanda Bedregal who was the director of the Museo Nacional de Antropología and Ms. María Luisa de Urioste. Marina Núñez del Prado, *Eternidad en Los Andes*, p. 30.

of a forest consumed by the millenary fire of a storm of stars, began to extend their shadows. At 7.30 hours, the first ray of sun illuminated one of the angles of the Gate of the Sun and spread in all of its range like an epiphany, like an invisible choir of angels.⁶⁵⁹

Although it is questionable whether Núñez del Prado saw the sun rise on the Gate of the Sun (it actually rises through the gate of Kalasasaya), what is clear is that her depiction of the Tiwanaku is influenced by the mystical ideas surrounding Tiwanaku as well as by Posnansky's theories about the advanced knowledge of astronomy of Tiwanaku civilisation.

In this art historical context, Valcárcel's *Puerta del Sol* was a deliberate disruption of the mysticism surrounding Tiwanaku, as well as Bolivian art history and artistic practice. *Puerta del Sol* was meant to provoke the public accustomed to visit the gallery where masters of the previous generation, like Enrique Arnal and Gil Imaná, exhibited.⁶⁶⁰ It is significant that Valcárcel mentions Imaná and Arnal as they both have painted national and indigenous themes in some of their best known artworks: Arnal's *aparapitas* (indigenous migrants who work carrying heavy loads on their backs) and Gil Imaná's emaciated indigenous women with shawls with the Andean cross motif.

Founded in the late 1940s, the Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas was the first public showroom for artists in La Paz. It was inaugurated with an exhibition of Guzmán de Rojas,⁶⁶¹ and in the following decades became a place of prestige where some of the most renowned artists have launched their careers.

In *Puerta del Sol*, Valcárcel playfully negates the mysticism of Tiwanaku with a conceptual recreation of the Gate of the Sun. The use of text as aesthetic language seems like an intentional provocation to the visitors of the gallery. It is a clever solution used to challenge the mystic aspects of Tiwanaku and art practice.

⁶⁵⁹ The original reads: 'El misterio ponía su mano en nuestras gargantas, parecía que íbamos a presenciar el nacimiento de los dioses. Reflejos de un dorado antiguo bordeaban las suaves colinas. Los monolitos de Kala-Sasaya[sic], erguidos como los restos de un bosque consumido por el fuego milenario de una tormenta de estrellas, comenzaron a alargar sus sombras. A las 7.30 horas, el primer rayo de sol iluminó un ángulo de la Portada del Sol y se difundió por todos los ámbitos como una epifanía, algo así como un coro de ángeles invisibles... La Puerta del Sol, bloque de piedra labrada con signos cabalísticos y secretos que nadie ha podido leer todavía, se iluminó.' Ibid., p. 31.

⁶⁶⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

⁶⁶¹ Iván Guzmán de Rojas, 'Pinacoteca Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas', <www.neotec.cc/gallery/sala7/index_es.html>, accessed 17 June 2015.

Puerta del Sol consists of an introductory panel with postcards and sketches [Fig. 5.4]; and five representations of the Gate of the Sun [Figs. 5.5 and 5.6].

The introductory panel shows the presumed notes of Valcárcel's creative process. His comments on five similar postcards of the Gate of the Sun with llamas and one back view of the gate are: 'radial', 'strong winds from the north', [crossed out remarks], 'therapeutic' and 'cloudy day'. The pointing of the arrow to the 'radial' postcard (the one with a back view of the gate), next to three similar gates pasted to its right, seems to indicate that this is the idea that Valcárcel has chosen after a careful analysis of the other alternatives. Three pieces of paper with sketches and annotations provide further detail about this artwork's creative process. As indicated in the sketches, in the cardboard representations that constitute the main body of the artwork, Valcárcel keeps the proportions of this iconic Gate; an ironic comment, most likely, on the exaggerated importance that Tiwanaku aesthetics has had in landmarks of Bolivian architecture (i.e. Villanueva's Monoblock). The handwritten annotations on the plinths of the gates were recently described by the artist as 'pseudo-documentation' of the production of the work. These texts provide information such as the title of the artwork, its dimensions, and the exact technique, including the brand of spray paint, the distance at which it was sprayed, as well as the amount of time of its application, for example:⁶⁶²

[Left plinth:]
 Project: 034-82
 Series: Tiwanaku
 Title: Puerta del Sol
 Action: Spray (aeroSOL)
 Surface: corrugated carton
 Dimensions: 219 x 150 cm
 Sky: white latex (2 layers)
 Dimensions: 50 x 100 cm
 Number: 2 of 5
 Day: Wednesday
 Date: 24 February 1982
 Time: approx. 12:40
 Place: La Paz
 Author: Producciones

⁶⁶² Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012.

Reason: Art is not dead⁶⁶³

[Right plinth:]

Colour of the sun:

Chrome 1134 aluminium

Painting: Spray (Nylon enamel)

Application: 12 sec

Distance: 40 cm

Observations: none

Effect: radial!⁶⁶⁴

The ironic inclusion of documentation of the creative process in the artwork humorously mimics museum and gallery labels and the uselessness of such scientific texts in the appreciation of art. The latter idea, recurrent in Valcárcel's writings and presentations, is also clearly illustrated in a text he wrote for an exhibition in 1990, in Casa de La Cultura of Santa Cruz de la Sierra:

Warning:

Prepare for the Worst

To the lazy teachers who send children to 'investigate' in art exhibitions instead of sending them to go and marvel themselves; and [who send them] to 'collect data' instead of collecting personal and genuine aesthetic experiences...

To the ladies eager for catalogues and publications with opinions, and [eager for] meetings with explanations and claims, that according to them, will help them better appreciate an artwork...

To the journalists anxious for explanations, justifications and theoretical interpretations so that they can better inform the public...

To all of those who distort art and confuse aesthetic phenomena with something [that can be verbalized] that can be catalogued, and is rational...

Prepare for the worst: to live (and die) without having ever **enjoyed** an artwork. When in fact it is so simple.⁶⁶⁵

⁶⁶³ Original text: 'Proyecto: 034-82/ Serie: Tiawanacu/ Título: Puerta del Sol/ Acción: Spray (aero SOL)/ Soporte: cartón corrugado/ Dimensiones: 219 x 150 cms/ Cielo: latex blanco (2 capas)/ Dimensiones: 50 x 100 cms./ Número: 2 de 5/ Día: Miércoles/ Fecha: 24 de febrero 1982/ Hora: aprox. 12:40/ Lugar: La Paz. Autor: Producciones/ Razón: El arte no ha muerto.'

⁶⁶⁴ Original text: 'Color del sol: Cromo 1134 aluminio/ Pintura Spray (Nylon enamel?)/ Aplicación: 12 seg./ Distancia: 40 cms/ Observaciones: ninguna/ Efecto: radial!'

⁶⁶⁵ The original reads: 'Advertencia: Prepárese para lo peor/ A los maestros cómodos que envían a los niños a 'investigar' en las exposiciones de arte en vez de a maravillarse; y a 'recopilar datos' en vez de recopilar experiencias estéticas propias y genuinas.../ A las damas ávidas de catálogos y publicaciones con opiniones, y reuniones con aclaraciones y declaraciones para, según ellas, poder apreciar mejor la obra.../ A los periodistas ansiosos por explicaciones, justificaciones e interpretaciones teóricas para, según ellos, informar mejor al supuesto público.../ A todos aquellos que distorsionan el arte y confunden el fenómeno estético con algo verbalizado, catalogable, racional.../ Prepárese para lo peor: Vivir (y morir) sin haber jamás **disfrutado** de una obra de arte. Cuando en realidad todo es tan simple.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'Advertencia'

At the same time, these ‘wall labels’ disclose Valcárcel’s artistic ‘secrets’ in a milieu where most of the artists are obsessed with the secrets of mastering technique. Exhibiting this information further makes possible for anyone to reproduce this artwork (as if it were a Fluxus art piece), as he has done himself by making five ‘copies’ of the Gate of the Sun for the exhibition. These ‘detailed’ instructions on how to reproduce his *Puerta del Sol* subvert both the uniqueness of his own artwork as well as that of this pre-Hispanic emblem, which is almost a national symbol and an artistic paradigm in Bolivian art history. The choice of materials – corrugated carton, markers and spray paint – underlines the temporality of the artwork (now non-existent), in contrast with the ‘timeless’ quality of the stone of the original Gate of the Sun. The ‘poor’ materials equally negate the historic transcendence sought by the majority of artists in Bolivia at the time. The deceiving simplicity of the technique employed in *Puerta del Sol* was undoubtedly also aimed at provoking fellow artists who disapproved of Valcárcel’s use of photography in his drawings.

Valcárcel’s ‘scientific’ annotations and explanatory notes on his artwork can also be considered a parody of the claims and speculations made about the astronomical knowledge of Tiwanaku civilization and its subsequent association with the Aymara indigenous people. In July of 1982, the same year that *Puerta del Sol* was exhibited, an article in the newspaper published an interview with researcher Kara Chukiwanka, the author of a calendar in which he establishes the Indian New Year to be 22 June.⁶⁶⁶ Chukiwanka’s theory, like the one brought forward by Arthur Posnansky, is sustained on speculation – on the idea that the sun’s first rays pass through the Gate of the Sun on the morning of the winter solstice. Posnansky’s interpretation of the Gate of the Sun in relation to the position of the sun, and related theories, are discredited nowadays as the original location of the Gate is today still uncertain. The Gate was moved from its original site by the Spanish conquistadors in their attempts to eradicate indigenous

Prepárese para lo peor’, in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, pp. 84-85.

⁶⁶⁶ Anonymous, ‘El año nuevo indio’, *Semana de Última Hora*, 2 July 1982.

idolatries; it currently stands where it was found when it was discovered in the nineteenth century.

Valcárcel makes an indirect allusion to the connection between the rays of the sun and the Gate in his ‘description’, in the introductory panel of *Puerta del Sol*, of the gate as ‘radial’. Painting the sun coming through the middle of his five gates of the sun mimics the image that was circulating in the press associated with the new year of the Aymara people, which is linked for ideological reasons (and not scientific ones) to Tiwanaku. While Valcárcel was most likely unaware of the construction of the New Year myth by Kataristas, he nonetheless took note of the fanciful nature of the link that was established between the Gate of the Sun and the Aymara people. Reproducing the image of the sun through the gate is thus a parody of all the ‘pseudo-evidence’, which was often too quickly embraced in Bolivia by artists and the general population alike. Valcárcel was equally hinting that he was not taking seriously the connection between the Gate, the sun and the Aymara New Year in the description of his action with a pun made out of the term ‘aerosol’ – wherein he underlines ‘sol’, which means sun in Spanish. The austerity in the use of colour and inexpressive and ‘technical’ language of Valcárcel’s *Puerta del Sol*, moreover, contrasts with the mystic and colourful attributes associated with Tiwanaku in Guzmán de Rojas’ paintings.

In addition to the abovementioned ‘myths’, many other unfounded theories and statements surrounding Tiwanaku have circulated throughout the years. Their scope is varied. The most common around the time of Valcárcel’s *Puerta del Sol* is the one attributing pre-Hispanic civilizations a socialist economy.⁶⁶⁷ As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Tiwanaku occupied a special place

⁶⁶⁷ Reinaga wrote, in 1970, a political thesis at the request of the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia. These ideas came to light more widely and openly after the recovery of democracy in 1982. Reinaga wrote: ‘Preamérica, el Tawantinsuyu, era una confederación de pueblos libres, unidos por carreteras, puentes, acueductos. El alimento estaba almacenado en enormes depósitos a lo largo y lo ancho del Continente. Esta abundancia determinó una organización, donde la propiedad era social. Todo era de todos los hombres en carne y espíritu eran idénticos a sí mismos. A tal punto que un hombre frente a otro hombre era el mismo hombre. Un hombre ante otro hombre era como si en un espejo viera su propia imagen. Es aquí donde no hubo lo tuyo ni lo mío. La nuestra, era una sociedad feliz. Los indios de esta América india, es aquí donde creamos la PRIMERA REPUBLICA SOCIALISTA DEL MUNDO.’ See: Fausto Reinaga, *Tesis India* reprinted in Yachaicuna n. 12, December 2009, <icci.nativeweb.org/yachaikuna/yachaykuna12.pdf>, accessed 1 May 2016.

for Trotskyist critic, Salazar Mostajo, and his followers. Not only did he include the Gate of the Sun of Tiwanaku in the ‘good’ side of his 1979 *Lucha de clases* mural [Fig. 2. 27] but, in the same year, he also praised Cristina Endara, one of his students at the Escuela de Bellas Artes for her ability in schematizing Tiwanaku features in her artwork.⁶⁶⁸ In his book, Salazar Mostajo highlighted the biennial organized by Pucara group, among other things, for its non-capitalistic ethos which was manifested in its non-monetary prize, a Tiwanaku *kernu*.⁶⁶⁹ The cover of the catalogue of the second biennial shows an image of the sun passing through the Gate of Kalasasaya in Tiwanaku [Fig. 2.13] – which it indeed does but during the autumn and spring equinox. Perhaps the organisers of the Pucara biennial did not notice that their so-called adversaries, Bienal INBO, also used Tiwanaku imagery in their catalogue. No captions are included but the image on the cover of the 1977 catalogue is a photograph illustrating a particular technique used in Tiwanaku construction to unite megaliths. According to the ethos of the Bienal INBO, the image is, without a doubt, a more abstract, subtle and less well-known symbol of Tiwanaku. Artist Gastón Ugalde also made artworks incorporating these stones in the 1980s, and he created a special installation for the last presidential ceremony of Evo Morales in Tiwanaku, in 2015.⁶⁷⁰ Another telling coincidence between these presumably opposed biennials is found in their use of earth, ceramic and stone colours, elements associated with Tiwanaku civilization, on the cover of both catalogues. Tiwanaku as an icon is so ingrained in the art system that, in the early 1980s, some of the symbols of the Gate of the Sun were used in the diplomas of the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo – together with the *kantuta* national flower, and the portrait of the War of Independence hero who gives his name to the competition.⁶⁷¹ In the same spirit of establishing links with Tiwanaku culture as an art historical antecedent to contemporary art practice, a

⁶⁶⁸ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, ‘La pintura boliviana contemporánea. Apuntes para una Historia Crítica’ (1975), *ESBA Revista de la Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes*, La Paz, 4 December 1976, p. 11.

⁶⁶⁹ More recently, in 2008, Edgar Arandia, the director of the National Museum of Art (2008 - 2015) and a representative of the current socialist government who coincides with some of Salazar Mostajo’s ideas, has launched a stone sculpture symposium in Tiwanaku.

⁶⁷⁰ Marcelo Tedesqui, ‘En ceremonia de Tiwanaku intervienen 1,115 personas’, *El Deber* [website], 21 January 2015, <www.eldeber.com.bo/bolivia/ceremonia-tiwanaku-intervienen-115-personas.html>, accessed 22 April 2016.

⁶⁷¹ Diploma granted to Javier Fernandez, winner of the prize in watercolour category, 31 July 1981.

stone sculpture biennial was organized in 2004 by the Art Department (now called Carrera de Artes) of the state university UMSA in the village where the archaeological site is located.

There is an equally unfounded myth surrounding Tiwanaku, which was humorously treated by Valcárcel a few years later: the one affirming that the ceremonial centre was built by aliens.⁶⁷² In his *Alfa Centauri* series [Figs. 5.7 and 8],⁶⁷³ painted between 1988 and 1994, Valcárcel ironically addresses the latter topic by inverting the logic of the theory. He depicts the Gate of the Sun of Tiwanaku firmly grounded in another planet, floating or even orbiting in space, along with a pyramid, an obelisk and other megalithic structures that he describes as:

Fragments of our world (lithic blocks, predominantly) levitate in sidereal space or integrate themselves to landscapes of other planets. In several artworks the Gate of the Sun is present, or the ruins of Tiwanaku. The existence of ‘our world’ in remote and unknown spheres. The anti-thesis of the idea of the presence of the other in our world.⁶⁷⁴

The type of playful antithetical reasoning underlying Valcárcel’s cosmic representations of the Gate of Sun was a useful strategy used by the artist to unmask the latent authoritarianism implicit in the construction of an idealised Bolivian identity based in indigenous culture. The relation between antithesis as strategy and these beliefs will be analysed in more detail in the section that follows.

⁶⁷² As Clare Sammells points, the building of Tiwanaku has been attributed not only to extraterrestrials but also Atlantians, Egyptians, etc. Clare A. Sammells, ‘The Aymara Year Count: Calendrical Translations in Tiwanaku, Bolivia’, *Ethnology*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer 2011), University of Pittsburgh- Of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education, pp. 245-258.

⁶⁷³ Roberto Valcárcel, ‘Alfa Centauri’ in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, pp. 220-229.

⁶⁷⁴ The original reads: ‘Fragmentos de nuestro mundo (predominantemente bloques líticos) levitan en el espacio sideral o se integran a paisajes de otros planetas. En varias obras aparece la Puerta del Sol de las ruinas de Tiwanacu [sic]. La existencia de ‘lo nuestro’ en ámbitos remotos y desconocidos. Una antítesis a la idea de la presencia de lo otro en este mundo.’ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 220.

II. Cruz Escalonada Unmasked

During the 1990s, characterized by an effervescence of indigenous spirit – greatly influenced by the celebrations commemorating the 500 years of the ‘discovery’ of the American continent – Valcárcel was invited by Taipinquiri Gallery to participate in an exhibition that focused on the theme *Cruz escalonada*, the indigenous stepped cross, also known as square cross. Named after an Aymara concept which means ‘the centre of the centre’ or the soul,⁶⁷⁵ Taipinquiri was an institution that promoted in its exhibitions of painting and sculpture the ideals of pre-Hispanic Andean indigenous art; particularly its integral and mystical view of the world.⁶⁷⁶ Valcárcel, who was against this spirit, the Bolivian artistic tradition and the romantic ‘revival’ of indigenous heritage endorsed by the gallery, responded to the invitation by sending a textual artwork about not granting the European component of Bolivian society some of its rights; and about the problems implicit in not recognizing, repressing and negating this ‘white minority’. Taipinquiri’s project was framed within a wider cultural and political movement in the country. Taipinquiri’s exhibition coincided with the presence of indigenous and populist parties both in the national government and in the city of La Paz. The gallery was inaugurated in 1993, the same year that a government conformed by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement, MNR) and the Katarista parties assumed office. It was the first time that the Katarista movement was in the government, and that an indigenous leader was elected vice president of the country. On the other hand, inviting Katarista leader Victor Hugo Cárdenas to the MNR formula had been a political move to neutralize the support that the populist party, CONDEPA (Conciencia de Patria – Conscience of Fatherland), was accumulating within the indigenous migrant population. Having an indigenous vice president was a strong symbol for the population and, in the end, proved to be useful for winning the

⁶⁷⁵ Denisse Ostermann, ‘Taipinquiri’ in Ríos Gastelú, Mario, *Creadores de Luz, Espacio y Forma* (Artistas plásticos de Bolivia), Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, La Paz, 1998 p. 13.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

elections.⁶⁷⁷ The indigenous participation in this political coalition materialised during this government in the revision of the country's political constitution, sanctioned in 1995, to include a definition of Bolivia as a 'multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural country'. This gradual increase in visibility of the indigenous population in the political arena had been preceded by the election of a CONDEPA party leader to the city government. A large part of the party's success derived from its efforts in giving voice and making the urban indigenous population of La Paz, the centre of their radio and television programmes.⁶⁷⁸ The radio and television stations that they owned manipulated the image of its leaders, and played an equally important role in the promotion of the party. Moreover, CONDEPA contributed to the rise of indigenous representation in politics by having a woman of indigenous descent – 'Comadre Remedios' – as representative in Congress.⁶⁷⁹ The support of the population materialized in CONDEPA's presiding the city office of La Paz during two consecutive terms in the first half of the 1990s, and the city of El Alto once.⁶⁸⁰ The affinity between the organisers of the stepped cross exhibition and the new political trend is evident in the 'pluri-multi' and development-type of vocabulary that one of its consultants, anthropologist Carlos Ostermann, used in a gallery publication:⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁷ It could also be argued that the party also needed to make such a statement, in the light of its participation (and specifically that of Sánchez de Lozada) in the application of an economic 'shock therapy', during the abrupt shift of the country into a neoliberal economy that he implemented as Minister of Planning in 1985.

⁶⁷⁸ RTP, Popular Radio and Television stations gave voice to the less fortunate in their *Tribuna Libre del Pueblo* (The People's Free Tribune) show where the audience was encouraged to come and narrate their cause of suffering. Its news programme and others, like *Sábados populares*, were also targeted to this audience.

⁶⁷⁹ While 'comadre' translates as godmother, it is an endearing term used in Bolivia and very well ingrained in urban indigenous culture. Remedios Loza is a chola, an urban woman of indigenous descent, whose garb is made up by the Spanish *mantilla* and *pollera* (shawl and skirt). The garb of the chola, usually complemented with a bowler hat, flashy gold jewellery and flat shoes, originates in a colonial decree to force indigenous people to leave behind their distinguishing clothes. In contemporary Bolivia, the garb of the chola is a symbol of indigenous descent. Like the other leaders of the party, Remedios Loza gained popular acceptance by first working as a television presenter.

⁶⁸⁰ During the first half of the 1990s, La Paz had two mayors from the CONDEPA party: Julio Mantilla (1991-1992) and Mónica Medina (1993-1995).

⁶⁸¹ This was a ten-year publication that included a selection of artworks from artists who had exhibited in the gallery. Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, *Taipinquiri 10 Años*, Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, La Paz, 2003. Soon after the Cruz Escalonada event, two of the Ostermann siblings worked in government offices. Carlos Ostermann was named under-secretary of Cultural Heritage in 1995, and his sister, Denisse

Temples, communities, paintings, sculptures, musical scores, dances, rituals and sacred objects, among others, which like the alchemist's mortar transubstantiate two worlds, creating particles, with each strike [of the pestle] that are summed and amalgamated to one another to conform a new and complex cultural reality, which in its totality is the face and soul of Bolivia today.

Article 1 of the Political Constitution of the State of the Republic of Bolivia, modified in 1994 [sic], will legitimise that singular process, which reads to the letter:

Bolivia free, independent, sovereign, multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural, constituted in a unitary republic, adopts for its government the democratic representative form, founded in the union and solidarity of all of Bolivians.

Multi-ethnicity and cultural plurality characterizes us as a nation. Our strengths and weaknesses derive from this fact. I believe that recognizing ourselves as a unique country is, in our judgment, the first step in assuming coherent and appropriate development policies, not only in a national level but also in a regional one.

In this respect, more than barriers, our differences [should] constitute the guidelines for planning and executing programs to elevate the quality of life of the different groups that make up the social structure of the country and of Latin America in its entirety. We should, therefore, not talk about sustainable development and even less about regional integration if there is no promotion and recognition of the multiple cultural factors that give consistency and meaning to the individual and collective social action of a nation.⁶⁸²

Ostermann, director of the Casa de la Cultura, in 1996. Denisse Ostermann was recently appointed deputy mayor of La Paz, 2005-2010, and she is currently a representative in the city council.

⁶⁸² The original text reads: 'Templos, comunidades, cuadros, esculturas, partituras, danzas, ritos y objetos sagrados, entre otros, al igual que el mortero de alquimista, se transubstancian dos mundos, creando a cada golpe partículas, que sumadas y amalgamadas entre sí, conformarán una nueva y compleja realidad cultural, que en su conjunto es el rostro y el alma de la Bolivia de hoy. El Artículo 1o, de la Constitución Política del Estado de la República de Bolivia, modificada en 1994, legitimará este singular proceso, que a la letra dice: 'Bolivia libre, independiente, soberana, multiétnica y pluricultural, constituida en República unitaria, adopta para su gobierno la forma democrática representativa, fundada en la unión y solidaridad de todos los bolivianos. Lo multiétnico y pluricultural, nos caracteriza como nación. Nuestras fortalezas y debilidades surgen de este hecho. Considero que el reconocerse como un país único es, a nuestro juicio, el primer paso para asumir políticas coherentes y apropiadas de desarrollo no sólo nacional, sino ante todo, regional. En este sentido, nuestras diferencias antes que barreras, son pautas a considerarse en la planificación y ejecución de programas para elevar la calidad de vida de los distintos grupos que componen la estructura social del país y de Latino América en su conjunto. Por lo tanto, no pueden hablarse de desarrollo sostenible y menos de integración regional si no se promueven y reconocen los múltiples factores culturales que dan consistencia y sentido a la acción social individual y colectiva de una nación.' Carlos Ostermann in Mario Ríos Gastelú, *Creadores de Luz, Espacio y Forma (Artistas plásticos de Bolivia)*, p. 12.

Some artists embraced this moment of populist and indigenous emergence in their art. One example is Javier Fernández's *Ekeko* in which he paints the effigy of abundance of the Alasitas Feast in front of the Gate of the Sun of Tiwanaku.⁶⁸³ Fernández represents the Ekeko with some of his usual attributes, foodstuff, bank notes, as well as Andean musical instruments and coca leaves. The watercolour fits so well the spirit of CONDEPA, also founded at the archaeological site of Tiwanaku, that the party decided to print it as a poster to promote itself during the campaign for the mayor of La Paz. However, the artwork reproduced in the poster presented a slight modification: a portrait of the party leader Carlos Palenque with his wife Mónica Medina,⁶⁸⁴ instead of the banknotes painted by Fernández. This modification was addressed in an anonymous newspaper note which questioned the probable use of public funds for the printing of the posters (the mayor in office was from CONDEPA), and denounced the modification of an artwork for the benefit of the party.⁶⁸⁵

Among the many projects organised by Taipinquiri, 'La Cruz Escalonada' represents the gallery's indigenous vocation particularly well.⁶⁸⁶ The exhibition was part of a larger event, a congress held annually between 1994 and 1996. The programme of the meeting that took place in 1995 included a series of events – art exhibitions, music festivals, talks, and a ritual ceremony – inspired by the stepped cross.⁶⁸⁷ Although the event was intentionally organised around the dates of the Catholic feast of the Cross (for example, it inaugurated on the 3rd of May in 1995),⁶⁸⁸ except for a few talks on syncretism, Taipinquiri chose to ignore the centrality of Catholicism in this feast. Implicit in Taipinquiri's omission was the

⁶⁸³ Ekeko is a figure of abundance typical of the fair of Alasitas, an important festivity where wishes in the form of miniatures – ranging from houses, university diplomas, bolivianos, dollars and euros notes – are bought and offered to friends and close ones.

⁶⁸⁴ Mónica Medina was CONDEPA's candidate for mayor of La Paz.

⁶⁸⁵ Anonymous, 'Abuso de poder en desmedro del arte', *Presencia* (Puerta Abierta), 29 January 1993, p. 1.

⁶⁸⁶ The principal projects mentioned in the presentation of the book are cultural consulting, fortnightly art exhibitions, conferences, seminars, book presentations, Paseo Taipinquiri (a bookshop), live artistic demonstrations, architectural exhibitions, multidisciplinary events, cultural promotion, architectural projects, art and literary appreciation workshops, and the 'The Square Cross' in Mario Ríos Gastelú, *Creadores de Luz, Espacio y Forma (Artistas plásticos de Bolivia)*, no page.

⁶⁸⁷ Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, Invitation to the conference *Expresión y sentimiento espiritual andino-amazónico, Segundo encuentro de cosmovisión andino-amazónico*, La Paz, 1996.

⁶⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

belief that the celebration of an indigenous ritual associated with the Southern Cross constellation, which is presumably conflated with the Feast of the Cross, is more important:

3 May is the feast of the constellation of the Southern Cross, our ancestors and the inhabitants of the countryside venerate on that day the Celestial Vault, which is characteristic of our Southern Hemisphere, differently from the nations of the North, wherein the Pole Star is the guide of thought and Western philosophy. The Andean world presents a [type of] logic and thinking different from the West. It is necessary today, more than ever, to acquire an awareness of our spiritual reality as a region and continent, both in the Andean world and in the totality of the Amazon region.

Every space in the planet has its unique way of expressing the spiritual world because each part has a different reality, a [different] prehistory, a unique history and geography that produce different realities. Taipinquiri, together with other institutions, wishes for that which is intrinsically contained in the subconscious of the Andean-Amazonian man to be known:

His spiritual reality.

That expresses itself through its art, philosophy, logic and its quotidian way of life, even in the aspirations of Latin American man.⁶⁸⁹

Roberto Valcárcel's *Cruz cuadrada* (Square Cross) [Fig. 5.9], the artwork that he sent to Taipinquiri in response to the invitation circa 1994, ironically reiterates in its title the theme of the event.⁶⁹⁰ While Valcárcel was probably not familiar with the details of what the stepped cross literally meant for Taipinquiri, he was certainly aware of the ethos of the institution and its embrace of an indigenous

⁶⁸⁹ The invitation reads: 'El 3 de Mayo es la fiesta de la constelación de la Cruz del Sur, nuestros antepasados y habitantes del campo reverencian ese día a la Bóveda Celeste, propia de nuestro hemisferio Sur, distinto a las naciones del Norte, donde la Estrella Polar es la guía del pensamiento y filosofía occidental. El mundo andino presenta un pensamiento y lógica distinta a occidente. Es necesario, hoy más que nunca tomar conciencia de nuestra realidad espiritual como región y continente, tanto en el mundo Andino, como en toda la Amazonía.// Todo espacio en el planeta tiene su forma única de expresión del mundo espiritual, pues cada parte tiene una realidad distinta, una prehistoria, una historia y una geografía única que produce realidades diferentes.// Taipinquiri junto con otras instituciones quiere dar a conocer aquello que está contenido intrínsecamente en la subconsciencia del hombre Andino-Amazónico: // Su realidad espiritual// Que se expresa a través del arte, de la filosofía, de la lógica, en la forma cotidiana de vida, incluso en las ilusiones del hombre latinoamericano.' Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ I do not have the exact year of the artwork but the first conference was held in 1994 and I have only found information of the event up to 1996. In a note, Valcárcel indicates that it was in the 1990s in Roberto Valcárcel, 'Cruz cuadrada' in *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 138.

view of the world. It would have been unlikely not to notice the vision reflected by Taipinquiri in the light of the indigenous references by CONDEPA party in the city government, and the presence of a Katarista in the national government coalition, and general embrace of indigenous culture by the enlightened elite and liberal intellectuals. It is clear that the institutional critique implicit (and sometimes explicit) in Valcárcel's *Cruz cuadrada* responded to an awareness of the latent authoritarianism of Taipinquiri's ethos and the general revival of indigenous culture. Valcárcel's response to the invitation also resonates with his questioning of the promotion of a mestizo identity by the national revolutionary party in the 1950s, and the special place that social realism and the muralist movement (promoted by the latter regime) have had in the history of art of Bolivia. Valcárcel's position towards this unquestioned aesthetic movements was made explicit in an interview that took place perhaps a year or two after the Taipinquiri event:

Under the pretext of a cultural service, [these] authoritarian theories [in Bolivian art] have hindered the development of the avant-garde, the development of research, [and] the development of modernity in general.⁶⁹¹

Composed of six paragraphs of text, *Cruz cuadrada* is a conceptual artwork in which the artist denounces the lack of honesty and biased premises surrounding Taipinquiri's exhibition, cultural tradition and art practice in Bolivia. It makes visible the artist's irritation with the institutions that reproduce a covert type of repression or that, paraphrasing the artist, promote certain truths, in the name of morality, to ultimately repress individuals.⁶⁹²

Valcárcel's *Cruz cuadrada* is, at the same time, an example of dialectical thinking (proposing an antithesis) within a society that has uncritically accepted the promotion of trends inspired by the mysticism of indigenous culture. *Cruz cuadrada* systematically exposes and inverts the logic of some of the most visible

⁶⁹¹ The original reads: 'Estas "teorías autoritarias [predominantemente en el arte boliviano] impiden el desarrollo de la vanguardia, el desarrollo investigativo, el desarrollo de la modernidad en general, so pretexto de servicio cultural.'" Alicia Szmukler, *La ciudad imaginaria. Un análisis sociológico de la pintura contemporánea en Bolivia* (colab. Mireya Herrero and Bernarda López), PIEB/SINERGIA, La Paz, 1998, p. 245.

⁶⁹² This idea is stated in rule number three of *El Movimiento Erótico's* call to unmask the repressive use of truth and morality. See the Introduction to this dissertation.

statements that sustain the art promoted by Taipinquiri. In so doing, it unveils the concealed authoritarianism of its ethos and invitation. Valcárcel's argument is predominantly founded on the belief that any claim for the rights of the indigenous can be used to defend the rights of the European immigrant descendants living in Bolivia today. This reversing of the oppressor-oppressed logic is undoubtedly a provocation to Taipinquiri and an example of a strategy, often used by Valcárcel, to show what would happen if things were exactly the opposite of what we thought or assumed. Valcárcel's 'rational' response to Taipinquiri's invitation is the opposite of what this institution was interested in. Taipinquiri's sought to promote an art associated with pre-Hispanic and contemporary Andean indigenous people and their spiritual, integral and mystical view of the world:⁶⁹³

Andean art is fundamentally an integral relation. More than a tendency, it is the instrument of communication of man with the infinite and of the infinite with him. It is the discovery of the cosmic mechanisms of reality and the vehicle for man to transcend into the Infinite.

Thus, one of its challenges is to rescue the structure of this thought and spiritual feeling because the feeling today of these peoples, which form the Andean and Amazonian countries (today South America), has their foundation in the latter, and this feeling determines today their decisions, [and] the vision of the future of all of these human groups.⁶⁹⁴

[...]

The 21st century will be inaccessible for human beings, unless they situate themselves in this Universe where reason has become small when faced with the mystery of Intuition and where the language of art seems to be the key for the expression of That.⁶⁹⁵

⁶⁹³ Denisse Ostermann, 'Taipinquiri' in Mario Ríos Gastelú, *Creadores de Luz, Espacio y Forma (Artistas plásticos de Bolivia)*, p. 13.

⁶⁹⁴ The original text reads: 'El arte andino es fundamentalmente una relación integral. Antes que una tendencia, es un instrumento de comunicación del hombre con el infinito y de éste hacia él. Es el descubrimiento de los mecanismos cósmicos de la realidad y el vehículo del hombre para trascender al Infinito'. Por lo tanto, uno de sus desafíos es rescatar la estructura de este pensamiento y sentimiento espiritual, porque el sentir de hoy día de estos pueblos que forman los países andinos y amazónicos (hoy día Sudamérica) tienen sus cimientos en aquello, y este sentir determina en el ahora sobre las decisiones, la visión del futuro que tienen todos estos grupos humanos. Ibid.

⁶⁹⁵ 'Para el ser humano, el siglo XXI será inaccesible, si no se sitúa en este Universo, donde la razón ha quedado pequeña, frente al misterio de la Intuición y donde el lenguaje del arte pareciera ser la clave de la expresión de Aquello.' Ibid.

An important part of the 1995 version of Taipinquiri's event was a pilgrimage to the Apacheta shrine of Ánimas – a mountainous landscape in the outskirts of La Paz – where an Andean ceremony took place on the 15th of May. The programme lists as part of the ceremony music by Pablo Huascar Muñoz and Gerardo Yañez, composers of New Age and indigenous music, as well as a dance piece and a *mesa* ritual to the Pachamama, judging by the instructions to bring the following elements: torch, coca, chuspa (coca bag), colour and a small table for offering.⁶⁹⁶ It is telling that the audience to which the event was directed were the non-indigenous public of Taipinquiri who were not completely familiar with the stepped cross theme and its relation with the Southern Cross. This is evidenced by the information included in the invitation to promote the event:

What are the cosmogonic and mythological ideas of this world? What is the concept of life after death?
 Who is Huiracocha, Thunupa, who are the Achachilas, Apus, who is the Pachamama, who is Illapa (the bolt of lightning)?
 Which are the most important ceremonial centres, what are the huacas, what is the Ekeko? What is syncretism in Latin America?
 We will try to examine in detail this and much more in the II Conference of the Andean-Amazonian Vision of the Cosmos.⁶⁹⁷

In a similar way, the audience to which the event was directed is suggested in including in the programme of the ritual in Animas an explanation about the Southern Cross by archaeo-astronomy researcher Manuel de la Torre.⁶⁹⁸

Considering Taipinquiri's identification with a mystic view of the stepped cross (and indigenous culture in general), it is not surprising that the institution refused to include Valcárcel's *Cruz cuadrada* claiming that it could not accept the artwork since it did not 'correspond with the concept of the exhibition'.⁶⁹⁹ In so doing, it

⁶⁹⁶ A *mesa* is an offering to Pachamama, the Andean earth goddess, that consists of burning different ritual objects including a *s'ullu* (llama foetus), sweets and other elements.

⁶⁹⁷ The original reads: '¿Cuáles son las ideas cosmogónicas y mitológicas de este mundo? ¿Cuál es el concepto de la vida después de la muerte? ¿Quién es Huiracocha, Thunupa, quiénes son los Achachilas, los Apus, qué es la Pachamama, quién es Illapa (El rayo)? ¿Cuáles son los centros ceremoniales más importantes, qué son las huacas, qué es el Ekeko?, ¿Cuál es el sincretismo en Latinoamérica?. Esto y mucho más intentaremos desmenuzar en el II Encuentro de Cosmovisión Andino-Amazónico.' Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, Invitation to the conference Expresión y sentimiento espiritual andino-amazónico, Segundo encuentro de cosmovisión andino-amazónico.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁹ Valcárcel wrote: 'En los años noventa la Galería Taipinquiri de la ciudad de La Paz organizó una exposición con el tema "la cruz cuadrada", el icono andino precolombino. Fui invitado a

evidenced its lack of space for critical thinking and its ultimately conservative nature.

Valcárcel's choice of *Cruz cuadrada* – another term for *Cruz escalonada* – as the title for this artwork was evidently a gesture to insist, albeit ironically, on the relevance of his proposal for the exhibition. At the same time, it was meant to make clear his understanding of the 'concept' behind the event. The medium selected by Valcárcel, a framed typed black text on white paper – ready-to-hang in the gallery with the other paintings sent to the event – was very much in line with more 'orthodox' conceptual art. This type of aesthetics, unusual in his oeuvre, was clearly intended to challenge both organisers and visitors who were expecting the more conventional type of paintings that were usually exhibited in the gallery. In particular, the detached aesthetics of Valcárcel's *Cruz cuadrada* did not correspond, for example, with the title of the 1995 event 'Expresión y sentimiento espiritual andino-amazónico' (Andean-Amazonian Spiritual Expression and Feeling). Valcárcel's *Cruz cuadrada* is equally far removed from the colourful image reproduced on the cover of Taipinquiri's 1994 conference publication, a painting of the square cross by Mamani Mamani entitled *La cruz amauta* (The Amauta Cross) [Fig. 5.10]. The paintings of Gil Imaná of indigenous women (although less colourful) were also within the line of Taipinquiri – particularly the images wherein Imaná painted the square cross on their shawls. Materialising Taipinquiri's affinity with this type of art, an exhibition of Imaná was inaugurated in the opening of the 1995 version of Taipinquiri's stepped cross [Fig. 5.11]. The black-and-white rectangular aesthetics of *Cruz cuadrada* also emphasizes Valcárcel's rational choice in contrast with the spiritual and intuitive vision of Taipinquiri. *Cruz cuadrada* was, moreover, a blatant rejection of Taipinquiri's mystic call highlighted by the organisers with the aforementioned ritual that took place in the Ánimas Valley as part of the exhibition.⁷⁰⁰

dicha muestra en calidad de participante. La obra conceptual que envié (un texto enmarcado) fue devuelto sin ser expuesta, con el comentario de que "no corresponde con el concepto de la exposición." Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 138.

⁷⁰⁰ Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, Invitation to the conference Expresión y sentimiento espiritual andino-amazónico, Segundo encuentro de cosmovisión andino-amazónico.

While the six paragraphs that compose the text of *Cruz cuadrada* look like a framed poem or a manifesto, their ‘office’ aesthetics may be interpreted, at the same time, as a link to the Fluxus movement and the aesthetics of Joseph Beuys. This aesthetic choice, with ‘European’ (and non-indigenous) references, was undoubtedly an intentional provocation on the part of Valcárcel. As previously noted, Valcárcel visited Beuys’ office at the Düsseldorf Academy, which was not part of the institution anymore but the site for his Free International University. Valcárcel’s aesthetic choice can also be considered a parody of bureaucratic and office aesthetics, and perhaps specifically of the institutional letter sent by Taipinquiri to invite him to participate in the exhibition. Furthermore, the text in *Cruz Cuadrada* exposes Taipinquiri’s mystic-indigenous image as a disguise that not only contrasts with the real needs of the indigenous population but with the possibility of having or adopting any other culture than the indigenous one in Bolivia. In what may seem at first glance like a simple inversion of the superiority of the indigenous, underlies the artist’s concern with authoritarianism and a defence of difference and the right to think autonomously.

In the following section, I will examine Valcárcel’s argument by analysing each of its parts, beginning with the first paragraph, and focusing on how he uses the thesis-antithesis method.

1. ‘We are an ethnic group in danger of extinction’

Valcárcel’s text in *Cruz cuadrada* begins with what could be deemed as a controversial statement in view of the history of Bolivia and the 500-year claims for the indigenous rights:

Among the multiple ethnic groups and diverse cultures of Bolivia, there is a Spanish-speaking criollo sector comprised of the Bolivian citizens who are descendants of European immigrants. The culture of this ethnic group is in danger of extinction.⁷⁰¹

Valcárcel’s representation of Bolivians with European descent as an ‘ethnic group’ in danger of becoming extinct wittily inverts the focus of Taipinquiri’s vision. It

⁷⁰¹ The original reads: ‘Entre las múltiples etnias y diversas culturas de Bolivia existe un sector criollo hispanoparlante conformado por ciudadanos bolivianos descendientes de inmigrantes europeos. La cultura de esta etnia está en peligro de extinción.’ Roberto Valcárcel, ‘Cruz cuadrada’, Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p.138.

specifically refers to the change in the political constitution of the country that I mentioned earlier in this chapter, which defines Bolivia as being multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural, from which MNR and CONDEPA parties have benefitted. In addition, as Valcárcel points out, the European-criollo ethnic group – his ethnic group – was completely omitted in the rhetoric of cultural practice of the 1990s. The endeavour of the organisers to promote an Andean art and to engage with its creative spirit is problematic, not only because it omits the *criollo* component of Bolivian society, but also because it makes it seem like if what they were exhibiting was completely outside of the tradition of Western modern art.⁷⁰² Valcárcel's reflections about such delusive attempts were expressed a decade before, in 1984, in the text of an exhibition of paintings and drawings that he presented in Bremen:

Some would like to deny the influence of European art in Latin America, perhaps because of identity problems, or perhaps because of political issues but the influence is still there, of course, like before... The term 'art' is European. The watercolours of the painter who denies this influence, who might like to be autonomous or autochthonous (that is: indian), are Windsor and Newton, his/her paper is Canson and his/her brushes are Grumbacher. The tradition of oil painting is European, the tradition of nationalism (see Hitler) is European, even the tradition of the revolution is European 'workers of the world unite' [the famous final phrase of the Communist Manifesto]. But when we talk about textiles, ceramics or cave art (which are a little less European than others), it is called mainly: craft work, handicraft, manual work, [considered] nearly soulless and commercially oriented. Most of the artists that I know in Bolivia paint or draw according to European traditions (which does not need to be judged).⁷⁰³

In contrast with what could be considered indigenous art, suggested above by Valcárcel (textiles, ceramics, etc.), what Taipinquiri generally exhibited were oil paintings on canvas generally of local themes, within the Western tradition of painting. Even if some of the titles, scenes and motifs of the artworks exhibited

⁷⁰² 'En sí, consideramos, que Taipinquiri [sic], a través de sus diversas actividades, promueve el espíritu creativo y la reflexión acerca de nuestras raíces culturales, con el fin de reconocer nuestras capacidades individuales, como nación y región, frente a un mundo cada vez más globalizado.' Denisse Ostermann, 'Taipinquiri y la Avenida Montenegro: un enclave cultural', in Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, *Taipinquiri 10 Años*, Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, La Paz, 2003.

⁷⁰³ Roberto Valcárcel in La Tienda Gallery, 'el arte no ha muerto: Drawings and paintings by Roberto Valcárcel' (catalogue), Bremen, 1984. Translated from the German by Valia Carvalho.

often made references to local and indigenous themes, their media and aesthetic language was not. This was evidenced in the importance that traditional artistry held for the artists who usually exhibited in the gallery, as well as the type of figuration: abstract, expressionist, social realism, naive and surrealist figuration. Thus, none of the paintings (or the few sculptures) exhibited in Taipinquiri seemed to have a clear link with Taipinquiri's definition of art:

Andean art is fundamentally an integral relation. Before a trend, it is an instrument of communication of man with the infinite and of it [the infinite] with man. It is the discovery of the cosmic mechanisms of reality and the vehicle of man to transcend to the infinite.⁷⁰⁴

The integral and cosmic view of the world of the artists who exhibited in Taipinquiri Gallery, if they had any, was perhaps only suggested in the topics and motifs they painted, and their art never challenged or crossed the borders of traditional Western painting.

2. 'We have been historically repressed'

In the second paragraph of *Cruz cuadrada*, Valcárcel reverses once again the expectations of the gallery and the political and cultural discourse in vogue at the time by drawing attention to the historical oppression of the 'white' ethnic group in Bolivia.

Subjugated by other cultures, this group [i.e. the criollos] is losing its customs and its cultural values. From 1952 many Hispanic Bolivians even reached the point of renouncing their original culture. The fear of the barzolas [revolutionary women, associated with the MNR, known for their aggressive behaviour] and the militia was too big.⁷⁰⁵

With these words, Valcárcel makes explicit his concern about the potential risk of idealizing ethnic groups, as the latter can be used as an excuse to justify repression

⁷⁰⁴ The original reads: "El arte andino es fundamentalmente una relación integral. Antes que una tendencia, es un instrumento de comunicación del hombre con el infinito y de este hacia él. Es el descubrimiento de los mecanismos cósmicos de la realidad y el vehículo del hombre para trascender al infinito." Carlos Ostermann, 'Taipinquiri y la Avenida Montenegro: Un enclave cultural', in Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, *Taypinquiri 10 Años*, Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, La Paz, 2003.

⁷⁰⁵ The original reads: 'Este grupo está perdiendo sus costumbres y valores culturales, avasallados por otras culturas. A partir de 1952 muchos hispano bolivianos llegaron hasta el punto de renegar de su cultura originaria. El temor a las barzolas y a los milicianos era demasiado grande.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'Cruz cuadrada' in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 138.

and the violation of human rights. More specifically, this paragraph is a reminder of how certain mystical views of the indigenous people have been historically instrumentalized in Bolivia to repress and control citizens. As an example he brings forth the nationalistic government (MNR) of 1952, which implemented several reforms for the benefit of the ‘campesinos’ (indigenous people).⁷⁰⁶ The latter included the expropriation of extensive properties of the previously hegemonic group (those of European descent) and its redistribution into the hands of the indigenous people who lived and worked the land.⁷⁰⁷ While the revolutionary government introduced many important reforms that were essential for improving the social and economic condition of the indigenous people, the regime replicated some of the repressive strategies of European fascist regimes. Thus, in order to stay in power, the regime persecuted its political adversaries, tortured and imprisoned them in concentration camps. The regime extended its oppressive measures to the rest of the population using armed militias of indigenous farmers and miners, overt and covert ‘political control’ groups,⁷⁰⁸ like the *barzolas* mentioned in Valcárcel’s text. The government also ‘encouraged’ the population to enroll into the MNR party by privileging its members with food rations and employment during the economic and food shortage crisis that followed the revolution. Being a member of the party also meant renouncing and attacking any traces of the previous hegemonic group and culture; even if it implied going against one’s culture and partaking in the persecution of family members. In Valcárcel’s *Mi vida*, the artist recalled this repression and times of economic hardship for his family, when his father, a ‘frustrated architect’, in the

⁷⁰⁶ Although ‘campesinos’ can be translated as ‘rural inhabitants’, this term is an ideological construction that has been used in Bolivia since the revolutionary government of 1952 to refer to the indigenous people, a major component of the population in the countryside during most of the 21st century.

⁷⁰⁷ This system has often been described as a feudal economy where the indigenous were granted a piece of the land to live in exchange of their working the land. The reform introduced by the revolutionary government took away the monopoly of the land by the Bolivian elite and distributed it to ‘those who work the land’.

⁷⁰⁸ ‘Political control’ was a special section of the police created to control and repress citizens during the MNR government.

artist's words, chose 'not to disguise himself' and not to 'take a piece of the revolutionary cake'⁷⁰⁹ during the construction boom of the 1950s in La Paz.

3. Pseudo-scientific claims to manipulate consciences

The third paragraph in *Cruz cuadrada* further notes how unfounded scientific statements can constitute a tool for the repression of citizens:

Even in common talk, false pseudo-scientific statements appeared claiming that 'In Bolivia we all have some indigenous blood'.⁷¹⁰

Franz Tamayo's proposal of a 'Bolivian temperament' grounded on the energy and the bodies of indigenous people and the intellect of the criollos can be considered an example of the pseudo-science that Valcárcel is referring to in the above phrase. This paradigm of symbolic mestizaje, which was in vogue during the first half of the 21st century, was promoted by the repressive revolutionary government, previously mentioned.⁷¹¹ Within this line, writer Augusto Céspedes, ideologue and director of the official newspaper of the MNR government, proposed the mestizo as the new identity of the citizens of Bolivia.⁷¹² As previously noted, in my analysis of Valcárcel's *Puerta del sol*, 'pseudo-scientific' claims regarding indigenous culture and heritage have served political interests in recent Bolivian history. This has been exemplified in the political focus, rather than scientific, of the recent national censuses regarding questions asking Bolivian citizens about the sense of belonging to indigenous ethnicities.⁷¹³ The Andean

⁷⁰⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida* (rehearsed by Valcárcel during an interview with the author), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2012.

⁷¹⁰ Original text: 'Inclusive aparecieron en el habla popular falsedades pseudo-científicas tales como las de que "En Bolivia todos tenemos algo de sangre indígena"'. Roberto Valcárcel, 'Cruz cuadrada' in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 138.

⁷¹¹ See Leonardo García Pabón, *La patria íntima. Alegorías nacionales en la literatura y el cine de Bolivia*. La Paz, CESU and Plural Editores, 1998, pp. 170-172.

⁷¹² Author and MNR ideologue Augusto Céspedes wrote this new identity into the heroic characters of his short-stories about the Chaco War (1932-1935) entitled *Sangre de Mestizos*. See Leonardo García Pabón, *ibid.*, p. 170.

⁷¹³ The questions and results of the most recent Bolivian census have created much controversy regarding how the indigenous population of Bolivia should be represented. Large quantities of urban indigenous people moved during the census to the rural areas with the intention of increasing the budgets of their towns of origin. This manipulation of reality by the indigenous population themselves, following political interests distorted the accuracy of such a presumably objective tool. Similarly, the employment of the new politically correct term 'campesino-indígena-originario' by the current government has had a counterproductive result in terms of

calendar can qualify as another example of what Valcárcel refers to as pseudo-science. In his website, Manuel de la Torre, a former consultant in the area of technology in the Education Reform (where Valcárcel worked as an external consultant) makes what can be considered a pseudo-scientific claim, by stating that 2008 was the year 5516, according to the Andean calendar.⁷¹⁴ The mystical nature of de la Torre's claims is evident in the language he uses to describe this date as the 'year 16 of the fifth Sun, of the great fifth lunar cycle'.⁷¹⁵ Furthermore, as anthropologist Clare Sammels has pointed out, these calculations are not based on archaeological findings but take as point of reference in its calculations a year of the Gregorian calendar: 1492, the year of Columbus's 'discovery' of the New World.⁷¹⁶ The Andean calendar is rather a claim of recognition of indigenous people post-1992, and an attempt to mystify them, which lacks scientific foundations. Sammels further points out that the accuracy of the calendar is irrelevant for Bolivians, as was evidenced in its recalibration in the press from one year to the next, with a difference of 500 years, without any comment.⁷¹⁷

Pseudo-scientific claims regarding indigenous heritage are equally motivated by an attempt to prove the mathematical skills of pre-Hispanic civilisation. Thus, a talk by Peruvian architect Carlos Milla Villena, author of *Génesis de la Cultura Andina* (Genesis of Andean Culture), a study on the stepped cross published in 1980, was included in the conference programme. Although the title of his paper is not listed in the invitation, it is likely that in the Taipinquiri conference of 1995, Milla Villena talked about the existence of a geometric system

the interest of the government as the census showed a dramatic decrease of indigenous population, a fact that does not seem to correspond with reality. For more information on the recent census, see: Pablo Stefanoni, 'El censo como caja de Pandora' in *El desacuerdo*. La Paz, 18 August 2013.

⁷¹⁴ Manuel de la Torre, '*Arqueoastronomía andina: Conocimiento astronómico de los pueblos de los Andes*, 2008, <www.astronomiaandina.260mb.com/index.php?pag=5>, accessed 19 June 2015.

⁷¹⁵ The original reads: 'Este año que se iniciará este 21 de junio del 2008, es denominado según la cronología de la cultura andina como el año 5516, que representa el año 16 del quinto Sol, del quinto gran ciclo lunar, este calendario es ahora aceptado como válido para toda la región andina-amazónica.' Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ Clare A Sammels. 'The Aymara Year Count: Calendrical Translations in Tiwanaku, Bolivia', *Ethnology*, Vol. 50, No. 3 (Summer 2011), University of Pittsburgh- Of the Commonwealth System of Higher Education, p. 251.

⁷¹⁷ Ibid., p. 249.

based on pi – his discovery – in the stepped cross.⁷¹⁸ Milla Villena's name, probably in the light of his discovery and recognition, was featured in the programme as '1st Prize in the IV Bienal Internacional del Área Andina in Quito'.⁷¹⁹ Engineer Jorge Emilio Molina probably equally highlighted the knowledge of mathematics by indigenous people in his talk titled 'La Cruz en Tiwanaku' (The Cross in Tiwanaku);⁷²⁰ as he was presented in the programme as the creator of Tetralectics,⁷²¹ a mathematical discovery based on the geometrical principles of the stepped cross.

4. 'We have a right to be proud'

Valcárcel's text in the fourth paragraph of *Cruz cuadrada* continues with a call for his own right to be proud and not have to conceal the 'ethnic' group that he belongs to. That is, to be recognized as a Bolivian citizen with Spanish and German ancestors:⁷²²

The members of this Spanish speaking criollo minority have the same right to be proud of who they are, in the same manner that each and all of the other ethnic groups and cultures that conform this nation do.⁷²³

Beyond the implicit provocation to Taipinquiri, the above sentence reiterates Valcárcel's *Cruz cuadrada* paragraph referring to criollos having to renounce to their European heritage after the 1952 revolution. At the same time, it makes an indirect reference to the history of rejection of European culture in Bolivia; initially a by-product of the War of Independence (1809-1825). Philosopher Guillermo Francovich refers to this rejection (i.e. the rejection of any traces of colonial history) as the myth of the Spanish Spectre. According to Francovich,

⁷¹⁸ Milla Villena was one of the speakers of one of the Pan Andean cosmogony tables. The other themes of the tables were syncretism, indigenous vital cycle, and agriculture in: Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, Invitation to the conference Expresión y sentimiento espiritual andino-amazónico, Segundo encuentro de cosmovisión andino-amazónico.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² Valcárcel explained that his ancestors were of Spanish and German origin, Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2013.

⁷²³ Original text: 'Los integrantes de esta minoría criolla hispanoparlante tienen el mismo derecho a estar orgullosos de lo que son, al igual que todas y cada una de las demás etnias y culturas que conforman esta nación.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'Cruz cuadrada' in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 139.

this belief has prevailed in Bolivia, from its founding (in 1825) well into the 20th century. In this regard, he contends:

The myth of the Spanish Spectre begins as a frank execration of all things that it [the Spanish regime] represented in the life of the country; it became a repudiation of all things that remained in it (the country) from Colonial times.

[...]

But the aversion and repudiation of the Spanish Spectre ended turning into lack of knowledge, blindness, ignorance, which have deleted the memory of the colonial past. The latter has transformed [the colonial past] for Bolivians into something strange: a confusing, obscure, frightful world, whose only glitter were the attempts of subversion by Indians or criollos, which were depicted as precursors of independence. An abyss opened, thus, between the colonial past and the republic, preventing any communication between them.

[...]

In fact, even in 1910, Franz Tamayo on occasion of the polemics about *Creación de la Pedagogía Nacional*, wrote: – We must fight our last battle of independence and destroy definitively the Spanish specter that still dominates our history.⁷²⁴

In addition to the rejection of the Spanish heritage, there was a movement aimed at thinking Bolivia without making reference to French culture and other European ideas that were in vogue in the early twentieth century. It was once again heralded by Franz Tamayo who called on Bolivians to renounce European pedagogy, particularly the project brought forward by the commission responsible for the education reform of 1910. The articles reproduced in Tamayo's book *Creación de la pedagogía nacional* were written as a direct response to education

⁷²⁴ Original text: 'El mito del Espectro Español que comienza así como franca execración de todo lo que éste representaba en la vida del país, pasó a ser un repudio de lo que quedaba en él de la Colonia. La República, bajo la influencia del Contrato Social de Rousseau, que fue el evangelio de los dirigentes de la Revolución de la independencia, comenzó a remodelar el país, dándole a éste una estructura democrática, de acuerdo con el pensamiento político de la época. El mito con sus repulsiones y sus negaciones del pasado, contribuyó eficazmente a la realización de ese propósito. Pero la aversión y el repudio por el Espectro Español acabaron haciéndose desconocimiento, ceguera, ignorancia, que borró el recuerdo de todo el pasado colonial. Este se convirtió para los bolivianos en algo extraño: mundo confuso, oscuro, temible, cuyos únicos destellos eran las tentativas de subversión indígenas o criollas, que aparecían como precursoras de la independencia. Se abrió, de ese modo, un abismo entre el pasado colonial y la República, impidiendo toda comunicación entre ellos. El mito traspuso el siglo XIX. En efecto, todavía en 1910, Franz Tamayo, con ocasión de la polémica que tuvo sobre la creación de la pedagogía nacional, escribía: – Tenemos que librar la última batalla de la independencia y destruir definitivamente el espectro español que aún domina en nuestra historia.' Guillermo Francovich, *Los mitos profundos de Bolivia* (second edition), Editorial Los Amigos del Libro, La Paz and Cochabamba, 1987, p. 127.

specialists Sánchez Bustamante and Segundo Guzmán's proposal of an education reform based on the Swedish gymnasium, following a long visit of different school systems in Europe.⁷²⁵ A citation from Tamayo's book in Taipinquiri's 1995 invitation illustrates the prevalence of this type of thinking at the end of the 20th century in Bolivia and within Taipinquiri:

What we must study are not foreign methods, compilation work, **but the soul of our race, which is a labour of true creation.** The intimate springs of our interior life and of our history is what the great pedagogue must discover above all. It is on life itself that he/she should operate and not on printed paper, and in this sense it is a Bolivian pedagogy that we must create, and not plagiarize any transatlantic pedagogy. Franz Tamayo Solares, 1910.⁷²⁶

Following Tamayo, Taipinquiri wanted to contribute to the creation of a Bolivian national character or a soul founded on an Andean vision of the world. It sought to do this by 'promoting the creative spirit and reflection on our cultural roots', which, according to the institution, was at risk in the light of globalization.⁷²⁷ The 1950s nationalism and subsequent anti-imperialist trends, following left-wing Cold War political ideas, have equally influenced the rejection of Western intellectual trends and an inward and Latin American perspective. While all these factors might have contributed to Valcárcel's critical attitude towards anti-European ideas, it is clear that Valcárcel's seven-year stay in Germany made him feel like a stranger in the Bolivian ideological context. This feeling of alienation

⁷²⁵ Javier Sanjinés, *Mestizaje Upside Down: Aesthetic Politics in Modern Bolivia*, pp. 45-54.

⁷²⁶ The emphasis is in the original which reads: 'Lo que hay que estudiar no son método extraños, trabajo compilatorio, **sino el alma de nuestra raza, que es un trabajo de verdadera creación.** Son los resortes íntimos de nuestra vida interior y de nuestra historia los que sobretodo el gran pedagogo debe descubrir. Es sobre la vida misma que debe operar y no sobre el papel impreso y en este sentido es una pedagogía boliviana la que hay que crear, y no plagiar una pedagogía transatlántica cualquiera. Franz Tamayo Solares, 1910.' Centro de Cultura, Arquitectura y Arte Taipinquiri, Invitation to the conference Expresión y sentimiento espiritual andino-amazónico, Segundo encuentro de cosmovisión andino-amazónico.

⁷²⁷ Carlos Ostermann wrote: 'Por lo tanto uno de sus desafíos es rescatar la estructura de este pensamiento y sentimiento espiritual, porque el sentir de estos pueblos que los países andinos, amazónicos y platenses (hoy Sudamérica) tienen sus cimientos en aquello, y ese sentir determina en el ahora, sobre las decisiones y la visión de futuro que tienen. En sí, consideramos que Taipynquiri, a través de sus diversas actividades, promueve el espíritu creativo y la reflexión acerca de nuestras raíces culturales, con el fin de reconocer nuestras capacidades individuales, como nación y región, frente a un mundo cada vez más globalizado.' Carlos Ostermann, 'Taipinquiri y la Avenida Montenegro: Un enclave cultural', in Centro Cultural [Taipinquiri], *Taipinquiri 10 Años*, p. 3.

was reflected early on in the silkscreen *S'ullu*⁷²⁸ (1978) [Fig. 5.12], which Valcárcel sent to the São Paulo Latin American Bienal as part of a group exhibition of prints by Bolivian artists. From this perspective, the Latin American Bienal was also an alienating event itself, as it invited Bolivian artists to participate under the category 'Indigenous Myths and Magic', along with other countries, which like Mexico have an important indigenous heritage.⁷²⁹ Thus, for Valcárcel, his silkscreen image of a llama foetus and five locks, printed from a photograph, represented his lack of access to the indigenous world:

It was a silkscreen print made specifically for the biennial in the studio of Hugo Rojas Lara. It is an 'isolated' artwork, a sort of reaction to the theme of the biennial: myth and magic in Latin America. The closed locks refer to the hermetism (of indigenous culture), to my not having access to that language (of indigenous origin) [...].⁷³⁰

The explicit critique of these ideas in *Cruz cuadrada*, created about sixteen years later, was perhaps also influenced by the fact that Valcárcel was being identified by Salazar Mostajo and his followers as the 'representative of foreign traditions'.⁷³¹

Valcárcel's negation of the prevailing views on art and politics, his attempt at 'pulling the cart in the other direction', is certainly a reflection of his own experience in the Bolivian art context. Upon his return from a long stay in Europe (1971-1977), the artist felt that Bolivia was a secluded and isolating place. Thus, he felt like a foreigner, to some extent.⁷³² In the light of Valcárcel's critique of ideas and art practice in Bolivia, it should come as no surprise that he has

⁷²⁸ A *s'ullu* is a llama foetus usually offered in Andean *mesas* (rituals) to the Pachamama goddess of the earth.

⁷²⁹ Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *1ª Bienal Latino-Americana de São Paulo*, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 1978.

⁷³⁰ Valcárcel explained (complete reference below): 'Es una serigrafía hecha específicamente para la bienal, en el taller de Hugo Rojas Lara. Es una obra "suelta", una especie de reacción al tema de la bienal: mito y magia en Latinoamérica. Los candados cerrados se refieren al hermetismo, a que no tengo acceso a ese lenguaje [a lo indígena]. Decidí hacer una serigrafía de foto, algo que no se había hecho antes en Bolivia. Al principio parece que respondía al medio, comentando mi falta de relación o adaptación, eso se puede ver en el tarabuqueño, en el Che Guevara, en el Franz Tamayo. Son una reacción/ adaptación que después de diez años dejó de interesarme.' Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype], London and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 11 August 2012.

⁷³¹ This view of Valcárcel as a representative of foreign values and habits is further discussed in Chapter Two. For more information, see: Anonymous, 'Crítica al festival de arte experimental', *El Diario*, La Paz, August 10 1983.

⁷³² Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via Skype].

become an enemy of the artists and critics who adhere to these beliefs. When Valcárcel sent *Cruz cuadrada* to Taipinquiri, only five years had passed since he had been singled out, by critic Salazar Mostajo, as the anti-example of what a Bolivian artist should be like, for his presumed alliance to (and imitation of) the art of the European avant-garde.⁷³³ Making reference to the view of art propagated by these critics and artists in the state university UMSA, and probably to his own experience in the Art Department, Valcárcel pointed out that the (implicit) requirement for students to research rural indigenous culture can be alienating:

It is a complete aberration that a bachelors' degree dissertation should be a research on the Chipayas [a small indigenous group in the Andean highlands] and similar nonsense; that is what I call alienation because it is a small bourgeois girl from Obrajés [a criollo-mestizo residential area in La Paz] who is asked to research the Chipayas. That is a complete alienation, an inverse one, let us say, the girl is alienated from her small bourgeoisie into a supposed 'anthropologism'.⁷³⁴

5. Cultural Opportunism?

The last section of *Cruz cuadrada*, before the final paragraph, emphasizes how mystic ideas, like the ones embraced by Taipinquiri, conceal the lack of real economic progress of the indigenous population, or a 'mestizaje' in terms of an equal distribution of wealth:

We do not deny the possibility of a symbiosis or racial mix of different cultures. But we believe that these should have real foundations (economic and productive) and not merely mimetic, accommodating or responding to cultural opportunism.⁷³⁵

In this paragraph, Valcárcel not only exposes Taipinquiri as a short-sighted and naïve institution, but further suggests a potential opportunism on their part, in the light of the government 'pluri-multi' perspective and policies. According to

⁷³³ Carlos Salazar Mostajo, *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia. Ensayo histórico-crítico*, Librería Editorial Juventud, La Paz, 1989, p. 212. See Chapter Two.

⁷³⁴ The original reads: '[son] aberraciones totales que se pidan tesis de grado, que hagan estudios acerca de los chipayas, y burreras como esas, a eso yo le llamo alienación, porque es una niña pequeño-burguesa obrajeña, que la mandan a que averigüe [sobre] los chipayas, es una total alienación, a la inversa, digamos, le están alienando de su pequeña burguesía hacia un supuesto antropologismo.' Alicia Szmuckler, 'Roberto Valcárcel' [transcription of interview], Santa Cruz de la Sierra, June 7, 1996, pp. 5-6.

⁷³⁵ Original text: 'No negamos la posibilidad de una simbiosis o mestizaje entre las diversas culturas. Pero creemos que esto debe tener bases reales (económicas productivas) y no razones meramente miméticas, acomodaticias o de oportunismo cultural.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'Cruz cuadrada' in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 139.

sociologist Silvia Rivera, political movements were appropriated and neutralized by the neoliberal-katarista coalition government of 1994, without a real change in the situation of the indigenous people.⁷³⁶ Taipinquiri would certainly be a fraud from her perspective as well.

This political opportunism seems more evident today in the recent use of Tiwanaku site as a stage for political events, particularly by the current government. In addition to being the site of the celebration of the Andean New Year, as mentioned before, the archaeological site has been the venue of the ‘indigenous’ possession of Evo Morales in three occasions (2006, 2010 and 2014). The site was the venue of the indigenous wedding ceremony of non-indigenous vice-president – his religious (Catholic) wedding took place in the colonial church of San Francisco in La Paz. The cultural opportunism of politicians regarding Tiwanaku is obvious to anyone who visits the site on other dates when the neglect of the site by the government is evident in the precarious conditions of its services, conservation and museum.

6. ‘We don’t want to disguise ourselves’

The final paragraph of *Cruz cuadrada* reiterates the alienation implicit in the mystical and political vision of Taipinquiri:

We don’t want to disguise ourselves as natives and assume mystical or ideological postures that only tarnish one of the basic qualities of the art of all ethnic groups and cultures: honesty.⁷³⁷

Valcárcel’s reference to disguise alludes to Taipinquiri’s questionable authenticity and contradiction as a private gallery, located in the criollo-suburbs of La Paz. The gallery was built in San Miguel, in an architectural style typical of the neighborhood inhabited by what Valcárcel deems as the Bolivian descendants of European immigrants [Fig. 5.13]. The non-indigenous descent of the three siblings involved in Taipinquiri – Denisse, Carlos and Chrystal Ostermann

⁷³⁶ Silvia Rivera, *Oprimidos pero no vencidos: luchas del campesinado aymara y qhechwa 1900-1980*, La Mirada Salvaje, La Paz, 2010.

⁷³⁷ The original text reads: ‘No deseamos disfrazarnos de autóctonos y asumir posturas místicas o ideológicas que lo único que harían es empañar uno de los principales valores en el arte de todas las etnias y culturas: la honestidad.’ Roberto Valcárcel, ‘Cruz cuadrada’ in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 139.

Stumpf – is evidenced by surnames that indicate European heritage from both sides of the family. The Ostermanns are, thus, good representatives of San Miguel, and it is likely that, like Valcárcel, they all attended the German School in La Paz. Director Denisse Ostermann was, in fact, a classmate of Valcárcel.⁷³⁸ Despite Valcárcel's institutional critique in his *Cruz cuadrada*, he has recently mentioned that the Ostermann siblings have always been cordial with him, presumably because his mother was a friend of their mother.⁷³⁹ It is particularly telling of the ideas that circulate in the art system in Bolivia that these siblings, of similar heritage and social status as Valcárcel, have assumed an indigenous identity for their gallery, their exhibitions and themselves.

Implicit in Valcárcel's final statement is a comment on local art history. In the 1930s, painter Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas inaugurated a trend of portraits of criollo-mestizo women dressed in indigenous garb [Fig. 5.14]. A similar representation of the indigenous by the non-indigenous took place in *Wara Wara*, one of the first Bolivian films where Argentine artist Juanita Tallansier [Fig. 5.15] played the protagonist role of the Inca princess, while sculptor Marina Núñez del Prado and her sister Nilda acted the role of *ñustas* (Inca princesses).

Equally, Valcárcel's reference to the need to disguise oneself questions a local art system wherein even indigenous artists have opted to dress as indigenous artists. For example, Roberto Mamani Mamani is an artist of indigenous origin who paints indigenous themes, capitalizes on the indigenous aspects of his life and has even opted to emphasize his 'indigenusness' in photographic portraits of himself with indigenous wear (wool caps and poncho) [Fig. 5.16]; clothing which until recently was rarely used by urban indigenous people, like himself. Mamani Mamani is a very successful artist in commercial terms, particularly among tourists and urban people of indigenous descent. Mamani Mamani has designed and painted, for example, the shawls used by one of the fraternities of El Gran Poder festivities (Jesus of the Great Power) – the most important indigenous and religious feast in the city of La Paz. His designs decorate recent buildings in El

⁷³⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via email], 3 May 2015.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*

Alto, the historic point of arrival of indigenous migrants into the city of La Paz.⁷⁴⁰ In the criollo-mestizo neighbourhood of Achumani, a mural painting of his authorship adorns one of the walls of the French Bolivian School.

Valcárcel's vision of the international art system regarding Bolivian art was equally made clear in his exchange of ideas with London-based painter Fernando Montes in February of 1996 at the ICA London. The roundtable titled 'Bolivian Oblivion', moderated by Professor Valerie Fraser, complemented the exhibition of Bolivian contemporary painting that had inaugurated in the adjacent Mall Galleries.⁷⁴¹ Patricia Tordoír, director of Arte Único Gallery at the time, recently described the astonishment of the audience upon hearing Valcárcel's intervention, following that of Montes, an artist whose interests are more in line with those of Taipinquiri:

Roberto got up on stage. He wasn't wearing a jacket and he wasn't wearing a tie. He was probably wearing a cap back to front or something like that, and he got up and he said 'I've just come back from Madrid and in Madrid I saw a Plaza Valcárcel and I saw a tire factory Valcárcel. I originate from Spain. My name comes from Spain. I am not an Indian. I do not paint Indians.' Then this colour came behind him projected on the wall and he said 'this is what I paint'. Everyone in the audience went [gasp sound]. It was brilliant to watch. He talked and talked and talked. The whole thing took longer than it was supposed to take.⁷⁴²

Valcárcel's presentation of himself in contrast to Montes reflects his awareness of the contradictions that he and Montes personify. After the debate with Montes, Valcárcel was under the impression that the audience was astonished by the irony of a Bolivian artist working with European ideas in Bolivia (himself) in contrast to a Bolivian artist living in London painting indigenous-inspired themes (Fernando Montes). Valcárcel's fascination with this type of contradictions was also reflected in his idea of presenting an 'intercultural' exhibition of two artists in the Bienal de

⁷⁴⁰ El Alto was part of the city of La Paz until 1984 when it became an autonomous city.

⁷⁴¹ ICA, 'Oblivion or Bolivian: What is wrong with Bolivian Art? [ICA Talks invitation], London, 5 February 1996. The exhibition *Contemporary Archangels of Bolivia* presented at the Mall Galleries consisted of artworks selected from a competition whose theme was the archangel motif. In tandem with this exhibition, another one, titled *Current Trends in Bolivian Art*, was presented in the same gallery which consisted of a selection of works from some of the artists represented by Arte Único Gallery. Patricia Tordoír, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 11 June 2015. Valcárcel also gave a talk in the Royal College of Art, London, to promote the exhibition in the Mall Galleries. Roberto Valcárcel, *Datos curriculares*, 2011.

⁷⁴² Patricia Tordoír, *Interview with the Author*, London, 11 June 2015.

Santa Cruz. The exhibition would include the artwork of Mamani Mamani, an artist who, despite his indigenous ‘costume’ and origins, paints in a European manner, according to Valcárcel. The other one was Angelika Heckel, an artist born in Austria, who has lived in Bolivia for the past 20 years, and has recreated Andean textiles with recycled pieces of plastic in her work.⁷⁴³

In an interview in 1996, Valcárcel further proposed that the adoption of an indigenous identity in the local history of art actually responds to the uncomfortable position of the criollos in relation to Bolivian history and culture:

It seemed to me that artists were trying to seek another identity because they were unable to accept the one they had. What I am saying, in reality, has serious consequences because there is an inversion of the concept, an inversion of the issue. The traditional view, from the nationalist [revolutionary] movement of the 1950s was that artists were rather looking for their identity and roots. Somehow I think that in failing to accept their reality, because it had been condemned by the militias and *barzolas* in the period of the movement, in the first period of [the government of] Víctor Paz, artists were forced to hold on to other identities, which were not theirs. Then my concept is, in reality, on a theoretical level, the inversion of that ideological posture. From my perspective, what I am saying is more realistic and verifiable, that is to say that it can be observed that most artists when looking for that identity, they were in fact denying their own.⁷⁴⁴

While assuming themes associated with an indigenous image of Bolivia has benefitted some artists, dressing up as a Bolivian Indian was also effective in the international establishment, as narrated by internationally successful sculptor

⁷⁴³ This idea was never materialized even though Valcárcel was invited to curate the Santa Cruz biennial three times between 2004 and 2010. He explains that the ‘curator’ title was over-dimensioned in all the cases, given the lack of power in decision-making and of conceiving a curatorial project. His curatorial proposal for the Mamani Mamani-Heckel exhibition was refused because the biennial could not meet the fees requested by Mamani Mamani. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2010.

⁷⁴⁴ Valcárcel’s explained: ‘[...]Pero se me hacía como que el artista estaba tratando de buscar otra identidad, porque era incapaz de aceptar la que él ya tenía. En realidad lo que estoy diciendo tiene graves consecuencias, porque hay una inversión del concepto, es una inversión del asunto, la visión tradicional a partir del movimiento nacionalista de los años cincuenta sería que el artista estaba más bien encontrando su identidad y encontrando su raíces. Más bien yo pienso que a falta de aceptar su propia raíz hispana y su propia identidad urbana, a falta de aceptar esa realidad porque habían sido satanizadas por los milicianos y las barzolas en la época del movimiento, en la primera época de Víctor Paz, el artista se vio obligado a aferrarse a otras identidades que no eran la suya. Entonces mi concepto es en realidad, a nivel teórico la inversión de esa postura ideológica. A mi manera de ver, lo que yo digo es mucho más realista y verificable, o sea que se puede constatar que la mayoría de los artistas en realidad al buscar esa identidad estaban negando la suya propia.’ Alicia Szmuckler, ‘Roberto Valcárcel’, pp.25-26.

Marina Núñez del Prado in her autobiography. Núñez del Prado explains that she was only able to gain the attention of gallerists in New York in 1941, after months of visiting more than 100 galleries,⁷⁴⁵ when she dressed as an indigenous woman for the inauguration of the American Indian exhibition at MOMA:

It suddenly occurred to me to dress as a Bolivian Indian, in the most spectacular way possible. I put on a beautiful jacket embossed with velvet, profusely embroidered with glass and crow beads, and a skirt of vernacular fabric. I embellished myself with big earrings and silver *topos* (traditional indigenous brooches) and let two tresses fall down on my back. My presence was a success, from the entrance into the galleries, which I crossed with firm and rhythmic step as it fitted an Indian princess. Soon some people approached me to admire my outfit and ask who I was and where I came from, with that exotic attire; my sister Nilda, who was following me, dressed in European fashion, responded: ‘– She is an Indian princess from Bolivia. She is the sculptor Marina Núñez del Prado’. The photographers gathered around me and the ladies exclaimed: ‘How interesting!’ and someone introduced me to the directors of the Museum of Modern Art, of the Metropolitan [Museum], of the San Francisco Museum, [and] to directors of galleries of the Pan American Union and to other personalities of the art world of the United States. [...] That was how after many months of anxiety and looking for a gallery to present my sculptures, I was able to get invited to exhibit them at Grand Central Gallery and subsequently at the Pan American Union and many other galleries.⁷⁴⁶

Valcárcel has consistently rejected the position of dressing his art or himself in indigenous ways, despite the obvious benefits of assuming this type of image in the art world. He only started to show images of his *Cruz cuadrada* in recent years, coinciding with the renewed Indigenismo and strong anti-colonialist discourse of

⁷⁴⁵ Marina Núñez del Prado, *Eternidad en Los Andes*, p. 59.

⁷⁴⁶ Núñez del Prado wrote: ‘Súbitamente se me ocurrió vestirme de indígena boliviana, en la forma más espectacular posible. Me puse una hermosa chaqueta encarnada de terciopelo profusamente bordada con abalorios y mostacillas y una larga pollera de tejido vernáculo, me adorné con grandes aretes y topos de plata y dejé caer por las espaldas mis largas trenzas. Mi presencia fue todo un éxito, desde la entrada en esas salas por las que crucé con paso firme y rítmico como cuadraba a una princesa india. Pronto se me acercaron personas para admirar mi atuendo y preguntarme quién era yo y de dónde venía con ese traje tan exótico; mi hermana Nilda, que me seguía vestida a la europea respondía: ‘– Es una Princesa India de Bolivia. Es la escultora Marina Núñez del Prado’. Los fotógrafos se agolparon a mi alrededor y las señoras exclamaban: ‘Qué interesante!’ y alguien me presentó a los directores del Museo Moderno, del Metropolitano, del Museo de San Francisco, a Directores de Galerías y de la Unión Panamericana y a otras personalidades del mundo del arte de los Estados Unidos.[...] Así fue como, después de tantos meses de búsqueda y ansiedad por conseguir una galería para presentar mis esculturas, logré que me invitaran a exhibirlas en la Grand Central Gallery y posteriormente en la Unión Panamericana y otras muchas galerías.’ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

president Evo Morales (2006-present). By projecting *Cruz cuadrada* as the first slide of a public presentation on his life, in 2012, Valcárcel implicitly established a link between the nationalistic-revolutionary regime of 1952 and Morales's government.⁷⁴⁷ Valcárcel's blunt introduction of himself as part of an elite fallen into disgrace, in 2012, was, at the same time, an honest representation to an audience accustomed to the presumably 'white' intellectual with an indigenous style suit (like the vice-president of Bolivia in his wedding in Tiwanaku) or even the indigenous artist with an indigenous costume, like Roberto Mamani Mamani. Showing this largely unknown artwork⁷⁴⁸ was undoubtedly meant to provoke the audience in La Paz, the city where the majority of the supporters of Evo Morales are located and where there is a strong indigenous visibility not only in terms of population but in the adoption of an indigenous 'costume'.⁷⁴⁹ While wearing a poncho or dressing up as indigenous has been used as a political tactic by presidents in Bolivia – including right wing dictators in the 1970s – the use of 'the indigenous disguise' has almost become a norm and prerequisite to obtain political favours during the government of Evo Morales.

Valcárcel has recently demonstrated his disagreement with current 'de facto' type of decolonizing measures. The creation of a 'decolonization' office and other 'changes' brought about by the current government – with decrees rather than projects – can be considered the equivalent in politics to the role that Taipinquiri's played in the arts. An example of Valcárcel's criticism of these bureaucratic policies is evident in his *3 pensamientos acerca de la descolonización* (three thoughts on decolonization) [Fig. 5.17-5.18], exhibited in the 2011 Contextos Bienal of Cochabamba. This artwork consists of three sets of conceptual 'paintings' (framed covers of old art history books) in which the artist 'decolonises' culture by ironically removing three major movements of the Western history of art, or showing the 'before and after' of late Renaissance

⁷⁴⁷ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, slide 1.

⁷⁴⁸ Valcárcel never exhibited *Cruz cuadrada*. The text only, without the image, is reproduced in Roberto Valcárcel, 'Cruz cuadrada', Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, pp. 137-139.

⁷⁴⁹ Wearing a poncho, sandals and a hat became suddenly, particularly at the beginning of Morales's government, a 'requirement' for indigenous political leaders, whom otherwise would not have worn these clothes in the city.

painting, etc. His more recent ironic response to a question about his thoughts on decolonization resonates with the absurdity of such ideas and, ultimately, his interest in debunking all such institutions. For example, ‘let’s start with football’, which is inconceivable in the light of the popularity of the sport in Bolivia and the importance that president Evo Morales has attributed to football by playing matches himself with the Bolivian team.⁷⁵⁰

Although the extent to which Taipinquiri used the indigenous cause to its advantage exceeds the scope of this research, what is certain is that its mystical projects, like *Cruz escalonada*, have all too often fallen into the dangerous self-righteous and prescriptive terrain that represented the opposite of what Valcárcel was interested in. In this regard, the artist’s response is unsurprising as the institution itself embodied the type of covert authoritarianism that he wished to unmask, namely, Taipinquiri’s reproduction of the mandates and rhetoric of the politicians in power.

Conclusion

To summarize, we have seen two examples of artworks in which Valcárcel undermines, playfully and critically – and in different degrees in each case – the use of indigenous culture by artists and the artistic institution in Bolivia. The first example was exhibited in the early 1980s, during the opening in the political arena to Katarista ideas and the continuation of a paradigm of art closely linked with indigenous culture. The second one was created in the following decade, in 1994, a year after a highly contested presidential elections wherein a new populist party, representing the poor urban indigenous population (CONDEPA), disputed the government with the elected neoliberal-katarista coalition. I have argued that the change of focus in Valcárcel’s artwork, from a playful inversion of prevailing values, in the first case, to a more explicit critique, in the second one, responds to the urgency to question Bolivian society in the light of the renewed dimension

⁷⁵⁰ Valcárcel was recently asked his thoughts about decolonization by *Revista VIP*, a publication specialising in social events. It is telling that *VIP* omitted this question and answer in the short note about Valcárcel. Roberto Valcárcel Interview with the Author, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

that indigenous mysticism had acquired during the first half of the 1990s. It has become clear that the more explicit critique in *Cruz cuadrada* derives from Valcárcel's awareness that there was a high degree of enthusiasm and sensitivity towards this topic in the 1990s, which made difficult the possibility of being critical.

Examining how Valcárcel addresses indigenous themes (which he does rarely) in the two artworks addressed in this chapter, has shed light on the way this charged and politically correct topic can be repressive. It has exposed a concealed authoritarian behaviour disguised in indigenous identity issues at the height of such trends in Bolivian society. Interpreting these artworks taking into account Valcárcel's interest in repression has suggested how mystification of indigenous legacy can be instrumental in political discourse and how veiled opportunism in the political arena is replicated in the art world. It has shed light on how artists, sometimes in a conscious and calculated way, and gallery directors, in a perhaps more innocent and unquestioning way, reproduce repression.

We have also seen how Valcárcel's conceptual approach towards this topic, his institutional critique, goes hand in hand, nonetheless with rational thought; a mental activity that is related with repression, from the perspective of Marcuse. While this approach towards art does not agree with Marcuse's ideas on mental liberation, it seems evident that the intention behind the artworks was Valcárcel's commitment to expose excess, unnecessary and veiled repression in society – what Marcuse would call the Great Refusal. I have thus argued that antithesis and conceptual art can be effective devices 'to pull the cart the other way' and to reject repression. It should be noted that Valcárcel is also having fun (feeling pleasure) while doing this exercise.

Finally, the artworks analysed in this chapter have introduced a much needed questioning of a difficult and sensitive topic which still has currency. Indigenous culture and emancipation, which has been at the base of Bolivian nationalism, has historically derived in political opportunism. In more recent times, 2006 to present, advocacy of the rights of indigenous people by the government has increasingly turned into an excuse for political opportunism and

persecution, and for controlling freedom of speech of individuals and in the press.

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This research, which set out to explore Marcuse's ideas on repression in Valcárcel's art and its relation to society, has identified different examples of veiled repression, the ideas, reasons and motivation for Valcárcel's interest in this topic, as well as an ethos and strategies to transcend it.

The study also specifically sought to gain insight into how Valcárcel's art interacts with different important phenomena in recent Bolivian history – particularly the military dictatorships of the 1970s and early 1980s and the legacy and emancipation of indigenous people. I have argued that Valcárcel's position is playful and, at times, intentionally elusive in this regard, and that while it is coherent with his commitment towards an autonomous state of being, that these strategies point to other types of repression besides the obvious repressive order during dictatorial regimes and the oppression of indigenous peoples.

Literature on the relation between Valcárcel's art and the ideas behind it is almost non-existent, and what there is has tended to portray him according to certain clichés that prevail in Bolivian art history – artistry, contribution to the renewal of form and themes and his questioning of dictatorship, among others. My study is important not only because it offers a reinterpretation of Valcárcel, a key and largely unstudied figure in contemporary art in Bolivia, but because it discusses a topic – veiled repression – which has been neglected in art history and other studies in Bolivia. Examining Valcárcel's art and reflections from the perspective of Marcuse has also made clear that the art system in Bolivia (art practice, art education, art history and art criticism) tends to be prescriptive, and thus can be deemed repressive.

I. Findings

In order to explain the relationship between Valcárcel's art and the veiled repression that frames it, in my research I answered the following questions: How do the ideas of Marcuse contribute to gaining further insight into Valcárcel's art and its relationship with Bolivian history and society? What is the veiled repression that frames Valcárcel's art? How does Valcárcel counter this repression? In this section I will synthesize the findings regarding these three main questions of this dissertation.

As we have seen, Marcuse's ideas can be useful for gaining insight into Valcárcel's art and its relationship with Bolivian history and society in a number of ways. Firstly, examining Marcuse's ideas on repression and his conceptualization of art as liberating has introduced a different point of view for the analysis of the relation between art and its context. This is an important contribution taking into account the fixation in art historiography and art criticism in Bolivia – myself included – to establish relationships between art and what are considered transcendental and dramatic events in Bolivia's history. Secondly, concepts, like Prometheus as the repressive paradigm of culture and Orpheus as liberating one, have equally shed light on the limitations of the existing historicizing and criticism of Valcárcel's art and more generally of Bolivian art. Finally, analysing Marcuse's ideas in *El Movimiento Erótico* has brought forward a theoretical framework, which has influenced my analysis of Valcárcel's art in this study. It has specifically illustrated how Marcuse's ideas on repression in advanced capitalism can be extrapolated and be useful when applied to other times and contexts. In particular, I have argued that Marcuse's ideas behind what seemed like far-fetched phenomena in Bolivia – advanced capitalism with its presumed sexual liberation and thriving culture industry – are useful to understand veiled forms of repression. It has become clear that one of the reasons why this was the case in the late 1970s and early 1980s, when Bolivia was under a rather precarious

capitalism and where it was most isolated from the international economic and cultural trends, was precisely its vulnerable and dependent situation.

The idea that there is a veiled repression, unconscious forms of containment that hinder our ability to think autonomously – particularly in what Marcuse refers to as illusory freedom in *Eros and Civilization* –, has proved key to my study.

Valcárcel's critical attitude towards what would otherwise seem like apparently free, and liberating beliefs, has shed some light on latent repression in Bolivia.

The following specific examples of veiled and unrecognized forms of repression that prevail in Bolivia have been singled out:

- US capitalism as both a cultural model and an anti-paradigm, and more specifically: its culture industry or industry of entertainment. I further argued that the culture industry is present in Bolivian society not only via the US but also through Brazil.
- Repression of eroticism in the use of sex for commercial aims, and in the reproduction in the press and art system of monogamous, sexist and homophobic views on eroticism.
- The potential repressive role of the mass media in Bolivia; one of its most emblematic examples being veiled advertisement – naked women not only used to 'sell' a newspaper but to misleadingly portray a feeling of freedom and 'progress'.
- A rather convergent and prudish art system (art history, art education, art practice and a non-creative and uncritical audience) with strong links to a project of a national art and the Promethean paradigm of culture.
- Prejudices regarding what it means to be creative and to be an artist, and the way artists so often reproduce, without questioning, the given art historical paradigms.
- The concepts of morality and truth (and their presumed righteousness) used as veiled forms of repression by politicians and reproduced in the art system.

- The opportunistic appropriation of indigenous causes and its culture in the art system, under the guise of a liberal and progressive mentality with no space for questioning.

In my study, it has become clear that Valcárcel counters repression in his art, writings and in public presentations in a variety of ways. Looking at Valcárcel's artwork from the perspective of Marcuse's ideas on repression has directed this study towards his investigations and reflections about making art that transcends its 'invisible' social controls. Following this logic, I have identified a general ethos in Valcárcel's art, and a number of strategies, some used by the artist with the deliberate intention of making non-authoritarian art, and others, which are perhaps unconscious but are coherent with this endeavour.

This research has pointed to a constant ethos in Valcárcel's artwork in his negation of the status quo – wherein Marcuse's Great Refusal and Dada's 'pulling the cart the other way' are conflated. Valcárcel's general attitude towards art is equally manifested in his embrace of play – where the Orphic paradigm and a general avant-garde irreverence coexist – as a paradigm of a liberated existence. I have finally demonstrated that the rules of Valcárcel's *Movimiento Erótico* point to three directions which are essential in Valcárcel's art practice: freedom as the absolute value behind what it means to make art and to be an artist (Rule 1); promoting creativity and expanding pre-established ways of viewing, doing and thinking about art (Rule 2); and unmasking invisible repression in art and society (Rule 3).

The following strategies with which Valcárcel's art counters veiled forms of repression have been highlighted:

- Humour: parody, jokes, puns and black humour.
- Play – what Freud refers to as phantasy making – and deceit.
- Blurring the lines of what is real from what is not, not giving explanations and placing the viewer in an uncomfortable position.
- Including gruesome elements from 'reality', or what Valcárcel refers to as 'presentation' (as opposed to 'representation').
- Multiple meanings and forms in one single artwork.

- Asymmetry and formal chaos.
- Antithesis and rational thinking.

II. Theoretical and Historiographical Implications

Analysing Valcárcel's art and its context from the perspective of Marcuse's ideas on repression has revealed a lack of specialists in Bolivian art, and that those there are produce work that is limited in scope, lacking any understanding of the broader intellectual context in which Valcárcel creates artworks. Despite its best intentions, the focus of art history in Bolivia has proved to be inadequate for the analysis of Valcárcel's art — and particularly of the artist's commitment to a non-authoritarian society and state of being.

In addition to the emphasis on originality and the Promethean paradigms that still prevail in local art history, a certain righteousness, never made explicit and never questioned, limits both the scholarship and the art practice. These righteous attitudes and beliefs in the Bolivian art system, which Valcárcel seeks to debunk, include the ideas that artists should suffer and have higher moral standards, i.e. than non-artists. These beliefs, which reproduce the Promethean paradigm, were equally manifested in the failure to identify the importance of humour and fun in the interpretation of Valcárcel's art – two aspects that we have seen are key, and of particular use for debunking authoritarianism. A prudish and sexist attitude towards eroticism was made visible in the censorship of the Festival de Arte Experimental and in the absence, particularly in art historical accounts of the 1980s and 1990s, of the erotic and sexual content of Valcárcel's art.⁷⁵¹ We have equally seen that the righteousness of anti-imperialist positions and those for the emancipation of indigenous people in Bolivia do not allow any space for questioning, particularly the type introduced by Valcárcel, and can hence be equally deemed repressive.

The need to re-examine the foundations of a Bolivian art history which adheres to a nationalist perspective (a perspective in which there is an implicit

⁷⁵¹ Querejazu has succinctly mentioned this aspect in his short descriptions of Valcárcel's art in his essays of Bolivian art from the late 1990s and 2000s.

attempt to redress its postcolonial history) has become evident. For example, a reflection on the prevalence of critic Marta Traba's ideas in Bolivian art history seems long overdue; in particular, the way some of these ideas are ingrained in the prevailing views of resisting capitalism or trying to make and promote an art that can be clearly identified as Bolivian on an international level.

The existence of artistic creations, like the ones of Valcárcel, makes visible a void in Bolivian art history and its models, and highlights the urgency of looking for an alternative approach which allows space for questioning the current status quo. The absence of a questioning attitude in the art system (and of its underlying paradigms) has become clear in the recent portrayal of Valcárcel by art critics. While both Ugalde and Valcárcel were pioneers in the introduction of experimental art, the former is nowadays the artist with more local and international visibility.⁷⁵² Thus, art historian Teresa Gisbert has recently singled Ugalde out as one of the artists who represents the current moment in Bolivia – the first indigenous-socialist government – while Valcárcel was described by her as an artist who is 'finished'.⁷⁵³ For the cover of one of the volumes of her most recent publication, Gisbert⁷⁵⁴ chose an artwork by Raúl Lara, an artist that unlike Valcárcel, and according to her view of art, represents a particular phenomenon during the current historical moment, i.e. the emergence of and increased visibility of the indigenous bourgeoisie. Querejazu also recently showed a shift in attitude, expressing less enthusiasm regarding Valcárcel's art than in his texts of the 1980s and defining him simply as a representative of his generation.⁷⁵⁵ In addition to this, in an informal conversation with curator Cecilia Bayá, one of the main promoters of Valcárcel's book, she insistently questioned me on the relevance of

⁷⁵² For example, the government of Evo Morales has commissioned many works from Ugalde, particularly for political events. Ugalde was in charge of the visual design of the inauguration of the presidency of Evo Morales, and in October 2014 he presented artworks, with his associate Sonia Falcone, in the F77 Summit in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Throughout Ugalde's career, he has been awarded several prizes both locally and internationally. For more information on Ugalde, see his website: 'Gastón Ugalde', <gastonugalde.com>, accessed 1 May 2015.

⁷⁵³ Teresa Gisbert, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 January, 2013.

⁷⁵⁴ José De Mesa and Teresa Gisbert, *Historia del Arte en Bolivia: Periodo Republicano*, Editorial Gisbert, La Paz, 2012.

⁷⁵⁵ Pedro Querejazu, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 1 October 2013. Querejazu's view of the artist as an intellectual has not changed, however. Querejazu asked the artist to write the presentation for his recent book, which is a compilation of all of his texts. Pedro Querejazu, *Arte contemporáneo en Bolivia, 1970-2013 : crítica, ensayos, estudios*. Pedro Querejazu Leyton, la Paz, 2013.

Valcárcel on an international level.⁷⁵⁶ These attitudes seem to suggest that whereas Ugalde undoubtedly responds more to what is expected from a Bolivian artist, both in Bolivia and internationally, Valcárcel is not ‘Bolivian’ enough – he does not engage clearly or ‘sympathetically’ with ‘Bolivian’ topics like indigenous emancipation and the policies of the current government. His art is also perhaps ‘too opaque’ and ‘too intellectual’ for art historians and audiences keen to see art through pre-established categories, and to make more metaphorical and literal interpretations.

In my research, there are also some contributions to Marcuse’s theory. In Valcárcel’s investigations and commitment to making non-authoritarian art, there is an implicit and important comment on Marcuse’s view of art as liberating: not all art is liberating.⁷⁵⁷ This realization of the limitations of Marcuse’s theory of art becomes clear in my analysis of Valcárcel’s art practice. While phantasy or imagination (an aspect that Marcuse highlights in Surrealism) is important in Valcárcel’s art, this view of art falls short considering the legacies of avant-garde movements that have influenced Valcárcel’s view of art, particularly of Dada (with its irreverence and humour); and conceptual art’s use of rational thought. Bearing this in mind, some of Valcárcel’s strategies can be deemed a contribution to Marcuse’s theory of art, like his so-called ‘presentation’ of coffins for newborns and a ‘dead body’ where Valcárcel seeks to underline reality and not representation – what Marcuse calls phantasy; his use of rational thought in his antithetical artworks; and his use of humour both in his art and in the way he presents himself in public.

Associating Valcárcel’s use of humour with eroticizing in this study can be deemed, at the same time, a theoretical contribution to Marcuse’s theory of liberation. As we have seen, Marcuse sustains that art is liberating because of the key role that ‘phantasy making’ – the only mental activity that does not respond to the repressive reality principle – plays in it. In his proposal, Marcuse does not

⁷⁵⁶ Cecilia Bayá, personal communication in informal conversation in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, August 2013.

⁷⁵⁷ Marcuse addresses this topic in literature in his *Aesthetic Dimension*, a text that Valcárcel has not read. Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1977.

consider Freud theory's on humour, particularly his later papers ('On Humour', originally published in 1927)⁷⁵⁸ in which he establishes humour as liberating, and particularly in what he calls tendentious jokes and in jokes directed at oneself. In the latter type of jokes Freud suggests that the super ego (the repressive instance in oneself) functions in a non-repressive manner; an observation, at a late stage in Freud's career, that has implications on his theory of the mind on which Marcuse bases his theory of repression. In my study, it becomes clear that humour, an important element in contemporary art, is one of the ways in which Marcuse's theory could be revised and expanded.

III. Some Limitations and Recommendation For Future Research

In the Introduction chapter, I expressed my concern regarding Valcárcel's position on facts, truth and objectivity – his subsequent lack of precision and tendency to invent data – and his implicit questioning of my work as a researcher. It should be clear by now that this initial limitation – Valcárcel's position regarding objectivity and his rejection of truths – has influenced my study as it has motivated me to keep a watchful attitude in terms of establishing a direct relationship between Valcárcel's artwork and historical events. Valcárcel's position regarding objectivity has equally influenced my consideration of his own contradictions as important elements to analyse.

There are many directions this study could have taken and I am interested in continuing my research by examining the topics I discuss in the following paragraphs.

In the 1980s, around the time *El Movimiento Erótico* was exhibited, Valcárcel performed a number of actions (and even published a short description of action art in a catalogue)⁷⁵⁹ wherein play and humour had important roles, strategies

⁷⁵⁸ Sigmund Freud, 'On Humour', Strachey, James (trans.), *The Standard Edition on the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Vol. XXI*.

⁷⁵⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, 'Acción artística' and 'Performance' in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, pp. 44-48.

which I have argued are key in defying authoritarianism.⁷⁶⁰ The investigation, and analysis of this strand of Valcárcel's art, not specifically addressed in my dissertation, seems promising, taking into consideration some of the ideas explored in this study.⁷⁶¹ For example, it seems that exploring the narcissistic component of these actions should shed some light on the artist's work both from a psychoanalytic point of view (its relation to the pleasure principle), as well as from the point of view of Narcissus, who for Marcuse, along with Orpheus, represents an existence close to the pleasure principle, and hence non-repressive.

In addition to *Eros and Civilization*, a number of other books and readings have informed Valcárcel's view of art and society and examining them could complement my interpretation of his work in relation to the veiled types of repression that frame it. A closer reading and dialogue with the following texts seems equally implicit in *El Movimiento Erótico: Marcuse's One-Dimensional Man*; Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*; Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as well as Reich's *Mass Psychology of Fascism*. While some of these names are mentioned in my study, a closer look at these texts should complement and enrich the interpretation of Valcárcel's works. There are, at the same time, many more authors that have interested the artist, and whose ideas reverberate in his view of the world, and some visibly in his artwork. I have already mentioned in the Introduction chapter that Valcárcel's view of truth does not limit itself to its relation to authoritarianism, but to his belief, inspired by the ideas of US philosopher Nelson Goodman and Palo Alto Mental Research Institute psychologist Paul Watzlawick,⁷⁶² that reality is a subjective construction. Anna

⁷⁶⁰ Valeria Paz, 'Hacia un arte experimental. Los lenguajes contemporáneos: 1960-2008', in Pentimalli Michela et. al., *Bolivia: Los caminos de la escultura*. Fundación Cultural Simón I. Patiño, La Paz, 2010.

⁷⁶¹ A research on the history of performance in Bolivia was recently published and it should be an important source for this endeavour. See: Ramiro Garavito, 'Roberto Valcárcel, de cuerpo entero, amarillo, transportándose' in Alejandra Dorado Cámara and Douglas Rodrigo Rada (curators), 'Somos artistas bolivianos', Centro Pedagógico y Cultural Simón I. Patiño, Cochabamba, 2015, pp. 36- 47.

⁷⁶² Valcárcel expands on this topic in different texts published in his book: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1-2. Other references besides Marcuse become apparent. In a short text titled 'El Factor cognitivo', Valcárcel refers to Nelson Goodman when he writes 'El reconocer estructuras consiste en gran medida en inventarlas y caracterizarlas. Comprender y crear van de la mano.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'El factor cognitivo', in Roberto Valcárcel, *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 57. His distrust of scientific knowledge and belief in the impossibility of objectivity in

Freud's theory on mechanisms of defence, which Valcárcel alludes to in an untitled series (constituted by phrases pasted on refrigerator parts), is another example of a topic that resonates with the artist and which has not been discussed in this dissertation.⁷⁶³ I have also come across the name of Bertrand Russell in my interviews and the material I reviewed, in relation to his revision of Goedel's theorem, which Valcárcel described in an interview in connection with the impossibility of being able to describe a system from within.⁷⁶⁴ Needless to say, what is clear is that Valcárcel's vein of ideas on art and society, being the curious man and avid reader that he is, is continuously being enriched, and is hardly exhausted in this dissertation.

While there are no other artists in Bolivia who have engaged with theories similar to the ones that interest Valcárcel, the feminist activist group Mujeres Creando has some elements in common.⁷⁶⁵ Firstly, like in the case of the artist, creativity is at the core of the actions of this self-denominated anarchist group. María Galindo (La Paz, 1964), trained as a psychologist, often uses psychoanalytical categories to conceptualize society. For example I recall her asking former president Carlos Mesa Gisbert, in her radio program a few years ago (around 2010), whether he thought power was erotic or not.⁷⁶⁶ Her view of Bolivian society is, at the same time, influenced by a reading of society in terms of social classes. Although it is unclear whether Galindo has read Marcuse, there is a

understanding reality is made evident in a text inspired by the ideas of Paul Watzlawick's (*¿Es real la realidad?*) where he establishes a relation between truth and authoritarianism: 'Queridos alumnos, no se dejen engatusar con el cuento de que existe una realidad y que con ayuda de la ciencia la vamos a conocer. Lo interesante y peligroso de tal cuento es que implica que la ciencia nos lleva a la verdad y que todo lo demás es falso. Hay un carácter de totalidad, autoritarismo y absolutismo en la pretensión de que existe una ciencia. LA ciencia, EL conocimiento científico, que nos llevará a conocer LA realidad.' Roberto Valcárcel, 'Realidad, ciencia y tecnología' in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 140-143.

⁷⁶³ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2012.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁵ I bring up their name also because, despite the fact that they are activists, Mujeres Creando are today the most well known example, on an international level, of Bolivian artists. Since the 2000s, Mujeres Creando have participated in Museo Nacional Centro Reina Sofia exhibitions, in the Bienal de São Paulo (2007 and 2014) and in the last Venice Biennale. Its leader, María Galindo also participated in the *Principio Potosí* exhibition (Museo Reina Sofia, Berlin Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt, and Musef and Museo Nacional de Arte La Paz). Mujeres Creando have also participated in Spain's MACBA programmes and exhibitions.

⁷⁶⁶ Mujeres Creando have a radio station called Radio Deseo. Maria Galindo, a feminist and self-defined anarchist is the most visible protagonist of Mujeres Creando. She studied psychology in Rome.

suggestive link between her mix of Marxist and Freudian perspectives and Valcárcel's view of society. Exploring these coincidences should give shape to a productive dialogue of ideas.⁷⁶⁷ Like Valcárcel, María Galindo also attended the German School in La Paz, an institution associated with the elite of Bolivia, and where she was a student in Valcárcel's art class. The provocative nature of both of their works seems to respond to their inside knowledge of the social class they often question.

Looking at other cases where the theory of Marcuse is applied both in art history and art practice could equally complement this research. An example that comes to mind is the investigation by Gustavo Larach (University of New Mexico) of contemporary art in Honduras from the perspective of Marcuse's *Aesthetic Dimension* (1977).⁷⁶⁸ Luke Skrebowski has also analysed the relationship between Helio Oiticica and Marcuse.⁷⁶⁹ During my research I have come across the names of many other artists of Valcárcel's generation (and before and after) who have read and were influenced, at least at some point, by Marcuse's ideas, including, for example, Robert Morris and Eduardo Kac.⁷⁷⁰

Conclusion

This study of one of the most significant artists in contemporary art in Bolivia contributes to existing literature with an alternative interpretation on his work and a more profound understanding of issues in Bolivian art which I have argued end up predetermining it in a veiled way. My dissertation draws attention to the potential of Valcárcel's art and his ideas to open new ways of practicing and thinking about art in a rather prescriptive art system. It also provides insight into new ways of understanding the relationship between art and society and into what

⁷⁶⁷ Valcárcel was a guest of María Galindo's program 'Machos, varones y maricones'. Unfortunately, I have not been able to get a copy of the audio.

⁷⁶⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension: Towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1977. Gustavo Larach, 'The emergence of a new sensibility in contemporary Honduran art', *Third Text*, 8 June 2012.

⁷⁶⁹ Luke Skrebowski, 'Revolution in the Aesthetic Revolution,' *Third Text*, Feb 16 2012. This article was brought to my attention by Susannah Gilbert.

⁷⁷⁰ Maurice Berger, *Robert Morris, Minimalism & the 1960s*, Harper and Row, New York, 1989. This reference was brought to my attention by David Hodge.

it means to engage in a more autonomous art practice. Coherent with having freedom as absolute principle, Valcárcel's artistic autonomy materializes in both artworks that negate the artistic status quo but also in others that are simply the equivalent of musical divertimentos, as Valcárcel calls them; artworks in which he amuses himself and thus enacts the possibility of freedom.⁷⁷¹ My research has equally provided insight into how to reflect and write about these types of art, and more specifically, on what it means to be a practitioner of an art history which follows the direction of Valcárcel's most important rule: 'there are no rules and no pre-judgements'.

⁷⁷¹ Anonymous, 'La principal causa de sufrimiento de la humanidad es el creer en verdades' in *Presencia* [Puerta Abierta], 17 October 17 1996.

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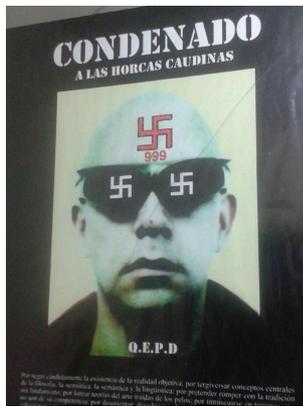


Fig. 0.1 Self-portrait of Valcárcel used in a poster published on Facebook attacking an exhibition titled *Curadores* (Curators). Source: Facebook wall of poet Victor Paz Irueta [no longer available].⁷⁷²



Fig. 0.2 Valcárcel's ironic self-representation as a curator wearing a llucho (indigenous wool cap from the Andean region), and an inflated cheek, as if he were chewing coca. Photograph: Courtesy of the artist.

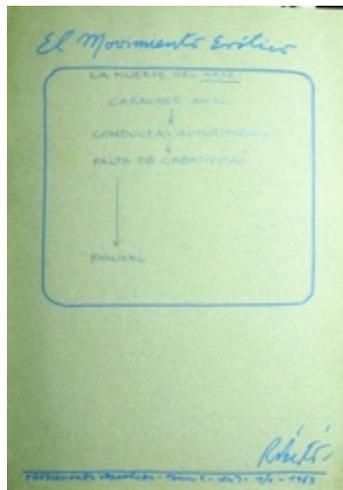


Fig. 1.1 Roberto Valcárcel, *El Movimiento Erótico* (The Erotic Movement), markers on cardboard, La Paz, 1983.



Fig. 1.2 *El Movimiento Erótico*, La Paz, markers and collage on cardboard, 1983. Source: *El Diario*, La Paz, August 10 1983.

⁷⁷² All photographs without credit information are by the author.



Fig. 1.3 Roberto Valcárcel, *El Movimiento Erótico*, Bienal de São Paulo, markers, collage and paint, 1983. Source: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *Catálogo Geral Bienal de São Paulo*, 1983, p. 85.



Fig. 1.4 Close-up of the left wall of *El Movimiento Erótico*, Bienal de São Paulo, 1983. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

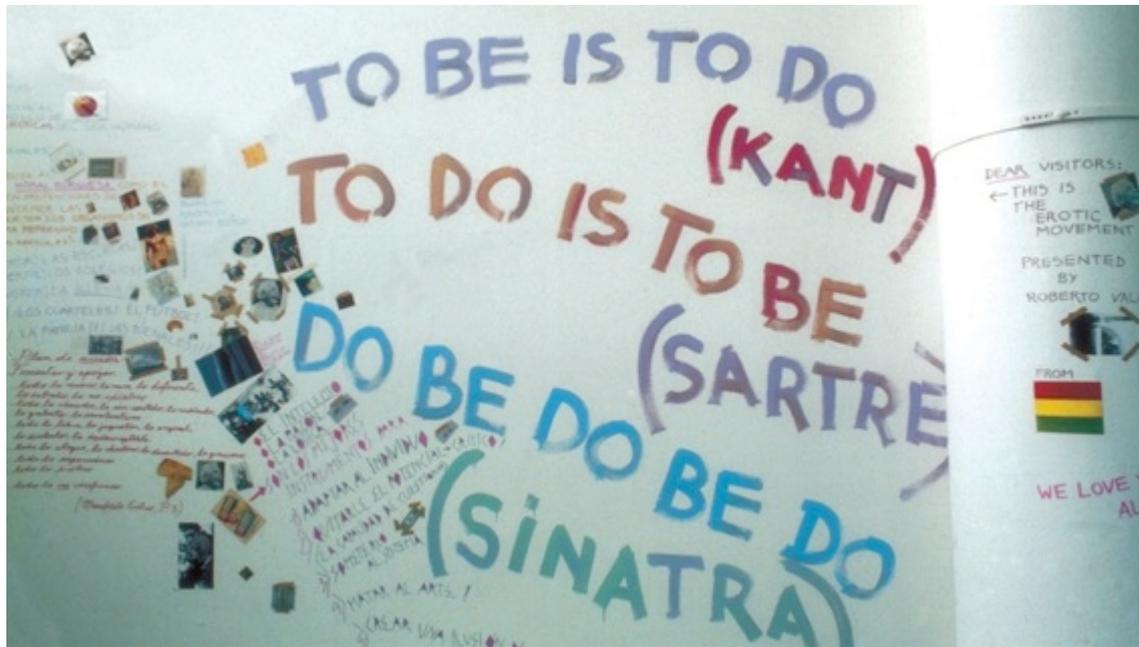


Fig. 1.8 Right wall of *El Movimiento Erótico*, Bienal de São Paulo, 1983.
Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

PRODUCCIONES VALCÁRCEL



Fig. 1.9 Roberto Valcárcel, Slide of Einstein as a sex symbol promoting Producciones Valcárcel in *Mi vida*, PowerPoint presentation, 2012. Image: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

amando hasta el final

Fig. 1.10 Roberto Valcárcel, 'Amando hasta el final' in the form of a seal.
Source: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 480.



Fig. 1.11 Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida* slide sequence depicting a falling aeroplane.
Images: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 1.12 Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida* slide sequence simulating a car
(with a Producciones Valcárcel plate) approaching the screen.
Images: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 1.13 Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida* use of fotonovela imagery to promote Valcárcel.
Image: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 1.14 and 1.15 Covers of *Semana de Última Hora*, weekly cultural supplement.
Sources: *Semana de Última Hora*, 29 November 1978 and 26 June 1982.



Figs. 1.16 and 1.17 *Aquí* publicity ironic reference to *Semana de Última Hora* (left). *Semana de Última Hora* described as ‘The Playboy of Bolivians’(right). Sources: *Aquí*, number 1, 17-19 March, 1979 and *Última Hora*, 23 April 1980.



Figs.1.18 and 1.19 Holguín’s *Virgin Mary with Child*, one of the masterpieces of the Museo Nacional de Arte [left] and García Meza suspends curfew, and gives a Christmas message to the citizens [right]. Sources: *Última Hora* 23 and 24 December 1980.



Figs. 1.20 and 1.21 Roberto Valcárcel, *Untitled* [left] and *Imperio* [right], objects and boxes, 1979-1980. Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 1.22 and 1.23 Orient [left] uses the photograph of a topless woman, previously published in *Semana de Última Hora* as cover of *Playboy* [right]. Sources: *¿Me da Orient?* advertisement published in *Última Hora*, 14 November 1975 and Anonymous, 'Atroz competencia entre las revistas de piel', 21 March 1975.

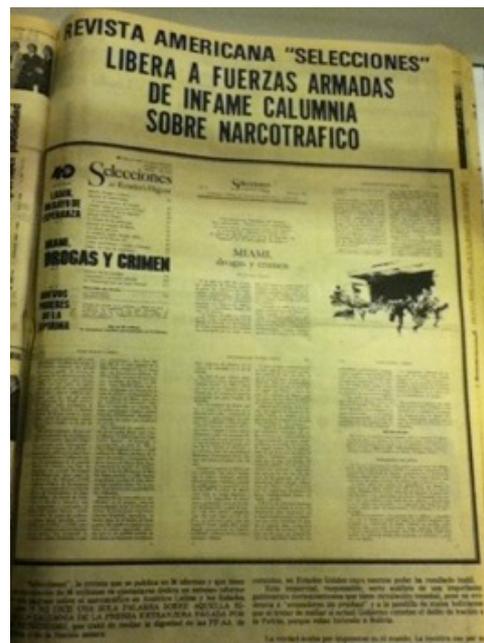


Fig. 1.24 Paid advertisement in *Última Hora*: 'American magazine *Readers' Digest* liberates the Armed Forces from Despicable Calumny of Drug Trafficking'.
Source: *Presencia*, 7 June 1981.

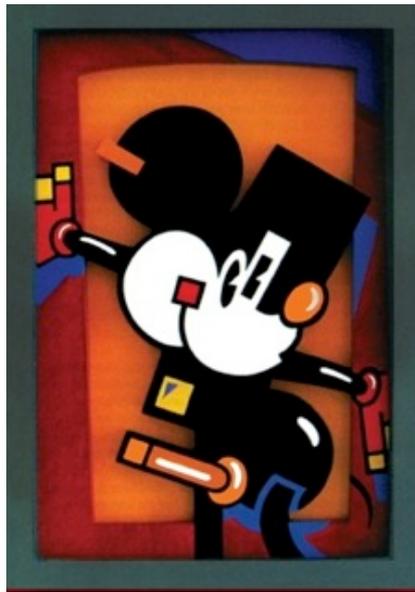


Figs. 1.25, 1.26, 1.27 and 1.28 [left to right] Boticelli's *Venus*, María Esther Ballivián's *Untitled*, Tito Yupanqui, *Virgin of Copacabana* and one of Valcárcel's *Gritónes (Grito n. 19) / Scream n. 19* on the cover of the revised edition of *Semana de Última Hora* 1983.

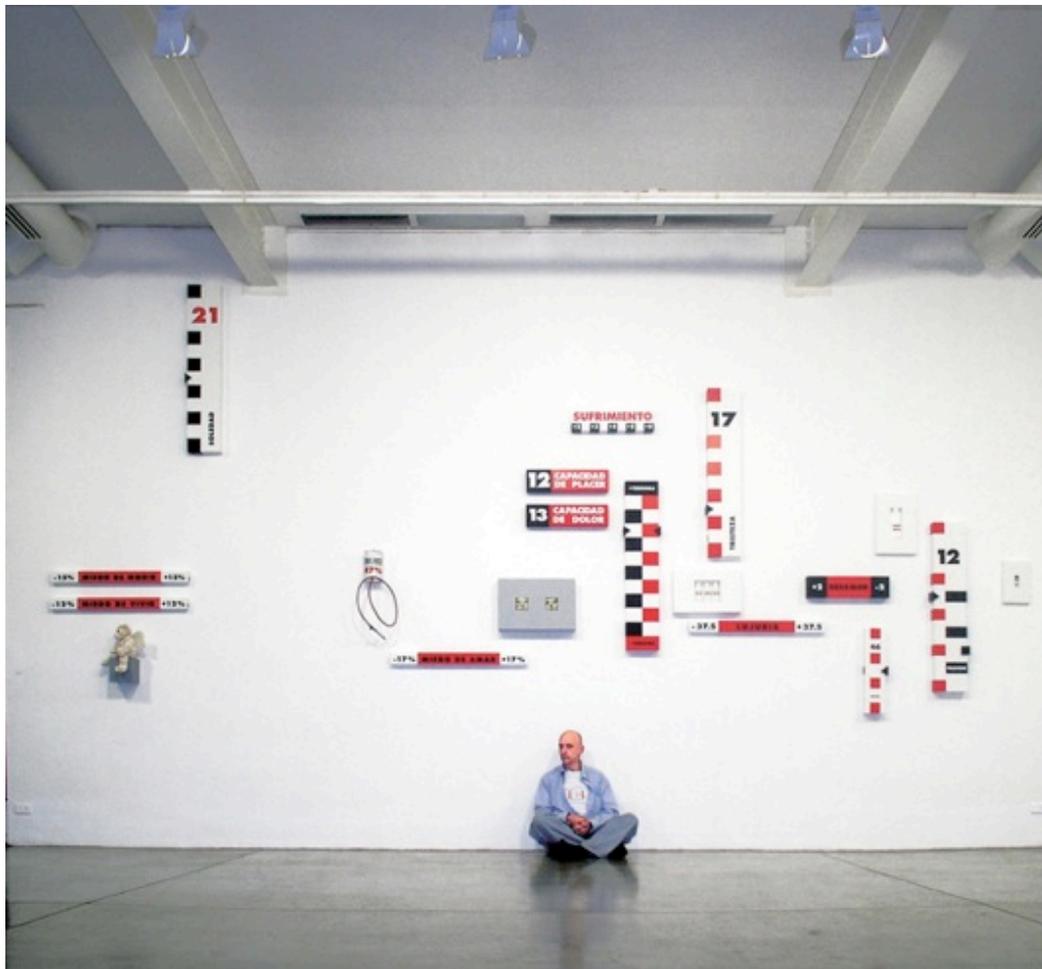
Sources: *Semana de Última Hora*, 21 January, 25 February, 28 January and 3 June, 1983.



Figs. 1.29, 1.30 and 1.31 Valcárcel's paintings with ties: *Corbatovi IX*, *Corbatovi X* and *Grandes Ideologías* (great ideologies), enamel on canvas, 1991.
Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 1.32 and 1.33 *Mickey Nudiste* [top] and *Mickey Cubiste* [bottom], ca 1996, enamel on carton and wood and acrylic on carved plank. Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 1.34- 1.36 Roberto Valcárcel, *Tristeza* and *Desamor* (Sadness and Heartbreak), 2001 [top] and an overview of an exhibition featuring Valcárcel's scales for measuring feelings, Galería Animal of Santiago de Chile, 2003 [bottom]. Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 1.37 and 1.38 Roberto Valcárcel Morales-Pardovalle residency in La Paz, 1985.
Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

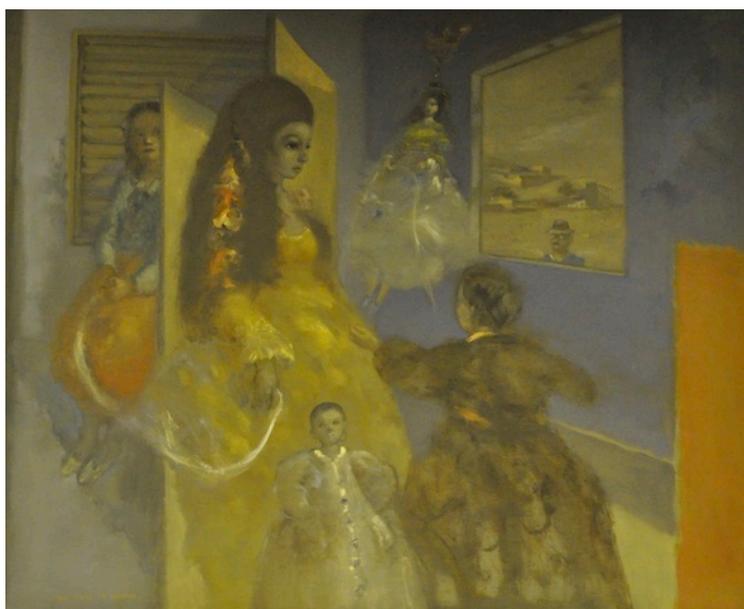
Chapter Two



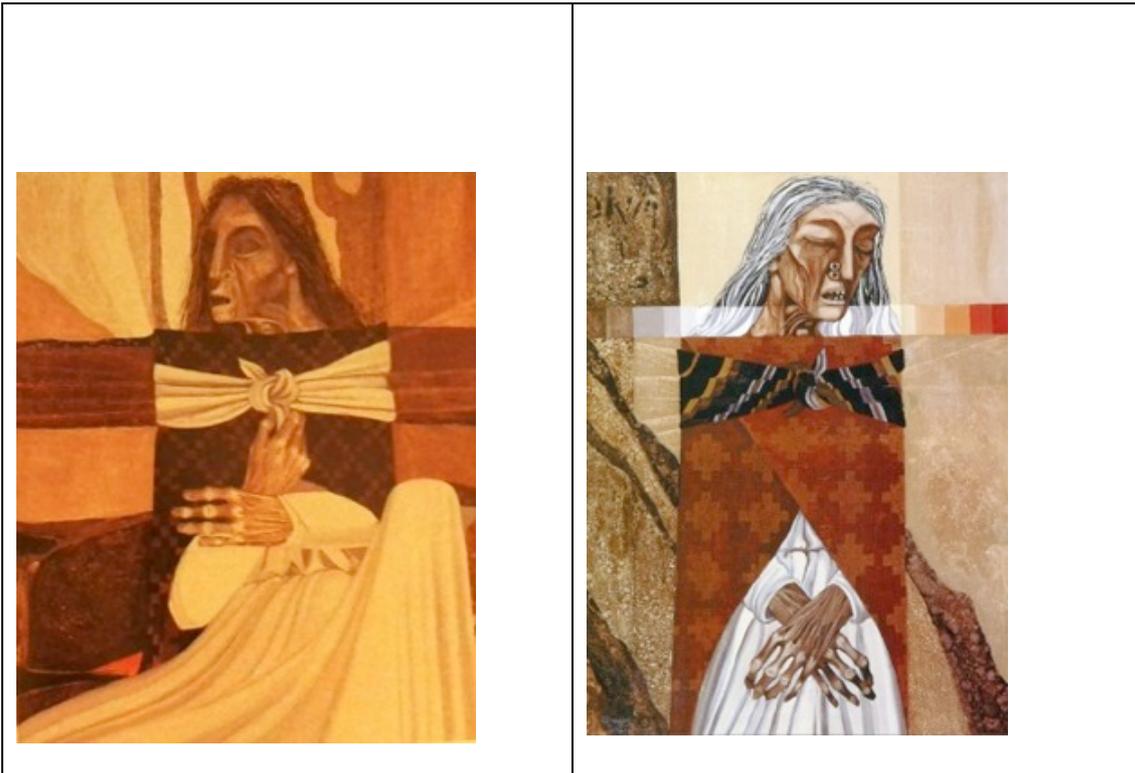
Figs. 2.1 and 2.2 *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas* (A Story with Artichoke Fields), mixed media on carton and wood panels, 1982. Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



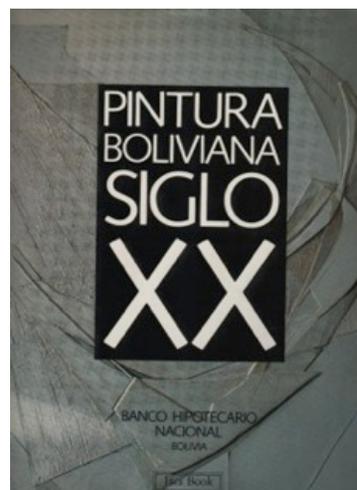
Fig. 2.3 *Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*, 1982. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 2.4 and 2.5 Raúl Lara, *Felipe V y su entorno* (1985) [top] and *De Quillacas a Toro Toro* (2001) [below]. Sources: Banco Central de Bolivia, *Colección de Obras de Arte del Banco Central de Bolivia*, p. 66 and Cecilia Bayá (curator), *Raúl Lara*, no editorial information available, n.d., p. 38.



Figs. 2.6 and 2.7 Gil Imana paintings: *Mujer* (Woman), 1970 and *Todo ha querido ser, nada ha sido* (She wanted to be everything and ended up being nothing), 1974. Sources: Pedro Querejazu, (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 113 and Cecilia Lampo (curator), *Gil Imaná. Exposición Individual 100* (catalogue), artespacio CAF, La Paz, 2016.



Figs 2.8 and 2.9 Cover of Carlos Salazar Mostajo's *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia* [left], and Pedro Querejazu's *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX* [right].



Figs. 2.10 and 2.11 María Luisa Pacheco's *Untitled*, 1978 [top] and Miguel Alandia Pantoja's *Educación y lucha de clases*, 1957. Sources: Pedro Querejazu, (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, p. 130-131 and Carlos Salazar Mostajo's *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia*, p. 129.



Figs. 2.12 and 2.13 Covers of Bienal Bolivia catalogues of 1981 [left], and 1983 [right].



Fig. 2.14 *AThilincho* on the cover of Ronald Roa Balderrama's *El Thilicho y su historia*. Notable ejemplo de creación artística popular.



Figs. 2.15 and 2.16 Edgar Arandia, *Sonidos del tiempo* (Sounds of time) [left] and Silvia Peñaloza, *¿Por qué?* (Why?) [right]. Source: Grupo Pucara, '1ra Bienal Internacional de Arte "Bolivia"' (catalogue), 28 October 1981.



Figs. 2.17 and 2.18 *Rebén* (Hostage), Max Aruquipa [left] and Dominique Tebayrene, *Presencia India* (Indian presence) [right]. Source: Grupo Pucara, '1ra Bienal Internacional de Arte "Bolivia"' (catalogue), 28 October 1981.



Fig. 2.19 Roberto Valcárcel, *Té Guevara* (Che/Tea Guevara), used tea bags on wood, 1983.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 2.20 *Marlene*, 1983, used filmstrips on wood. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 2.21, 2.22, 2.23 and 2.24: Adolfo Sardón, *Carguyoc* [top left], Victor Zapana *Criatura del Ande* (Creature of the Andes) [top right], Yolanda Rivas, *Keru* [bottom left], and Servando Mercado, *Juntuma Wallake* [bottom right]. Source: Grupo Pucara, 'II Biental Internacional de Arte "Bolivia' (catalogue), 29 October 1983.



Figs. 2.25 and 2.26 Some artworks reproduced in the Bienal INBO catalogue of 1977: David Angles, *Apuntes de diablos comiendo rostros asados* (Sketches of devils eating roasted faces) [left] and Angel Oblitas, *Bartolina Sisa* [right]. Source: INBO, *I Bienal de Arte Pintores Contemporáneos* (catalogue), La Paz, 1977.



Fig. 2.27 Salazar Mostajo in front of his *Lucha de clases* (Class Struggle), 1979. Source: Carlos Salazar Mostajo's *La pintura contemporánea en Bolivia*, no page.



Fig. 2.28 Roberto Valcárcel, *Pluricadros eclécticos radicales* (Radical and Eclectic Pluri-paintings), enamel and acrylic on canvas, 1987. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 2.29 *Pluricadros eclécticos radicales*. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 2.30 *Pluricadros eclécticos radicales*. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 2.31 and 2.32 Close-up of *Pluricadros eclécticos radicales*: three yellow buttons and Mickey Mouse. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 2.33 Roberto Valcárcel, *¿Qué es helarte?*, ink on cardboard, 1986-1987. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

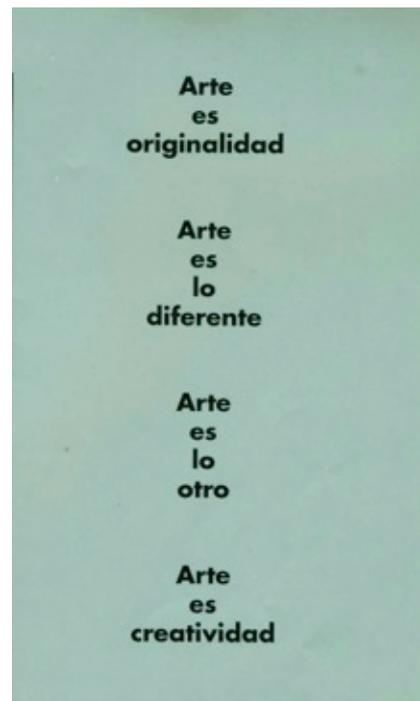
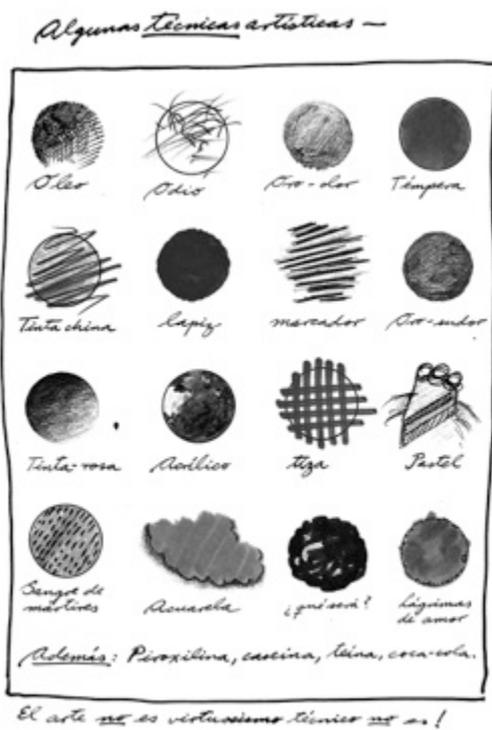
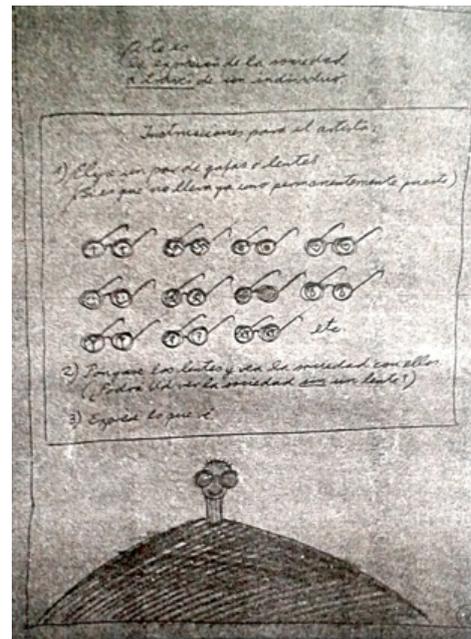


Fig. 2.34 , 2.35, 2.36 and 2.37 Close-up of *¿Qué es helarte?*, 1987-1988, ink on cardboard and magazine publication (bottom right). Sources: Photographs Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel (top left and bottom left), photocopy from Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue) (top right) and Roberto Valcárcel, '¿Qué es helarte?', *Encuentro*, n. 6, June 1990, p. 57 (bottom right).



Fig. 2.38 and 2.39 Close-ups of *¿Qué es el arte?* Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

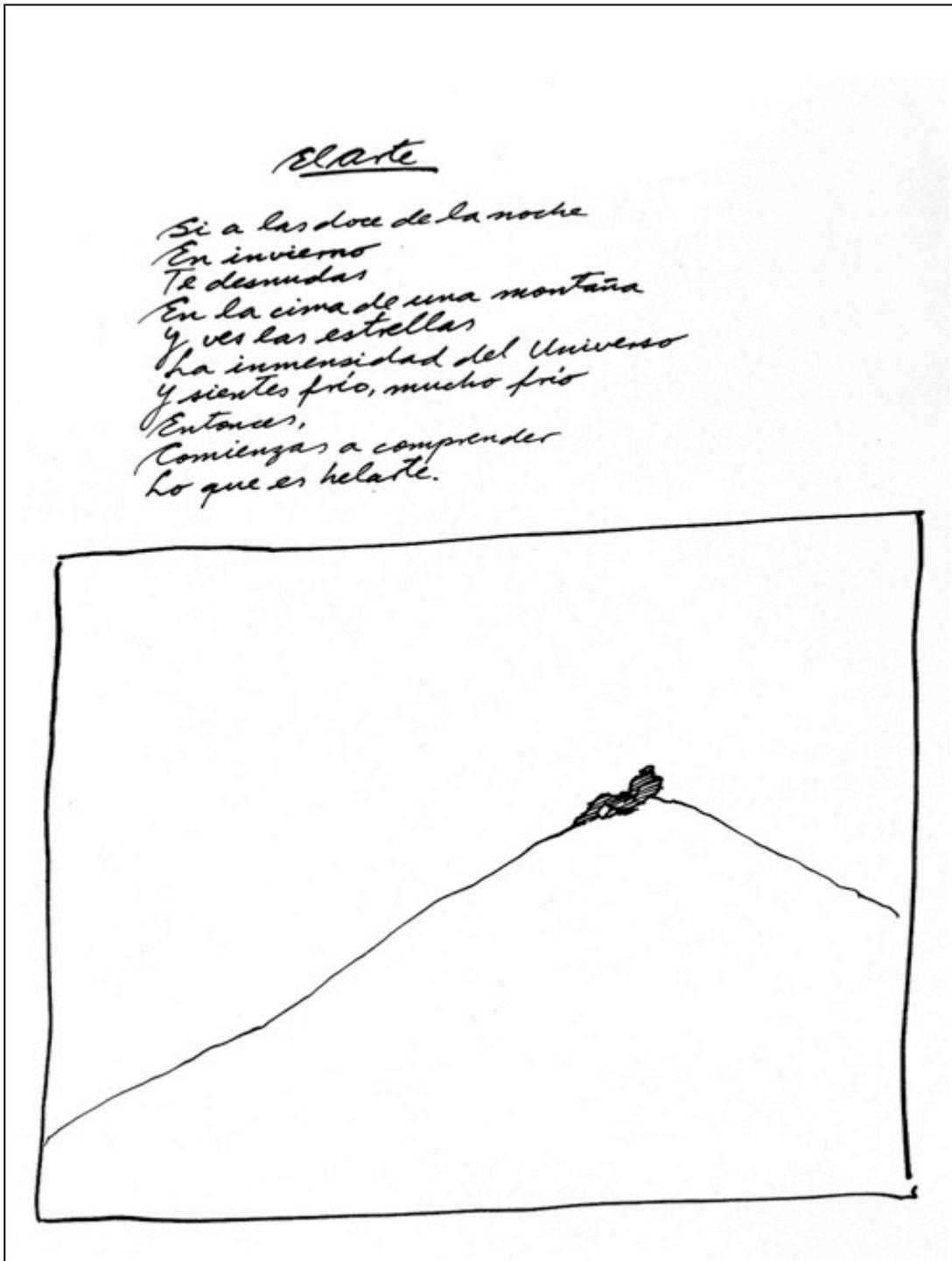


Fig. 2.40 Close-up of *¿Qué es helarte?* Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

Chapter Three



Fig. 3.1 *Victima de Guerra* (Victim of War), found objects, Emusa gallery, 1979.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 3.2 Valcárcel's *Gritones* represented in comic-like form,
 oil on canvas, 1983. Source: Anonymous, 'Actividad cultural en La Paz', *Presencia*,
 9 July 1983.

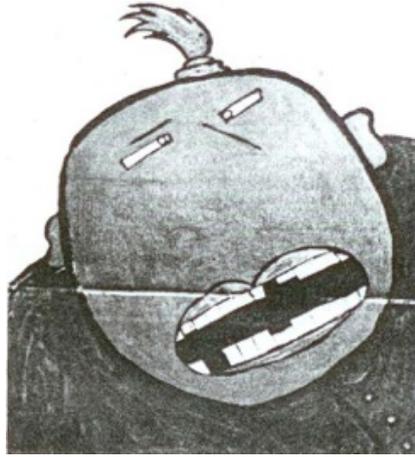


Fig. 3.3 Valcárcel's *Gritón* represented in comic-like form, oil on canvas, 1983.
Source: Anonymous, 'Nueva etapa en la pintura de Valcárcel en la Galería Emusa', *Última Hora*, 12 July 1983.

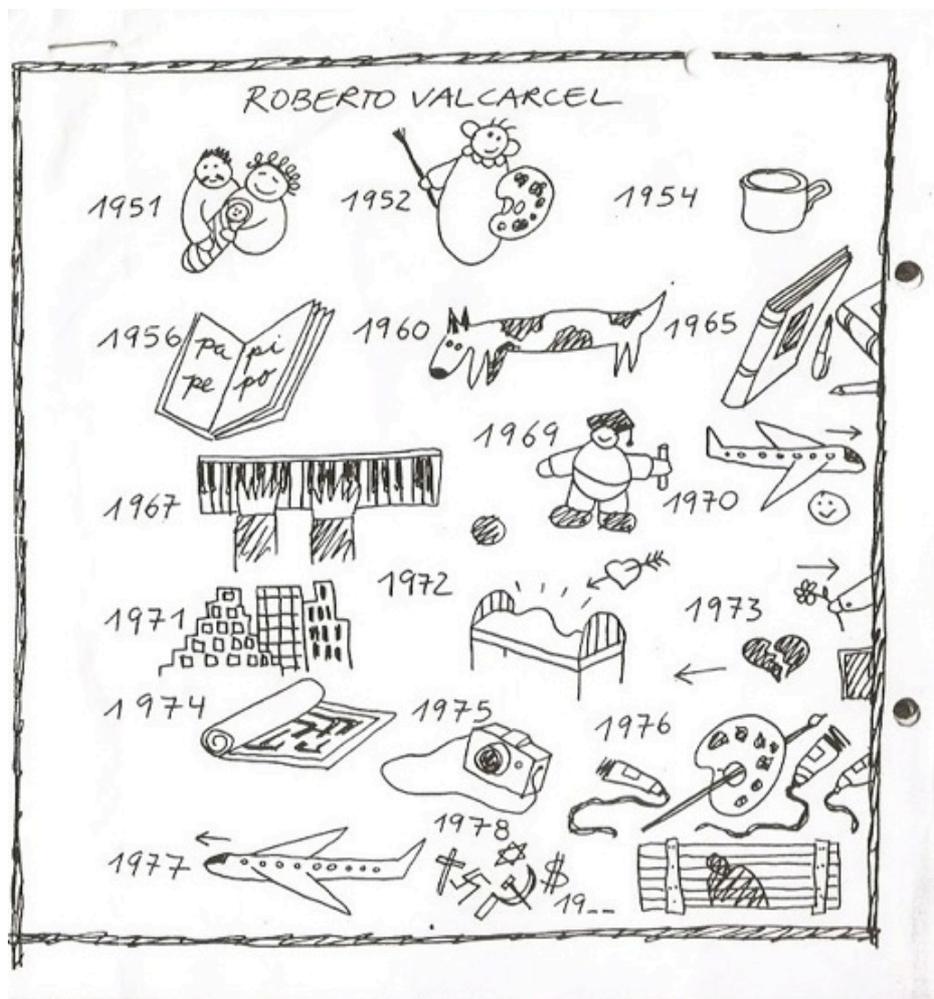


Fig. 3.4 Valcárcel's biography and artwork in comic form. Source: Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 180* (exhibition catalogue), 5-16 July 1983.



Fig. 3.5 Valcárcel's biography and artwork in comic form, Emusa catalogue, 1983.
Source: Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 180* (exhibition catalogue), 5-16 July 1983.



Fig. 3.6 Self-promotion of Producciones Valcárcel in *Mi vida* PowerPoint.
Image: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 3.7 *Untitled*, mixed media on wood, 1984. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig 3.8 *Mar para Bolivia* (Sea for Bolivia), oil on canvas, 2012.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

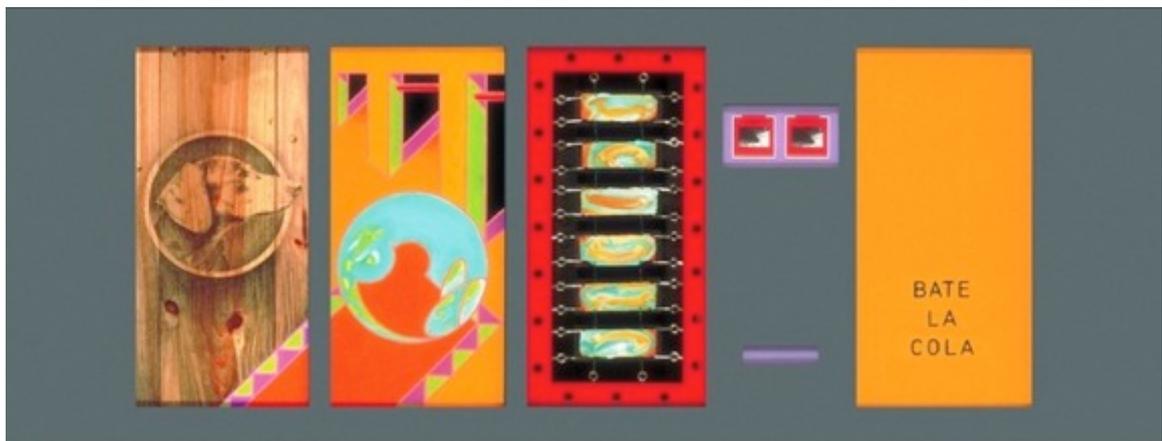


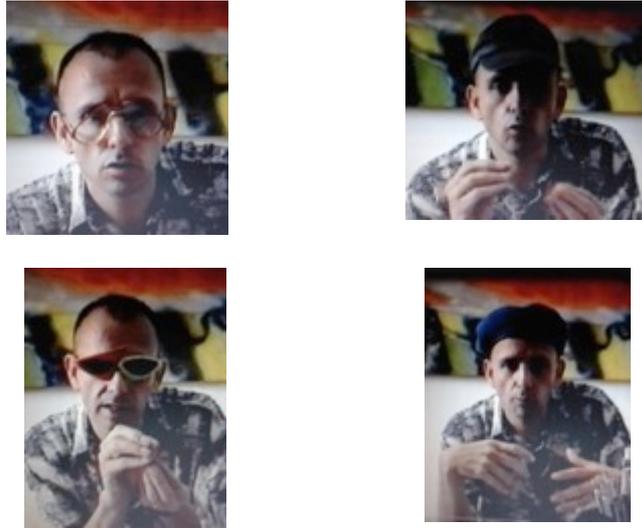
Fig. 3.9 Roberto Valcárcel, *Retrato de Petruccio* (Portrait of Petruccio), enamel on wood, 1994. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



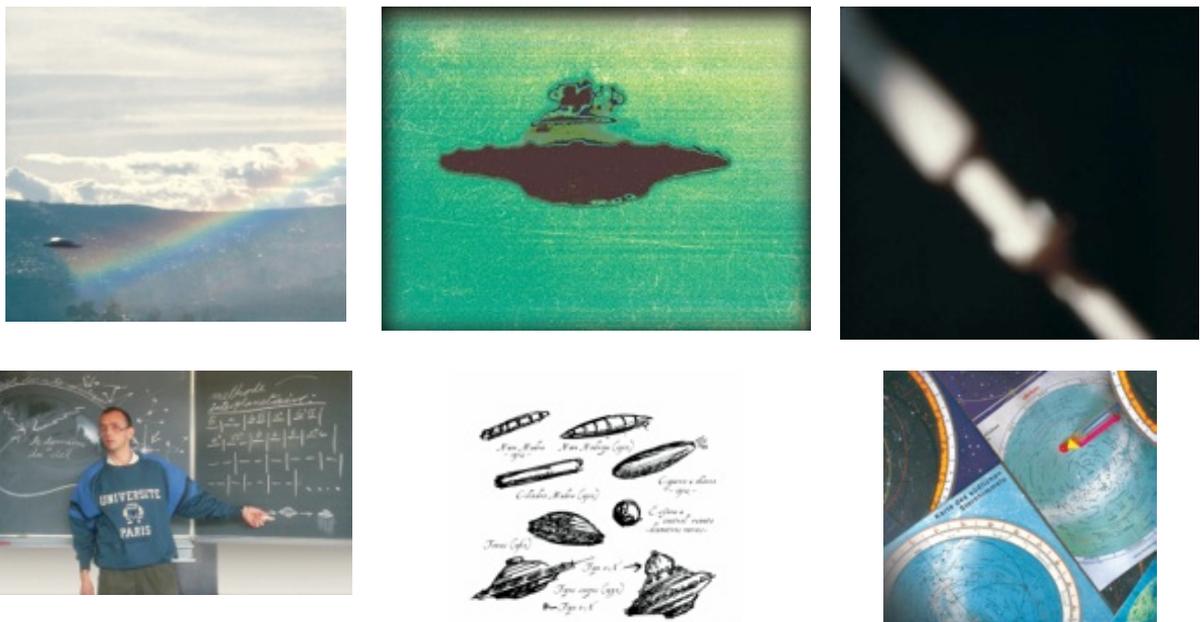
Fig. 3.10 Photograph published with the title 'Con Ronald y Lucy? Kathy? Nancy!' Source: Galería Arte Único, *Valcárcel* (exhibition catalogue), La Paz, 17 May-6 June 1990.



Figs 3.11 and 3.12 Roberto Valcárcel 5 [left], and Roberto Valcárcel 6 [right] in the 1988 catalogue of the first 'group' exhibition of Producciones Valcárcel. Source: Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.



Figs 3.13 -3.16 Valcárcel presents his different personas in a video on Bolivian art, ca. 1994. Source: Stills from Alejandro Villena, *Arte contemporáneo boliviano. Volume I, 1994-1997*.



Figs. 3.17-3.22 'Documentation' of the Interplanetary Association of Artists, ca. 1984, as published in the artist's book *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008* (vol. 1). Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 3.23-3.27 Facebook publications: ‘The Fried egg, one of the emblems of the IFCT’ [top left]; ‘The emblematic egg in context’ [top centre]; and ‘From the Self-defense Handbook of the IFCT’ [top right]. ‘The Department of Impossible Love of the Ministry of Love of the IFCT’ publishes periodically examples of very difficult but not impossible love relations’ [bottom left] and ‘This is the British contextualized version [...]’ [bottom middle].

Sources: Roberto Valcárcel’s Facebook wall, 2010-2011.

Chapter Four



Figs 4.1 and 4.2 Front page of *Última Hora*, 17 October 1980 [left]. Paid publicity published by Banzer in *Última Hora*, 2 September 1979 [right].



Fig. 4.3 Roberto Valcárcel, *Grito n. 32* (Scream n. 32), oil on wood, 1979-1980.
Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.4 Roberto Valcárcel, *Grito n. 65* (Scream n. 65), oil on wood, ca 1979-1980.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig 4.5. Roberto Valcárcel, *Grito n. 19* (Scream n. 19), oil on wood, ca 1979.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.6 Roberto Valcárcel, *Grito n. 47* (Scream n. 47), oil on wood, 1979-1980.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.7 Roberto Valcárcel, *Grito n. 49* (Scream n. 49), oil on wood, 1979-1980.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.8 Roberto Valcárcel, *Aborcado (Hung)*, oil on wood, 1979.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.9 Roberto Valcárcel, *Mineros IV (Miners IV)*, pencil on paper, exhibited in Emusa gallery in 1979. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.10 Roberto Valcárcel, *Dolor* (Pain), pencil and enamel on corrugated zinc, ca.1979-1980. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.11 Roberto Valcárcel, prints with linoleum on corrugated cardboard. Source: Galería Emusa, *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 111* (exhibition catalogue), La Paz, 1980.



Figs. 4.12-4.15 Roberto Valcárcel, *Freud, Marx, Einstein and Kant*, objets, ca. 1994.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

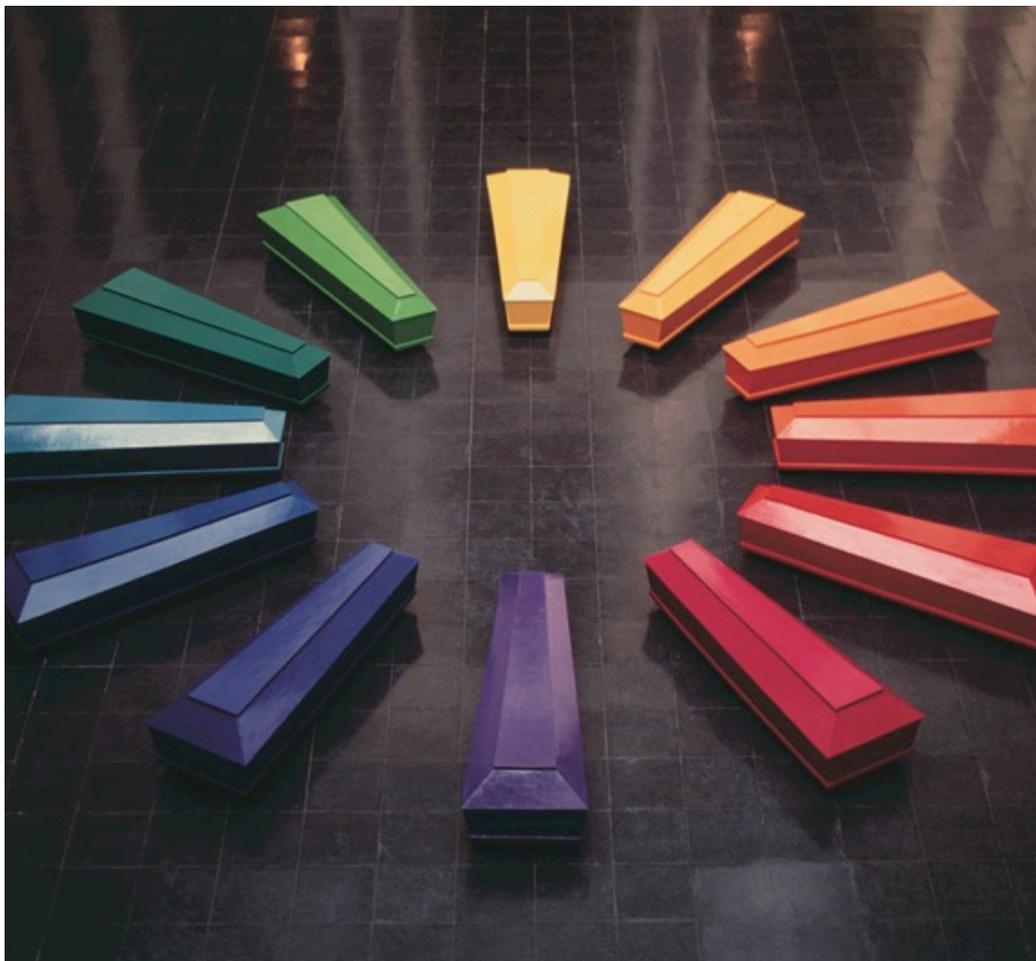


Fig. 4.16 Roberto Valcárcel, *Círculo cromático* (chromatic wheel) in a group exhibition of Bolivian art in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo of Santiago de Chile, installation, 1996.
 Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.17-4.22 Roberto Valcárcel, *Retratos y naturalezas muertas* (Portraits and 'dead natures'), silkscreen on kraft and grey cardboard paper, 1980.



Figs. 4.23- 4.24 Roberto Valcárcel, *Retratos y naturalezas muertas*, as published in the catalogue of the exhibition. Source: *Exposición de Producciones Valcárcel, exposición 134* (exhibition catalogue), La Paz, 5-16 May 1981.



Fig. 4.25 Review of Valcárcel’s exhibition in: Anonymous, ‘Retratos y naturalezas muertas en exposición de Roberto Valcárcel’, *Última Hora*, 13 May 1981.



Figs. 4.26-4.29 Images from the exhibition *Retratos y naturalezas muertas* reproduced in *Presencia* 8, 10, 13 and 16 May 1981.



Figs. 4.26-4.29 Images of *Retratos y naturalezas muertas* reproduced in *Presencia*, 8, 10, 13 and 16 May 1981.



Fig. 4.33 Diego Morales, *Títeres del Imperialismo* (Puppets of Imperialism), exhibited in Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas in 1980.
Source: Edgar Arandía et. al., *Beneméritos de la Utopía: la estética del compromiso*, p. 97.



CURRICULUM

producciones valcárcel considera que no es posible conocer a un individuo mediante el llamado curriculum vitae; mucho menos conocer la relación entre este y su obra.

el curriculum es una especie de respuesta a las demandas de academias, galeristas, críticos y del público en general, incapaces de juzgar una obra sin recurrir a referencias adicionales, ansiosos de que sea el contexto del artista lo que les dé pautas de significación, en vez de encontrarlas en su propio contexto (vivencial).

la intención original del artista, de "darse a conocer" mediante el curriculum, se ha deformando hasta convertirse en una lista de honores y distinciones que no tienen relación alguna con la compleja realidad en la que el artista vive.

en el curriculum están implicados, en mayor o menor grado, genéricamente como:

"mira cuán meteórica mi carrera, cuán superior soy a ti, ciudadano no-artista"

o: "si un día logras un curriculum como el mío podrás ser tan bueno como yo"

o: "con este curriculum, tan florido, mis obras deben ser buenas, no?"

Inclusive en casos relativamente modestos, en los que se menciona la palabra "autodidacta", se entiende el mensaje:

"mira cuán rebelde soy, cuán antiaacadémico"

o, al menos: "mira cuán bueno soy sin haber estudiado"

un curriculum no indica si el artista es buena persona o si es un tipo nefasto, si es ególatra o egocéntrico (como casi todos los artistas) o si es una persona generosa, si es liberado sexual o un católico acérrimo o medias tintas, si es rojo, verde, café o medias tintas, glotón, jovial, torpe, dedicado, borracho o medias tintas.

producciones valcárcel propone, en lugar de un curriculum vitae, un curriculum en el cual es el lector quien decide qué datos son dignos de ser creídos y cuáles no:

©11

Figs. 4.34 and 4.35 Roberto Valcárcel, eye and head accident photograph published next to his Curriculum Possibilitae in the artist's book (Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*). Photograph: Courtesy of the Artist.



Figs. 4.36 and 4.37 Roberto Valcárcel, 'animation' of the accident image in 'Mi vida' PowerPoint presentation of 2012. Images: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.38 Valcárcel self-portrait with no arms, 1981. Source: Anonymous, 'Retratos y autorretratos en la galería "EMUSA"', *Semana de Última Hora*, 20 February 1981.



Fig. 4.39 Artist posing 'with no arms', 1974, published in his book (Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*). Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.40 Roberto Valcárcel, photograph of the artist after his presumed kidnapping by extra-terrestrials, ca. 1984. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 4.41 Roberto Valcárcel, photograph of artist in a wheelchair, published on the cover of an exhibition catalogue. Source: Galería Arte Único, *Valcárcel* (exhibition catalogue), La Paz, 17 May-6 June 1990.

Chapter Five

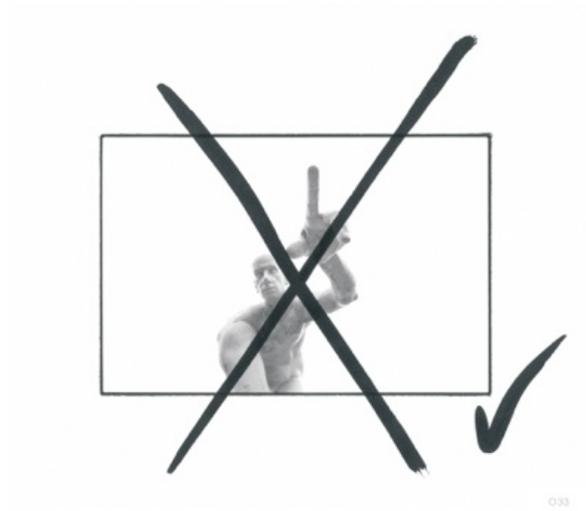


Fig. 5.1 Roberto Valcárcel, *Untitled*, 1978, photograph crossed out and checked with black marker.

Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

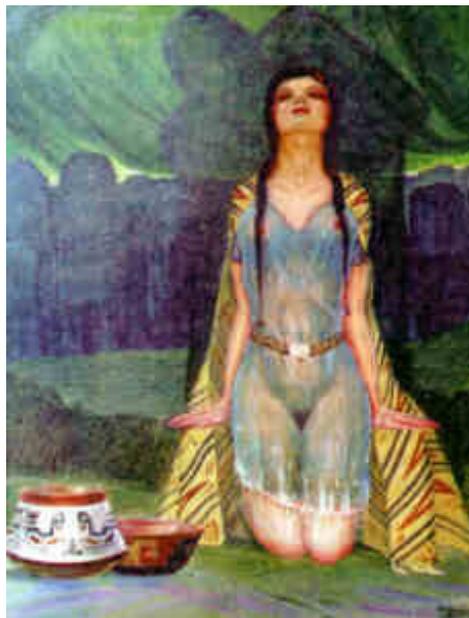


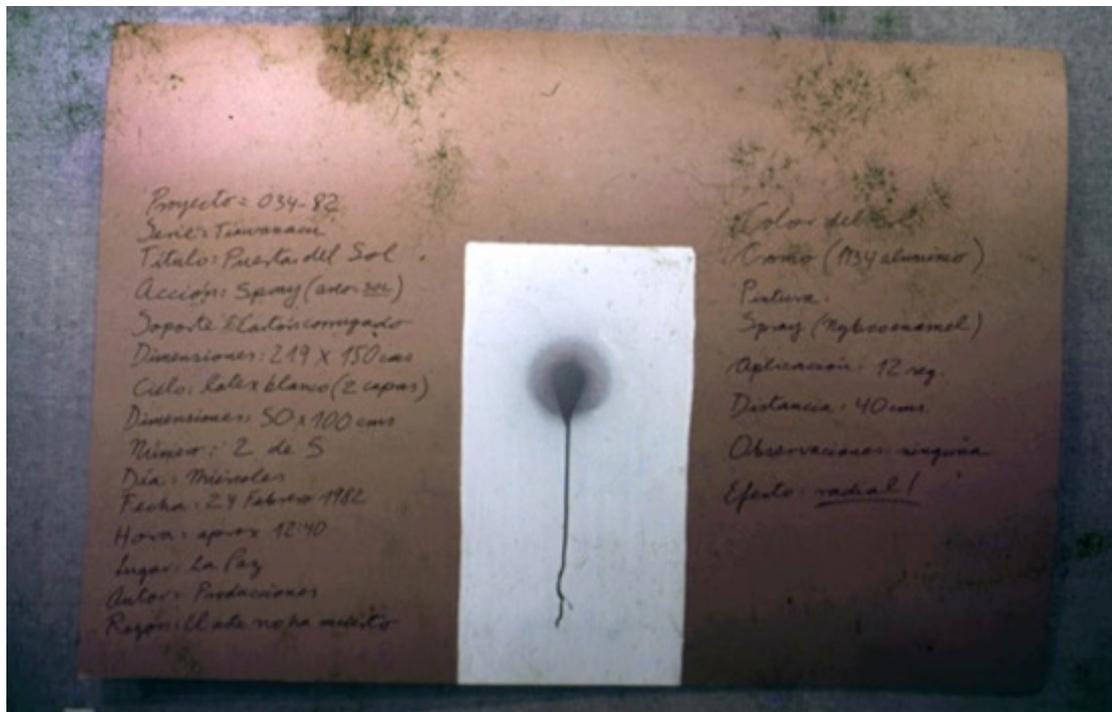
Fig. 5.2 Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, *El beso del Ídolo* (The Idol's Kiss), 1926. Source: Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, *Guzmán de Rojas. Exposición en el Centenario de su nacimiento*, p. 16.



Fig. 5.3 Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, *El triunfo de la naturaleza* (The Triumph of Nature), 1928. Source: Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, *Guzmán de Rojas. Exposición en el Centenario de su nacimiento*. p. 15.

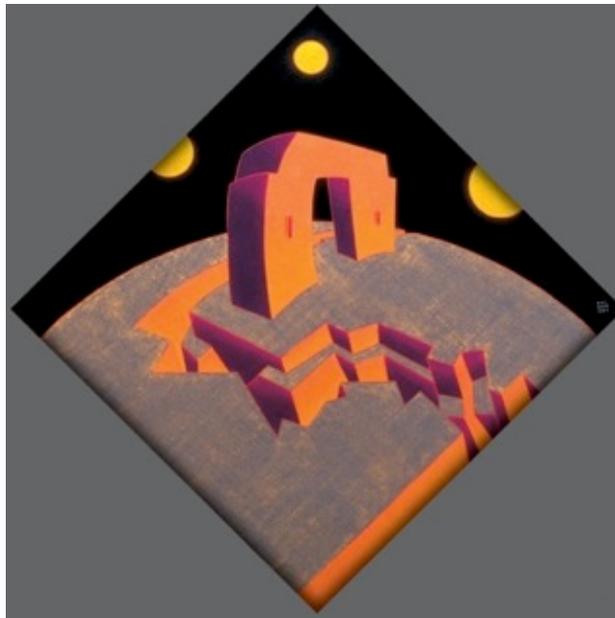
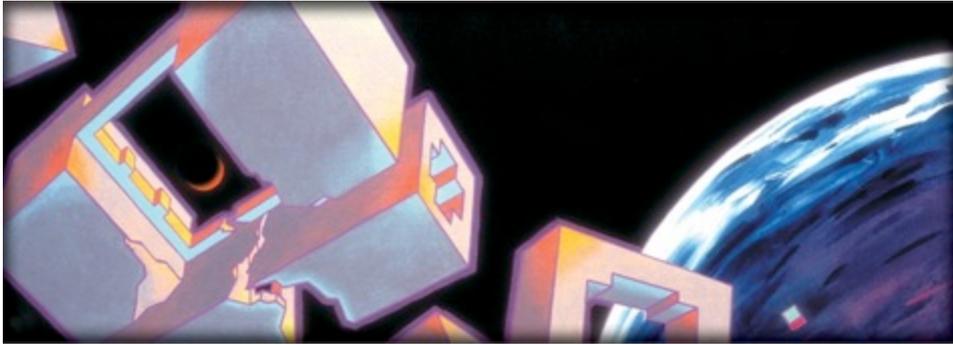


Fig. 5.4 Roberto Valcárcel *Puerta del Sol* (Gate of the Sun), 1982: Introductory panel with postcards and sketches. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 5.5 and 5.6 *Puerta del Sol*, 1982, black marker, spray and commercial paint on corrugated carton, overview of gallery [top] and close-up [bottom].

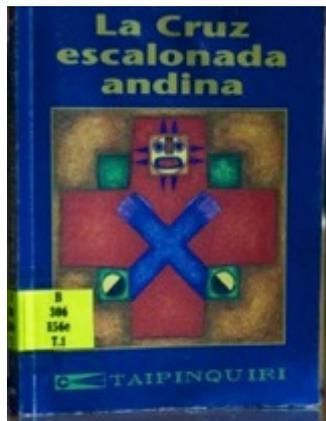
Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Figs. 5.7 and 5.8 Roberto Valcárcel, Alfa Centauri's series: *Casiopea 48* [top] and *Aldebaran 2* [bottom], 1988-1994, oil on canvas.
Photographs: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



Fig. 5.9 *Cruz cuadrada* (Square Cross), 1994, framed text printed on paper.
Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.



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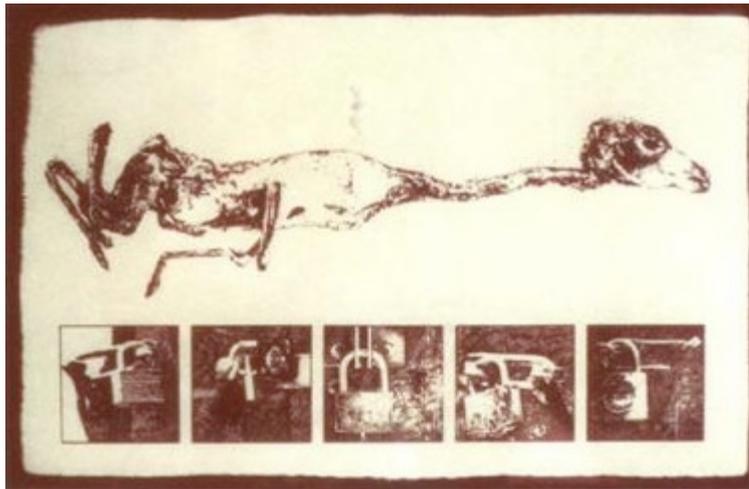
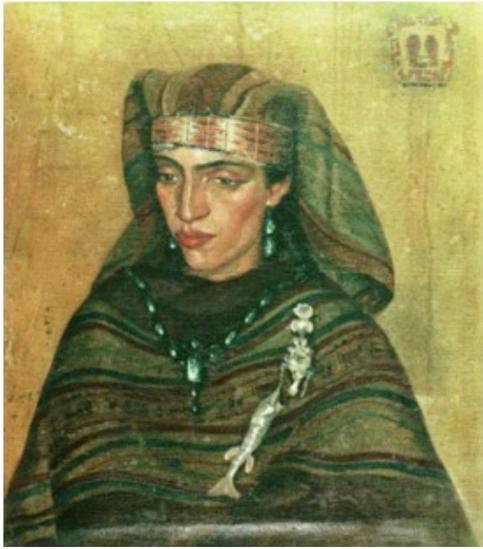


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- Fig. 5.1 Roberto Valcárcel, *Untitled*, 1978. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.
- Fig. 5.2 Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, *El beso del Idolo* (The Idol's Kiss), 1926. Source: Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, *Guzmán de Rojas. Exposición en el Centenario de su nacimiento*, p. 16.
- Fig. 5.3 Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, *El triunfo de la naturaleza* (The Triumph of Nature), 1928. Source: Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, *Guzmán de Rojas. Exposición en el Centenario de su nacimiento*. p. 15.
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Gothic and early Renaissance'; 'Painting of the Renaissance' and 'Painting of the Baroque', 2011. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

Fig. 5.18 Roberto Valcárcel, close-up of *3 pensamientos acerca de la descolonización de Bolivia* (three thoughts on decolonization), framed art history book covers with the titles, translated from German, 'Painting of Gothic and early Renaissance'; 'Painting of the Renaissance' and 'Painting of the Baroque', 2011. Photograph: Courtesy of Roberto Valcárcel.

APPENDICES

Appendix A **Chronology of Bolivian History: 1947- 2015**⁷⁷³

The following chronology coincides with the most important events in the history of Bolivia during the life of Roberto Valcárcel (born in La Paz in 1951). While the first of such events is the Nationalist Revolution of 1952, I begin the chronology with the presidential elections of 1947, which can be considered its direct antecedent.

1947

Presidential elections are called in Bolivia. Not having obtained a clear majority in the results required by the constitution (50 % plus one of the votes), conservative candidates from the Partido Republicano Genuino party join forces with the Partido Unión Republicana Socialista (PURS) party. This alliance guarantees the Partido Republicano Genuino a majority of votes in Congress. The candidates of this alliance, Enrique Herzog and Mamerto Urriolagoitia, are elected president and vice president of the country.

An indigenous rebellion arises in the Lake Titicaca area wherein land properties are seized and some of their owners are murdered. The leaders of the revolts are detained and sent to inhospitable lands in the tropical region of the country.

1949

President Hertzog resigns under pressure from his party. Upon his resignation, vice president Urriolagoitia – considered a stronger leader – assumes the presidency of the country. There is a general strike in the Patiño tin mines (the main source of Bolivian economy) which is repressed by the military resulting in the assassination of miners. The repression is remembered as the Massacre of Siglo XX (the XX Century Mining Centre Massacre).⁷⁷⁴ According to the government, the death toll is of 144 and there are 23 wounded.

⁷⁷³ This chronology has been compiled with information from the following sources: Silvia Arze, 'Marco cronológico del arte boliviano en el Siglo XX', in Pedro Querejazu (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, Banco Hipotecario Nacional, La Paz, 1989; Fernando Canelas Tardío and Carlos D. Mesa Gisbert, *Bolivia Milenio*, Editorial Canelas, S.A., Cochabamba, 1999; José de Mesa, Teresa Gisbert and Carlos D. Mesa, *Historia de Bolivia. Séptima edición actualizada y aumentada*, La Paz, Editorial Gisbert, 2008 and Mery Vaca, '10 hitos que marcaron los 10 años del gobierno de Evo Morales', ANF (Agencia de Noticias Fides) [website], 20 January 2016, <www.noticiasfides.com/politica/10-hitos-que-marcaron-los-10-anos-de-gobierno-de-evo-morales-361798/>, accessed 15 February 2016.

⁷⁷⁴ The 1949 events in Siglo XX mining centre had an antecedent in a similar situation in 1941 in the Catavi mining centre. The demands of the miners in both cases reflect the Pulacayo Thesis, a Trotskyist program of the workers' movement approved in a miner's congress in 1946 in the village of Pulacayo.

The months after the Massacre of Siglo XX are known as a period of civil war. A state of siege is declared in reaction to an armed uprising commanded by the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) party in the largest cities of the country and to the announcement of a parallel government in Santa Cruz de la Sierra wherein MNR party leader Paz Estenssoro (in exile) is proclaimed president. Santa Cruz de la Sierra and Cochabamba, the headquarters of the rebels, are bombarded and militarised. In Potosí, several revolutionaries are executed by a firing squad. A strike is declared in several mining centres, which are occupied by the workers. By 1 September, the government regains control of the country.⁷⁷⁵ The leaders of the parties of the opposition are exiled, including those of the nationalist MNR, the conservative Falange Socialista Boliviana (FSB) and the Trotskyist Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR).

1950

18 May: A workers' general strike demanding an increase in salaries turns into a popular uprising with armed clashes in the workers' neighbourhoods of Villa Victoria and Pura Pura of La Paz. Military troops repress harshly the popular uprisings which have extended throughout the city.⁷⁷⁶ A toll of 13 dead and of hundreds of wounded is recorded.

1951

Presidential elections are called and Victor Paz Estenssoro of the MNR party is elected president.

Because of the socialist tendency of the MNR, president Mamerto Urriolagoitia refuses to recognize the results of the elections and hands over the presidency to a military junta whose first measure is to annul the results of the elections.

1952

9, 10 and 11 April: Armed MNR militants with the support of 2,500 rebel police officers occupy the streets of La Paz. Combats between these groups and the Armed Forces take place deriving into a popular insurrection which will be known as the Revolution of 52. Armed miners supporting the revolution occupy El Alto, the entrance to the city of La Paz. Radio Illimani is seized by the revolutionaries. A truce is finally reached in the village of Viacha in favour of the revolution. There is a toll of 490 dead and 1,000 wounded. Hernán Siles Zuazo presides the revolutionary junta between 11 and 14 April.

Victor Paz Estenssoro, the MNR party leader in exile in Buenos Aires, returns to La Paz and assumes the presidency of the country on 14 April.

⁷⁷⁵ Educa, '1936-1952', Educa [website], 'La llamada Guerra civil y los hechos de Villa Victoria', <www.educa.com.bo/1936-1952-viejo-orden/la-llamada-guerra-civil-de-1949-y-los-hechos-de-villa-victoria>, accessed 22 February 2016.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid.

1953

The MNR party governs in alliance with the Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), the worker's syndicate founded shortly after the triumph of the revolution.

The revolutionary government decrees several transformative reforms. The Agrarian Reform mandates the expropriation of extensive land properties to be handed over to the indigenous peasants. At the same time, property titles are given to highland peasants to occupy the lowlands of the country. The government decrees universal vote – previously restricted to literate men with an income. Other radical reforms include the nationalisation and expropriation of the mines (the main source of economic income of the country) from private companies; the Education Reform – promoting education in the rural areas mainly inhabited by indigenous peasants – and the restructuring of the Armed Forces.

Bolivian legislation is modified so that city mayors are no longer elected directly but appointed by the president.

The government secures its stability through several repressive acts and institutions. The most notorious ones are the creation of a political control section in the police and the establishment of armed militias loyal to the revolutionary government. The government equally sets up concentration camps for the seclusion of political prisoners who are the object of abuse and torture.

1956

The first elections with universal vote take place. Amid accusations of fraud, Hernán Siles Suazo of the MNR party is elected president.

In order to counteract high rates of inflation, economic stability is sought with the support of specialists from the IMF and the US government. New economic policies dictate a halt in the subsidy of essential goods. Following protests by the population and workers in the streets, the government declares the co-government with COB finished.

President Siles Zuazo declares himself in hunger strike and the workers' protests stop.

1958

In an attempt to suffocate a failed FSB coup in Santa Cruz, 10,000 campesino militias from the village of Ucareña in Cochabamba seize the village of Terebinto in Santa Cruz. During the occupation of Terebinto, four opposition leaders are tortured, mutilated and assassinated.

1959

Oscar Únzaga, leader of the FSB party, and another member of the party die during the search by political control officers of the house where they are hiding

in La Paz.⁷⁷⁷ Their deaths follow a failed attempt of FSB militants to take Cuartel Sucre (The Sucre Barracks) in La Paz. In retaliation, 23 FSB rebels are executed by a firing squad.

A second occupation of Santa Cruz takes place by military and armed campesino militias from Ucureña.

As consequence of differences regarding upcoming elections, the militants of the MNR party divide and the party starts a process of fragmentation. MNR founding leader Wálter Guevara creates the Partido Revolucionario Auténtico (PRA) party.

1960

Elections are called and Victor Paz Estenssoro, leader of the MNR party, is once again, and amid accusations of fraud, elected president of Bolivia. Wálter Guevara of PRA obtains the second place in the elections.

During his second government (1960-1964), Paz Estenssoro seeks international investment in order to insert Bolivia in the world economy.

Violent clashes among campesino groups led by factions of the MNR party take place in the villages of Cliza and Ucureña in Cochabamba.

1961

A new political constitution is sanctioned by Congress. The reforms of the revolution are introduced into the new constitution, as well as heritage laws and a re-definition of the relationship between church and state. The main motivation for sanctioning a new constitution is, nonetheless, to introduce a modification to allow the re-election of the president.

In order to redress the mismanagement of the state mining company Corporación Minera de Bolivia (COMIBOL), the government launches Plan Triangular (Triangular Plan), a development programme with the support of the US government, the Inter-American Bank and West Germany.

1962

Relations with Chile are broken following the latter country's unilateral diversion of Lauca River into its territory.

US assistance is sought by means of loans and donations (Punto IV and PL480 programmes). With the assistance of the latter, the government seeks to cover fiscal deficit and the payment of government salaries. The US imposes the payment of Bolivia's debt – pending since 1931– as condition for this aid.

Kennedy's Alliance for Progress is launched. President Victor Paz Estenssoro travels to the US on an official visit.

⁷⁷⁷ It has never been clearly established how these deaths happened. The government claimed it was a double suicide while FSB members denounced them as murders by political control officers.

1963

The fragmentation of the MNR party is made apparent, once again, in the creation of the Partido Revolucionario de Izquierda Nacional (PRIN) party by Siles Zuazo, a founding member of the MNR who opposes Paz Estenssoro's re-election.

1964

Victor Paz Estenssoro runs for president amid discontent in his own party.

General René Barrientos Ortuño, running for vice president with Paz Estenssoro, signs a pact with the campesinos – El Pacto Militar-Campesino (The Military-Campesino Pact), whose ultimate aim is to control them and secure their support. Campesinos sign the pact to benefit from development works.⁷⁷⁸

Paz Estenssoro is elected president but is overthrown by a coup headed by General Barrientos Ortuño a few months later. A military junta constituted by Barrientos Ortuño and General Alfredo Ovando Candia governs the country. Barrientos Ortuño becomes the visible leader of the presidency and Ovando Candia the commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

1965

To avoid discontent with Ovando Candia and the military forces, Barrientos Ortuño creates a co-presidency wherein he governs with Ovando Candia.

The wages of the miners of the national mining company COMIBOL are reduced and frozen. The government prohibits strikes and refuses to recognize syndicate leaders.

1966

Barrientos Ortuño resigns from the co-presidency to habilitate himself as presidential candidate. Ovando Candia is named interim president.

The first tin melting state company is created in Vinto, Oruro, proving wrong previous studies which concluded that it was not feasible to melt metals in Bolivia because of costs and altitude of mining centres, among other factors.

The Bolivian navy is created.

Barrientos Ortuño is elected president and Luis Adolfo Siles Salinas (half-brother of former president Siles Zuazo) vice president.

⁷⁷⁸ Educa, 'El pacto militar-campesino. La constitución de 1967', Educa [website], <www.educa.com.bo/militarismo-1964-1978/el-pacto-militar-campesino-la-constitucion-de-1967>, accessed 14 December 2015.

1967

A new constitution – valid until 1994 – is sanctioned eliminating double nationality, popular militias and the re-election of the president.⁷⁷⁹

A guerrilla group, under the leadership of Che Guevara, rises in Ñancahuazú, the southern part of the Department of Santa Cruz. Its objective is to become a continental nucleus for the irradiation of the Cuban socialist revolution in the region.

In an attempt to undermine the demands of the miners of the state company COMIBOL and their support to the guerrilla of Che Guevara, the government stages a violent takeover of the mining district Siglo XX (XX Century Mining Centre). This infamous government action will be remembered as Massacre de San Juan (Saint John's Massacre).

Che Guevara is captured in combat and executed in La Higuera, Department of Santa Cruz.

1969

President Barrientos Ortuño dies in a helicopter accident in Arque, Cochabamba and vice president Luis Adolfo Siles Salinas assumes the presidency of the country.

National television, broadcasting the government station, is inaugurated.

Bolivia signs the Andean Pact, an agreement to foster economic growth and industrial development in the region.

Ovando Candia seizes the presidency from Siles Salinas who had been president for only five months. Ovando Candia is the head of a military junta that rules the country. Ovando Candia annuls the elections scheduled for 1970 and dismisses Congress.⁷⁸⁰ His government, constituted by military men, MNR and Christian Democracy party members, as well as independents, re-introduces nationalist politics. Diplomatic relations are established with the socialist block and a contract is signed for the sale of minerals to the Soviet Union.

The US Gulf Oil company is nationalised.

1970

A university revolution takes place when a group of radical Marxist students, inspired by May 68, occupy and take control of the state university Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (UMSA) in La Paz.

Falangistas (FSB party members) and members of La Paz gang Los Marqueses (The Marqueses) take back the university by assault.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ GPO, 'Revolutionary Nationalism: Ovando and Torres', Library of Congress [website], <countrystudies.us/bolivia/22.htm>, accessed 15 December 2015.

Violent incidents and terrorist attacks take place in La Paz.

El Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN), a guerrilla nucleus inspired by Che Guevara's movement, is established in Teoponte, the tropical region of the Department of La Paz. Some of its members, university students and members of the Christian Democratic party – followers of Liberation Theology – die of hunger and are annihilated by the army.

October 5: A failed coup attempt by Ovando Candia takes place.

Military officers demand the resignation of Ovando Candia and a triumvirate presidency is formed, composed of Efraín Guachalla, Fernando Sattori and Alberto Albarracín.

A coup takes place led by the right wing section of the Armed Forces but the left wing military forces re-assert themselves under the leadership of Juan José Torres.⁷⁸¹

Torres seizes the presidency and takes oath of office before crowds of people gathered in the main square of La Paz, Plaza Murillo.

Juan Lechín resumes his post as head of Central Obrera Boliviana (COB).

US Peace Corps are expelled from the country.

Che guerrilla members Regis Debray and Ciro Bustos are liberated.

An armed group headed by Oscar Zamora, leader of the communist-Leninist party, conducts terrorist acts in the north of La Paz.

A university group takes by assault a motel in La Paz.

1971

The Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR) party is founded by the radical sector of the Christian Democratic party and MNRI (Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario de Izquierda) party members.

The Partido Socialista (Socialist Party) is founded.

Preceded by the V Congress of COB, an Asamblea Popular (a People's Assembly) is set up with the aim to create the conditions for the seizure of power by the proletariat. The Assembly is constituted by representatives of workers of Trotskyist orientation. The postulates of the demands of the workers, including the provision of arms, replicate those of the Thesis of Pulacayo. The Assembly is inaugurated on 22 June with similar powers to those of a parliament modelled after a soviet. COB leader Juan Lechín is named president of the Assembly and Oscar Eid its General Secretary.

Two months after, Torres is overthrown by a bloody coup d'état led by the Junta

⁷⁸¹ GPO, 'Revolutionary Nationalism: Ovando and Torres', Library of Congress [website], <countrystudies.us/bolivia/22.htm>, accessed 15 December 2015.

of Commanders of the Armed Forces. The coup has the support of the MNR, and FSB parties – under the umbrella Frente Popular Nacionalista (Nationalist Popular Front) – and private business representatives.

University students resist the coup in Santa Cruz de la Sierra and in La Paz. The toll is 98 dead and 560 wounded.

General Hugo Banzer Suárez assumes the presidency on 24 August. Banzer Suárez's first measures include the closing of universities⁷⁸² and outlawing COB and left wing parties.

1972

Two coup attempts take place. Andrés Selich, former Minister of Interior of Banzer Suárez, and presumed conspirator, is detained and murdered by government forces.

1974

Political parties are annulled. The regime's pact with Frente Popular Nacionalista is cancelled and the government begins an era of a more straightforward dictatorship with the support of the Armed Forces.

1975

El abrazo de Charaña (The Charaña Embrace), a symbolic resumption of diplomatic relations between Chile's president, Augusto Pinochet, and Banzer Suárez takes place in the border between Chile and Bolivia. In this encounter, Pinochet agrees to grant Bolivia a sovereign access to the sea in exchange of a piece of Bolivian land. The agreement is never consummated.

1976

Census results indicate that 58 % of the population lives in the countryside, that 36.8% are illiterate and that 54% are of indigenous origin.

Former president Torres is assassinated in Buenos Aires. His death is presumed to be part of Plan Cóndor, a joint programme by South American dictators to eliminate political dissidents.

1977

A strike initiated by four women from the mining centres, headed by Domitila Barrios de Chungara, demands amnesty for political prisoners. The strike gains support from large sectors of the population. Under pressure by the strike and Jimmy Carter's administration, Banzer Suárez announces presidential elections.

⁷⁸² Universities reopen at the end of 1972 but their autonomy is cancelled and political activities are prohibited.

1978

Juan Pereda Asbún (Banzer Suárez's former Minister of Industry and Minister of Interior) runs for president with the Unión Nacionalista del Pueblo (UNP) party and wins elections, amid accusations of fraud. The elections are annulled and Pereda assumes the presidency by coup.

Four months after Pereda's coup, commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces general David Padilla Arancibia stages another coup. The rationale behind Padilla Arancibia's coup is to ensure that power is handed down to a democratically elected president. Consequently, Padilla Arancibia's first measure is to call elections.

1979

Banzer Suárez creates the ADN (Acción Democrática Nacional) party to represent him in Congress and counter his association with military regimes.

1 June: General elections take place and Hernán Siles Zuazo (now leader of left wing oriented UDP – Unión Democrática y Popular) wins by only a slight difference with Paz Estenssoro, MNR party candidate (31.22 % vs. 31.13%).

26 June: The campesino workers' confederation Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia (CSUTCB) is created.

Unable to reach an agreement regarding the results of elections, Congress names the head of senate, civilian Wálter Guevara Arze, interim president of Bolivia.

During the inauguration of Congress, a trial of responsibilities against Banzer Suárez is announced and soon after initiated by Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz, leader of PS1 party.

OAS Assembly sessions are held in La Paz. In one of the sessions, all the members vote to support Bolivia's sovereign access to the Pacific sea (lost to Chile during the Pacific War, 1879). On the same day, General Alberto Natusch Busch stages a coup against Guevara, in alliance with MNR and Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario de Izquierda-Unión Popular (MNRI-UP – part of the UDP party).

The population's complete repudiation of Natusch Busch's coup is manifested in public demonstrations in the streets. COB expresses its rejection of the coup by decreeing an indefinite strike and CSUTCB blocks all inter-departmental roads in the country. This is the first time that campesinos join workers in their struggle and that their political power is made visible. Congress sojourns to negotiate with COB and the Armed Forces.

Masacre de Todos Santos (All Saints' Day Massacre): Civilians in the streets who oppose Natusch Busch's coup are violently repressed. Although resistance and repression takes place during several days, the massacre is named after the day of the bloodiest repression, the Catholic feast of All Saints. There is a death toll of approximately 200 and 500 wounded.

An agreement is reached and Natusch Busch resigns on the condition that Guevara Arze does not assume the presidency.

Congress is re-established and it appoints civilian Lidia Gueiler Tejada, the head of the deputies' section of parliament, interim constitutional president of Bolivia. Gueiler Tejada is the first woman president of Bolivia.

General Luis García Meza exerts pressure on president Gueiler Tejada (his cousin) and is designated commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.

1980

Gueiler Tejada's economic austerity measures are followed by COB strikes and campesinos blocking of interdepartmental roads.

22 March: Spanish Jesuit Luis Espinal, who had arrived to Bolivia with the Liberation Theology movement and was director of the opposition newspaper *Aquí*, is assassinated.

2 June: The leaders of MIR party die in an aeroplane accident, with the exception of Jaime Paz Zamora who survives with serious burns.

Lidia Gueiler Tejada calls elections. Siles Zuazo wins (with 38.74% of votes) but not having reached an absolute majority, it is up to Congress to elect the president.

17 July: 18 days after elections, the government of Lidia Gueiler Tejada is overthrown by General García Meza. The coup is organised with the support of Argentinian advisors in repression and torture. It is equally presumed that Klaus Barbie, former head of the Gestapo in Lyon (living in Bolivia since 1955), collaborated with the coup and the regime. The coup begins with the uprising of troops in the city of Trinidad and is launched with the occupation of COB offices during a meeting of the political committee to safeguard democracy Comité de Defensa Democrática (CONADE). During the occupation of COB, socialist political leader Quiroga Santa Cruz is wounded and removed from the premises for questioning and execution. Two other leaders of the worker's syndicate COB are murdered in the violent takeover of its headquarters.

President Gueiler Tejada, under arrest in the presidential office, is forced to resign and her cabinet members are arrested.

The following repressive measures are dictated: a curfew is established between 9.00 pm and 6.00 am; a complete censorship of the press and a radio chain are enforced – all radio stations are obligated to reproduce news broadcasted by the government radio; and the headquarters of the Federation of Miners, under the tuition of COB, are destroyed. In addition to the latter, mining centres are seized and attacked with a toll of several dead. Political and syndicate rights are suspended.

16 October: Artist Diego Morales is arrested, beaten and interrogated because of the political content of the paintings he is exhibiting in Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas in La Paz.⁷⁸³

García Meza's government is characterised by its violent repression, corruption and high involvement in drug trafficking.

1981

15 January: MIR party leaders attending a meeting in a Harrington Street house in La Paz are assassinated – shortly after Coronel Arce Gómez, Minister of Interior Affairs, warns in an announcement broadcasted in television that 'political opponents should walk with their will under their arm'.

1 March: In a televised interview with Minister Arce Gómez conducted by US reporter Mike Wallace for *60 Minutes*, Arce Gómez is portrayed as 'The Minister of Cocaine'.⁷⁸⁴ At the time, the Chapare region, in the department of Cochabamba, is one of the most important centres for the production of cocaine.

Military uprisings take place in La Paz, Cochabamba and Santa Cruz. On 4 August, following a fifth coup attempt (a revolt in Santa Cruz led by Natusch Busch), García Meza resigns and hands over power to a military junta constituted by Celso Torrelio, Waldo Bernal and Óscar Pammo.

The Armed Forces appoints General Celso Torrelio, former Minister of Interior of García Meza, president of Bolivia.

1982

Due to Torrelio's lack of public credibility and lack of international support, a section of the Armed Forces demands his resignation. Torrelio resigns and the Armed Forces appoint General Guido Vildoso president of Bolivia.

After another failed attempt to call elections, Vildoso decides to recognize the election results of 1980 and hands over power to Congress.

Following constitutional mandate, Hernán Siles Zuazo of Unión Democrática y Popular (UDP) is elected president by the recently re-established Congress. Siles Zuazo is the head of a party constituted by a coalition of left wing parties (MNRI, MIR and PCB). Siles Zuazo's government inaugurates the final restoration of democracy in the country promising to improve its economic situation within the first 100 days of government.

⁷⁸³ For more information, see: Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, 'Resolución n° 33/82', Organization of American States [website], 8 March 1982, <www.cidh.oas.org/annualrep/81.82sp/Bolivia7824.htm>, accessed 9 February 2015.

⁷⁸⁴ For more information on this, see: Latin American Bureau, 'La mafia en el poder' in *Narcotráfico y Política: Militarismo y mafia en Bolivia* [online book originally published in 1982], electronically edited by Equipo Nizkor and Human Rights, 5 June 2001, <www.derechos.org/nizkor/bolivia/libros/cocacoup/cap2.html>, accessed 10 February 2015.

Although Siles Zuazo's government is characterised by an absolute respect for democracy, he has little support in Congress, and permanent pressure from the national workers' union (COB) and a hyperinflation of 2,000 %. The high rate of inflation is a consequence of an economic de-dollarisation measure (the conversion of all previously existing agreements into pesos) which triggers a flight of foreign currency and speculation in the black market.

Campeños move to the lowlands (Chapare region and Santa Cruz) and abroad as result of extreme drought in the highlands caused by El Niño. Large groups of campesinos from Potosí move to the cities to beg for money.

1983

Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie is deported to France where he goes on trial and is condemned to life in prison.

1984

More than 1,000 strikes in total have taken place since the beginning of Siles Zuazo's government. Direct pressure is exerted on the president himself: water and electricity are cut off from his office and from the presidential residency. President Siles Zuazo is kidnapped, during ten hours, by a group of policemen, military men and civilians. Despite Siles Zuazo's lack of support, the kidnap (or failed coup attempt) is repudiated by COB, Congress and the Armed Forces.

1985

During the Jornadas de marzo (March Days), 12,000 miners occupy the streets of La Paz paralysing activities during more than a week and demanding Siles' resignation.

President Siles Zuazo begins a four-day hunger strike, with the objective of gaining back the support of different parties and COB so that he can govern more fluidly. Following mediation by the Church, the president's strike is suspended and Siles Zuazo agrees to meet with political parties to discuss the political crisis. An agreement is reached in which the president agrees to call elections one year before the end of his term.

Hyperinflation reaches an 8,767% annual rate. It is the highest hyperinflation in the history of the country and the seventh in the history of the world.

Elections are called and Banzer Suárez wins by 28.57%. Since there is no absolute winner, Congress elects Victor Paz Estenssoro president of Bolivia.

Paz Estenssoro assumes the presidency of the country for the fourth time, in alliance with Banzer Suárez's party, Acción Democrática y Popular (ADN).

The 21060 Decree is sanctioned as a measure to stabilise Bolivian currency and end hyperinflation. The decree signifies a harsh turn towards a liberal economy.

The IMF re-opens credit for Bolivia and the country's external debt is re-negotiated at 8-11 cents to the dollar.

Hyperinflation is halted.

Tin prices, the main source of income of the country's economy, drop following the collapse of the London market. As result, drastic economic measures are in place including the dismissal of 23,000 miners from the state mining company COMIBOL. Miners, with a long trajectory in syndicalism and a strong identification with Trotskyist ideas, move to the region of Chapare, the most important centre of cocaine production. In time, coca growers will become an important political force supporting the 2005 election of Evo Morales, the leader of their syndicate.

1986

A general strike is announced by mining workers and sectors of COB. Paz Estenssoro decrees a state of siege and confines 150 leaders to the north of the country, including COB leader Lechín.

In February, a trial against former dictator García Meza is initiated in Congress by Juan del Granado Cosío, future mayor of La Paz (2000-2010).

During the *Marcha por la vida* (March for Life), nearly 10,000 miners and workers march from Oruro to La Paz against job dismissals. A second state of siege is decreed and the army is sent to halt the march in Calamarca, 60 km before reaching La Paz. An agreement is established without bloodshed and the march is stopped. The outcome is considered emblematic of the end of a syndicate era initiated with the restoration of democracy in 1982.

Informal economy is on the rise: Unemployed workers seek a source of income by selling in the streets and smuggling. *Gremialistas*, guild organisations representing market and street vendors, arise.

The government establishes the Fondo Social de Emergencia (Social Emergency Fund) to foster employment and to counteract the massive dismissal of its employees.

The government launches anti-drug trafficking measures. They include eradication of surplus coca fields and public works in the Chapare coca-growing region.

In September, Noel Kempff, a biologist from the Bolivian Academy of Sciences, and the members of his team are killed in the Huanchaca National Park in Santa Cruz Department. Kempff's assassination follows the discovery of his team of one of the country's largest cocaine processing installations.

1987

City mayor elections are announced for the first time since 1949.

US anti-drug teams are established in El Chapare coca farming region.

1988

Law 1008, a harsh anti-drug legislation granting special powers to courts and attorneys, is sanctioned by Congress.

El Alto, previously part of the city of La Paz, is established as a city with an independent administration.

Populist parties rise as result of the weakening of the left following the UDP crises. The Unidad Cívica Solidaridad UCS party is created by beer company owner Max Fernández, a man of great business intuition and little instruction. The popularity of UCS, a party without a clear political programme, rises via Fernández's gifts – public works – to the electorate.

The populist party Conciencia de Patria (CONDEPA) is founded after the closing of Radio Televisión Popular (RTP station) is ordered by the government, following an interview with drug-dealer Roberto Suárez in which he accuses the government of taking part in drug-trafficking. Director of RTP Carlos Palenque is the host of the programme *Tribuna Libre del Pueblo* (The People's Free Court), a show where he calls poor sectors of the population 'compadres' and 'comadres' – an affectionate term, designating a familial link, which translates into 'godfathers' and 'godmothers'. RTP has become an important medium of social assistance and for the expression of grievances of the poorest sectors of society. Multitudes of people prevent the closing of RTP with massive protests in the streets. Soon after, a group of politicians and intellectuals join Palenque in the foundation of a party promoting what they call an endogenous ideology, a nationalist project similar to that of the MNR party. Over time CONDEPA manages to gain the support of 11-15% of the population.

Villa Tunari Massacre: Clashes between coca growing farmers and eradication force leave a toll of 12 people dead.

Presidential elections are announced.

1989

Presidential elections are held and the results indicate nearly a triple tie. Although Sánchez de Lozada has the highest number of votes, he does not have the majority of votes required which means that Congress has to vote. Paz Zamora of the MIR party establishes an alliance with ADN party – the new democratic party headed by Banzer Suárez, former dictator and former persecutor of Paz Zamora – and is elected president by Congress.

During his government, Paz Zamora continues the neoliberal politics of his predecessor Paz Estenssoro. With the slogan of 'coca is not cocaine' Paz Zamora seeks the international de-penalization of coca growing. Anti-corruption Law 1178 (known as Ley SAFCO) is sanctioned in Congress.

Arce Gómez, former Minister of Interior of García Meza, is turned over to US Federal Drug Enforcement Agency and is sent to the US to be tried for drug trafficking.

1992

Census results indicate that, for the first time in Bolivia's history, there are more people in the city (57%) than in the countryside. Illiteracy rates have dropped to 20%, from 36% in 1976. 87% of the population speaks Spanish, 34% Quechua and 23.5% Aymara. Also, 60.15% of Bolivia's population is under 25. Infant mortality has dropped to 75/1000 (from 150/ 1000).

1993

Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada runs for the presidency in representation of the MNR party and is elected. During his presidency (1993-1997) important reforms take place under the programme Plan de Todos (A Plan for Everyone). The programme's main elements are: capitalisation (with the sale of 50% of state company shares in petrol, communication, train, air transportation and electric service institutions to private companies) and the subsequent creation of Bonosol pension for the elderly; decentralisation of government administration and of city resources in the Popular Participation programme; and an Education Reform. Also, a new constitution, in which Bolivia is redefined as a pluri-cultural and multi-ethnic country is sanctioned, as well as the Instituto Nacional de Reforma Agraria (INRA) law which grants property rights to indigenous communities in the eastern part of Bolivia.

1994

Former dictator García Meza, convicted in 1993 for human rights violations and other serious crimes, is captured and extradited from Brazil where he was living under a false identity.

Bolivia participates for the first time in the FIFA World Cup.

Mining workers occupy Da Capo company mines in Amayapampa, Capacirca and Llallagua, firstly as a way of exerting pressure so that their demands are met, and ultimately for the company to leave. The government sends a large police contingent to the area in order to reverse the situation. Following several days of clashes between police forces, armed workers and community members, the toll is 10 dead and 35 wounded.⁷⁸⁵

1995

A new political constitution is sanctioned by Congress wherein Bolivia is recognized as a multi-ethnic and pluri-cultural nation.

1996

Hydrocarbon Law 1689, part of a government's plan to gain funds by selling shares of state companies, is sanctioned. The government succeeds in selling state company shares. The government has the support of businessmen, including an important group from Santa Cruz, who are part of the government.

⁷⁸⁵ Comisión Interamericana de Derechos Humanos, [no title], Organization of American States [website], <www.cidh.org/countryrep/bolivia-esp/ii.hechos.htm>, accessed 17 December 2015.

1997

Former dictator Banzer Suárez is elected president. Banzer Suárez will govern until 2001 in coalition with CONDEPA, MIR and UCS parties.

Evo Morales is elected representative of the IU (Izquierda Unida) party.

1998

An earthquake in the Aiquile village of Cochabamba is declared a national emergency. The government will be later denounced for diverting funds destined to the victims of the earthquake.

2000

Guerra del Agua (Water Wars)

Tens of thousands march in the city of Cochabamba against the privatisation of the city water company to Aguas del Tunari. The protests end with an agreement between Coordinadora del Agua (Water Coordination) – groups united against the privatisation of water – and the government in which the latter accepts to reverse privatisation.

CSUTCB campesinos and coca leaf farmers block the highways connecting Cochabamba with La Paz and Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Under the threat of 'laying siege to La Paz', Felipe Quispe, Executive Secretary of the CSUTCB and former EGTK member, pressures Banzer Suárez's government to accept his multiple demands which include 1000 tractors, among other benefits.

2001

Following heavy rains and flooding, government declares almost half of Bolivia a natural disaster area.

6 August: Having being diagnosed with lung cancer, Banzer Suárez resigns and vice president Jorge Quiroga Ramírez assumes the presidency.

2002

Former president (and dictator) Banzer Suárez dies in May.

New elections take place in June and Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada is elected president for the second time.⁷⁸⁶ Sánchez de Lozada's government is confronted with a strong rejection from the population – as he represents neoliberal politics in the light of the privatisation of state institutions during his previous government. Also, the government has a weak position in parliament and faces the opposition of coca growers' syndicate leader Evo Morales.

⁷⁸⁶ Sánchez de Lozada obtains 22.5% of the votes while Evo Morales and Manfred Reyes Villa obtain each 20.9% of the votes.

2003

In January, COB, CSTUCB urban and rural workers and coca farmers (under the leadership of Felipe Quispe and Evo Morales) join to found El Estado Mayor del Pueblo (The People's High State). Following the mandate of El Estado Mayor del Pueblo, campesinos block the main highways of the country as a measure to put pressure on the government so that it meets their demands. El Estado Mayor del Pueblo gives government 48 hours to agree to solve its demands and announces its determination to otherwise launch demonstrations towards the resignation of the president and vice president.

A new tax law is sanctioned and a policy dictating the freezing of salaries is announced.

Febrero Negro (Black February)

12 and 13 February: More than 30 people are killed following a mutiny of the Bolivian Police Special Security Group (Grupo Especial de Seguridad, GES) during the ensuing confrontations between surveillance forces – GES, Colorados, military police and the Armed Forces – students of Ayacucho School and civilians. Organised and spontaneous groups take advantage of the lack of security in the city and set fire and vandalise government offices; including the office of the vice president, the Labour Ministry, the Ministry of Sustainable Development, and the Military Court; the offices of the government parties (MNR and MIR) and private property. A group of students from the History Department of UMSA recover and save historic documents from the Library of Congress which is located in the office of the vice president.

Guerra del Gas (Gas Wars)

A series of marches and strikes by workers and campesino syndicates protest against the government contemplating new taxes and exporting gas via Chile. The demonstrations ensue in a siege of La Paz that takes place from the first days of October up to 17 October. Access and vehicle circulation is suspended in La Paz (by means of road blocks) and the city begins to be gradually left without food and petrol. On 12 October, a military operation to reverse the siege of La Paz has a toll of 26 dead. The operation succeeds in passing a convoy of petrol. On 13 October, a hunger strike and a massive march by the citizens of La Paz demand the resignation of the president. On 17 October, having lost complete control of the situation, president Sánchez de Lozada, his wife and Defence Minister Carlos Sánchez Berzaín leave the president's residency in a helicopter that takes them to El Alto airport so that they can leave to the US, which they do by taking an international flight from Santa Cruz de la Sierra. President Sánchez de Lozada sends his resignation from a fax machine in the airport of Viru Viru (in Santa Cruz), just before the departure of the airplane. The death toll of the gas wars is 112 dead (92 civilian and 20 policemen).

17 October: Vice president Carlos D. Mesa Gisbert assumes the presidency of the country. In response to the critical situation of the country, Mesa Gisbert announces important measures: a referendum on gas; a modification of the hydrocarbon law; a call for a constitutional assembly so that departmental

authorities can be directly elected; and a referendum on autonomies. Mesa Gisbert's government faces lack of support in a congress constituted by his own party members (who support Sánchez de Lozada) and by the opposition; as well as the rejection of civic groups from Santa Cruz, businessmen with influence on the media, and of radical left wing politicians including Evo Morales.

2004

Municipal elections throughout the country are won by social associations, evidencing the loss of prestige of traditional political parties.

Social conflicts are on the rise once again during Mesa Gisbert's government and they include: the arbitrary seizure of land by the landless campesino movement Sin Tierra in La Paz, Santa Cruz and Cochabamba; a transportation strike; pressure from COB; seizure of mines by cooperative workers; blocking of the main national highways; marches and strikes by former state workers, and by education and health workers; occupation of petrol field camps by a group of campesinos; strikes and pressure from civic leaders and media from Santa Cruz; road blocks and strikes in El Alto resulting in the recession of contract with Aguas del Illimani and terrorist violence.

30 March: Retired miner Eustaquio Picachuri, victim of the compulsory early retirement plan enforced in 1985, enters Congress with a dynamite in an attempt to negotiate better retirement conditions for himself. The dynamite explodes causing his own death and that of two policemen.

18 July: The Hydrocarbon Referendum takes place. The majority votes in favour of reforming the hydrocarbon law for the state to have more control and ownership, and more favourable conditions in the management and sale of its gas.

Two coca farmers die in an attempt to seize the headquarters of the Special Force against Drug Trafficking FELCN (Fuerza Especial de Lucha contra el Narcotráfico) in the Isiboro Securé National Park.

13 October: Congress votes to authorise a trial of responsibilities against Sánchez de Lozada and his government.

2005

Evo Morales announces a block of the main roads of the country by coca farmers. The members of Fejuve El Alto – The Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of El Alto – join in the blocking of the roads.

6 March: Following weeks of civil unrest, president Mesa Gisbert announces, in a televised message, his resignation on the following day. A massive group of people go to Plaza Murillo, the main square of La Paz (in front of Congress and the president's office), to express their support of Mesa Gisbert. Congress votes against accepting the president's resignation.

Pope John Paul II dies and president Carlos Mesa Gisbert declares a day of national mourning.

17 May: The new Hydrocarbon Law is sanctioned by Congress.

A campaign against the president takes place in Congress and in the streets as consequence of the sanctioning of The Hydrocarbons Law.

6 June: following unsuccessful negotiations with Congress regarding the Hydrocarbon Law and a climate of social and political unrest, President Mesa Gisbert resigns once again and requests a shortened mandate and the convocation of presidential elections. Before leaving his post, Mesa Gisbert – aware that the majority of population would not accept a successor from the political party system – asks the president of the Supreme Court to assume the presidency, and for Hormando Vaca Díez and Mario Cossío, the heads of the two houses of Congress – each representing the traditional parties: MIR and MNR –, to renounce to their right of succession. Congress meets temporarily in Sucre, the seat of the headquarters of the Supreme Court. In Sucre, miners and campesinos of the MAS party surround the city as a way of exerting pressure on the two heads of Congress (the chambers of deputies and senators) who ultimately decide to renounce to their right of succession.

9 June: Eduardo Rodríguez Veltzé, head of the Supreme Court, assumes the presidency of the country. The previously uncompromising and violent marches demanding the nationalisation of hydrocarbons cease and peace is re-established.

President Rodríguez Veltzé calls elections in December.

Coca grower syndicate leader Evo Morales is elected president obtaining 53.7 percent of the votes. Morales is the first indigenous president of Bolivia.

Elections for department prefects (governors) take place.

2006

January 22: Evo Morales assumes the presidency of Bolivia.

In the morning of 1 May, Labour Day holiday, gas fields administered by private companies are occupied by military troops and Evo Morales announces a decree to nationalise gas. Morales instructs the drafting of new contracts with international companies wherein they are obliged to pay 82% of their profits to the Bolivian state. According to data provided by independent specialists, the increase in the payment of profits by private companies to the state is in practice much less than 82%.⁷⁸⁷

6 August: the Constitutional Assembly is inaugurated in Sucre, the historic and constitutional capital of Bolivia. A movement exerts pressure for the seat of government to be moved from La Paz to Sucre. Violent protests ensue following the decision of the Assembly not to modify the administrative seat of the country in the new constitution. Because of the controversy and violent clashes that occur

⁷⁸⁷ Rolando Carvajal, 'Las petroleras casi doblan la tajada que les dejó la nacionalización', 10 September 2012, CEDIB [website], <www.cedib.org/post_type_titulares/adios-al-82-el-estado-plurinacional-redujo-su-participacion-en-el-negocio-de-los-hidrocarburos-bolpress-8-9-2012>, accessed 31 May 2016.

while the assembly meets, it is soon moved to military grounds in Sucre and shortly after to Oruro.

2007

10 December: A new constitution is approved by the Constitutional Assembly in the city of Oruro.

2008

Autonomic referenda take place in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Beni, Pando and Tarija. Aimed at de-authorising department authorities and referendum results, Evo Morales announces a Revocatory Referendum to confirm or reject all departmental and national authorities.

The Revocatory Referendum takes place. Evo Morales is ratified as president, as well as the prefects (governors) from Chuquisaca, Oruro, Potosí, Tarija, Santa Cruz, Pando and Beni. The prefects from the opposition are revoked in La Paz and Cochabamba.

Protests demanding economic and administrative independence take place in the departments where MAS has least votes: Pando, Beni, Santa Cruz and Tarija. Regional institutions are occupied by autonomists and violent confrontations take place in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Campesinos affiliated to the MAS party travel from the village of Porvenir to the city of Cobija (in Pando) in order to take back the institutions occupied by autonomists. Violent confrontations occur following autonomists' attempts to prevent campesinos from arriving to Cobija. The death toll of these confrontations is 13 (11 campesinos and 2 autonomists). Prefect Leopoldo Fernández – accused by president Morales of attempting a coup – is detained.

In September, US ambassador Philip Goldberg is expelled from the country. Morales accuses Goldberg of conspiring against him in alliance with the prefects of the departments governed by the opposition. Soon after, Morales expels the US drug fighting agency DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) and US cooperation agency USAID. These expulsions inaugurate a new era in international relations wherein ties to Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, and participation in ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de nuestra América) become strategic.⁷⁸⁸ Later on, more removed friendships are initiated with former president of Iran Mahmud Ahmadineyad and Libya's Muammar Gaddafi.

2009

25 January: A referendum to ratify the new constitution takes place and is approved by 61% votes.

⁷⁸⁸ ALBA (Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de nuestra América) is a regional organisation for the social, political and economic integration of its members. It was founded by Cuba and Venezuela in 2004 in response to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (a scheme to unite all free trade areas in the Americas, excluding Cuba). Bolivia joined ALBA in 2006.

7 February: Evo Morales enacts a new constitution founded on indigenous ethnic principles and one which grants specific rights to indigenous people. Some important rights made explicit in the new constitution are the right for indigenous people to keep their cultural, religious identity, customs and everyday practices; the right to free determination and territoriality; the right to property titles for the land they inhabit; and the right for their administrative institutions and for their laws to be recognised.⁷⁸⁹ The new constitution also re-founds the country by changing its former name (The Republic of Bolivia) to the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and introduces the re-election of the president in the constitution.

Presidential elections take place. Evo Morales wins with 67% of the vote.

2010

22 January is decreed a public holiday in commemoration of the date Evo Morales assumed the presidency of Bolivia for the first time.

26 December: The government announces that it will no longer assume subsidising fuel prices. An 82% rise in fuel prices is decreed. As a result, Evo Morales' popularity suffers a blow and a wave of protests ensues. In order to gain back support, Morales revises his decision and annuls the fuel rise decree.

2011

1,700 indigenous families from the National Park and Indigenous Territory Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Securé (Territorio Indígena y Parque Nacional Isiboro Securé – TIPNIS) march from the city of Trinidad to La Paz to protest against a highway throughout indigenous territory, which violates the constitution. Contradicting Evo Morales' political discourse and the laws he sanctioned protecting indigenous people and the environment, the government represses the march during its transit from Trinidad to La Paz.

Following an unsuccessful meeting with Michelle Bachelet's government, president Evo Morales initiates a demand against Chile in the International Court of Justice of The Hague to compel Chile to negotiate granting Bolivia sovereign access to the sea.

16 October: Elections take place to vote for the high magistrates of the judicial courts. The candidates are pre-selected by Morales' party in the legislative assembly. 60% of the population demonstrate their frustration by voting null or blank.

2014

Presidential elections take place. Evo Morales wins with 61% of the votes and assumes his third mandate.

⁷⁸⁹ See: Asamblea Constituyente, Honorable Congreso Nacional de la República de Bolivia, Nueva Constitución Política del Estado, <www.oas.org/juridico/spanish/mesicic3_blv_constpolitica.pdf>, October 2008, accessed 31 May 2016.

2015

The Hague International Court declares itself competent regarding Bolivia's demand against Chile.

Pope Francisco visits Bolivia. Despite a history of verbal attacks against the Catholic Church, Pope Francisco is received with an extremely warm welcome by President Morales himself and by the population in general.

A referendum is announced for 2016 to vote for the reform of the constitution so that president Evo Morales is authorised to run as presidential candidate for a fourth time.

President Morales travels to New York and to a number of countries in Europe to launch a campaign to attract investors.

Morales declares the press to be his enemy and launches a strategy to control the media by buying actions, exerting pressure through taxation and other types of government control. Morales promotes laws – like the law against racism and all forms of discrimination – which he uses to keep the criticism of the opposition and of the press in line. Private foundations and NGOs, particularly those not aligned to the government, are forced to close down.

Appendix B Biography of Roberto Valcárcel

Roberto Valcárcel was born in La Paz, Bolivia, on 19 August 1951, a few months before the National Revolution of 1952. He attended the Mariscal Braun (Marshal Braun) German school, one of the most prestigious schools in the country but he does not have good memories of his alma mater, which he recently referred to as the ‘Fascist German School’.⁷⁹⁰ On several occasions, he has also mentioned that during his school years he was teased for being different: for not playing football, like the rest of the boys and for being overweight.⁷⁹¹ Between 1959 and 1960, his family moved briefly to Montevideo due to a job opportunity for his father,⁷⁹² in view of the limited employment possibilities during the revolutionary regime for an architect who refused to enlist in the government party.⁷⁹³ During his stay in Montevideo, Valcárcel took his first communion, which was an important introduction to Catholicism, a religion whose authoritarianism (like that of other institutions) he has continued to question throughout his life.⁷⁹⁴ During his school years, he did some artworks, paintings in what he calls a ‘Brasilia’ type of aesthetics, and participated in art competitions, obtaining a prize, in 1965, in a children’s painting competition in La Paz, and a distinction, in 1968, in a children’s modelling competition in La Paz.⁷⁹⁵ Before finishing secondary school, he moved briefly to Saint Petersburg, Florida, as part of an exchange program (through a Catholic institution) – an experience he described as ‘extremely boring’.⁷⁹⁶ During those years Valcárcel also took part in a rock band playing cover songs, which he named Apple Pie Museum.⁷⁹⁷ Upon

⁷⁹⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, 26 December 2012.

⁷⁹¹ Valcárcel has mentioned being overweight in several interviews. In his action *Strip-tease avec Tchaikovsky and Donizetti* (1985) he shows the scar of an intestinal bypass surgery that he had in order to lose weight. An image of this performance is reproduced in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008, p. 91. Valcárcel has made reference to this surgery in a few occasions and most recently in an email: Roberto Valcárcel, *Email to the Author*, 3 May 2015.

⁷⁹² Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* (via email), 3 May 2015.

⁷⁹³ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 26 December 2012.

⁷⁹⁴ Roberto Valcárcel, *Mi vida*, PowerPoint presentation document, October 2012.

⁷⁹⁵ Diploma of Distinction for a prize in Category D, 13avo Salón Anual de Pintura Infantil (13th Annual Children’s Painting Salon), La Paz July 1965. Diploma of Distinction, 15avo Salón de Modelado Infantil (15th Children’s Modelling Salon), July 1968.

⁷⁹⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* (via email), 3 May 2015.

⁷⁹⁷ Armando Urioste, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 9 December 2013.

finishing high school studies in La Paz, in 1970 he was offered a DAAD scholarship to study architecture at TH Darmstadt, in Germany, which included an additional year of schooling (the 13th year that is required in Germany for university admission).⁷⁹⁸ In an interview with the author, Valcárcel mentioned that he studied architecture since DAAD, the institution that sponsored his scholarship, did not grant funding for studying art because it considered that it should be studied in one's own country.⁷⁹⁹ Valcárcel's decision to study architecture was also influenced by his parents' views because although they had always encouraged his artistic inclinations, they were concerned about how he would ensure an income.⁸⁰⁰

During his first year of university, his work in the sculpture class (Plastisches Gestalten)⁸⁰¹ stood out from the rest – he used wooden cubes instead of clay which was the material expected for the students to work with – and for this reason he was invited to be a teaching assistant of the module (1972-75).⁸⁰² His stay in Germany between 1970 and 1977 coincided with the transformation of the Western European society following the 1968 student movements. Living in Germany during this time modified his view of the world, in tandem with his readings during his free time from university.⁸⁰³ Valcárcel read Herbert Marcuse in depth, as well as other Frankfurt School authors like Theodor W. Adorno, and psychoanalytical literature.⁸⁰⁴ While studying in Darmstadt he also did some art – mainly paintings and photography – and frequently visited the city's collection of works by Joseph Beuys, as well as other art museums in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, and especially contemporary art exhibitions like the Documenta. Upon finishing his studies, Valcárcel obtained the highest mark (100) in his final year project and was awarded a Diploma in Architectural Engineering, which he notes

⁷⁹⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares* (Curricular data), updated 2011.

⁷⁹⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 30 May 2010.

⁸⁰⁰ Idem.

⁸⁰¹ Valcárcel translated *Plastisches Gestalten* as 'giving form in three dimensions'. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 30 May 2010.

⁸⁰² Ibid.

⁸⁰³ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 26 December 2012.

⁸⁰⁴ The other books of Marcuse that Valcárcel read, in addition to *Eros Civilization*, are *One-Dimensional Man* and *Negations*. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* (via email), 3 May 2015.

in his CV is the equivalent to a Master's Degree in Architecture.⁸⁰⁵ During his stay in Germany, Valcárcel visited several cities in Europe, both as part of his studies (he mentions in an interview a visit to England) and out of personal interest. Berlin, Bilbao, Venice, Paris, Verona, Pisa, Istanbul are some of the cities photographs of which were included in his first exhibition in La Paz as well as in his book.⁸⁰⁶ In 1976, friends from university invited him to participate in a group show in Galerie Fogra Zeigt in Darmstadt where he exhibited black and white photographs.⁸⁰⁷

Valcárcel never studied art formally and only began to dedicate himself more fully to art upon his return to Bolivia in 1977. Since 1978, and particularly during the 1980s, Valcárcel exhibited his artworks in a few private and public galleries in Bolivia;⁸⁰⁸ on occasions it happened twice in the same year since exhibition running times were very short (nine days on average in Emusa Gallery, for example). Valcárcel also presented his work at the Museo Nacional de Arte in 1978 and 1980, an institution which has traditionally offered a small gallery space for artists to present solo exhibitions. From early on in his career, Valcárcel gained recognition by obtaining important prizes in the most important national art competitions, particularly in the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo, which was, until the 1990s, the most prestigious art competition in the country. In 1978, he was awarded both the grand prize and the prize in non-traditional media in the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo.⁸⁰⁹ The same year, he won the first prize in a watercolour contest organized by *El Diario* newspaper. In 1979, Valcárcel was

⁸⁰⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares* (Curricular data), updated 2011.

⁸⁰⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008, pp. 26-37.

⁸⁰⁷ The artists that exhibited with Valcárcel in *Fotografiken* are Karin Schwalbach, Gitta Schrader, Henri Becker, Achim Steingrubner. See: Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1, p. 25.

⁸⁰⁸ Valcárcel showed his artwork in Emusa Gallery, in Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas (the municipal salon of La Paz) and in the Museo Nacional de Arte in La Paz; Salón Piráí (Casa de la Cultura) in Santa Cruz de la Sierra and the municipal Salón Gíldaro Antezana in Cochabamba. From the 1990s, Valcárcel exhibited in Arte Único Gallery, Fundación BHN Gallery, and Nota Gallery in La Paz; in the 2000s he had exhibitions in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (once, in 2003) and in Kiosko Gallery, both in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

⁸⁰⁹ Diploma for the Grand Prize (for a group of watercolours), Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo, 25 October 1978. Diploma for the Prize in Non-traditional Media for *Gran turismo* (Great Tourism), Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo, 25 October 1978.

awarded the first prize in painting in Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo.⁸¹⁰ In 1980, he won again the grand prize in the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo for the mural *Oda a Franz Tamayo* (Ode to Franz Tamayo), which he painted with Gastón Ugalde, and in 1984 the first prize in the non-traditional media category.⁸¹¹

Valcárcel has also participated in international biennials from early on in his career. In 1978 he was invited to exhibit in the group exhibition of silkscreens that was presented by Bolivia in the Latin American edition of the São Paulo Bienal. According to Valcárcel, his silkscreen, much like the rest of artworks from Bolivia, went mostly unnoticed in the Bienal.⁸¹² The following year, in 1979, he exhibited an artwork in the Bienal with Gastón Ugalde, which was designed according to the Bienal space – taking into account the previous experience –⁸¹³ and received some press coverage.⁸¹⁴ By the early 1980s, Valcárcel had a high profile in the Bolivian art world.⁸¹⁵ During the 1980s he represented Bolivia in the most significant biennials in Latin America: São Paulo (1983), San Juan (1983), Havana (1984, 1989),⁸¹⁶ Trujillo and Cuenca, both in 1987. Valcárcel's participation in the 1983 São Paulo Bienal with *El Movimiento Erótico* got some

⁸¹⁰ Diploma for the First Prize in Painting, Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo, October 1979. In 1979 Valcárcel equally won the first prize in the International Drawing Bienal of Maldonado, Uruguay.

⁸¹¹ Other first prizes awarded to Valcárcel include: the first prize in the national competition 'Recuperación del Dibujo' (Recovering Drawing) organized by INBO, Fundación Cultural EMUSA, La Paz, in 1987; the first prize in the competition for a mural the Colegio de Arquitectos de La Paz (the School of Architects of La Paz) in 1991; the first prize in the drawing category of the Santa Cruz Bienal, 1993; the first prize of the *Arcángeles contemporáneos* (Contemporary Archangels) competition, organized by the Anglo-American Women Association, in La Paz, in 1995; and one of the five prizes of the Santa Cruz Bienal of 1999. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*.

⁸¹² Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 30 July 2010.

⁸¹³ *Ibid.*

⁸¹⁴ See: Radha Abramo, 'A Bienal, na síntese de sua própria vida', no source available, nd; Anonymous, 'A mostra dos modelos estéticos', *Folha de São Paulo*, 4 October 1979; Anonymous, "The Latin Americans" in the "15th Sao Paulo Bienal", *Latin American Daily Post Supplement*, October-December, 1979; Anonymous, "Violência e repressão, o tema da Bolívia na Bienal", *O Estado*, 12 October, 1979; and Marco Antonio Zanfra, 'A denuncia do horror, presente na 15a Bienal', no source available, nd.

⁸¹⁵ In 1983 a survey of 26 specialists conducted by *Última Hora* newspaper, both artists and art historians, listed Valcárcel as one of the most important painters in Bolivian art history. Valcárcel is listed in the survey as number 17, sharing the place in the rank with four other artists – colonial artist Master of Curahuara de Carangas, XIX century painter Manuel Ugalde, and XX century painters Jorge de La Reza and Alfredo La Placa in: Carlos D. Mesa Gisbert, 'Los diez pintores más significativos de la historia del arte boliviano', *Semana de Última Hora*, 26 August 1983.

⁸¹⁶ Valcárcel also participated in the Havana Bienal in 1991.

press coverage and mentioning in a 2001 publication about the 50 years of the biennial.⁸¹⁷ His performances in the Cuenca and Trujillo biennials (1987), in which he painted his body, caused a sensation.⁸¹⁸ Bolivian curator Pedro Querejazu, who was in charge of the selection of artworks for international biennials in the 1980s and 1990s, has indicated that one of the reasons for repeatedly inviting Valcárcel and Gastón Ugalde was that both artists responded quickly and creatively to short notice calls and to having little or no funding for the shipping and installation of their artworks.

From his first years back in La Paz, Valcárcel also almost immediately began to teach. He taught art in the German School in La Paz (1978-85) and morphology and design in the Department of Architecture at UMSA, the state university.⁸¹⁹ Between 1982 and 1983, he taught non-traditional media art and research methodology for thesis writing, and he supervised the preparation process for the final year examination in the Art Department at UMSA. During the transition of the country to democracy in 1982, Valcárcel was invited by Teresa Gisbert, dean of the Architecture and Art Faculty, to direct the Art Department of UMSA. In the following year, Gisbert and Valcárcel were dismissed, and eventually banned from teaching in the public university accused of being against the autonomy of the university (which implied having collaborated with dictatorial government); an accusation which in the end was never proved.⁸²⁰ At the same time, between 1982 and 1985, Valcárcel taught formal design in the Architecture Department of UMSA and, between 1979 and 1985, he gave art and design classes in his studio. Around 1983, a select group of

⁸¹⁷ Anonymous, 'Os caminhos para chegar a arte contemporânea', *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 14 October 1983 and Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, *Bienal 50 Anos: 1951-2001* (ed. Agnaldo Farias), Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2001, <issuu.com/bienal/docs/bienal---50-anos-2001>, accessed 2 June 2014.

⁸¹⁸ Anonymous, '¡Performance! en Trujillo', *Lundero, Suplemento Cultural de La Industria*, Chiclayo, Trujillo, 27 December 1987.

⁸¹⁹ Valcárcel taught in the Department of Architecture at UMSA between 1978 and 1985: Formal Design I (1982-85), Morphology and Design (1978-80). Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*.

⁸²⁰ Valcárcel only recently found out through a friend – he was never officially informed – that he had been acquitted in the academic trial that was launched against him by the university. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 26 July 2010.

young artists who were interested in Valcárcel's ideas on art – like Guiomar Mesa, Efraín Ortuño and Sol Mateo – met on Saturdays in his studio.⁸²¹

Valcárcel's interest in teaching art during the 1980s was reflected in trips to visit art academies abroad. In 1983, he was awarded a DAAD 'update' scholarship, to spend three months in Germany at the art academies of Berlin, Düsseldorf, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Munich. While visiting the graduate show at the Düsseldorf Academy, he made a point of visiting Joseph Beuys' Office where Valcárcel met the artist's assistant Johannes Stüttgen. Upon his return from the trip, he published an article in the press entitled 'Un arte distinto (fracasado intento de entrevista a Joseph Beuys)' – 'A Different Art (failed attempt at an interview with Joseph Beuys)'.⁸²² From then on, a series of letters were exchanged between Valcárcel and Beuys, including a recommendation for the Guggenheim scholarship application.⁸²³ Johannes Stüttgen also awarded Valcárcel a certificate from the Free International University (FIU) – which he had enlarged and hung in his atelier – in which he declared Valcárcel to be a representative of the institution. Three years later, in 1986, Valcárcel travelled to the US, this time invited by the United States Information Agency, to visit a number of art schools in New York, Washington, Baltimore, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Following this trip, Valcárcel attended a two-month residency at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts where he drew *Recuerdos 1* (Memories 1) and *Recuerdos 2* (Memories 2).⁸²⁴

In 1985, in the mist of the UDP government's economic and social crises, Valcárcel accepted an invitation from a group of friends (former university

⁸²¹ Guiomar Mesa, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 4 January 2013.

⁸²² Roberto Valcárcel, 'Un arte distinto (fracasado intento de entrevista a Joseph Beuys)', *Semana de Última Hora*, 1 July 1983.

⁸²³ Valcárcel has applied (unsuccessfully) to the Guggenheim Scholarship a few times – he does not remember exactly how many. In addition to the recommendation by Beuys (a mostly illegible letter in German dated 19 March 1984), he also obtained a recommendation from Eric McCready of the Archer M. Huntington Gallery (now Blanton Museum), whom he most likely met during the INBO Bienal of 1981. Valcárcel has also mentioned asking Argentine critic Rafael Squirru for another recommendation and having asked art historian and former fellow Guggenheim fellow Teresa Gisbert to write one. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 30 May 2010. I also wrote a recommendation letter, in 2002.

⁸²⁴ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, pp. 122 and 123. See also: Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

classmates) to work as an architect in Darmstadt.⁸²⁵ He stayed in Germany only a few months, however, as he found both the German winter and his technical drawing job depressing.⁸²⁶ Valcárcel was back in La Paz by November of the same year.⁸²⁷ On his return he supervised the construction of the Morales-Pardovalle residence (1985), which he had designed – now alas demolished – and which has been highlighted by art historians Teresa Gisbert and Pedro Querejazu as one of the first examples of postmodern architecture in Bolivia.⁸²⁸

In 1988, Valcárcel moved to Santa Cruz de la Sierra.⁸²⁹ In a recent interview he mentions that this was for personal reasons.⁸³⁰ Valcárcel told me that he finds people and life in Santa Cruz de la Sierra more agreeable than in La Paz – where, according to his perception, there is a certain passive aggression in the air. His moving to Santa Cruz de la Sierra was nonetheless the direct consequence of an invitation by cultural manager Marcelo Araúz, who at the time was promoting the arrival of artists and culture industry professionals to the city.⁸³¹ Since moving to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, one of the most important industrial and business centres of the country – and a city known for its beauty queen ‘industry’ and carnival – Valcárcel has sustained himself economically by giving classes. He began teaching creativity in secondary schools and also directed a special project titled *Seamos Creativos* (Let’s be Creative) – with funding from the US government – to foster creativity in the less privileged neighbourhoods of the city between 1991 to 1996.⁸³² He has also taught creativity in marginal

⁸²⁵ Democracy was finally re-established in Bolivia in 1982. Having won the elections the UDP party, a left-wing coalition, was unable to manage the economic problems it inherited, as well as the demands of the workers headed by COB (worker’s syndicate). This triggered an inflation rate of 60,000%, and the eventual resignation of president Siles Zuazo.

⁸²⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 31 August 2013.

⁸²⁷ Pedro Querejazu, ‘[A] Propósito de Amadeus’, *Semana de Última Hora*, 29 November 1985.

⁸²⁸ Teresa Gisbert in ‘Historia y cultura en la Bolivia del siglo XX’, in Pedro Querejazu, (ed.), *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX*, Banco Hipotecario Nacional, La Paz, 1989, p. 45. Pedro Querejazu, ‘El arte en Bolivia en los siglos XIX y XX’, in *La Razón*, 27 December 1993, reproduced in Pedro Querejazu, *Arte Contemporáneo en Bolivia, 1970-2013, Críticas, ensayos, estudios*, Libros de arte N. 4, edited by Pedro Querejazu, La Paz, 2013, p. 228.

⁸²⁹ Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, *Producciones Valcárcel, exposición colectiva* (catalogue), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 21 September 1988.

⁸³⁰ Anonymous, ‘Entrevista a Roberto Valcárcel Möller sobre el Arte Experimental y Conceptual y su Influencia’, no source available, 2015.

⁸³¹ Marcelo Araúz, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 29 December 2012.

⁸³² Valcárcel taught art and creativity at the Instituto de Bellas Artes (Fine Arts Institute) between 1989 and 1991. He directed and taught creativity in the project *Seamos Creativos* (Let’s

neighbourhoods with funding from the Dutch government. Around 1991, Valcárcel's interest in teaching extended to various attempts to establish an art school called Pintovia in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The project, however, never prospered due to the lack of support from both state and private institutions, as well as the lack of colleagues and members in society with similar interests.⁸³³

In 1992, Valcárcel moved to Miami to manage a short-lived and unsuccessful art gallery exhibiting Bolivian art there.⁸³⁴ While in Miami, he exhibited his work in Sharona Gallery.⁸³⁵ This show was the second (and last) international solo exhibition of the artist's work.⁸³⁶ In 1993 Valcárcel moved back briefly to La Paz and then to Santa Cruz de la Sierra where he has resided since. On his return to Santa Cruz de la Sierra, he curated some small thematic exhibitions for the Piraí gallery (Casa de la Cultura) and the retrospective exhibition of painter María Luisa Pacheco in La Paz.⁸³⁷

During the 1990s, Valcárcel continued teaching and occasionally exhibiting his artworks in international exhibitions.⁸³⁸ In 1994, he was once again invited by Pedro Querejazu to participate in the São Paulo Bienal (with Ejti Stih and Sol Mateo), and from the mid 1990s Valcárcel's work was generally included in international exhibitions of Bolivian art, for example in *Bolivia: Pintura Actual*

be Creative), between 1991 and 1996. He equally taught creativity at the Colegio Mayor San Lorenzo in 1997.

⁸³³ Valcárcel explained: 'Me di cuenta que un individuo no podía hacer escuela [que era necesario que haya] gente que comparta ese espíritu. Habían artistas sin dotes de docente [...] no interesa ni se puede enseñar a un público burgués, a nenas que pintan flores al óleo [...]'. Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 30 May 2010.

⁸³⁴ The project of a gallery for Bolivian art in Miami was by gallerists Patricia Tordoir and artist Gastón Ugalde. Patricia Tordoir, *Interview with the Author*, London, 11 June 2015.

⁸³⁵ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*.

⁸³⁶ In 1984, Valcárcel showed his work for the first time in a solo exhibition in La Tienda, a non-professional art gallery exhibiting a variety of objects and crafts from Latin America in Bremen.

⁸³⁷ The texts that Valcárcel wrote for the catalogues of the following exhibitions, presented in Sala Piraí, May–November 1992, are available in his book: *Nueva Abstracción* (New Abstraction), *Santa Cruz ayer y hoy* (Santa Cruz, Yesterday and Today), *Máscaras artísticas contemporáneas* (Contemporary Artistic Masks), *El desnudo en el arte* (Nude in Art), *Retratos y autorretratos* (Portraits and Self-Portraits), *Naturaleza muerta* (Still Life paintings), *Metáforas florales* (Floral metaphors), and *El Taborochi en el arte* (The Taborochi Tree in Art). Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, p. 91 and 164–170. The exhibition *María Luisa Pacheco, pintora de los Andes* (María Luisa Pacheco, Painter of the Andes) was exhibited in several galleries (National Museum of Art, Arte Único Gallery, Fundación BHN Gallery and Emusa Gallery) in La Paz in October 1994.

⁸³⁸ Since 1996, Valcárcel has taught, in a number of universities, graduate and postgraduate level subjects related to graphic design but also to creativity and architecture.⁸³⁸ Valcárcel has carried on teaching classes in his studio – and continues to do so.

(Bolivia: Contemporary Painting) in the Arts Pavilion, Seville in 1992.⁸³⁹ Gallerist Patricia Tordoir from Fundación esART also included his artwork in the exhibitions of Bolivian art that she organized in Casa de América, Madrid in 1995, and in London's Mall Galleries in 1996. During these years Valcárcel's art was equally present in the international art fairs in which Fundación esART participated. In 1996, Valcárcel also participated in *Fin de los márgenes* (The End of Borders) exhibition, curated by Cecilia Bayá in the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo of Santiago de Chile. In 1997, Pedro Querejazu – the curator for Bolivian art in the first Mercosur Bienal – included Valcárcel's *Campo de Alcachofas* (1982) in the political section. In 1999, Querejazu invited Valcárcel to exhibit recent works in the second Mercosur Bienal.

Although Valcárcel has complained of a lack of opportunities for a real exchange of ideas with his colleagues,⁸⁴⁰ there have been a couple of times when he had a chance to do so. In 1996, he presented his ideas on art in a debate with a watercolour artist Ricardo Pérez Alcalá at Universidad Santo Tomás.⁸⁴¹ The same year, a similar presentation took place in the ICA, London, with Fernando Montes, a Bolivian artist based in London.⁸⁴² Valcárcel was also invited to give talks and participate in conferences internationally. Fundación esART of La Paz invited him to give a talk about the exhibition 'Bolivian Contemporary Art' in Casa de América, Madrid in 1995 and a similar one at The Royal College of Art, London in 1996, as part of the activities to promote the exhibition of Bolivian art in the Mall galleries.⁸⁴³ He has also given a number of lectures and talks in Bolivia, particularly since 1995, and although his CV lists only 38 lectures and talks, there are probably many more.⁸⁴⁴ It is an indication of the lack of specialists

⁸³⁹ Valcárcel equally includes in his CV a group exhibition in 1992 at the International Monetary Fund. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares* (Curricular data), updated 2011.

⁸⁴⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 30 July 2010.

⁸⁴¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares* (Curricular data), updated 2011.

⁸⁴² The talk titled 'Bolivian or Oblivion?' was presented at the ICA - Institute of Contemporary Art, London, 1996. See Chapter Five for more information.

⁸⁴³ Both talks, in Madrid and London, were titled 'Bolivian Contemporary Art'.

⁸⁴⁴ In his CV, Valcárcel lists the following institutions where he has given talks: Fundación Cultural BHN, Museo Nacional de Arte, Universidad Católica, ICOM, Bienal de Arquitectura, Taller el quinto pasajero, SIART, Fundación esART and Universidad Unifranz, in La Paz; Casa de la Cultura, Universidad Católica, Escuela Normal Integrada Enrique Finot, UPB, Centro Cultural Simon I. Patiño and Centro Cultural Franco Alemán Goethe-Institut, in Santa Cruz de

in Bolivian art that Valcárcel was involved in so many such events. The recognition of Valcárcel as a specialist was also manifested in his participation in the advisory committees of some of the most important galleries in 1980s and 1990s: Emusa Gallery in La Paz (1985-1994);⁸⁴⁵ Casa Municipal de Cultura de Santa Cruz (1995); and Fundación BHN Gallery in La Paz (1995-2000). He has also been on the advisory board of Fundación esART since 1995 until recently. Valcárcel is also an important figure for the director of Kiosko Gallery in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Raquel Schwartz, whom he has occasionally advised.⁸⁴⁶ Throughout his career, Valcárcel has also been invited to be a jury member of the most important artistic competitions in the country, like SIART, the international biennial based in La Paz that ran in 1999, 2001, 2003, 2009 and 2013.⁸⁴⁷

Valcárcel has equally devoted a great deal of his time to the study and teaching of creativity. He has given several short courses, from the late 1990s to the present, directed at various different audiences including general public, school teachers, artists, illustrators, graphic designers, photographers, architecture students, and others. Valcárcel is the author of two books on creativity: a guideline for schoolteachers and a study of creativity in Bolivia.⁸⁴⁸ In the early 2000s, he was a consultant on expression and creativity for the Bolivian

la Sierra; Universidad UAJMS, in Tarija; and Martadero, in Cochabamba. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel – Datos Curriculares*.

⁸⁴⁵ Valcárcel claims, in his CV, to have been advisor of Emusa Gallery from 1985 to 2002. I believe this is a mistake because the gallery closed in 1998. Emusa inaugurated in 1974 and closed 24 years after. See: Instituto Internacional para la Democracia et al., *Llave para la memoria, testimonios y vivencias, 40 años del Círculo de Mujeres Periodistas de La Paz*, 2013, Editorial Gente Común, p. 20, <library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/bolivien/10698.pdf>, accessed 30 May 2016.

⁸⁴⁶ Raquel Schwartz, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 28 December 2012. His close relationship with director of Kiosko Gallery Raquel Schwartz was reflected by his advising Kilometro Cero, Taller Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo in 2001 and 2005. Valcárcel was an invited guest of the 2005 version of the workshop. See: Raquel Schwartz and Cecilia Bayá, *Taller Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo Kilometro Cero* (Kilometre Zero International Workshop of Contemporary Art), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 2001. Raquel Schwartz and Cecilia Bayá, *Taller Internacional de Arte Contemporáneo Kilometro Cero* (Kilometer Zero International Workshop of Contemporary Art), Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 2005.

⁸⁴⁷ SIART has recently announced the launching of a new edition of the biennial, which will take place in October of 2016 in La Paz. Valcárcel has also been member of the jury of the Salón Pedro Domingo Murillo (1998); Bienal Santa Cruz (1995); the municipal salon of Cochabamba (1994 and 2000); Concurso Nacional de Carteles, ICI, Cooperación Española, Santa Cruz (1993) and the second national competition *Recuperación del Dibujo* (Recovering Drawing), Fundación Cultura BHN, La Paz (1995).

⁸⁴⁸ *Manual De Creatividad para maestros de escuela* (1995) and *Crear Para Sobrevivir. Un estudio acerca de la creatividad en Bolivia*, (1996). Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*.

government's Education Reform. It should be noted, nonetheless, that Valcárcel's personal interest in the topic of creativity dates from at least 1974, when he started reading psychology books about creativity.⁸⁴⁹ It is probable that Joseph Beuys' action in Documenta V, where he presented his Organization for Direct Democracy through Referendum (a platform for discussing his political ideas with visitors during 100 days), had an impact on Valcárcel's interest in creativity. Valcárcel recalls hearing Beuys then talk about his Free International University, an institution for the study of creativity and democracy.⁸⁵⁰

In the 2000s, Valcárcel's artwork continued to be shown in international exhibitions. In 2003 his work was exhibited at Animal Gallery in *Sublime*, a group exhibition curated by Justo Pastor Mellado and Rosa Velasco. In 2008, Valcárcel's artwork also participated in the *Entrecruce Latinoamericano* (Latin American Crossroads), an exhibition in the Isabel Aninat Gallery of Santiago de Chile. During the 2000s, his work was shown in the esART Gallery and Kiosko Gallery stands at international art fairs.⁸⁵¹ A special and small exhibition of conceptual artworks – a tribute – was presented in the Bolivian SIART biennial of 2003. In 2004, Valcárcel was invited by Alfons Hug, the curator of the São Paulo Bienal to present his *Escalas de cuantificación* (Measuring Scales) in the biennial. In 2005, the latter artworks were included in *Contrabandistas de imágenes: selección de la 26a Bienal de São Paulo* (Image Smugglers: A Selection of Artworks from the 26th São Paulo Bienal), exhibited at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo of Santiago de Chile.

Although Valcárcel has sporadically worked as curator, his work in this field responds more to invitations than to a vocation or particular interest. Thus, Valcárcel includes curating activities in his complete CV but he does not mention it as one of his professional areas (same as architecture). Valcárcel was appointed curator of the Santa Cruz Bienal in 2006, 2008 and 2010.⁸⁵² Despite this title, his work mostly consisted of organizational tasks, e.g. placing artworks in the gallery

⁸⁴⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* [via email], 3 May 2015.

⁸⁵⁰ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, La Paz, 30 May 2010.

⁸⁵¹ Valcárcel's artwork was exhibited in the esART's Gallery stand in ArteBA, Buenos Aires in 2000 and 2001 and in Kiosko Gallery's stand in the following art fairs: Arte BA 2007 and 2008; La Otra, Bogotá, 2008; Pinta New York Art Fair, 2009; Chaco Art Fair Santiago de Chile, 2010. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*.

⁸⁵² Valcárcel curated the 2010 Santa Cruz Bienal with Cecilia Bayá.

space and inviting the jury. In reference to this biennial, in an interview with the author, Valcárcel has recently described his curating activities as ‘non-existent’.⁸⁵³ Valcárcel explained that the Santa Cruz biennials are art competitions that usually include seminars or conferences. He also highlighted that his curating activities in the biennial never included a curatorial proposal.⁸⁵⁴ To illustrate this point, he explained that he proposed for the biennial an exhibition of indigenous painter Mamani Mamani and Angelika Heckel (an artist of Austrian origin), but that this curatorial idea was not realised due to lack of funding.⁸⁵⁵ Valcárcel had a similar experience with the National Huari Visual Arts Competition in 2007 where his job consisted of mostly administrative, organizational and hanging duties. Since 2007 Valcárcel has organized and presented exhibitions of photographs by his workshop students in Santa Cruz de la Sierra galleries.⁸⁵⁶

Throughout his professional career, Valcárcel has also designed posters, postcard, invitations, and publications – including some of his own exhibition catalogues.⁸⁵⁷ In 2008 Valcárcel designed and edited a book about his artwork, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*.⁸⁵⁸

Since the beginning of his career, Valcárcel has written about art, some of these texts have been published in volume 2 of his book.⁸⁵⁹ For example, he wrote a text for the newspaper format catalogue (designed with Ugalde) for the Bolivian representation at the 1979 São Paulo Bienal in which he took part. He

⁸⁵³ Valcárcel stated ‘En rigor mi labor curatorial es inexistente’ in Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 30 May 2010.

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁵ See Chapter Five.

⁸⁵⁶ In his CV, Valcárcel lists Neofotoscz (a play of words combining the terms ‘new’, ‘photos’ and ‘Santa Cruz’), in Kiosko Gallery in 2007. In 2013, I visited an exhibition of the artworks of his photography workshop students in Centro Cultural Santa Cruz and Valcárcel advertised in May 2016, in his Facebook page, a new photography workshop that includes exhibiting class work.

⁸⁵⁷ The complete list of Valcárcel’s graphic design work is listed in Valcárcel’s 2011 CV and it includes book covers, posters, exhibition catalogues, institution memoirs, brochures, postcards, visual identity, CD covers and book illustrations. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*.

⁸⁵⁸ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 1-2, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008.

⁸⁵⁹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Ibid*, vol. 2.

has since written some reviews, published in the press, of art in Bolivia.⁸⁶⁰ He has also written catalogue texts about art as well as his own artwork – often using a fictitious name – and that of his colleagues.⁸⁶¹ Valcárcel has, on occasion, been asked to write texts for exhibition catalogues of Bolivian art shown abroad.⁸⁶²

Valcárcel's reflections on art, manifested in writing and public presentations, and his articulate expression of ideas have resulted in his recognition as an expert in contemporary art. In 2000, Valcárcel was invited to participate in the Havana Bienal round table titled *Biennials, Institutions, North-South-Relations in the Controversies* with the talk 'Intercultural Exchanges in the Arts of the Andean Region'.⁸⁶³ In 2011, Valcárcel gave a talk in Miami MOCA's *New Methods Symposium*, a conference on artist-run spaces in Latin America.⁸⁶⁴ Valcárcel was invited to participate in this symposium by Kiosko Gallery of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, a contemporary art space hosting residencies, workshops and exhibitions.

From 2011 to the present, Valcárcel has continued lecturing in different universities and giving art, photography and creativity classes in his workshop. He has also exhibited his artwork and that of his students. During these years, Valcárcel has given creativity workshops on an international level to government institutions and he recently presented a paper in a summit that took place in Doha, in 2014.⁸⁶⁵

⁸⁶⁰ For example: 'De arcángeles y otros demonios: ¿Boom de la pintura boliviana?', *Presencia*, La Paz 1995 and '¡Premios, premios, premios! - En torno al 27° Salón de Artes Plásticas', *Los Tiempos*, Cochabamba 23 September 1997.

⁸⁶¹ Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vol. 2, Vol. 2, pp. 173-205.

⁸⁶² See: 'La escultora boliviana Marina Núñez del Prado', an essay published in the catalogue of the exhibition in Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires 2001. Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*. Valcárcel was also asked to write the entry for Bolivian art for the UECLAA website which he declined.

⁸⁶³ Universes in Universe, Round Table: *Biennials, Institutions, North-South-Relations*, 7th Havana Bienal, <universes-in-universe.de/car/habana/bien7/symp/e-mesa1.htm>, accessed 2 September 2015.

⁸⁶⁴ Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, *New Methods Symposium*, MOCA [website], <mocanomi.org/2011/05/new-methods-symposium-2/>, accessed 31 May 2016.

⁸⁶⁵ Wise summit, 'Prof. Roberto Valcárcel' [Wise Summit website], <www.wise-qatar.org/roberto-valcarcel>, accessed 2 July 2015. His work as international consultant in creativity is the result of a partnership with MDF Global Consulting who hired him to give the International Course of Creativity for Development, Ede, Netherlands, in 2009, and the Course of Creativity for Development, directed to executives of the Ministry of Finance of the Kingdom of Jordan (Aqaba, 2010).

Although in his CV Valcárcel lists five working areas – academic work; visual arts; conceptual art; graphic design and creativity consultancy – the three activities that have interested him the most and that have taken most of his time are art making, creativity-related jobs and teaching. He has also described himself, a couple of times, as ‘adocentado’ (defeated by teaching), nonetheless.⁸⁶⁶ When I interviewed Valcárcel in 2010-2012, he was equally concerned with the lack of economic security in his life.⁸⁶⁷ In terms of his artistic practice and lack of international recognition, in 2010, at fifty-nine, he explained – citing one of Jethro Tull’s song lyrics –that he was ‘too old to rock and yet too young to die’ and described himself as ‘a strange and solitary [artist] in Bolivia but not brilliant enough for the planet’.⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁶ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 30 May 2010 and Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with the Author* (via Skype), 11 August 2012.

⁸⁶⁷ Roberto Valcárcel, *Interview with Roberto Valcárcel*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 30 May 2010.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Appendix C Exhibition History⁸⁶⁹

Solo Exhibitions

- 1978 *Roberto Valcárcel*, Museo Nacional de Arte, September, La Paz.
Roberto Valcárcel (Several Photographs and a Victim of War), exhibition 84, Emusa Gallery, 19-30 December, La Paz.
- 1979 *Roberto Valcárcel* (Drawings and Paintings), exhibition 90, Emusa Gallery, 8-19 May, La Paz.
- 1980 *Valcárcel Productions* (Drawings, Paintings, Prints and Objects), exhibition 111, Emusa Gallery, 18 March-5 April, La Paz.
Valcárcel Productions (Drawings, Paintings, Photographs and Objects), Museo Nacional de Arte, 15-28 May 1980.
Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, La Paz, November 1980.
- 1981 *Valcárcel Productions* (Silkscreen Prints), exhibition 134, Emusa Gallery, 5-16 May.
- 1982 *Puerta del Sol* (Gate of the Sun), Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, February, La Paz.
Valcárcel Productions (*Historia con Campo de Alcachofas*), exhibition 152, Emusa Gallery, April 6-17, La Paz.
- 1983 *Valcárcel Productions*, exhibition 180, Emusa Gallery, 5-16 July, La Paz.
Bolivia joven (Young Bolivia), Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, La Paz, July 1983.
- 1984 *Valcárcel Productions* (Paintings), exhibition 199, Emusa Gallery, 15-26 May, La Paz.
'el arte no ha muerto: Zeichnungen + Bilder von (Art is not

⁸⁶⁹ This exhibition history has been compiled from the following sources: Fundación Cultural EMUSA, *Memoria, 1974-1994*, Fundación Cultural EMUSA, La Paz, 1994; Norah Claros and Tanaz Baghirzade de Campero, *Memoria: 20 años de Arte*, Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz, 2013; Pedro Querejazu, *Arte contemporáneo en Bolivia, 1970-2013: crítica, ensayos, estudios*, Pedro Querejazu Leyton (ed.), La Paz, 2013; Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel: trabajos 1968-2008*, vols. 1-2, Plural Editores and Fundación Cultural del Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz, 2008; exhibition documentation (catalogues and invitations); the Kiosko Gallery website; Valcárcel's updated cv (2011), *CV Data: 2010-2015*; and personal communications with Valcárcel. When the information was available, I used the original titles of the exhibitions – in lieu of the titles in Valcárcel's cv, book, etc., some of which I understand have been written from memory. I provide the exact dates of the exhibitions (days and months or months only) whenever possible. Years are provided in the rest of the cases.

- Dead: Drawings and paintings by Roberto Valcárcel)', La Tienda Gallery, Bremen, 13 April- 31 May.
- 1985 *Valcárcel Productions* (Paintings, Prints, Drawings and Photographs), exhibition 216, Emusa Gallery, 19-30 March, La Paz.
- 1986 Salón Cecilio Guzmán de Rojas, 30 March-10 April, La Paz.
- 1987 *Valcárcel Productions* (Drawings), exhibition 268, Emusa Gallery, 2-13 June, La Paz.
- 1988 *Valcárcel Productions Group Exhibition*, Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reiche, September, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- 1989 *Roberto Valcárcel* (Casas-rostros/ House-faces), Arte Único Gallery, 29 June-18 July, La Paz.
- Dos exponentes de una generación* (Two Artists Representative of a Generation – with Gastón Ugalde), Casa de la Cultura, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 25 August-7 September.
- 1990 *Roberto Valcárcel (Valcárcel Productions)* (Esmaltes/ Enamels), exhibition 336, Emusa Gallery, 2-13 October, La Paz.
- Valcárcel*, Arte Único Gallery, 17 May-6 June, La Paz.
- Casa de la Cultura, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- 1991 *Roberto Valcárcel: Obras recientes* (Roberto Valcárcel: Recent Works), Arte Único Gallery, 14-27 November, La Paz.
- 1992 *Roberto Valcárcel- Recent Works*, Sharona Gallery (606 Lincoln Road), March, Miami.⁸⁷⁰
- 1993 *Made in USA*, Arte Único Gallery, 12-25 August, La Paz.
- 1994 *Roberto Valcárcel* (Paintings), Emusa Gallery, 6-17 September, La Paz.
- Grupo Valcárcel* (Valcárcel Group), Fundación BHN Gallery, La Paz, 19 April-6 May, 1994.
- El Grupo Valcárcel: siete artistas en uno*, (Valcárcel Group: Seven Artists in One), Casa de la Cultura Raúl Otero Reich, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 8-27 June; Emusa Gallery, La Paz, 6-17 September; and Salón Gíldaro Antezana, Cochabamba, 24-29 October.
- 1995 *Valcárcel*, Fundación BHN Gallery, La Paz, 19 May- 6 June.

⁸⁷⁰ Valcárcel does not remember whether this exhibition took place in 1992 or in 1993. Roberto Valcárcel, email to the author, 6 June 2016.

- 1996 *Exposición de Roberto Valcárcel*, Museo Nacional de Arte, 9-27 October, La Paz.
Objetos-pinturas (Objects-paintings), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- 1997 *Robo, amarillo, perde, azul/ Los colores de Bolivia* (Red, Yellow, Green, Blue/ the Colours of Bolivia), Fundación BHN Gallery, 11 September-7 October, La Paz.
- 2002 *De Mínimo Tractatus Perennis Ilusionem* (Objects), Espacio de Arte Nota, 13-31 August, La Paz.⁸⁷¹
- 2003 *Cuantificaciones* (Quantifications), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
Roberto Valcárcel (Peluches prisioneros/Imprisoned Cuddly Toys), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz, 11-28 June.
Cuatro obras conceptuales (Four Conceptual Artworks), Bienal SIART, FEA (Fundación Estética Andina), October, La Paz.
Mecanismos de defensa – objetos (Defence Mechanisms – Objects), Espacio de Arte Nota, 18 - 28 June, La Paz.
- 2004 *Escalas de sentimientos* (Scales to Measure Feelings), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- 2005 *Mecanismos de Defensa* (Defence Mechanisms), Oxígeno Gallery, 26 August, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
Pretextos de pared (Wall Pretexts), Espacio de Arte Nota, 4-15 October, La Paz.
- 2006 *Fotos flacas* (Skinny Photographs), Inauguration of Kiosko Gallery, 19 May-9 June, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
Espacio de Arte Nota, 3-14 October, La Paz.
Con fotografías y ... meo fotensen unt..Meo fotosky or...(With photographs and... *meo fotensen unt..Meo fotosky or...*), sculptures, Espacio de Arte Nota, 3-14 October, La Paz.
- 2007 *Ligualda'h* (a play on the word Equality), photographs and objects, Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
Fotos flacas y ligualdáh (Skinny Photos and Equality), Manzana 1 Espacio de Arte, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- 2008 *Fotografías recientes* (Recent Photographs), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.

⁸⁷¹ Listed as *Risent Werks* (Recent Works) in Roberto Valcárcel, *Roberto Valcárcel - Datos Curriculares*.

- 2014 *Zapatos + cajas con cositas + pinturas negativas* (Shoes, Boxes with Small Things and Negative Paintings), Artespacio CAF (Corporación Americana de Fomento), La Paz.
- Roberto Valcárcel: Trabajos 2014* (Roberto Valcárcel: 2014 Works), Nube Gallery, 13 May-25 June, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- Exposición de muebles, objetos y obras de arte de Roberto Valcárcel, precedidos de una lectura de poemas de Jaime Saenz, a cargo del susodicho* (Exhibition of furniture, objects and artworks of Roberto Valcárcel preceded by a reading of poems of Jaime Saenz by the aforementioned), Espacio La Hostia, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Actions/ Performances

- 1978 *Duelo de pintores* (Painters' Duel), action with Gastón Ugalde, Avenida Arce, La Paz.
- 1979 *La dama y el papagayo* (The Lady and the Parrot), La Paz.
- 1982 Group performance (with Rina Dalence, Efraín Ortuño, Luz Bolivia Paredes, Ricardo Peredo, Teresa G. Mesa, Rosario Mejía, Marina Suárez, Cecilia Wilde, Roxana Aranibar, Rosario Ostría, Ruth Piza, Kiki and Roberto Valcárcel), Centro Boliviano Americano, October, La Paz.⁸⁷²
- Acción por la democracia* (Action for Democracy) with Gastón Ugalde and some students of Valcárcel, UMSA Monoblock atrium, La Paz.
- 1985 *Acción rosa* (Rose Action), San Francisco atrium, La Paz.
- Acción turquesa* (Turquoise Action), Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz.
- Acción violeta* (Violet Action), Avenida 16 de Julio, La Paz.
- Strip-tease avec Tchaikovsky et Donizetti*, Divina Comedia Gallery, La Paz.
- Several actions with Ricardo Peredo Wende in Comercio Street*, La Paz.
- 1986 *Sólo Latex* (with violet paint), January, La Paz.
- La máquina del tiempo* (The Time Machine), Auditorio del CBA, 8 May, La Paz.
- 1987 *Verde Viacha* (Viacha Green) action in the Dada Festival, Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz.
- 1988 *Acción cromática con niños envueltos* (Chromatic Action with Wrapped Children), Casa de la Cultura, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

⁸⁷² Anonymous, 'Performance: Acontecimiento Artístico', *Última Hora*, 5 October 1982.

Group Exhibitions

- 1976 *Fotografiken* (Photography), Fogra Zeigt Gallery, Darmstadt, 12 June -10 July.
- 1980 Group exhibition (Painting, Sculpture and Mixed Media), exhibition 127, Emusa Gallery, 2-13 December, La Paz.
- 1981 *Retratos y autorretratos* (Portraits and Self-portraits), exhibition 130, Emusa Gallery, 17-28 February, La Paz.
- Group exhibition (Painting and Sculpture), exhibition 135, Emusa Gallery, 9-20 June, La Paz.
- Group exhibition – Christmas Auction (Painting and Sculpture), exhibition 146, Emusa Gallery, 15-26 December, La Paz.
- 1983 *Primer festival boliviano de arte experimental* (First Bolivian Festival of Experimental Art), exhibition 182, Emusa Gallery, La Paz, 2-13 August 1983.
- 1984 Group exhibition to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the gallery (Painting, Print, Sculpture and Mixed Media), exhibition 212, Emusa Gallery, 18-29 December, La Paz.
- 1985 *Arte contemporáneo* (Contemporary Art), Museo Nacional de Arte, 9-18 April, La Paz.
- Arte contemporáneo* (Contemporary Art), V Periodo de Sesiones del Parlamento Andino, Banco Central de Bolivia, La Paz.
- 1986 Exposición Gala 40, Museo Nacional de Arte, 30 April-21 May, La Paz.
- 1987 *Desnudo* (The Nude Figure), Paintings and Sculptures, exhibition 261, Emusa Gallery, 17-28 February, La Paz.
- Concurso Especial: Recuperación del Dibujo* (Special Competition: Recovering Drawing), Emusa Gallery, 15-23 December, La Paz.
- 1989 *Graphic Arts*, exhibition 303, Emusa Gallery, 21 March-1 April, La Paz.
- 1991 Museo de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile.
Museo de Arte Moderno, Cali, Colombia.
- 1992 International Monetary Fund Center, Washington, D.C.
Bolivia: Pintura Actual (Bolivia: Contemporary Paintings), Expo 92, Sevilla.
- 1994 Group exhibition for the inauguration of the Escuela de Bellas Artes of Oruro, exhibition 408, Emusa Gallery, 10-17 June, La Paz.

- Retratos* (Portraits), Arte Único Gallery, La Paz, 28 April - 18 May.
- Bolivia: Arte Nuevo* (Bolivia: New Art), Centro Cultural Mapocho, Santiago de Chile, 1-13 August.
- Primera exposición 1994* (First Exhibition of 1994), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- 1995 *Actualidad en la Pintura Boliviana* (Current Issues in Bolivian Painting), Casa de América, Madrid.
- Museo Nacional de Arte, La Paz.
- El desnudo* (The Nude Figure), Fundación BHN Gallery, La Paz, 6-23 December.
- 1996 *Bolivian Contemporary Art*, The Mall Galleries, London.
- I Salón de Arte Libre* (First Salon of Free Art), exhibition 440, Emusa Gallery, La Paz, 11-29 June.
- Bolivian Art*, Americas Society, New York.
- El fin de los márgenes* (The End of Borders), Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile.
- Arte-Facto: Arte Hecho En Santa Cruz* (Artefact/ Art de Facto: Art Made in Santa Cruz), Museo de Historia Regional, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- 1997 *Colectiva* (Group Exhibition), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- Virgenes y Flores* (Virgins and Flowers), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- Arte-Facto: Arte Hecho En Santa Cruz* (Artefact/ Art de Facto: Art Made in Santa Cruz), Museo de Historia Regional, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- 1998 *Arte-Facto: Arte Hecho En Santa Cruz* (Artefact/ Art de Facto: Art Made in Santa Cruz), Museo de Historia Regional, 2-30 December, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- 1999 *Exposición de inauguración* (Inauguration Exhibition) of Espacio de Arte Nota in its new building in San Miguel, La Paz.
- 2000 *Puerta-Ventanas al 2000* (Window-doors towards 2000), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- 2001 *Seis artistas de Santa Cruz* (Six Artists from Santa Cruz), Espacio de Arte Nota, 3-7 July, La Paz.
- Contemporary Bolivian Art*, Dresdner Bank, Hamburg.
- 2003 *Arte sublime* (Sublime Art), Animal Gallery, Santiago de Chile.

- 2004 *Un objeto para sentarse* (An Object to Sit on), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
El objeto del deseo (The Object of Desire), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- 2005 *Secreto Compartido* (Shared Secret), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
Made in Santa Cruz (Paintings and Objects) presented by Oxígeno in Nota Gallery, La Paz.
Contrabandistas de imágenes (Image Smugglers), Selection of artworks from the São Paulo Bienal, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile.
- 2006 *Retratos* (Portraits), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
Objeto para vestir (Object to Dress with), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
Obras de colecciones privadas (Artworks from Private Collections), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
Ni ángeles ni espadas (Neither Angels nor Swords), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
Roberto Valcárcel, Kiosko Gallery, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 19 May-2 June.
- 2007 *Culto Oculto. Arte y Religión.* (Occult Cult. Art and Religion) Kiosko Gallery, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 9-31 August.
La Paz - Hamburgo - La Paz (La Paz - Hamburg - La Paz), paintings, Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
El reto (The Challenge), Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
Políticamente Incorrecto (Politically Incorrect), Kiosko Gallery, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 6-22 December.
- 2008 *Entrecruce Latinoamericano* (Latin American Crossroads), Isabel Aninat Gallery, Santiago de Chile.
- 2009 *Contextos – arte contemporáneo* (Contexts – Contemporary Art) Centro Cultural Portales, Cochabamba.
Diálogo: 21 Artistas (Dialogue: 21 Artists), Espacio de Arte Nota, 18 December- 30 January La Paz.
Homenaje Bicentenario de La Paz (Tribute to the Bicentennial of La Paz) – Artists from La Paz, Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- 2010 *Nouvo – Contemporary Bolivian Sculpture*, Kiosko Gallery, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, 7-31 May.

- Hombres – Siete artistas, un motivo* (Men – Seven Artists, one Motif),
Manzana 1 Espacio de Arte, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- Objeto para Convivir* (Object to Live with), diverse media, Espacio de
Arte Nota, La Paz.
- 2011 *s-n* (without a name), Paintings and Sculptures, Espacio de Arte
Nota, La Paz.
- 12 Años. Nota: 40 Artistas* (12 Years of Nota: 40 Artists), Paintings
and Sculptures, Espacio de Arte Nota, La Paz.
- Bienal *Contextos – arte contemporáneo* (Context – Contemporary Art)
Centro Cultural Palacio Portales, Cochabamba.
- Consciencia – Arte Actual (Conscience – Contemporary Art),
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- Miamicito*, Dot Fifty One Gallery, Miami, 9 April - 15 June.
- 2012 *New Brazil Bolivia Now*, Selection of artworks from biennials in La
Paz and Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and Brazilian contemporary art,
Marta Traba Gallery, São Paulo.
- 2013 III Bienal *Contextos – arte contemporáneo* (Contexts – Contemporary
Art), Centro Cultural Palacio Portales, Cochabamba.
- 2014 Contemporary Art from Santa Cruz, Unagro Pavilion,⁸⁷³ Fexpocruz
(Feria de Exposición de Santa Cruz), Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- 2015 *Curadores* (Curators), Manzana 1 Espacio de Arte, Santa Cruz de la
Sierra.
- Artistas Contemporáneos* (Contemporary Artists), Casa Cor Gallery,
Santa Cruz de la Sierra.
- Opening exhibition of Mérida Romero Gallery, Santa Cruz de la
Sierra.
- La Feliz Muerte del Arte* (The Happy Death of Art), Artespacio CAF
(Corporación Americana de Fomento), La Paz.

International Biennials

- 1978 Latin American Bienal, Bienal de São Paulo.
- 1979 Maldonado Drawing Bienal

⁸⁷³ UNAGRO is the acronym for 'Unión Agroindustrial de Cañeros, SA' (Sugarcane Agro-industrial Union, Anonymous Society). Fexpocruz stands for Feria de Exposición de Santa Cruz (Exhibition Fair of Santa Cruz).

1979, 1983, 1994 and 2004	São Paulo Bienal.
1983	San Juan Bienal. Taiwan Graphic Art Exhibition.
1984, 1989 and 1991	Havana Bienal.
1985	Bienal de arte sobre papel (Art on Paper Biennial), Buenos Aires.
1987	Trujillo Bienal. Cuenca Bienal.
1997	Lima Bienal.
1998	I Bienal Internacional de Arte de Cumaná, Venezuela.
1997 and 1999	Mercosur Bienal, Porto Alegre.

International Art Fairs

1997 and 1998	ARCO, Madrid.
1998	New York Art Fair.
2000, 2001, 2007 and 2008	ArteBA, Buenos Aires
2008	La Otra (The Other One), Bogotá.
2009	Pinta, New York.
2010	Chaco, Santiago de Chile.

Appendix D Glossary

ABAP

Acronym for Asociación Boliviana de Artistas Plásticos (Bolivian Artists' Association), an institution created in 1961 by artist Miguel Alandía Pantoja – POR party leader – to represent the rights and interests of artists.

Achachilas

Aymara term to designate sacred mountains that, according to the beliefs of indigenous people of the Andes, are inhabited by the spirits of their ancestors.

ADN

Acronym for Acción Democrática Nacional (National Democratic Action), a conservative party founded in 1979 by former dictator Hugo Bánzer Suárez.

Apus

Quechua term to designate the spirits of the mountains and other sacred sites.

Artefacto

A contemporary art event (1996-1999) initiated by a group of artists – Sol Mateo, Raquel Schwartz, Roberto Valcárcel, Ejti Stih and Guido Bravo – to promote contemporary art in Santa Cruz de la Sierra. The three versions of the event were presented in the Museo Regional de Historia de Santa Cruz (Regional History Museum of Santa Cruz).⁸⁷⁴

Barzolas

Name given to a group of militant women of the MNR party who took part in the repressive strategy of the revolutionary government (1952-1964). The term *barzolas* derives from María Barzola's surname, an indigenous woman who led the resistance to the occupation of the Catavi mines by the Armed Forces (which later ensued in the Catavi Massacre of 1942).

Campesino

Although 'campesino' can be translated as 'rural inhabitant', the term has been used in Bolivia since the revolutionary government of 1952 to refer to the indigenous people in the Andean countryside. Campesinos were also one of the groups whose interests the revolutionary government sought to represent. Groups of campesinos constituted, in turn, armed

⁸⁷⁴ See: Valeria Paz, 'Hacia un arte experimental: Los lenguajes contemporáneos 1960-2008' in Pentimalli, Michela et. al., *Los caminos de la escultura*, Fundación Cultural Simón I. Patiño La Paz, 2010, p. 270.

militias that were used by the revolutionary government to watch over its interests.

CAyC

Acronym for Centro de Arte y Comunicación (Centre for Art and Communication), a contemporary art centre established in Buenos Aires in 1968 – initially with the name Centro de Estudios de Arte Comunicación (Centre for Art and Communication Studies) – by a group of artists under the leadership of influential art critic Jorge Glusberg. The institution promoted art and research from an interdisciplinary perspective and in relation to science and communication. It sponsored artists within its line of interest, and in particular groups like Grupo de los Trece (Group of Thirteen) and Grupo CAyC.⁸⁷⁵

Chipaya

Small group of indigenous people that settled in the Andes in 2000 BC whose language is endangered and who currently live in a remote region of Oruro.

COB

Acronym for Central Obrera Boliviana (The Bolivian Workers Central Union), a proletarian organisation founded on 17 April 1952 – at the onset of the revolutionary government. Its founding members played a key role in the street battles during the revolution of 1952. COB co-governed with the MNR party between 1952 and 1956.

Colorados de Bolivia (The Reds of Bolivia)

The military unit of the Armed Forces that guards and protects the president of Bolivia, his office (Palacio de Gobierno/ Government Palace) and his residency. The name of the unit is a reference to the colour of its uniform. The unit was used for the first time during the War of the Pacific (1879), an armed conflict with Chile in which Bolivia lost its access to the sea.

COMIBOL

Acronym for Corporación Minera de Bolivia (Bolivia's Mining Corporation), a state institution created to manage the mining industry in 1952, following the nationalisation of the mines by the revolutionary government.⁸⁷⁶

⁸⁷⁵ ICAA, 'Qué es el CAYC What is CAYC', <Cicaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/THEARCHIVE/FullRecord/tabid/88/doc/748013/language/en-US/Default.aspx> [ICAA website], accessed 13 February 2016.

⁸⁷⁶ Corporación Minera de Bolivia, 'Fundación de Comibol', <www.comibol.gob.bo/index.php/institucional/historia/fundacion-comibol> [COMIBOL website], accessed 13 February 2016.

CONDEPA

Acronym for *Consciencia de Patria* (Conscience of Fatherland), a populist party founded by television and radio presenter Carlos Palenque. In the early 1990s CONDEPA had a large group of followers particularly among the street and market vendors and poor inhabitants of the cities of La Paz and El Alto.

Control Político (Political Control)

A special section of the police created to control and repress citizens during the MNR government.

Criollo

Section of the Bolivian population constituted by the descendants of European migrants.

Cruceño

Inhabitants of Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Cruz cuadrada (Square cross)

A symbol used in architecture, textiles and vases of different pre-Hispanic civilisations of the Andean highland.

CSUTCB

Acronym for the *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia* (The Only Confederation of Syndicates of Campesino Workers of Bolivia), the main syndicate for indigenous people. CSUTCB seeks to promote the economic development of its members.⁸⁷⁷ It was created in 1979 during a COB congress by the representatives of two indigenous political associations: *Confederación Nacional de Campesinos Tupac Katari* (The National Confederation of Campesinos Tupac Katari) and *Bloque Independiente Campesino* (Campesino Independent Block). CSUTCB is affiliated with COB.

EGTK

Acronym for *Ejército Guerrillero Túpac Katari* (The Túpac Katari Guerrilla Army), a guerrilla movement of Marxist and Indianista orientation, active in the early 1990s, which sought the insurgency of indigenous people. The movement took the name of Túpac Katari, an indigenous revolutionary leader who led siege of the city of La Paz in 1781. EGTK made small-scale attacks in the early 1990s (e.g. attacking an electrical power station in El Alto). EGTK leaders were incarcerated

⁸⁷⁷ CSUTCB'S vision as described in its website is 'to attain a sustainable, equitable and fair economic development for the indigenous people of Bolivia; maintaining their native identity, by means of a sustainable administration of natural resources, and with the participation of indigenous and campesino people' [Translation is mine]. *Confederación Sindical Única de Trabajadores Campesinos de Bolivia*, 'QUIENES SOMOS', <www.csutcb.org/node/3> [CSUTB website], accessed 3 December 2015.

between 1992 and 1997 in the high security prison of Chonchocoro. Álvaro García Linera, a former member of the group, is currently the vice-president of Bolivia (since 2006).

El Alto

A city on the outskirts of La Paz which gained its autonomy from the latter in 1984. El Alto has been traditionally inhabited by indigenous migrants from the countryside (campesinos) to the city of La Paz and by their descendants.

EMUSA

Acronym for Empresa Minera Unificada Sociedad Anónima (Mining Unified Company), a mining company that founded and supported Emusa Gallery, one of the most important private galleries in La Paz between 1974 and 1998.

Estética del deterioro (Aesthetics of Deterioration)

Argentine critic Marta Traba coined the term 'aesthetics of deterioration' in *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950-1970*, to refer to contemporary art from the US and Western Europe, which she considered to be a reflection of the decadence of capitalism.

Falangistas

Members of the FSB party.

Federación de Juntas Vecinales (Federation of Neighbourhood Associations)

The first Federación de Juntas Vecinales emerged in La Paz at the beginning of the 20th century and federations are nowadays established on a national level. While the demands of the federations have traditionally included infrastructure, basic services (potable water, electricity, etc.), they have also played a key role in politics. The members of the Federation of El Alto and La Paz organised and led the siege of La Paz and uprisings of Black October in 2003.

Fexpocruz

Acronym for Feria de Exposición de Santa Cruz (Exhibition Fair of Santa Cruz), a fair created in 1962, which is today the most important venue for commercial events in the country. Its most important event is the International Fair ExpoCruz that takes place every year in September, in a date close to the celebration of the anniversary of the department of Santa Cruz (24 September).

FIU

Acronym for the Free International University, a higher education art school outside the academic system founded in 1973 by Joseph Beuys and writer Henrich Böll. The university was characterised by its admission of

all students and its focus on the development of the creative potential of individuals in any discipline. The FIU's headquarters were located in Beuys' studio in the Düsseldorf Academy.

FELCN

Acronym for Fuerza Especial de Lucha contra el Narcotráfico (Special Force against Drug Trafficking), a specialized force of the national police founded in 1987 with the aim to 'defend and protect society from illegal drugs [...]'.⁸⁷⁸ It operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Government (former Ministry of Interior).

FSB

Acronym for Falange Socialista Boliviana (Bolivian Socialist Phalanx), a nationalist, socialist and conservative party founded by Óscar Únzaga de la Vega. FSB was originally formed by university students and, in the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s, it constituted the main political group opposing the MNR government.⁸⁷⁹

Gran Poder

El Señor del Gran Poder (Jesus of the Great Power) is one of the most important devotional feasts in the city of La Paz. It is centred in the church of El Señor del Gran Poder in the Chijini neighborhood, nowadays largely populated by people of indigenous origin. The cult to the image of Jesus of the Great Power (previously a painting of the Holy Trinity with three faces) is manifested in a large and exuberant procession made up of folkloric dancers and marching bands, which takes place in the main streets of La Paz.

Huiracocha

Huiracocha is the creator deity in Inca mythology [also: Wiracocha and Viracocha].

INBO

Acronym for Inversiones Bolivianas (Bolivian Investment Group), a conglomerate of companies that sponsored the Bienal INBO in 1975, 1977 and 1981, the competition 'Recuperación del Dibujo' (Recovering Drawing) in 1987, and the publication of *Pintura Boliviana del Siglo XX* in 1989. In the 1990s INBO created Fundación BHN (The BHN Foundation), a cultural organisation including a gallery, an editorial line, and a documentation centre.

⁸⁷⁸ In its website FELCN describes itself: 'The Special Force against Drug Trafficking is a specialized organism of the Bolivian Police whose aim is to defend and protect society from the problem of illegal drugs and to ensure compliance with legal norms; with the participation of society and respect of human rights and the environment.' FELCN, 'Misión/ Visión' [FELCN website], <www.felcn.gob.bo/Q-MisionVision.aspx, accessed 9 December 2015. Translation mine.

⁸⁷⁹ Carlos D. Mesa Gisbert, 'Presidencia y partidos políticos' in *Presidentes de Bolivia: Entre urnas y fusiles*, La Paz, Editorial Gisbert, 2003, p. 205.

Indianismo/ Indianista

Ideology formulated in the 1960s by indigenous intellectual Fausto Reinaga in which he called a revolution for the emancipation of indigenous people (the Indian Revolution). Key ideas of Indianismo were manifested in the 1960s in the program of the first Indianista parties: the PIAK party (Partido Indio de Aymaras y Keswas/ Indian Party of Aymara and Quechua people) – of which Reinaga was the leader and which transformed into the PIB party (Partido Indio de Bolivia/ Indian Party of Bolivia). Indigenous leader Felipe Quispe, a key player in the 2003 siege of La Paz, was influenced by the ideas of Indianismo.

Izquierda Unida

Party constituted by a coalition of communist parties (1989-1997). Farmers growing coca were represented by this party until 1999, the year when the MAS party was created.

Katarismo

A political movement, launched in 1973 in Tiwanaku, to vindicate the rights and inclusion of indigenous people in politics and culture. It was named after the indigenous revolt leader Túpac Katari who led the siege of La Paz in 1781. Fausto Reinaga's 1960s Indianismo, a movement calling a revolution for the emancipation of Bolivian Indians, was an influential antecedent of the Katarismo movement. During the transition into democracy (1978-1982), new parties emerged under the influence of Katarismo. These parties became visible for the first time in the presidential elections of 1978 and took part in the 1979 and 1980 elections. The ideology of former leader of EGTK and CSUTCB Felipe Quispe has roots in Katarismo (and Indianismo). Quispe ran for elections in 2002 as a candidate of MIP (Movimiento Indígena Pachakuti/ Pachakuti Indigenous Movement), a party he created to represent his radical wing of Katarismo. The presence of Katarismo is also evident in MAS government leaders, particularly in the figure of current vice president Alvaro García Linera – a former leader of the EGTK guerrilla movement, which promoted a radical Katarismo.

Keru

Name given to ceramic ceremonial vases of pre-Hispanic civilisations, i.e. Tiwanaku and Inca.

Ll'uchu

A wool cap used by indigenous people in the highlands.

MAS

Acronym for Movimiento al Socialismo (Movement towards Socialism Socialism), a party founded in 1999 by coca farmer syndicate leader Evo Morales and left wing militants and intellectuals. The party gained large

support following the advice of the US ambassador to the population not to vote for Evo Morales in the 2002 elections. With Evo Morales as president, MAS has governed the country three times since 2006.

MIR

Acronym for Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (Leftist Revolutionary Movement), a left-wing party of Marxist ideas created in 1971 by university students, radical members of the Christian Democracy and MNR parties. In the early 1970s, MIR gained notoriety in the labour movement and politics. MIR party members were repressed during the military regime of Hugo Banzer Suárez (1971-1978) and during the authoritarian regimes between 1978 and 1982. The party participated in the UDP government (1982-1985), with Jaime Paz Zamora as vice-president. Paz Zamora, the party's candidate in the 1989 elections was voted president of Bolivia by Congress and governed between 1989 and 1993.

Mestizo

In 1910, intellectual Franz Tamayo proposed an education paradigm based on the mestizo. The revolutionary government of 1952 adopted the idea of the mestizo as part of a political program in which it proclaimed the mestizo as the new identity of the citizens of Bolivia. The centrality of the mestizo in the revolutionary project was promoted by Augusto Céspedes, ideologue of the party, director of its official newspaper and author of a compilation of short stories (*Sangre de Mestizos/ Blood of Mestizos*, 1936) set during the Chaco War with Paraguay.⁸⁸⁰

MNR

Acronym for Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (Nationalist Revolutionary Movement), a party founded in 1941 with an ideology inspired in Fascism and Marxism. The MNR seized the presidency following the victory of the party after the revolution of 1952. The revolutionary government sought to modernize the country with the following reforms: universal vote, agrarian reform and state ownership of mines. The MNR has been in government eight times.⁸⁸¹

Monoblock

The main building of the UMSA university complex designed by celebrated architect Emilio Villanueva. Built in 1947 in Neo-Tiwanaku style, this seventeen-storey building is an important architectural icon in the city of La Paz.

⁸⁸⁰ Céspedes wrote this new identity into the heroic characters of his short stories about the Chaco War (1932-1935) entitled *Sangre de Mestizos*. See Leonardo García Pabón, *La patria íntima. Alegorías nacionales en la literatura y el cine de Bolivia*, CESU and Plural Editores, La Paz, 1998, p. 171.

⁸⁸¹ This figure includes short interims and extremely short governments interrupted by coups and uprisings. MNR leader Victor Paz was president 1952-1956, 1960-1964, 1964 (only a few months) and 1985-1989. Hernán Siles Zuazo governed 1956-1960. Lidia Gueiler governed a few months 1980-1981. Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada was president 1993-1997 and 2002-2003.

Movimiento Sin Tierra (MST)/ Landless Movement

Founded in 2000, MST is an organisation constituted by indigenous people without land that seeks to redress its unfair distribution in Bolivia following the Agrarian Reform of 1953 (wherein large states were created in the eastern part of Bolivia and small farms in the west). Using similar strategies to the ones of the Brazilian Landless movement, Bolivian MST has occupied large parcels of land, properties of politicians and large corporations in Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Octubre Negro (Black October)

Black October is the name given to the uprisings of the inhabitants of El Alto that took place in October of 2003 in the form of a siege of the city of La Paz. The crisis was caused by the outcome of two previous crises (Febrero Negro and a crisis in the village of Sorata), the general inconformity with president Sánchez de Lozada, and a number of demands and interests.⁸⁸² A demand that gained notorious importance during the October riots was the claim for Bolivian gas not to be exported through Chile – in the light of the loss of access to the sea by Bolivia following the war with Chile of 1879.

PRA

Acronym for Partido Revolucionario Auténtico (Authentic Revolutionary Party), a fraction of the MNR party founded by Wálter Guevara in 1960. The founding of PRA and other fractions of the MNR can be considered attempts to challenge the power and authority of Paz Estenssoro in the party.

POR

Acronym for Partido Obrero Revolucionario (Workers' Revolutionary Party), a Marxist party founded in 1935 by José Aguirre Gainsborg and Tristan Marof and his group Túpac Amaru. In 1938, after the Fourth International, the party defined an ideological identification with the Trotskyist strand of Marxism and against Stalinism. Its ideology was manifested in important documents and events such as the Thesis of Pulacayo of 1946 and the Popular Assembly of 1971.

⁸⁸² The uprising started with a strike against a new directive for taxes in El Alto – a city of indigenous migrants where both the poorest and the richest property prices of Bolivia are found. President Sánchez de Lozada faced an increased rejection of the population as consequence of the occupation of the village of Sorata, less than a month before, by the Armed Forces in an effort to release tourists 'under siege'. The Sorata crisis had been, in turn, preceded at the beginning of the year, by the violent occupation of Plaza Murillo by the students of Colegio Ayacucho (a long-established public school in the centre of La Paz), the strike of the police, and the subsequent intervention of the Armed Forces to control the wave of riots, assaults and destruction in La Paz. Many other demands contributed to an increased rejection of the president, both partisan and from the general population.

PRIN

Acronym for Partido Revolucionario de Izquierda Nacional (Revolutionary Party of the Nationalist Left), a fraction of the MNR party founded in 1963 by the COB leader Juan Lechín.

PS-1

Acronym for Partido Socialista 1 (Socialist Party 1), a radical fraction of the Socialist Party created in 1979 under the leadership of Marcelo Quiroga Santa Cruz. During a brief democratic interim, Quiroga Santa Cruz launched a trial in Congress against the former president and dictator Hugo Banzer Suárez. Quiroga Santa Cruz represented an enormous threat to the right and to Banzer Suárez and he was assassinated in 1980 during the violent coup staged by García Meza.

PURS

Acronym for Partido de la Unión Republicana y Socialista (Republican and Socialist Union Party), a political alliance established in the 1940s between the two factions of the Republican Party – the Salamanca and Saavedra wings – and the Liberal Party. Enrique Herzog, a PURS candidate, was elected president in 1947. Upon Herzog's resignation, the vice-president Mamerto Urriolagoitia assumed the presidency. PURS governed the country between 1947 and 1951.

RADEPA

Acronym for Razón de Patria (Reason of the Fatherland), a military lodge with radical nationalist tendencies formed during the Chaco War (1935). Without a specific ideological program, the lodge sought the moralization of the country through strict discipline and the imposition of order. RADEPA equally proclaimed an allegiance to an authoritarian type of nationalism inspired by German National Socialism. In 1943, RADEPA – in coalition with the MNR – came to power via a coup staged by Major Gualberto Villarroel.

S'ullu (foetus)

A llama foetus used in the Andean *ch'alla* ceremony, a ritual offering to the Pachamama (mother earth) goddess where other symbolic elements are burned and buried (alcohol, coca leaves, sweets, Palo Santo wood, grains, wool threads, nuts, wine, alcohol, flower petals, streamers, etc.). *Ch'allas* typically take place in carnival (on Tuesday), during the month of August and before the construction of houses and buildings.

Tesis de Pulacayo (Thesis of Pulacayo)

A political programme of Trotskyist perspective proclaimed in 1945 in the mining centre of Pulacayo aimed at the seizure of power by the workers. The thesis includes important demands for the miners regarding salaries, a 40-hour work week, syndicate independence, control of the mines and arms for the workers.

Thunupa

An Inca god considered the supreme creator. He is also the god of the volcano, thunder and lightning. Thunupa is equally the name of a sacred volcano in the department of Oruro that was venerated by pre-Hispanic civilisations and that is still is venerated by indigenous people.

Tiwanaku

A Pre-Columbian archaeological site in the department of La Paz. It was the capital of an empire in the Southern Andes that lasted several centuries. Tiwanaku civilization was characterized by its use of new technologies and materials for architecture, pottery, textiles, metals and basket weaving.⁸⁸³ The empire reached its apogee between 500 and 900 AD. The site of Tiwanaku has been used as a political symbol for the vindications of the indigenous population of Bolivia. As such, it was the location where indigenous political parties and movements (Indianismo, Katarismo and CONDEPA) were founded. More recently it has been used as the stage of important political acts of the MAS party.⁸⁸⁴

UCS

Acronym for Unidad Cívica Solidaridad (Solidarity Civic Unity), a populist party created in 1988 by the beer company owner Max Fernández. Without a clear ideology, UCS became known and gained supporters by offering gifts to the electorate.

UDP

Acronym for Unión Democrática y Popular (Democratic and Popular Union), a party founded in 1977 conformed by an alliance of left wing parties: MIR, MNR-1, PRIN and PCB. It governed the country between 1982 and 1985, following an almost uninterrupted period of military dictatorships initiated in 1964. UDP's government had to face one of the biggest economic and social crisis in Bolivian history as well as the highest inflation rate and an uncompromising pressure from the workers' union COB.

UMSA

Acronym for Universidad Mayor de San Andrés (Higher University of San Andrés), a university founded by president Andrés de Santa Cruz – an independence war hero. The university was inaugurated in 1830. UMSA is the state university in the city of La Paz.

UNAGRO

Acronym for Unión Agroindustrial de Cañeros, SA (Sugarcane Agro-

⁸⁸³ UNESCO, 'Tiwanaku: Spiritual and Political Centre of the 'Tiwanaku Culture', <whc.unesco.org/en/list/567>, UNESCO [website], accessed 9 November 2015.

⁸⁸⁴ Tiwanaku was the venue where the indigenous celebration of the inauguration of Evo Morales' presidential terms took place in 2006 and 2014.

industrial Union, Anonymous Society), a corporate group from Santa Cruz promoting the sugar cane industry. It was created in 1977.

UNP

Acronym for Unión Nacionalista Popular (People's Nationalist Union), a political party constituted by conservative and traditional groups, which won the 1978 presidential elections. In response to accusations of fraud, presidential candidate General Juan Pereda – Banzer's former Minister of Interior – staged a coup to ensure his appointment as president of the country.

Wara Wara

A 1930's film by José Velasco Maidana, set in the 16th century, about the romance of indigenous princess Wara Wara and a Spanish conquistador.

YPFB

Acronym for Yacimientos Petrolíferos Bolivianos (Bolivian Oilfields), a state company created by president David Toro in 1936, following the expulsion of Standard Oil from the country. The company was established for the management and administration of the petrol production in the country.