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Article abstract

In reviewing the theory of the museum, art historian Griselda Pollock proposes a “virtual feminist museum,” a gallery that does not exist but proves formidable indeed. According to Pollock, the institutions where art circulates are governed by patriarchal logics of exhibition and conservation. This article considers the potential contents of a virtual Latin American feminist museum. The widespread Argentinian feminist movement #NiUnaMenos (2015) and the National Campaign for the Right to Safe, Free, and Legal Abortion (since 2005) yielded a vast corpus of images. In an unprecedented way in Argentina, these images extended traditional public spaces (parks, streets, and assembly) by incorporating digital media (especially social networks). In a circular fashion, the images themselves—especially photos—demonstrated enormous power to call on people to rise up and take to the streets. The hypothesis we present here is that the power belonging to these images is associated with a new pathos of female enjoyment (glitter and makeup, nudity and joy) that constitutes a virtual Latin American feminist museum.

The Virtual Museum and Female Joy in Argentina: An Exploration of the Revolt

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Until the 1970s, art history and its models overlooked feminism entirely. During that decade, historical materialist feminism combined social analysis with semiotics, drawing on film and literary theory as well as psychoanalysis, to begin building a critical art history capable of addressing feminist languages and issues. The intellectual sisterhood of scholars and writers like Teresa de Lauretis, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Adrienne Rich, Laura Mulvey, Mieke Bal, and Griselda Pollock would open up new horizons in art history. On the pages that follow, we will look to some of Pollock's ideas to envision a virtual feminist museum. Rather than a collection of artworks in cyberspace, Pollock's is an impossible museum that would require dismantling patriarchy in all spheres of art. The aim here is to lay the curatorial groundwork for a museum of female joy in Argentina today, focusing on what the images produce as part of the feminist movement #NiUnaMenos (2015) and the National Campaign for the Right to Safe, Free, and Legal Abortion (2005).

Within the framework of the virtual museum, we will explore a series of issues at stake in women's networks in Latin America today in order to evidence the pathos of female joy, visible in particular in images from the feminist digital archive. This pathos can be seen in the portraits of women singing and smiling captured by the M.A.F.I.A. collective and photographers Lucía Prieto and Guido Piotrkowski. These photos can be correlated with other amateur images that circulated widely on social networks during 2018 and part of 2020 in Argentina, the two moments in which abortion legality was discussed in the Argentinian parliament. In these images, glitter, confetti, makeup, and a myriad of green ornamental details articulate the story of a visible joy

and the possibility of an atmosphere of celebration in the midst of an uprising. We argue that the images themselves, because of their characteristics and the way they circulate, call upon people to occupy public spaces and exercise their “right to have rights.” Joy had not only been condemned by patriarchal and religious discourse, but even barred from certain feminist discourses, especially those associated with the social “tragedy” of people who die from illegal abortions. Without denying that tragic reality—quite the contrary—photographs of feminine joy casts a new light on the need for legal abortion-on-demand.

BETWEEN THE IMAGINARY MUSEUM AND THE ARCHIVE

At the end of the 1980s, Pollock’s works *Framing Feminism* (1987)¹ and *Vision & Difference* (1988)² introduced the concept of “feminist intervention” that would become central to her work. Feminist intervention aims to redefine not only research topics, but also the theories and methods used to read cultural practices. Pollock formulates it as follows: “My aim is precisely to show how a feminist intervention exceeds a local concern with ‘the woman question’ and makes gender central to our terms of historical analysis (always in conjunction with other structurations such as class and race which are mutually inflecting).”³ In other words, intervention in art history requires acknowledging the power-gender relations that underlie all analysis in the human sciences, supporting the feminist insistence “on the social construction of sexual difference and the role of ‘woman as sign.’”⁴

A decade later, Pollock coined another key—and radical—term: “differencing the canon.” From her feminist stance, she challenged the conservative cultural policies of the 1980s and the entrenchment of a canon in art exhibitions that overlooked critical and social histories. Rather than merely rejecting or disregarding the canon—or expanding it by, say, introducing female artists—Pollock proposes producing criticism from within to create authentic counter-histories based on new regimes of reading and writing. These new feminist narratives, these counter-histories, would rebuke bourgeois, depoliticized, and ahistorical categories and structures in

1. Rozsika Parker & Griselda Pollock (éds.), *Framing Feminism: Art and the Women’s Movement 1970–85*, Londres/New York, Pandora Press, 1987.

2. Griselda Pollock, *Vision & Difference*, New York, Routledge, 2003.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14–15.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

what Pollock refers to as “differentiating difference,”⁵ that is, rebuilding spaces of representation and visibility from a feminist perspective. A thorough revision of art history, then, would not mean inverting patriarchal logics or building heroic narratives of female spectators and artists, or of the women represented, but instead exploring the “*inscriptions in the feminine*”⁶ to see how the feminine has managed to resist, to not be erased from, the designating canon. Revising the canon in these terms means understanding its dominant discourses and hegemonic visualities, how it came to be and how it circulates.

To analyze the resistance of the feminine, Pollock explores art history by imagining what she calls the “virtual feminist museum,”⁷ a space that houses a selection of images as part of an “archive expanded across time and space.”⁸ Its aim is to open up to parameters other than the ones that usually govern art (period, style, and teleological affirmations about the works and their makers). To that end, Pollock proposes imagining how these tensions would play out in a museum that, as she herself notes, will never come to be. In an ironic twist on virtuality, no feminist museum, she asserts, is possible as long as woman continues to be an object of consumption without a social or political network outside of hegemonic circuits. Thus, Pollock describes her gesture as a forward-looking *poiesis*; it is not an agenda to be carried out but a constantly amended set of exigencies. She materializes the virtual feminist museum in *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum* (2007),⁹ which we would like to place into dialogue with a series of photographs that went viral on social networks.

What distinguishes the virtual feminist museum from the imaginary museum à la Malraux¹⁰ is the specific set of exigencies it makes and its departure from certain hegemonic notions associated with the artist and art’s taxonomies. Pollock’s aim is

5. Griselda Pollock, *Differencing the Canon. Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art’s Histories*, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 5.

6. Pollock, 2006, p. 139.

7. For an approach to the relationship between the “virtual feminist museum,” Walter Benjamin’s perspective on collections, and contemporary theory on the archive, see: Natalia Taccetta, “Archivo de intensidades: entre el museo feminista virtual y la reescritura de la historia,” *Cuadernos de Filosofía*, no. 69, 2017, p. 171–189.

8. Pollock, 2006, p. 52.

9. Griselda Pollock, *Encounters in the Virtual Feminist Museum: Time, Space and the Archive*, London, Routledge, 2007.

10. Here we refer to André Malraux’s 1954 theory on how photographic reproduction removed artworks from their original contexts, which enabled him to imagine a montage that would challenge the criteria of style, iconography, artist, and nationality.

to read works as cultural practices capable of producing meanings and conveying affect. At stake is transforming the context of works to create a “feminist space” that is sheer potentiality “for a counter-museum that uses the most interesting aspect of the museum: the encounter between and with artworks arranged according to a scheme that is not identical with their making.”¹¹

For Pollock, the virtual museum is more a laboratory than a tale; it has no set formulation or curatorial layout. In this regard, she turns to Sigmund Freud and Aby Warburg, “invoking” them in her reading of images as forms—formulae—that reveal profound feelings more anchored in the unconscious than in the legible realm of reason. Freud and Warburg provide Pollock with potential models for feminist counter-movements against those “phallogentric and nationalist heroic narratives”¹² that riddle art history, forming what Walter Benjamin might call its optical and political unconscious. According to Pollock, both Freud and Warburg see the image as a mediator between history and subjectivity and between emotion and politics. It is in the montage that they find the representation of the movements of memory and the unconscious, their shifts and accumulations.¹³

The virtual feminist museum, then, is a necessary “method for exploring other sets or series of images and objects and other modes of relating them.”¹⁴ The aim of this long-term project is to define “feminism as a virtuality in philosophical terms”¹⁵ because “whatever it might be, or whatever its effects are, are not yet realized. Far from being over, feminism is in a state of becoming without a known destiny or end.”¹⁶

Like Jacques Derrida’s archive,¹⁷ this selective and always incomplete virtual museum is engaged in the identifications women construct and combat in cultural representations. In short, Pollock hopes that a feminist appropriation of the concept of museum will yield a new way of thinking about the exhibition. Here, a critique of

11. Pollock, 2007, p. 11.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

13. See Daniela Losiggio and Natalia Taccetta, “La cuestión del archivo desde una perspectiva warburgiana: huellas, pathos, dinamogramas,” *Cuadernos de Filosofía*, no. 72, 2019, p. 69–76.

14. Griselda Pollock, “Un-expected Turns: The Aesthetic, the Pathetic and the Adversarial in the Long Durée of Art’s Histories,” *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 7, 2012, p. 4.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. Jacques Derrida, *Mal d’archive* [1995], Paris, Galilée, 2008.

art history and its images can entail an exploration of *différance*,¹⁸ that is, of that which is both central to and excluded from the canon.

Pollock's feminist intervention, then, aims to elaborate a new visual and rhetorical regime around the figures of the encounter and of montage, evidencing that history is not just chronology, and that the temporalities at stake depend on the ideological reading of the whole. Following Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* (2012),¹⁹ the virtual museum ventures a collection of images-history that reveals the emotional connections possible between images, even when those images were not originally envisioned as contiguous, or when they correspond to diverse registers and devices. Pollock's premise and inspiration, then, is that the image is not mere representation but a formula of pathos, a "thought-feeling formula"²⁰ that challenges existing definitions. We apply this "iconology of the interval"²¹ to envision a virtual museum of feminine joy.

In the light of all these considerations, we believe that the photographs of the demonstrations for legal abortion in Argentina indicate a breakthrough in the pathos of the feminist Argentinian struggles and also a break with the canon of art history. On the one hand, this museum produces a new space for thought-feeling: the significant "abortion" as a social tragedy was, after 2018, slightly displaced by feminine joy. In fact, we consider that the question of feminine joy and pleasure had never explicitly or extensively been mentioned in feminist Argentinians' discourses, although it was always latent, as is shown in a recently rescued photograph from 1984 that we will analyze shortly.

18. *Différance* is a concept conceived by Jacques Derrida from the French word "*différence*" (difference) with which he tries to symbolize that something surpasses the representation or for which the representation is insufficient. In addition, "*différer*," also means "postpone"—in addition to differentiating—, which articulates the idea that words do not fully assume meaning, but that it is always "deferred" or "postponed" in a chain of meanings. These ideas appear in the lecture delivered at the French Philosophical Society on January 27, 1968, published simultaneously in the *Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie* (July–September 1968) and in *Théorie d'ensemble* (Éditions du Seuil, 1968, coll. "Tel Quel").

19. Aby Moritz Warburg, Joaquín Chamorro Mielke, Martin Warnke, Claudia Brinker & Fernando Checa Cremades (eds.), *Atlas Mnemosyne*, Madrid, Akal, coll. "Akal arte y estética," 2010.

20. Pollock, 2012, p. 72.

21. In an oft-cited article about Aby Warburg and the "nameless science," Giorgio Agamben refers to Warburg's work as an "anthropology of Western culture." That expression combines the "iconology of the interval" with various dimensions of traditional human sciences like philology, ethnology, and history, yielding not diachrony or synchrony but the point where the dichotomy between them is unraveled—that is where the human subject takes shape.

On the other hand, this symbolic and affective entity—our virtual and feminist museum—has a special materiality. It is made of digital photographs, which means that it is infinitely replicable and that the authority of the artist is less important than the way it circulates or calls for other images and people to intervene in public digital spaces or to occupy the street. In this sense, digital images amplify the public space,²² they resignify it, expanding its possibilities and producing a new and dispersed feminist intermediality, whose logic is that of the articulation between feminist struggle and joy. This is precisely the essential archontic principle²³ that determines what is included in this archive and what relationships are woven between the different traces of the struggles taking place there. The images do not in themselves offer evidence, but rather institute an archive. Our criteria of image selection have to do with their circulation. We have chosen images that are now well-known and of course very representative of the massive circulation of images in those days. We have asked some professional photographers to allow us to show their images, but we consider them alongside a great number of images of feminist demonstrations that circulated between 2018–2020.

FROM TRAGEDY TO WOMEN'S JOY IN ARGENTINA

The “delay” in the Argentinian fight for legal abortion can be attributed to several factors. One of them is the country's last military dictatorship (1976–1983), during which feminist organizations and the progress they had achieved in terms of women's rights suffered serious setbacks.²⁴ Another is the intensification of the Catholic Church's efforts to maintain its hegemony in Latin America, after the triumph of abortion laws in Europe and in the United States.²⁵ In any case, the first bill for abortion rights could not be launched until the democratic transition. The Abortion

22. Marcela Fuentes, *Activismos tecnopolíticos. Constelaciones de performance*, Buenos Aires, Eterna Cadencia, 2020, p. 47.

23. Derrida, [1995] 2008, p. 23.

24. See Revista Sur, no. 329, 1971, an edition all about women and abortion https://catalogo.bn.gov.ar/F/?func=direct&doc_number=001218322 (accessed 6 August 2021). In 1975, a group of Argentinian women met to launch a campaign for legal abortion that was interrupted by the coup d'état of March 1976. Despite intense censorship, new organizations founded in those years continued discussing the need for abortion rights. See Mónica Tarducci, Catalina Trebisacce and Karin Grammatico, *Cuando el feminismo era mala palabra*, Buenos Aires, Espacio, 2018.

25. See Daniela Losiggio, “Depicting ‘Gender Ideology’ as Affective and Arbitrary: Organized Actions Against Sexual and Gender Rights in Latin America Today,” Cecilia Macón, Mariela Solana and Nayla Vacarezza (eds.), *Affect, Gender and Sexuality in Latin America*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021, p. 19–39.

Rights Commission (Comisión por el Derecho al Aborto, or CODEAB) was founded in 1998, and in 2005 it became the National Campaign for the Right to Safe, Free, and Legal Abortion. In 2003, attendees at the National Women's Conference chose an identifying insignia for pro-legalization: the color green, which no political party or social organization had used in the past. In the beginning, women wore emerald green ribbons, pins, or clothes to identify with the movement, but the scarf soon became the main symbol of the cause. This was clearly a nod toward the struggle of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and with them, Argentinian women's fight for human rights.²⁶

In the face of this recently fervent feminist activity and the waning lobby power of the Church under democracy, not only in Argentina but worldwide, the Church began supporting secular "pro-life" or "pro-family" groups that promoted religious values while drawing on medical, scientific, and legal discourse.²⁷ In Argentina today, there are approximately 140 NGOs of this kind.²⁸ The term "pro-life" attempts to position feminism as pro-death.²⁹ Perhaps performatively, Argentinian feminists have responded by calling those groups "anti-rights organizations."

At the same time, in Argentina's social imaginary, the image of a threatened fetus deserving of sympathy peaked in March 2018. On February 18, 2018, the National Campaign organized a *pañuelazo*³⁰ in locations across the country as a show of support for the congressional motion to consider the bill to legalize abortion. On March 5, Congress voted to form committees to debate the bill. A few days later, women took to the streets of Argentinian cities on International Women's Day, many

26. White scarves are the celebrated symbol of Mothers of Plaza de Mayo, who organized to draw attention to forced disappearances during Argentina's last dictatorship. See Cecilia Macón, "White Scarves and Green Scarves. The Affective Temporality of #QueSeaLey [#MakeItLaw] as Fourth-wave Feminism," Macón, Solana and Vacarezza (eds), 2021, p. 41–62; and Magalí Haber, "Aproximación y diferimiento: resonancias afectivas en el cuerpo político feminista," *Diferencias*, no. 10, 2020, p. 41–62.

27. See for example Juan Marco Vaggione, "La Iglesia Católica frente a la política sexual: la configuración de una ciudadanía religiosa," *Cuadernos Pagu* no. 50, 2017, s/f, available at Scielo.br, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/18094449201700500002> (accessed 6 August 2021).

28. José Manuel Morales Faúndes, "El desarrollo del activismo autodenominado 'Pro-Vida' en Argentina, 1980–2014," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología*, vol. 77, no. 3, 2015, p. 407–436.

29. Nayla Vacarezza, "Política de los afectos, tecnologías de visualización y usos del terror en los discursos de los grupos contrarios a la legalización del aborto," Ruth Zurbriggen and Claudia Anzorena (eds.), *El aborto como derecho de las mujeres. Otra historia es posible*, Buenos Aires, Herramienta, 2013, p. 209–226.

30. The idea of the *pañuelazo* (loosely translated, "scarf slam") was to come out wearing the emerald green scarves in public spaces (both physical and virtual) in support of the National Campaign.

carrying signs in support of the congressional bill. On March 25,³¹ marches against the legalization of abortion were organized in some of Argentina's largest cities. In Buenos Aires, the conservative organizations marched with an enormous papier-mâché fetus they called "Alma" [soul, spirit] (see Fig. 1), a name that evoked the transcendental nature these groups wanted to attribute to fetuses. More importantly, "Alma" revealed just how politicized the debate over legal abortion had become.



Fig. 1. *Alma*, M.A.F.I.A, 25 March 2018.

There are echoes of the sympathy towards fetuses within Argentinian feminism, which has historically employed the rhetoric of abortion as the *ultima ratio*. Until the year 2018, feminists had apparently reached a consensus on “sex ed to inform, contraception to avoid abortion, legal abortion to avoid death,” a slogan made popular at the National Women’s Conferences (held in Argentina since 1986). In this chain of meanings, abortion was positioned—both literally and chronologically—as the last-ditch alternative in a series of struggles. A document released by the Alternativa Feminista movement in 1985, for example, read as follows: “Abortion is our last resort

31. This was the day that conservative President Carlos Menem had declared the “Day of the Unborn Child” in 1998.

in the case of an undesired pregnancy. We do not want to have abortions.”³² The idea is that if the state provided the education and contraception needed, abortion would become less and less common. Yet, that facile argument is neither statistically nor theoretically sound.³³

Right from the start, the members of the National Campaign have been very much aware of the need to differentiate between these three goals. A document released in 2005 by the *ATEM-25 de Noviembre* organization categorically distinguished between abortion and contraception: “Abortion is abortion and contraception is contraception.”³⁴ In this regard, as Tununa Mercado argued in an article published in 1998:

“No one wants an abortion,”—as if that commonsensical phrase were enough to settle the heated controversy surrounding abortion rights. It could well form the basis for a debate in the free market of terms on which ones to employ [...]. If we were totally honest, though, abortion is, in fact, what we want the most.³⁵

Nayla Vacarezza and July Chaneton’s interviews with women who had illegal abortions in Argentina shed more light on this issue: in many cases, the women interviewed express a yearning for an abortion, portraying it even as a new life opportunity.³⁶ On the other hand, in this and other testimonies gathered by Sin Cautivas and Socorro Rosa (organizations that assist women who want to end their pregnancies), the

32. This pamphlet is an anonymous sheet published in 1985 quoted in Mabel Bellucci, *Historia de una desobediencia. Aborto y feminismo*, Buenos Aires, Capital intelectual, 2014, p. 274.

33. In other countries, the arguments in favor of the right to abortion have drawn on women’s autonomy (the case of Great Britain, the U.S., and France) and on gestation as a type of forced labor the state cannot impose (the case of France and Italy). Macón, 2021. See also: Paola Tabet, “Natural Fertility, Forced Reproduction,” Diana Leonard and Lisa Adkins (eds.), *Sex in Question. French Materialist Feminism*, London, Taylor & Francis, 2005, p. 111–181. In terms of the statistics, empirical studies have shown that sexual education and the distribution of contraception reduce the rate of “maternal deaths” resulting from illegal abortion but by no means eradicate them. See Ruth Puffer, “La planificación familiar y la mortalidad materna e infantil en los Estados Unidos,” *Bol of Sanit Panam*, vol. 115, no. 5, 1993, p. 389–404, available at iris.paho.org, <https://iris.paho.org/bitstream/handle/10665.2/16293/v115n5p389.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> (accessed 11 November 2021); Miriam A. Gran Álvarez, Rosa M. Torres Vidal, Libia M. López Nistal, María E. Pérez Leyva, “Fecundidad, anticoncepción, aborto y mortalidad materna en Cuba,” *Revista Cubana de Salud Pública*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2013, p. 822–835, <http://www.revsaludpublica.sld.cu/index.php/spu/article/view/60/705> (accessed 11 November 2021).

34. ATEM-25 de noviembre, “El derecho al aborto: una lucha feminista por la igualdad”, *Brujas*, no. 31, 2005, p. 65, quoted in Bellucci, 2014, p. 286.

35. Tununa Mercado, “Hablarle a la mudez [1995],” quoted in Bellucci, 2014, p. 295.

36. Esteban Grippaldi, *La intemperie y lo intempestivo. Experiencias del aborto voluntario en el relato de mujeres y varones*, Buenos Aires, Marea, 2011.

emphasis is on the suffering caused by an undesired pregnancy: phrases like “Nothing mattered to me at all,” and “I felt something awful inside” come up regularly.³⁷ These testimonies reveal that depicting abortion as a “last resort” is a purely strategic move.³⁸

This iconoclastic pro-legalization lasted until legal abortion splintered off from the chain of demands where it had figured in third place. The argument here is that the image of the “green wave” brought the issue of female joy—and its discontinuity with the desire to be a mother—to the center of the public sphere in Argentina.

JOY AND THE GREEN WAVE IN ARGENTINA

As we described in the first section, the virtual feminist museum explores the archive “not as a place to recover the past but rather as a way to engage with some of the legacies, epistemes, and traumas pressing down on the present.”³⁹ This has two implications: first, the archive is a historiographical device to be deconstructed rather than a technology for conservation; and second, these archaeologies are not just methodologies but political (and, in some cases, feminist) interventions. What configuring a virtual feminist museum implies is precisely a review of the way in which images make calls to each other through visual motifs related to joy, to *Pathosformeln*⁴⁰ that invite people to participate and intervene in public spaces. Hundreds of images that call to fight invade the social networks and become omnipresent. As such, we can say that the aim here is to emphasize the virtuality of a feminist gallery of photographs that rests on a twofold idea operative in the struggle for the legalization of abortion in Argentina since 2005. First, the struggle absolves from guilt those not informed on how to avoid an unwanted pregnancy or without access to contraception (now understood as a responsibility of the state); second—and more fundamentally—the struggle manifests the joy that is, in some cases, the origin of an unwanted pregnancy.⁴¹

37. See Ruth Zurbriggen, María Trpin and Belén Grosso, “Decidir abortar, decidir acompañar *Socorro Rosa*: un servicio de prácticas y experiencias en clave feminista” and Sin Cautivas, “Yo aborto, tú abortas, todas hablamos Representaciones sociales en entrevistas a mujeres que abortaron en Argentina,” Zurbriggen and Anzorena (eds.), 2013, p. 283–320.

38. This is undoubtedly related to the influence of different branches of Christianity in Latin America. See: Losiggio, 2021.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

40. Aby Warburg, *El Renacimiento del paganismo. Aportaciones a la historia cultural del Renacimiento europeo*, trans. Elena Sánchez & Felipe Pereda, Madrid, Alianza, 2005, p. 404 and p. 415.

41. Though this was also a source of controversy during the congressional debate, there are certain cases in which abortion is legal in Argentina (Article 86 of the Criminal Code): when a mother's health is endangered or a woman becomes pregnant after being raped.

Happily, during the days of the first congressional debate (2018), the politicians who spoke acknowledged the state's responsibility for women's health while (strategically) separating it from the question of joy. In the sessions leading up to the debate, only specialist Dora Barrancos⁴² spoke of an "equal right to joy" [*goce*]. She used this term in the sense of *jouissance* or pleasure. The pro-rights arguments by political parties, the press, and NGOs tended strategically to avoid the topic.⁴³ However, the traditional public space, which we argue is reconfigured by images, evoked only female joy (and not tragedy).

The hypothesis we propose, as mentioned above, is that it was this formula of the pathos of female joy that produced a massive call to occupy, amplify, and redefine public space. We understand occupying public spaces as the "right to have rights," to use an expression coined by Hannah Arendt.⁴⁴ Those who have been excluded from existing political organizations (political parties, labor unions, institutions, positive law) still have political capacity through the right of appearance, occupying streets and parks, and thanks to what we might consider a certain democratization of the image through social media.⁴⁵ The images circulating on social networks during 2018 and 2020 (when the law was finally voted on) were images of joy, of women released from mandates, showing the multiplicity of their bodies, laughing, enjoying, and dancing. We consider that these images extended and redefined the traditional public space, that space of the appearance of bodies of real people with the ability to become pregnant, whose access to the right to terminate their pregnancies had been historically denied. The images of joy call them to join the new scene. On the one hand, they included as participants people far from urban public spaces where the parliamentary debate was taking place. These people participated by posting photos on social networks from their homes or places of work as a form of political militancy. They appeared alone (although observing a collective code for clothing

42. Argentinian sociologist and feminist historian.

43. On the coverage of the abortion issue during the bill's debate in 2011 by the country's most important papers, see Yanel Mogaburo, Florencia Moragas, and Sara Pérez, "El derecho al aborto en cuestión. El aborto no punible en la prensa argentina: voces y alineamientos" and Florencia Rovetto, "La despenalización del aborto en la prensa argentina. Enfoque y tratamiento de los fundamentos de la Campaña Nacional," Zurbriggen and Anzorena (eds.), 2013, p. 227–260.

44. Hannah Arendt, *Los orígenes del Totalitarismo* [1951], trans. by Solana Guillermo Díez, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 2006; Seyla Benhabib, *Las reivindicaciones de la cultura. Igualdad y diversidad en la era global*, Buenos Aires, Katz, 2006.

45. Judith Butler, *Cuerpos aliados y lucha política. Hacia una teoría performativa de la asamblea*, trans. by M. J. Viejo, Buenos Aires, Paidós, 2017.

and makeup) and in groups (in *pañuelazos*), or they simply photographed all sorts of inanimate objects that were green (like cars or trees), playfully enlivening the feminist atmosphere with humour. But on the other hand, those photos—especially the ones we analyze here—were a call to action in themselves and mobilized bodies into parks, streets, and assemblies.⁴⁶

This unprecedented virtual museum expressed an innovation within feminism (at least women's feminism) related to group parties (joy) and the need to put the spotlight on feminine pleasure (*jouissance*) for a change. The term “female joy” here is not used in the psychoanalytical sense, with its ties to hysteria and phallic pleasure.⁴⁷ Rather, it draws attention to the ambiguity of the term in English, which evokes both joy and *jouissance*. There is, however, one aspect of this last notion of joy in psychoanalysis that is important to heed. While for both Baruch Spinoza and (much later) Gilles Deleuze⁴⁸ joy is an “adequate idea” that heightens the potential for action, *jouissance* is, in psychoanalysis, a type of satisfaction found in unpleasure. It cannot, then, be understood in terms of utility or agency. Joy, as we define it, is always knowledge of oneself in a collective, that is, in relation to other beings. That understanding—singular and collective at once—enables agency. *Jouissance* is anti-economic, sheer expenditure of the body's energy that the ego returns to time and again; it poses a true danger.⁴⁹ Although *jouissance* is a Lacanian term, its meaning can be traced back to Sigmund Freud, specifically to his notion of (the death) drive—the ego's tendency to return to

46. We are aware of the caveats that have been made about the digital age gap, as well as that of gender and socioeconomic class, that are of course an obstacle to the democratization of uprisings. See for example, Claudia Laudano, “Feministas en ‘la red’. Reflexiones en torno a las potencialidades y restricciones de la participación en el ciberespacio,” Florencia Rovetto and Luciano Fabbri (eds.), *Sin feminismo no hay democracia*. Género y Ciencias Sociales, Rosario, Último recurso, p. 31–34; Sarah Jackson, Foucault Welles Brooke, Moyra Bailey, *#HashtagActivism. Networks of Race and Gender Justice*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT, 2020. We also agree that the broadening of public spaces that occurred in 2018 and 2020, in the context of the parliamentary debates on the legalization of abortion in Argentina, must be understood precisely as an open and incomplete process.

47. See Gerard Pommier, *La excepción femenina. Ensayo sobre los impases del goce*, Buenos Aires, Alianza, 1986.

48. See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics: Proved in Geometrical Order* [1677], Matthew J. Kisner (ed.), transl. by Michael Silverthorne and Matthew J. Kisner, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018; Gilles Deleuze, *En medio de Spinoza* [1980–1981], 2nd ed., Buenos Aires, Cactus, coll. “Cambridge texts in the history of philosophy,” 2008.

49. Jacques Lacan, “On *jouissance*,” Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), *On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: 1972–1973: Encore. The Seminar XX of Jacques Lacan* [1975], New York, Norton, 1998, p. 1–13.

unpleasure.⁵⁰ Following Freud, Jacques Lacan distinguishes *jouissance* from pleasure. The body finds pleasure in silence, when it expresses nothing. *Jouissance*, however, is experienced as tension, discomfort, even an exploit or risk. From this perspective, *jouissance* is at least potentially one of the invisible causes of an unwanted pregnancy.⁵¹

Beyond the psychoanalytic distinctions between joy and desire, women who do not desire to be mothers can be said to yearn to end a pregnancy.⁵² Desire here is understood as that “wanting” expressed in the testimonies, a desire to “persevere in one’s existence.”⁵³ In this case, Spinoza’s definition of desire is most apt. In keeping with Judith Butler’s reading, desire for Spinoza is not only the desire to persevere in one’s (own) being but also to do so “in a world that reflects and furthers the possibility of that perseverance.”⁵⁴ No one can persevere in their being individually or on their own without considering social judgment, family expectations, and other imperatives. To persevere requires relating to others (desires), representing oneself to others, imagining those others, and acting-thinking accordingly. The desire to interrupt a pregnancy entails, in this perspective, a desire to live (well) and persevere in one’s (individual and community) being in a healthy manner.

AN ARGENTINIAN FEMINIST VIRTUAL MUSEUM

This final section presents a series of photographs, a virtual museum that we suggest expresses the real pathos of the Argentinian feminist gallery. In a sense, it is a poetic laboratory that questions the logic of the museum, a modern device par excellence in which there has been little room for women. Unlike traditional art history, digital photographs and “mechanical images” can now technically circulate “all over a variety

50. See, for example, Sigmund Freud, “The Unconscious [1915],” p. 159–215; “Repression [1915],” p. 141–158; “Beyond the Pleasure Principle [1920],” p. 1–64, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, London, Hogarth Press, 1957.

51. Jacques Lacan, “Psicoanálisis y medicina,” *Intervenciones y textos 1*, Buenos Aires, Manantial, 1985, p. 86–99.

52. For Lacan, joy dwells on in another vortex of desire. Joy is always the joy of the body with itself, while desire is the flipside of the symbolic law: it is expressed in the words that at once forbid it and make it be. The distinction between joy of the flesh (pre-linguistic) and a linguistic desire is somewhat problematic, though its nuances riddle Lacan’s work. For a more detailed examination of the topic, see: Néstor Braunstein, *El goce: un concepto lacaniano*, Madrid, Siglo XXI Editores, 2006; Diana Rabinovich, *El concepto de objeto en la teoría psicoanalítica*, Buenos Aires, Manantial, 2015.

53. Spinoza, Proposition 7 from Book III, [1677] 2018.

54. Judith Butler, *Senses of the Subject*, New York, Fordham University Press, 2015, p. 65.

of media, times and contexts in which they interact,” as Sergio Martínez Luna says.⁵⁵ The images of feminine joy have travelled all over social media and have circulated in traditional public spaces all over the country; they connect people from the parks of Buenos Aires with girls that are far from the big cities and demonstrations, and include them in an amplified public space. Within the movement, public space is also the digital space where women converge, sharing dress codes, gestures, and makeup.



Fig. 2. *Maria Elena Oddone*, anonymous photographer, 8 March 1984

Although we include professional photos here, we want to highlight the fact that similar amateur images circulated widely in 2018, and it is their power to call to action that we want to emphasize here. This power is of joy, finally freed by the images themselves. Yet, wasn't joy an important question within Argentinian feminism from the very first years of democracy? It would appear so in that classic and anonymous

55. Sergio Martínez Luna, *Cultura Visual. La pregunta por la imagen*, Buenos Aires, Sans Soleil, p. 116.

photograph dated March 8, 1984 (International Women's Day) in which a dour looking María Elena Oddone, the Argentinian feminist, is holding a sign that reads, "No to motherhood, yes to pleasure" (see Fig. 2).

With that sign, Oddone was affirming that *pleasure* (which we have called here *jouissance*) is entirely separate from the desire to be a mother, suggesting that motherhood must be desired, not imposed as punishment for *jouissance*. This is also the idea behind the slogan "There is no motherhood without desire," a popular sign and graffiti during the marches and rallies to support legal abortion (see Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. *Graffiti, Revista Crítica*, June 2018.

On August 7, 2018, the day before the first Senate debate, Amnesty International ran a paid ad in the international edition of the *New York Times*. The full-page ad showed only a hanger, a notorious tool used in dangerous, aseptic home abortions, with the word "Adiós" (see Fig. 4).

The image brings to mind a classic 2003 poster by the collective Mujeres Públicas showing a knitting needle, another common abortion instrument used by poor women (see Fig. 5), seeking to raise awareness about common practices that scandalize middle- and upper-class anti-abortion rights sectors.

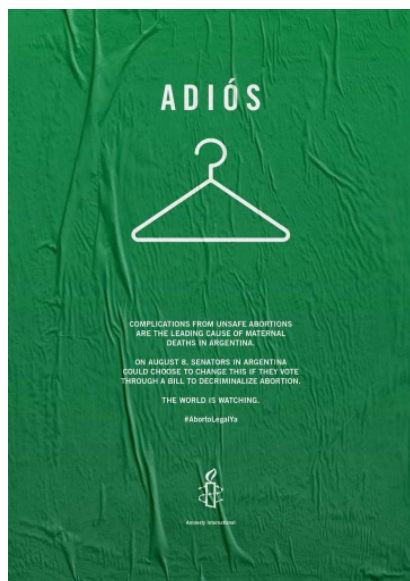
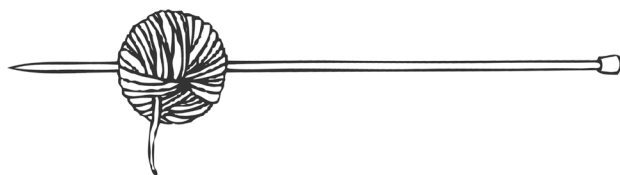


Fig. 4. *Adiós* (Amnesty International), *New York Times*, June 2018.



escarpines abortos TODO CON LA MISMA AGUJA

Fig. 5. *Todo con la misma aguja*, Mujeres públicas, 2003.

In stark contrast with these images that evoke tragedy and the state's double standard—classics in Argentine feminism—the “green wave” recreates another type of museum. From that first *pañuelazo* for legal abortion on February 18, 2018, the time seems to have come to advertise women's joy, *jouissance*, and desire. Since then, at rallies in city squares across the country, and those held during the days of the congressional debate, the parks and social media were dyed emerald green.⁵⁶ Any number of green scarfs, flags, and flares (see Figs 6 and 7) shaped the configuration of the wave—that natural phenomenon that announces the coming of a tide—in the social imaginary. As scholar Magalí Haber has pointed out, this idea of the wave came first from the drone photographs.



Fig. 6. *Pañuelazo*, Lucía Prieto, 18 February 2018.

56. The rallies that attracted the greatest number of supporters took place on the days of the debate in the House (June 13, 2018), where the bill passed, and in the Senate (August 8), where it did not.



Fig. 7. *Pañuelazo*, Lucía Prieto y Valeria Dranovsky, 13 June 2018.

Actually, there is one inaugural photograph taken by a drone on March 8, 2018 that became a symbol of the struggle. Seeing this image, we can have the impression of the feminist movement as a liquid, homogeneous phenomenon, as a calm but unstoppable wave (see Fig. 8), but also as a female orgasm.⁵⁷ Here we are echoing the words of Georges Didi-Huberman in the first volume of his most recent saga, *Désirer, désobéir. Ce qui nous soulève* (2020), in which the author places uprisings into relation with desire and liquid. He points out that uprisings are similar to “the waves of the ocean, each of which helps lead to, one day, suddenly, the dam being submerged or the cliff crumbling down.”⁵⁸ It is clear here that the transformation is connected to the waves that accumulate, calling each other up mutually, like the “desire-images”⁵⁹ of the virtual museum that puts into operation the yearning for emancipation.

57. Haber, 2020.

58. Georges Didi-Huberman, “Espíritu de revuelta: las olas se forman y se propagan”, *Desear, desobedecer. Lo que nos levanta*, 1, Madrid, Abada editores, 2020, p. 169. Our translation from the Spanish version of this text.

59. Didi-Huberman takes the term “Wunschbild” from Ernst Bloch. We translate it here as “desire-image.”



Fig. 8. *Pañuelazo*, *Prensa Obrera*, 8 March 2018.

Other images of these rallies (the most prolific of them probably from the demonstrations in 2018 and, to a lesser degree, in 2020) look more like Carnival celebrations and pride marches than like traditional (and more solemn) feminist marches in Argentina. The photos taken by the M.A.F.I.A. collective, Lucía Prieto and Guido Piotrkowski are representative of an enormous number of images, both amateur and professional, that circulated especially on social media during that time and constituted a true feminist virtual museum that records the joy generated by the feminist struggle. This photo gallery introduces a pathos of feminist joy that is truly significant for people with the ability to become pregnant in Argentina, thereby making an unprecedented and massive call to action. Women young and old are half-naked, baring bodies that do not necessarily reflect patriarchal standards of beauty. Made up and ornately outfitted, they sing and dance (see Figs 9–15). Photographer Lucía Prieto captures the democracy of this *jouissance*. Rather than a demand for the right to joy, what we see in her images is the affirmation that joy exists, even if some disregard it and others deny their joy or the joy of others—thus taking joy in



Fig. 9. *Pañuelazo*, Lucía Prieto, 18 February 2018.



Fig. 10. *Cantando*, Lucía Prieto, 13 June 2018



Fig. 11. *Dos manifestantes*, Lucía Prieto, 13 June 2018



Fig. 12. *Jóvenes*, Guido Piotrkowski, 8 August 2018



Fig. 13. *Maquillajes*, Guido Piotrkowski, 8 August 2018.



Fig. 14. *Nina Brugo, founder of the campaign*, Guido Piotrkowski, 13 June 2018



Fig. 15. *Mujeres festejando*, Lucía Prieto, 13 June 2018.

imposing discipline. Prieto's photographs portray joy as what is actually exercised and experienced in the non-normative (and doesn't the beauty of her images reside in rendering this visible?).

The photographs by Guido Piotrkowski and the M.A.F.I.A. collective, unlike that of Oddone in 1984, no longer show the single-minded, solitary, slighted face of activism, but its joy (see Figs 16–18), an affect that connects the individual woman's body with that of millions of others, challenging "political subjectivity" and contributing to the shift from "me" to "us."

FINAL THOUGHTS

Pollock's virtual museum sets out to show—as a form of speech—not only what can or could be said but also what never came to fruition. Not because it was forgotten or ignored, but because of indifference and injustice. The device imagined here not only reveals how women are systematically denied female joy but also understands that joy from within phallogentric discourse. At stake is working with the sum of what can and cannot be seen pursuant to specific codification. The criterion for selecting



Fig. 16. *Mujeres cantando y riendo*, Guido Piotrkowski, 8 August 2018.



Fig. 17. *Festejo*, M.A.F.I.A, 13 June 2018.



Fig. 18. *Hamaca*, M.A.F.I.A., 13 June 2018.

the images discussed here is an archontic principle that contests what can be seen. Here the remnants of patriarchal and heteronormative history are recovered in order to desecrate that history,⁶⁰ enabling a reading of women's joy as a lived experience, an integral part of the struggles for recognition.

This virtual museum is, ultimately, simply an archive of images depicting an insurrection against the regulation of images, a struggle against the imposition of a certain regime of visibility on the reality of joy. The bodies that are wept over, the subjectivities in chains, serve as the support for the exhibition of the collective demand, but so does the resilience of those who bask in their joy, so do the faces and fists that rise up in a wave for the first time. The virtual museum thus rebels against the canon of images and the regimes that dictate how bodies can be seen; against regimes dictating pregnancies and those who do not wish to be mothers; against regimes dictating who carries drums or wears scarfs, goes naked or accessorized, slathers on

60. The idea of profanation here is borrowed from Giorgio Agamben. Profanation is connected to "return to free use" (in contrast to the act of consecration), shedding light on new possibilities. Giorgio Agamben, "In Praise of Profanation," *Profanations*, trans. by Jeff Fort, New York, Zone Books, 2007.

glitter or makeup. Gathering the joy in a file that is incomplete by definition is an act of disobedience, but, by simply imagining such an archive, an alternative take on the contemporary history of feminist revolt becomes possible.

The Virtual Museum and Female Joy in Argentina: An Exploration of the Revolt

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ABSTRACT

In reviewing the theory of the museum, art historian Griselda Pollock proposes a “virtual feminist museum,” a gallery that does not exist but proves formidable indeed. According to Pollock, the institutions where art circulates are governed by patriarchal logics of exhibition and conservation. This article considers the potential contents of a virtual Latin American feminist museum. The widespread Argentinian feminist movement #NiUnaMenos (2015) and the National Campaign for the Right to Safe, Free, and Legal Abortion (since 2005) yielded a vast corpus of images. In an unprecedented way in Argentina, these images extended traditional public spaces (parks, streets, and assembly) by incorporating digital media (especially social networks). In a circular fashion, the images themselves—especially photos—demonstrated enormous power to call on people to rise up and take to the streets. The hypothesis we present here is that the power belonging to these images is associated with a new pathos of female enjoyment (glitter and makeup, nudity and joy) that constitutes a virtual Latin American feminist museum.

RÉSUMÉ

En passant en revue la théorie du musée, l'historienne de l'art Griselda Pollock propose un « musée féministe virtuel », une galerie qui n'existe pas mais qui s'avère redoutable. Selon Pollock, les institutions où circule l'art sont régies par des logiques patriarcales d'exposition et de conservation. Cet article examine le contenu potentiel d'un musée féministe latino-américain virtuel. Le vaste mouvement féministe argentin #NiUnaMenos (2015) et la Campagne nationale pour le droit à l'avortement sûr, gratuit et légal (depuis 2005) ont produit un vaste corpus d'images. De manière inédite en Argentine, ces images ont étendu les espaces publics traditionnels (places, rues et assemblées), incorporant les médias numériques (en particulier les réseaux sociaux). De manière circulaire, les images elles-mêmes, en particulier les photos, ont démontré un pouvoir énorme pour appeler les gens à se lever et à descendre dans la rue. L'hypothèse que nous présentons ici est que le pouvoir appartenant à ces images est associé à un nouveau pathos du plaisir féminin (paillettes et maquillage, nudité et joie) qui constitue un musée féministe latino-américain virtuel.

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