

“Justice is what love looks like in public”

Cornel West

**University of Alberta**

The politics of the face:  
Manifestations of Che Guevara's image and its collage of renderings and agency

By

Maria-Carolina Cambre

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Para el olvidado  
Y  
La recuperada

## Abstract

The politics of the face:  
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Che Guevara's image, is seen as a global icon crossing all kinds of social and cultural boundaries, as exemplified in street protests and evidenced by multiple visual messages such as posters, logos, t-shirts and slogans. We are invited, demanded, expected to recount and memorialize. But what exactly are we being asked to remember? This study aims to create an analytical space for understanding this phenomenon as far as it can be observed through its analysis and to provide a starting point for a better perspective of the significance of visual events in public as well as their cultural resonance.

I was initially interested in this image of Guevara and how it worked because I perceived a performative capability to gather people and sanction action that was inherently productive and powerful at a grassroots level. I was curious about vernacular (non institutional) visual communication. Although I acknowledge mass-produced versions of the matrix (source) image, my primary interest is in those renderings acquiring some singularity either through their production or location or in how they have been appropriated and adapted.

This project is a series of encounters with the image and a look at the levels at which it operates and how it moves fluidly between them. I do not wish to locate this

image or designate its “address.” Instead, I prefer to examine how it is a locating how it is a verb as well as a noun. This project contributes to understandings of how images are working in the world and consequently to how people can produce and direct the visual space rather than be relegated to receiving and, more or less passively, consuming images. I hasten to add that though the consumption of images is never passive, the built-in impetus of advertising images encourages passive consumption. The implications of seeing the vernacular image as something that does not fit in established mass media methods of study gestures towards its being a somewhat different phenomenon and it’s worth a closer look at the action or performance of the image itself, what it allows people to do and how this happens.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank-you for participating in a journey, for influencing its direction and the colors of my experiences, for contributing a music to which I have tried to dance, for sharing and giving the gift of your example, your thoughts, your passions and your creativity.

But how do I thank-you when I don't know your name: when your acts (and your life or death) have shown the pure generosity of expecting no return? Can I reduce you to a kind of *Who's Who* list of inspiration moments and people? Should I conform to this “emblematic genre of the *Homo academicus*” (Waquet 2005, 371)<sup>i</sup> and compress the vast range of kinds of encouragement into a modest formula constrained by authorial strategies?

Yes, “research without indebtedness is suspect” (Waquet 2005, 385). But the knowledge that results from your presence on this journey (our informal community) cannot be measured, and thus cannot be bought, sold or exchanged: it is a gift.

Off screen, then, is where my thanks, a gesture, will have to take place. In keeping with the spirit of reciprocity as well as the performative and participative tone of this dissertation, I include the coupon below (which I dearly hope you will take full advantage of) for you to use in a future time and place. For you that can, please use this coupon in the full confidence that I will honor it, regardless of whether we have ever met before. For those that have left this world, I will do my best to honor you.

### **THE JULES MOUNTEER CERTIFICATE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**I, MARIA-CAROLINA CAMBRE (ALSO KNOWN AS CC), HEREWITH ENTITLE THE BEARER OF THIS COUPON TO ONE HOT/COLD BEVERAGE OF CHOICE ACCOMPANIED BY A SWEET/SAVORY SNACK AT THE TIME AND PLACE WE ARRANGE WHEN THIS COUPON IS REDEEMED.**

**I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU!**

---

<sup>i</sup> Waquet, F. (2005) “Acknowledgments: Instructions for use” in *Modern intellectual history*, 2,3. Pp 361-385.



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*The politics of the face*  
*Manifestations of Che Guevara's image and its collage of renderings and agency.*

To challenge the regimes of representation  
That govern a society is to conceive of how a  
Politics can transform reality. As this creative  
Struggle moves onward, it is bound to  
Recompose subjectivity and praxis. More  
Often than not, it requires that one leave the  
Realms of the known, and take oneself there  
Where one does not expect, is not expected to be.

Trinh T. Minh-Ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red*

This dissertation addresses what happens socially, culturally, and politically when the image of Che Guevara is put to physical use, allowed to work (on us). A rich description of the multiple roles that Guevara's image plays, the broadly varied nature of his portrayals, from appropriated to inaesthetic, from ambivalent to antagonistic, and from material to virtual help reveal the workings of public non-institutional visual communication through this image. My research on/with/under the image/s of Che



Guevara derived from Alberto Korda's famous 1960 photograph came to me in pieces. Since I know myself to be an oft-fragmented multiple also, the collage form became not only a method and methodology but also a theoretical lens.

Exploration and discovery were my primary investigatory modes during the project's progression, and thus collage as a mode of visual and textual representation coinciding with those modes is more fitting than one modeled on control and prediction. "In this process ends shift; the work yields clues that one pursues. In a sense, one surrenders to what the work in process suggests" (Eisner, 2003, p. 378). A collage is made up of pieces and fragments in dialogue across space; sometimes they overlap, sometimes they echo, and sometimes they contradict one another. There is a productive tension in those spaces between pieces where the reader becomes the link between pieces bridging them differently at different times. I use the term "pieces" rather than "chapters" to signal that the series of writings I present as scrolls have no set hierarchy or order, and may be read as free-standing individual segments, though there is a mutual dynamic among them as they co-form a collage. As such, the form of this dissertation is dialectical where the thesis and antithesis are alternately presented, and the reader must negotiate and collaborate in creating his or her unique synthesis. It is a necessarily participative process. In their different ways the pieces in this dissertation all address the central questions: Why are people everywhere interpellated by this image? Does its commoditization matter? What kinds of capacities does it engender for them and how do they see themselves participating in them? Finally, what do this image's stories indicate in terms of how we interact with images?

### Personal shift in progress



My desire to work in the spirit embodied by Trinh T. Minh-Ha's words is the very heart pulsing within this dissertation. Her expression of the transformational nature of human understanding, the risks, and rewards, has become my touchstone throughout the research and writing process, and has repeatedly guided me back from confusing mazes of "the realms of the known" Minh-Ha refers to above, in which I have so often been lost. The experience of undertaking a doctoral program and writing a thesis is an unending creative struggle where I occasionally gain traction enough to compose words and images reflecting the moment of praxis in the inquiry. One of the most difficult ongoing challenges is the repeated reassessment, and regaining of awareness, of the many ways my privileged-world masculine Western training informs my work. As a result, my process involves finding ways to interrupt myself, my privileged self as a holder of Canadian citizenship for example (and all the benefits associated with that alone), in order to open toward both, silenced selves and other ways of knowing. To do this I remember, and recompose my immigrant self, my non-English speaking self, my Argentine and my feminine self.

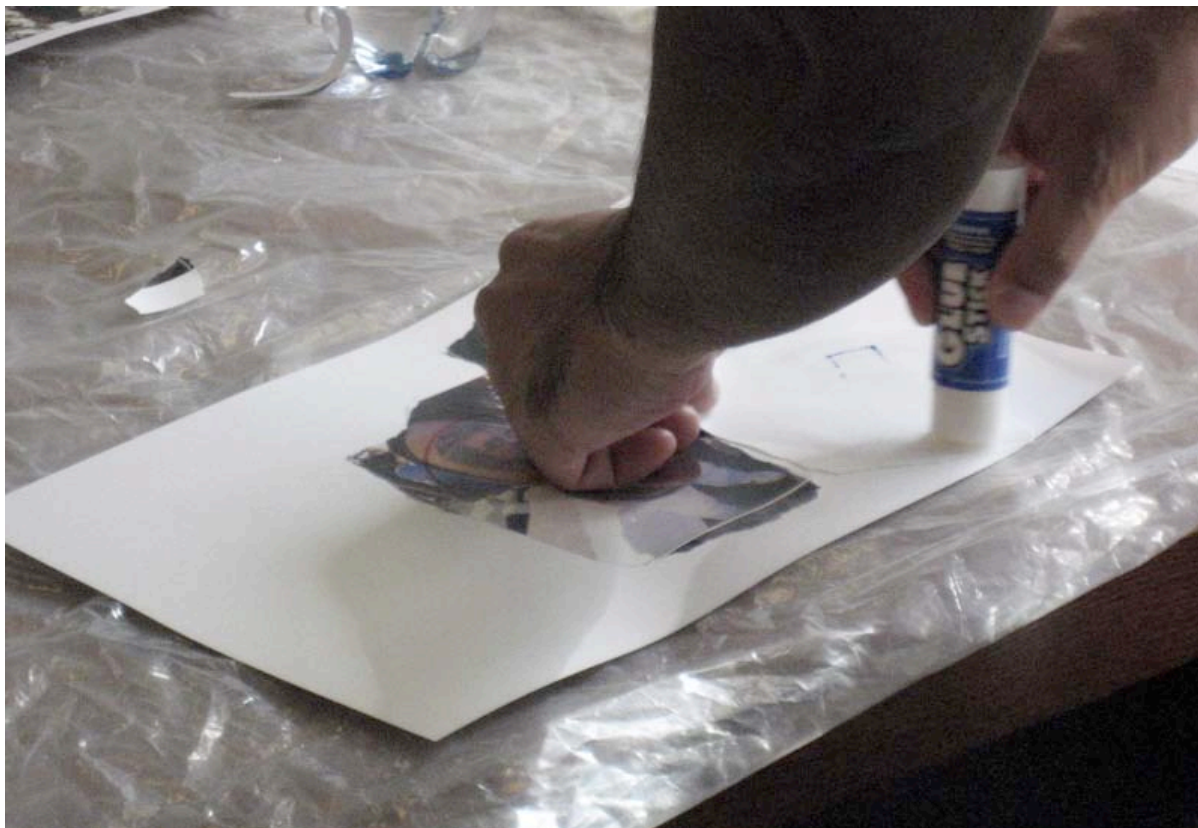
I also consciously direct myself to open to the narratives and discourses outside the academy and its territorialized disciplines. Listening to elders is vital for this process because the expert knowledge elders are responsible for is shared through modeling, storytelling, and innovation, and emphasizes praxis without ignoring context. Elders such as John Crier, and Dr. Weber-Pillwax impart a holistic yet application-focused knowledge that supports my efforts to "recompose subjectivity and knowledge" (as Minh-Ha writes in the epigraph). As a result this inquiry is informed not only through university-style research but also through an inward journey enabled by my participation



in ceremonies such as sweats and circles that, though they are not explicitly figured here, are part of the foundation.

To elaborate on how I am situating myself, equally vital is spirit work within myself that I embrace as a way to learn to *see* Minh-Ha's "regimes of representation" that sometimes govern even my thoughts. "Spirit work" is the term I use to express my efforts to come to grips with the self that is always simultaneously colonizer, colonized and seeking liberation. If, when reading, you detect a split author in this thesis, then you have correctly identified the voice/s. I am fundamentally and irretrievably divided. I inhabit the gap because I am absolutely both/and (Canadian/Argentine; colonizer/colonized; inside/outside the Academy etc.) at the same time as being neither/nor. My positionality has become schizophrenic in the sense of "a splitting of the mind" in orientation. The trope of trickster is useful to describe my positioning as similar to that of one who looks creatively "backward and forward with the same glances" (King, 2008 p. 22). As Graeme Sullivan (2008) expresses it: "trickster is an insider and outsider, dependent and independent, instinctual and adaptable, always a predator and always preyed upon, always on the road and always at home." (Weblog) While characterized by moments of traction, for the most part my movement is a wandering: not an aimless wandering, but a nomadic seeking that finds a home in homelessness itself. In the words attributed to Italo Calvino, "the ideal place for me is the one in which it is most natural to live as a foreigner."

Consequently, my goal has been to speak *to* and *with* the image of Che Guevara rather than secure a position of mastery *over* the object of study by speaking *about* it and ignoring "systems of binary opposition (subject/object; I/It; We/They)" (Minh-Ha, 1991, p. 12). Mastery implies domination, a kind of completion, closure, fixity, and a reduction



in the need to attend to changes or gaps that may have been missed. For this image of Guevara, the *Guerrillero Heroico*, whose work is never finished and is repeatedly in a process of metamorphosis, there is no place for the either/or of a binary based on control/chaos. Instead there is a process of mutual becoming that this dissertation develops into a snapshot of. Thus the work of displacement (praxis vis-à-vis dialectical space) is necessary to destabilize the “other” from the sphere of acquisition and my self from the appropriating and demarcating sphere of mastery. Part of this involves closely attending to language as something that can be easily “reduced to the status of instrument and/or fine style” and thus “either ignores the “beauty” of language or fetishizes it (as an end point)...” (Minh-Ha, 1991, p. 12).

### Overview of the composition

Given that we live in a society saturated with visual images, we have all become accustomed to using and producing images. While we navigate the image-scape successfully, we may not necessarily understand how images work on/with us and what becomes of reality when it is understood as a function of the image’s perspective. Remarkably, insights into the pedagogical function, the power and effect of visual images have not kept pace with this paradigm shift as the continued identification of knowledge with language shows. Images represent an *other* mode of thinking. They bring new possibilities for imagining social and political change. As a result, I have come to understand these images as not just visual documentation but also as cultural labour. Correspondingly, this dissertation has a parallel structure of text and image where readers are invited to participate in a visual interaction with images of Che Guevara on every





page. Just as this piece you are reading now embodies the principle of parallel structure by having each page equally divided between image and text, the rest of the dissertation will exemplify the parallel by having entire pages of text and image facing each other throughout.

**The pieces (parts) of the dissertation/textual collage are as follows:**

A journey through the stories about the original photograph, its reproduction and its dissemination juxtaposed with collages that also tell stories about the image. Here, I consider salient literature regarding the photograph's "biography" to examine the visual climate, accounts and stories of how people respond to the image, and the current debates surrounding the politicization of this image. These discourses around the photo criss-cross it repeatedly providing a rich contextual layer. Primarily I focus on the key debate surround the commoditization of the image and its supposed emptying of power or meaning that has been the point of division around which those who admire Guevara the historical figure confront those who decry him as an assassin. I find the virulence of the debate to be a commanding indicator of the saliency of this image today.

In another piece, I introduce a semiotic conceptual orientation with a substantial review of the literature that also stretches beyond and is probed by accompanying images. I apply theoretical concepts at the core of several debates in image theory, and the politics of aesthetics, while adding philosophical and theoretical analysis and my own questions. In this piece, I explore the limits of C. S. Peirce's doctrine of signs and follow up on Donald Preziosi's (2003) elaboration of Roman Jakobson's addition of a fourth sign type, namely artifice. The inclusion of artifice is underwritten by an understanding of A. J.



Greimas' (1987) semiotic square as a way to introduce complexity into binary or dual forms. I posit the square is as a dynamic, fractal-like construction. One that “structurates”, to employ Julia Kristeva's (1991) useful neologism, but is fluid in the sense that it is continually multiplying and contingent, like a fractal. Building on this foundation, I articulate possible connections between “artifice” and the notion of the “virtual” as described by a philosophers and academicians from C.S. Peirce to Rob Shields (2003), as a contribution to this theorizing and explore its relevance to the Che image phenomenon. Overall, it is the desire to find ways to speak about the *Guerrillero Heroico* activity and resonance that drives the theoretical contributions in this piece.

In another piece attending to lived understanding, I explore the personal experiences of people who have encountered or been impacted by the image in some way through a phenomenological approach where participants share anecdotes about their experiences with this image. In this piece, phenomenologists such as Gabriel Marcel, Emmanuel Levinas and Roland Barthes provide theoretical lenses for reflection and analysis. Because participants frequently connect hope to their experiences of the image, I expand on this concept as an animating motif, and as a contribution to understandings of the acting/being of the *Guerrillero Heroico*. This piece also has a separate life as a chapter in an edited volume called: *Ecologies of affect: Placing nostalgia, desire and hope* (2011).

The phenomenological piece is complemented by another piece resulting from a four-month case study I undertook in Venezuela. Here, I share the results of an ethnographic case study exploring the use of Che Guevara's image in a well-known Caracas barrio called *23 de enero*. A group of youths in urban Caracas, Venezuela have taken up this image as their banner and decorated their entire neighbourhood with it.



Through their words, and the images in their neighbourhood, they teach me about how they come to an understanding of praxis and action with reference to the Che Guevara's face in their neighbourhood. I draw on Hannah Arendt's (1959) theory of action as a parallel to what these youth call "actioning." Their profound concept of "actioning" brings to the fore the performative aspects of the image in a way that scholarly work in the area of the visual has yet to reach. "Actioning" through their use of imagery becomes the codes by which these youth resist, rage, cry and hope in the possibility of throwing off the imperial yoke and all its colonial weight. This piece has also been published in the *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies*' special issue entitled: "Youth, cultural politics and new social spaces in an era of globalization" (September 2009).

Finally, I include a piece underpinned by Indigenous Research Methodologies and principles and manifests itself with an arts-led approach of visual collage. The first layer of this visual piece is a reflection on my own journey in coming to know Che Guevara through his image and becoming someone who can express that knowledge by learning through materially interacting with hundreds of examples of variations on that one picture. Drawing heavily on T. P. Brockelman's (2001) work, I move towards a theory of collage as brought forward through my experiences with the image. A collaborative composition that I photographed at each stage of the creative process also appears as part of the overall parallel structure of the dissertation as visual research. Hence, these photographs have a double function, they provide a visual discourse juxtaposed with the textual one and they embody the understandings of a number of people manifested through collage. The multivocal and heterotopic result suits for such an image and its divergent legacies. In addition it is a result that works through productive ambiguities to

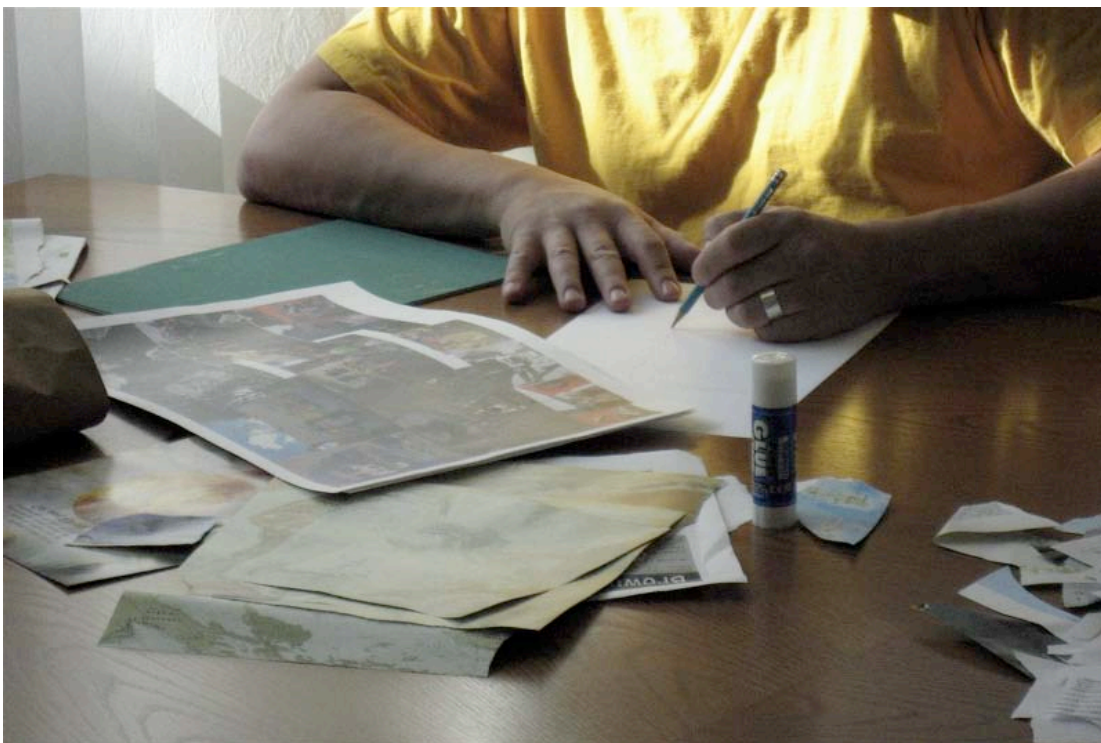


enable the reader participate in creating meanings in those openings between text and image.

### **Collage as discursive strategy**

Presenting this dissertation as a visual and textual collage mirroring the global collage of Che images has specific and concrete implications for my decisions regarding its overall form and format, as well as for the various foci and ways I move to, from, and between these pieces. I elaborate on possible criteria for the epistemology and ontology of collage in the visually oriented piece functioning as a foundation for the methods I have used. Instead of repeating that explanation here, it is sufficient to broadly outline what I understand the collage form to embody, and why it is the most appropriate discursive strategy for this dissertation.

I am acutely aware that the very idea of writing implies a sequence, and a fairly rational and linear one at that, as a result, writing alone cannot represent the work of this thesis. Additionally, I am motivated by a desire to challenge conventions in academic writing that hide the artifice and artistry of the means of representation. Instead, I prefer to contribute toward opening a space of representation that allows alternative forms. The image is the threshold of that space, creating it, a way out, and offering new knowings and a way to speak my truths. It is altogether too easy and comfortable to forget that what appears as a seamless flow of information following a sequential pattern, be it chronological, thematic, or otherwise, is manipulated and constructed for the reader “to accept a particular version of reality as ‘real’” (cited in Ellsworth 1997 p. 86). To adapt

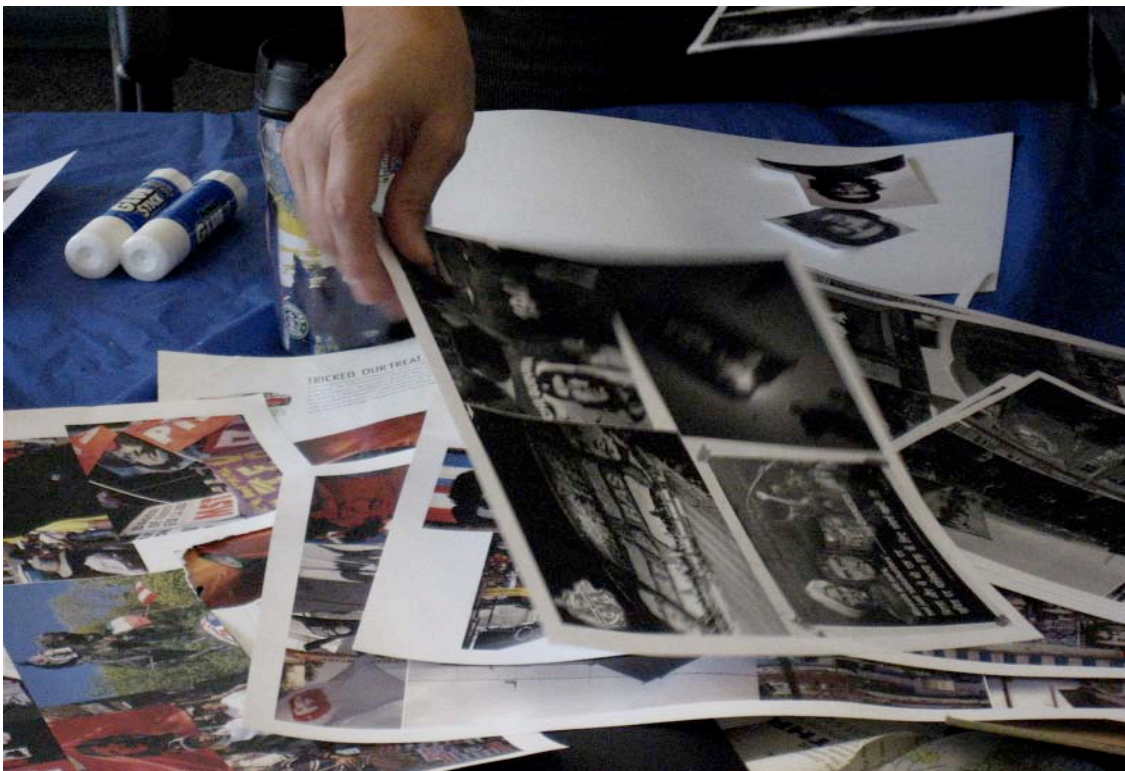




speaks *to* his or her understanding of the story and simultaneously merges *with* it. No one version can constitute *the* story: they call for each other and are in continual dialogue. Similarly the millions of Che images produced everywhere are layered over time to provide the “perfect” image, one that can only be seen in all the layers that do not show it. The glue that binds these versions, be they of narrative or image, is the imagination of the reader/viewer. The most appropriate form to represent a study on such a phenomenon I contend is collage. Collage is etymologically rooted in the French to glue, or glued together (*colle*) and evoking the idea of bringing together (co-lect) a variety of things. However, collage needs someone to receive (witness) the “variety of retellings’ and become the place where they are brought together, we can say that the collage pre-exists the viewer in the same way as a story pre-exists the teller.

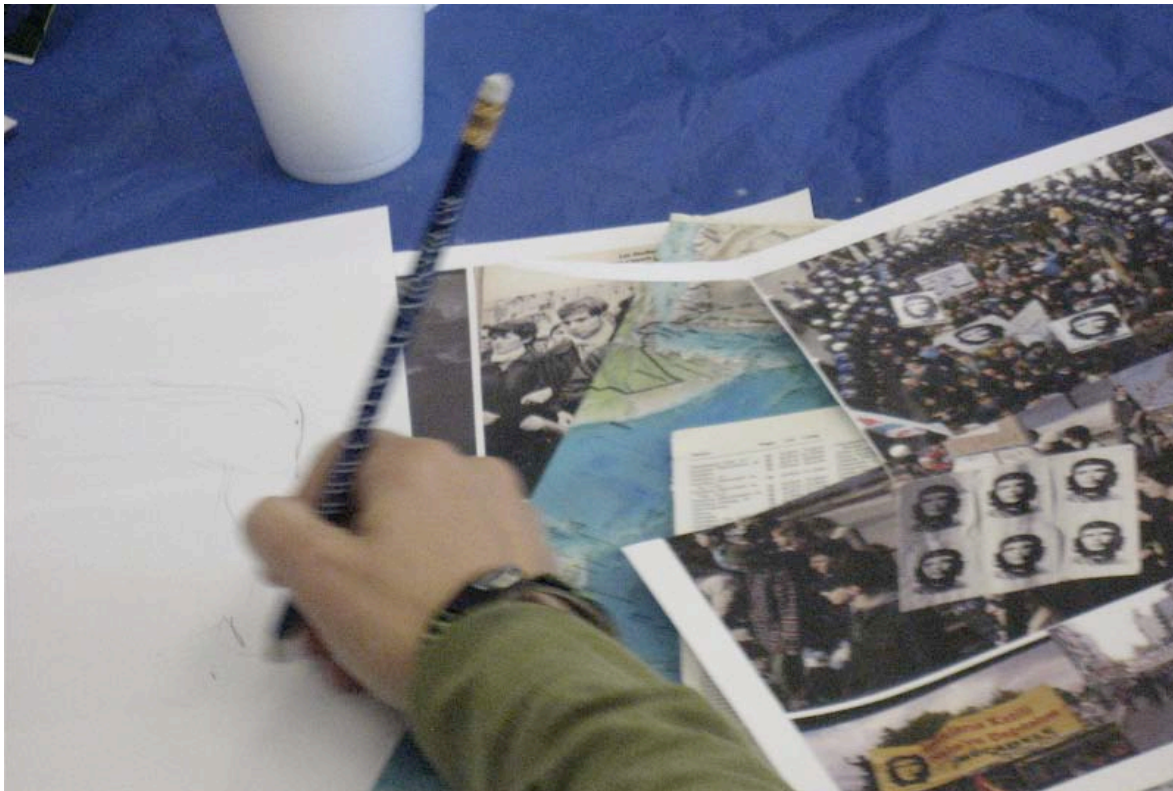
### **Pedagogy of collage**

Juxtaposition and fragmentation are at once destructive and productive: this is the paradox of collage (and, I might add, the trickster nature). Not only can the pieces be understood in any order but they also overlap. A collage approach reveals a process of extraction and reinsertion, or in Deleuzian terms deterritorialization and reterritorialization: so what priorities does that embody? It underlined the processual and unfinished nature of my becoming, as a researcher, helping me find moments of traction in my research and calling me out to new ways of being in the world. It revealed sensitivity to the particular rather than the substitutive. The emphasis on making judgments and experiencing relationships is integral to collage which then allows things to find a place, and rigorously, but without necessarily following set rules: an act/ing of



critique. In the concept of collage I find the challenging of regimes of representation that Minh-Ha writes of and interrogation of rules in general as part of a greater challenge to formulaic and standardizing approaches to research both on the level of approaches and methods, as well as the level of demonstration of results and “findings.” In other words, conventional boundaries are questioned and often blurred. With respect to the reader/viewer, the collage form encourages us to act otherwise in the face of rules: it invites us to emancipate ourselves because for collage the only cage is the one you bring with you.

In keeping with the ontology of collage, conditions of undecidability and impossibility are in play as part of this dissertation’s tactics, thus the pedagogical challenge is not one of transgression, but rather of transformation like finding harmony in a junkyard. In the same sense that a piece of newsprint can be transformed from daily press to a glass beside a bottle of Suze in Picasso’s collage, murmuring about its past life while embracing the new one. And, depending on how you view it, it can again be that piece of newsprint, the “imperfect fit” as educator Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997) terms it, providing a dialogical space, or a slippage and mutability constituting an “enunciative space.” (Foucault, M. 1972, p. 115) This enunciative space is neither the space of the newsprints identity as documentary media nor the new form of the glass it resembles in the collage: rather it is the between one and the other, being both yet neither; a flickering moving space. It is a pedagogical space of play between one’s “socially and historically constructed assumptions, one’s rationality, and the forces of uncertainty, indeterminacy, and undeciability” (cited in Garoian, & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 130). Elsewhere:



Gadamer (1986) argues that this to and fro displays a ‘phenomenon of excess,’ the presence of absences that constitutes the object of play and art (p. 12). For example, this excess of undecidability is immanent interstitially in collage narrative by way of shuttling in-between its disparate [pieces] (Garoian, & Gaudelius, 2008, p. 130).

### Shall we dance?

In sum, this interdisciplinary dissertation mixes and crosses the approaches within phenomenology, semiotics, and ethnography with a collage<sup>1</sup> approach centered in Indigenous Research Methodologies. With reference to university guidelines, I follow the paper format to some extent because some of the pieces in the textual collage are works prepared for publication in the area of Cultural Studies. Yet, it can also be considered an artifact thus, I present the dissertation as hybrid because form and content are only artificially extricable, and propositional form is not always able to articulate what is knowable.

As noted, rather than striving for finite understandings, or to achieve “mastery,” I aim to create a space for play, a structural possibility for understanding something about the image of Che Guevara’s face, an image that so many feel they understand and resonate with powerfully, and yet so few are able to account for. And thus we move from guerrilla

<sup>1</sup> Both the textual and visual collages are allegorical (from Greek *αλλος*, *allos*, “other”, and *αγορευειν*, *agoreuein*, “to speak in public”) in the sense that meaning is multilevel and not always evoked through text.

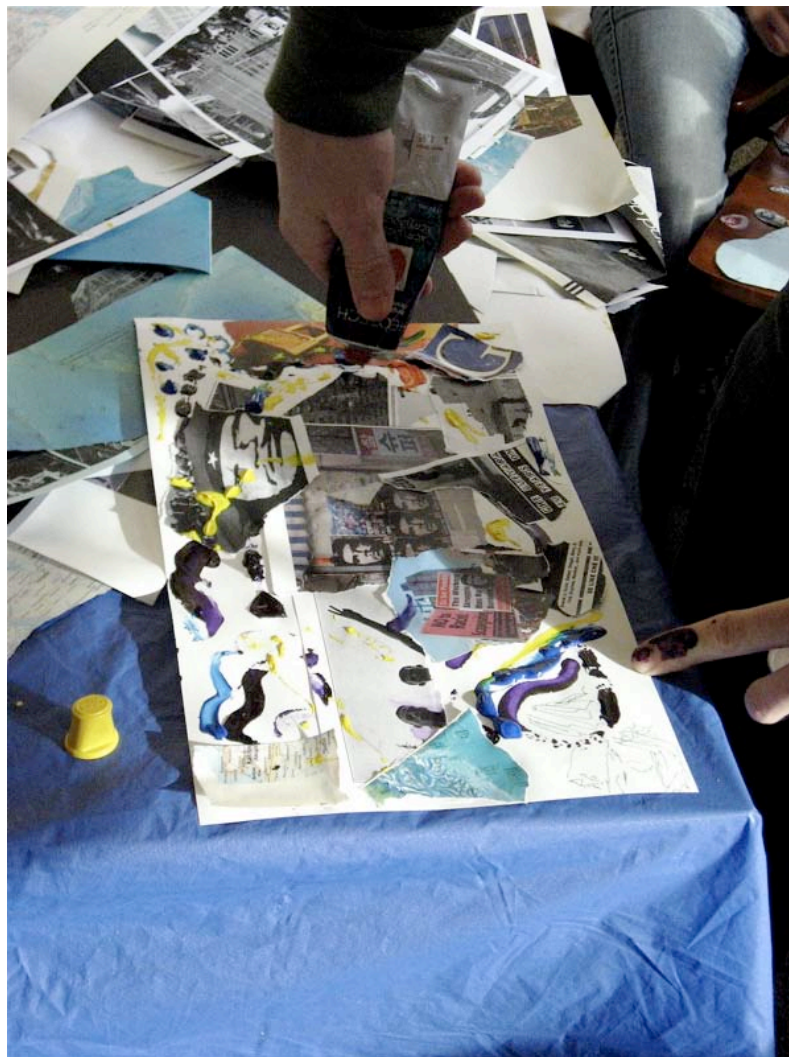




warfare, to guerrilla artfare, while recognizing that the same processes and forms I use to open spaces can be used equally by others wishing to close them (part of the disturbing ambivalence of popular culture formats). Still my focus is on art as something that can create and critique “or ironicize manifestations or expressions of hegemonic political or religious power” (Preziosi, 2009, p.12). As an end to the opening, I follow Eliot Eisner (2003) when he posits that:

The limits of our cognition are not defined by the limits of our language. We have a long philosophic tradition in the West that promotes the view that knowing anything requires some formulation of what we know in words; we need to have warrants for our assertions. But is it really the case that what we cannot assert we cannot know? (p. 379-380)

Clearly my answer to Eisner’s query would be no.



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Stealing or *steeling* the image?  
The failed branding of the *Guerrillero Heroico* image of Che Guevara

*So join the struggle while you may  
The revolution is just a t-shirt away*

*Waiting For The Great Leap Forwards*  
Billy Bragg

*El derecho de autor realmente no tiene razón de ser.  
Yo no tengo derechos. Al contrario, tengo deberes<sup>1</sup>*

Jean-Luc Godard



## BACKGROUND

Since the first publication of the *Guerrillero Heroico*, the famous Che Guevara photograph taken in March 1960 by Alberto Diaz Gutierrez (familiarily known as Korda), the picture has inspired artists around the world to modify and render it in a myriad of media and styles<sup>2</sup>. However when Smirnoff's UK advertising agency wanted to use the image to sell vodka in 1999, Korda, a gifted and unassuming photographer, sued them. "The ads depicted Che's face adorned with a pattern of hammers and chilli-pepper sickles, not to foster communist consciousness in a creative redeployment of commodity fetishism,

but simply to promote a new spice line of Smirnoff vodka." (Hernandez-Reguant, A. 2008 p. 257) The company settled out of court and gave Korda a significant sum that he promptly

<sup>1</sup> Translated as, "copyright really has no reason to exist. I don't have rights. On the contrary, I have obligations."

<sup>2</sup> Street graffiti of Che Guevara wearing a Che t-shirt in Bergen, Norway from Wikipedia (public domain) available at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che\\_Guevara\\_in\\_popular\\_culture](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Che_Guevara_in_popular_culture). Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are my own.



Enjoy Che Guevara®

donated to a hospital in Cuba. It is worth remembering that regardless of the fame, and accompanying profit potential from this photograph, Korda refused to endorse its commercialization and certainly did not gain financially. Korda said that the use of Che's image for selling vodka was a "slur on his [Guevara's] name." He pointed out that Che "never drank himself, was not a drunk, and [that] drink should not be associated with his immortal memory." (Sridhar, 2002, online)

After the international lawsuit Korda's rights as the author were recognized publicly and spokespeople for many media conglomerates in Europe and the United States saw it as an unprecedented, unacknowledged move on the part of the Cuban government towards capitalism. The debate that had been bubbling under the surface for decades finally spilled onto mainstream headlines:

The *Times* of London wryly recast this development as if it were the Argentine revolutionary's own long and hard fought victory... 'After 40 Years, Che Beats Forces of Capitalism' (Bird 2000). CNN.com likewise dramatized the event, but with a slightly less ironic, and more-to-the-point, headline: 'Social Justice, Sí. Vodka Advertisements, No.' (Hernandez-Reguant, A. 2008, p. 256)

While the *Times* of London and CNN saw the use of copyright in this case as distinctly non-commercial, *Wall Street Journal* correspondent Michael Casey (2009) on the other hand, equates all copyright use to commercialism; "Che had not beaten capitalism; he had joined it" (p. 313) and that the photograph was emptied of all significance, "copyright number VA-1-276-975" was no more than "a nine-character alphanumeric code" (p. 337). In a more bizarre twist Larson and Lizardo (2007) cite Vargas Llosa in 2005 as saying that the image of Guevara is the "quintessential brand of *capitalism*" (p. 426 my emphasis). Needless to say, no evidence is available on how many people purchase Guevara products merely in order to champion capitalism.

Pundits' beliefs aside, a historical perspective reveals that portraits of Guevara have tended to surface at key political moments. The *New York Times* of May 02, 1961 runs the headline "Castro Rules Out Elections in Cuba," (p. A2) on the first page with a large feature image. Apparently for May Day celebrations in 1961, before Guevara's death, "portraits of Karl Marx, Raul Castro, the Minister of Armed Forces, and Maj. Ernesto Guevara...[were] being carried by athletes in parade in Havana". (*New York Times*, 1961, also noted in Larson and Lizardo 2007) This was not the *Guerrillero Heroico* but an official portrait, of the sort often trotted out for political marches and marking Guevara's face as part of the official visual equipment of the new government, but was not made to stand out in any special way.

With respect to the *Guerrillero Heroico*, the Cuban context is unique. After the news of Guevara's death, on Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1967<sup>3</sup>, the *Granma* newspaper, official organ of

<sup>3</sup> Simultaneously in October 1968, Antonio Pérez "ÑIKO" designed a poster for the Comisión de Orientación Revolucionaria (COR), it was not printed that year because its composition contained surrealist and allusive elements that were rejected in a historical juncture where the testimonial photograph was preferred as the way to reveal the energetic and vigorous image of Che. In 1968, the design was reformulated and the offset printed poster had a communicative effect and symbolic meaning that later became representative of Cuban graphic art (Campos, personal communication). Ese cartel se diseñó en octubre de 1967, cuando ya se confirmó su muerte y no se



PALESTINA  
**LIBRE**

the Communist Party in Cuba printed a special edition dedicated to Che Guevara. The cover was a full-page image of the Korda photograph. It was so well received that it was printed again the very next day (Campos, R.M. personal communication). On the night of the 18<sup>th</sup>, in the Plaza de la Revolución that image was hung as the background for the public stage from which Fidel Castro would say the eulogy<sup>4</sup>, and recount Guevara's contribution to Cuba's revolution leading up to his assassination. According to Cuban historian Reinaldo Morales Campos, the impact of Castro's eulogy extolling Guevara's profound intelligence, courage, and human sensibility as model revolutionary figure fused with the photograph by Korda and "led to the image being taken up as an effigy of the Guerrillero Heroico to highlight his image worldwide" (Personal communication 2010).

After Feltrinelli's publication of Guevara's *Bolivian Diaries* in early 1968 with the *Guerrillero Heroico* on the cover and about a million posters to promote the book, there was a global explosion of reproductions, often in the form of protest posters. According to Larson and Lizardo (2007), "the *New York Times* repeatedly connected Che to Marxist social movements in Europe and the Americas" (p. 428) around this time. In the 1960s, a bedroom "without a poster of Che Guevara was hardly furnished at all" (cited in Larson & Lizardo 2007 p. 428). Jorge R Bermudez (2006) refers to the global transcendence of the *Guerrillero Heroico* signaling its use in the memorable days of the Parisian barricades in May 1968; in the slaughter of Mexican students in Tlatelolco; in clashes in Milan, during the Prague Spring uprising; and in youth protest against the Vietnam war in the USA.

Larson and Lizardo note a significant peak of visibility in the USA at the time Guevara's remains were revealed in Bolivia in 1997. They also observe a shift in tone in the *New York Times*' headlines such as "From Rebel to Pop Icon" in the Arts Pages towards emphasizing the commercial quality of the image, and a focus on its accompaniment by a wave of products sporting the image (p. 428). In this article, Doreen Carvajal interviews Jim Fleischer, representing Fischer Skis who, as Larson and Lizardo (2007) also note, explained they were reproducing Che's image on their promotional materials even while dissociating themselves from the man himself: "We felt that the Che image - just the icon and not the man's doings - represented what we wanted: revolution, extreme change" (*New York Times*, C11). Yet Carvajal also cites José Borges, a spokesman for the Cuban Mission to the United Nations: "We have always been against any commercial use of his image...one thing is to promote his image and his example, and another thing is to use it as a way to get more money" (*New York Times*, C11) .

Oddly, and erroneously, Larson and Lizardo (2007) immediately follow the ski example with the words: "In light of this mountain of damning evidence, the *New York Times* concluded, In Europe and the United States, Che's image owes its commercial appeal to the absence of political content" (1997b, Tina Rosenberg) Inserting this sentence where they do is misleading because first, it is not in the same article, and second, it is not a conclusion. Rather it is one of the opening paragraphs in Tina Rosenberg's article "The World Resurrects Che" written months later on July 20, (p. E14) and was followed by a letter to the editor, written in response on that

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imprimió y el que se reprodujo fue el del texto de "Che la juventud entonara tu canto con gritos de guerra y de victoria" que lo editó el Comité Nacional de la Unión de la Jóvenes Comunistas (UJC) , que poseía una foto , a medio cuerpo, con su boina y el uniforme verde oliva también de Korda y que la había tomado en un acto por el quinto aniversario de la Revolución. Ese cartel de la UJC amaneció colocado en todas las calles y avenidas.

<sup>4</sup> Full original text of Castro's speech in Spanish available here:

file:///Users/Carolina/Desktop/Cartel%20Cubano/Discurso%20del%20Comandante%20Fidel%20Castro%20Ruz%20e1%2018%20de%20octubre%20de%201967%20-%20Wikisource.htm





very day, from a reader named David Silver entitled “Would Che have Turned Capitalist? Never!” (*New York Times*, A20) Ironically, in the face of this “mountain of damning evidence” Silver, an ordinary reader, is moved to make a written complaint to the effect that “Tina Rosenberg jumps to an unwarranted conclusion” and backs his claim by citing Che Guevara himself:

Che wrote to the editor of *Marcha*, a weekly newspaper in Montevideo, Uruguay. He stressed the danger of bourgeois ideology and its seductive appeal to oppressed and exploited people: ‘in capitalist society man is controlled by a pitiless law usually beyond his comprehension. The alienated human specimen is tied to society as a whole by an individual umbilical cord: the law of value’” (*New York Times*, p. A20).

Epitomized in this snapshot of exchanges published in the *New York Times*, we can see the contest for the meaning, memory and value of Che Guevara’s image is all but concluded.

## THE POLITICS OF BRANDING

Does copyrighting this image mean it is automatically pressed into commercial service? Can recent developments in legalities allow its meaning, value, and usage to be summed up so simply? What about the multitudinous artistic and vernacular renderings of the *Guerrillero Heroico* that Korda or his estate (managed by his daughter Diana Diaz) do not prosecute or pursue? Evidently, “what it [the image] has come to mean has been the subject of much speculation.” (Poyner 2006 p. 34) Perhaps copyright laws are being applied in an unconventional way, a way that exceeds the frames and models of analysis usually applied. More often than not, copyright law’s purpose is to protect the author's right to obtain commercial benefit from work, but we know this was not a goal for Korda. By having potential users of the image ask permission before availing themselves of it, copyright laws also safeguard an author's general right to control how a work is utilized. Thus, we can examine the problematics of how different people take up the image, as well as how the image itself invokes and provokes action, to better understand the dynamics of appropriation.

The notions of brand, trademark and logo are often bandied about interchangeably with respect to the *Guerrillero Heroico* by those who would see its copyrighting as an appropriation of the image as a ‘mark’ of something. For the purposes of this article, I refer to logo as a graphic, and logotype as the lettering/words: together logo and logotype form a trademark following the legal discourse. The brand then is the entire package of graphics, name, messaging and communications, visual identity, marketing strategies, and individual experiences with the business, product or service. Robert E. Moore provides some definitional guidelines for understanding exactly what a brand, or what the essential ingredients for considering something a brand might be. According to Moore, (2003) “brands are often defined as a form of protection: they protect the consumer from counterfeit goods, and they protect the producer from unfair competition.” (p. 332) Additionally, he observes that in an era where branding processes seem to encompass far more than products and services, and that all sorts of experiences, events, leaders,



nations and even wars are being branded: “the absence from the academic literature of any semiotically sophisticated and ethnographically rich understanding of brands is downright shocking.” (2003, p. 332) His article robustly addresses this lack, and provides a thoughtful sounding board to which I periodically return to address some of the confusion around the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

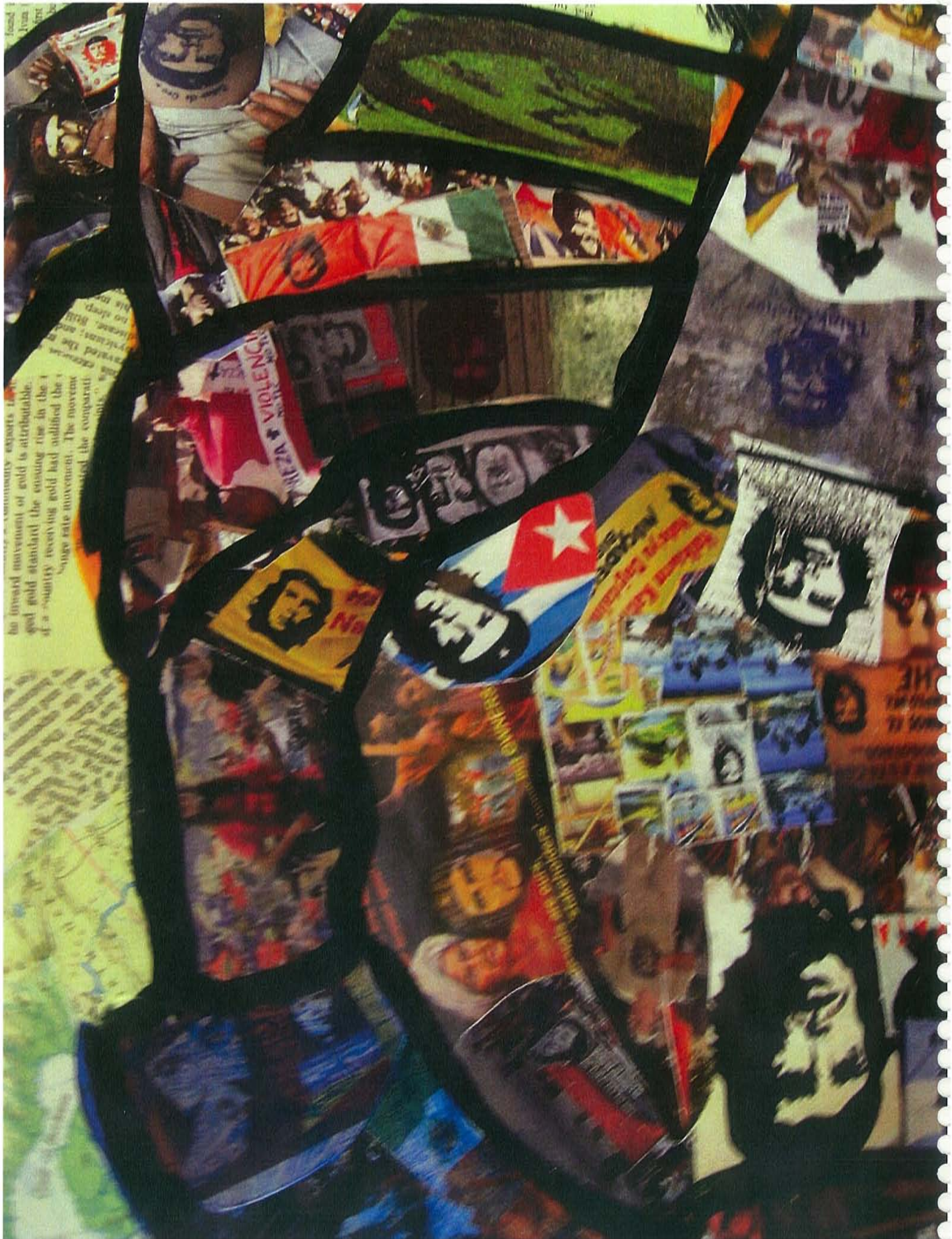
According to one strategist, “if brand names did not exist there would be no trustworthy marketplace.” (Moore, 2003, p. 338) One of the key elements of a brand has to do with its trustworthiness or credibility. To elaborate, Moore (2003) turns to David Aaker, one of the most heavily cited authors in the brand strategy literature, who tells us that a brand is:

A distinguished name and/or symbol ... intended to identify the goods or services ... and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical (Aaker, 1991, p. 7 in Moore 2003, p. 338).

Refining the definition of ‘brand,’ Moore (2003) calls it “a name and a logo, joined to a set of regimented associations, with source-identifying indexicals” (p. 339) and concludes: “a brand is a promise.” (p. 339). Accordingly, for the Coca-Cola company, we can understand the Polar Bear, Santa Claus, the wavy font type, the specific tone of red, team sponsorships, prizes and contests, songs like “I’d like to teach the world to sing” and slogans such as; “The real thing,” “Always,” “Open happiness,” and “Enjoy” and even the traditional shape of the bottle to all be part of the brand designed to connect individuals to one company. The collection of elements is calculated by branding experts, with the product and tradition of the one company in mind, aiming to make clear links in consumers’ minds.

What then would be the characteristics by which one might recognize Korda’s Che photograph as a brand? More often than not the long hair, beard, star, beret, and eyes looking above and beyond the viewer, bomber jacket or a combination of all or some of these are featured by those who render the image to trigger recognition. One might say it is regularly linked to the notions of dissent, rebellion, revolution, youth, as well as non-conformity, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism. But these notions lead us to no one place or group or even agreement on the meaning of an idea. Since many people, especially in Canada and the United States do not know who Guevara is or where he is from, or where or when the original photograph was taken, we have situations where an image is unmoored often from its human and historical source. However, a key characteristic of a brand is precisely a credible and trustworthy connection to one source. Perhaps one might imagine all these variant renderings and interpretations as endless iterations of the original photograph, which could take the position of a source. However, a photograph is an index with a contiguous relationship to the source, the man himself.

Following this line of thinking then, the set of all these images would constitute the brand for the original source or photograph and so it might look like a ship whose anchor has lodged itself at the base of its own hull, in a self-referential circuit. But this is not the case because the image does not exist in a hermetically sealed closed sign system. Rather, it is part of some...“collective equipment that everyone is in a position to use, not in order to be subjected to their authority but as tools to probe the contemporary world” (Bourriaud, 2005, p. 9). Every



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iteration of the image also simultaneously bears the marks of the artist or producer and thus references the specific time, place, event or person that has intersected with the image in that rendering. This would seem to make the *Guerrillero Heroico* the actual antithesis of a brand if we accept Michael Casey's (2009) account of the logic of brand protection where: "Large companies are sticklers for the integrity of their brands. They worry about the size, colour, dimensions, and appropriate uses of their corporate logo, ... No McDonald's franchisee would ever be allowed to put up a blue Golden Arches sign." (p. 334) Since "the most important characteristic of a brand is its credibility" (Erdem, T. & J. Swait. 2004, p. 192), the protection of brands is serious business<sup>5</sup>.

Another aspect of branding to consider is the manner in which a group or corporation enacts their branding strategy. Invariably, they orchestrate the time and place of the "launch" in a hierarchical mass-produced fashion. Moore (2003) explains:

In the process of producing brands, branding professionals attempt to capture, and turn to their advantage, a set of fairly recondite—even, ineffable—facts about how brands circulate in society, even as they try to create the conditions that allow brands to circulate. So circulation is fundamentally part of the production process, even if not quantifiably so. The use of ethnographic methods represents an effort to uncover and understand likely patterns of circulation and consumption, in advance of production, every bit as much as efforts to develop the 'brand personality' are attempts further to define them. (p. 352)

Because a company's products combine both tangible and intangible features, "value no longer inheres in the commodity itself as a tangible thing; rather, value inheres in something else, something less tangible: the aura, the simulacrum, the reproduction (as opposed to the original), the brand". (Moore 2003 p. 331) The immaterial aspects are unstable: they are open to interpretation and can shift with time and circumstance. Therefore, corporations go to great pains to protect the integrity of their brand names with complicated policy architectures because brands are inherently vulnerable. For example, when golf professional Tiger Woods was caught in an adultery scandal in 2009, Gatorade and other private enterprises stopped endorsing him and distanced themselves<sup>6</sup> because as one branding expert noted, the Woods brand "was founded upon prestige, mystique...and an aura of elusive untouchability," but now "we all suddenly know more about his bottom-feeding behavior than we ever cared to." (Elliott, 2010, *NYT*) We learn, in fact, that he was actually excessively touchable. Woods had been an image of prowess based on precision, integrity, and a clarity of focus that (some might imply) reflected a clear conscience. Woods had compromised that image with contradictory behaviour. In this scenario, those who attribute the amount of an enterprise's private market value in part to its name reevaluated the choice to endorse an athlete that might negatively impact the name, or more crucially, its market value.

The need to protect and control the perception of a brand's "name" shows not only the existence of inherent vulnerability to undesirable interpretations, but also that branding strategy is actually about deciding on a limited set of predetermined meanings deemed acceptable for a brand. In other words a branded product is:

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<sup>5</sup> A question to be raised here is whether it is appropriate or possible to brand political art in the first place.

<sup>6</sup> "Accenture Plc and AT&T dropped him as their pitch man after he became engulfed in allegations of multiple extramarital affairs following a minor car accident outside his Florida home on Nov. 27"



... partly a thing, and partly language. The brand name functions as a 'rigid designator' in their terminology of Kripke (1972): it communicates information about the source, producer, and/or type of thing, and can provide quite rich sociocultural and ideological 'captioning' for the object (including by 'keying' it to definable activities) through the radical use of 'condensation symbolism' (Sapir, 1949 [1929]). (Moore, R. E. 2003 p. 334)

Simply put, terminologies like: rigid designator, ideological caption, or condensation symbolism describe the process of linking an object to a fiction designed to create a desire to consume them both, as J. B. Twitchell (2004) acknowledges in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, "a brand is simply a story attached to a manufactured object." (p. 484) With its ultimate goal of selling products and augmenting commercial value, branding is a kind of planning, control, and action requires a centralized and concerted effort that is nonexistent in the case of the *Guerrillero Heroico*<sup>7</sup>.

This image emerged somewhat organically outside of Cuba and more intentionally within Cuba. The effervescing of the image here and there through different media and created by different hands almost simultaneously challenges the establishment of a clear line tracing its provenance, and perhaps that is part of its appeal. Still, this image has a very different history within Cuba than it does outside of Cuba; consequently I examine them separately.

## WITHIN CUBA

One of the most relentlessly strident critiques of the *Guerrillero Heroico*'s uses in Cuba is contained in Michael Casey's 2009 book, *Che's Afterlife: The legacy of an image*. Marshalling a motley assortment of opinions, anecdotes and interviews for support, Casey's overriding thrust is that the *Guerrillero Heroico* is the "quintessential capitalist brand" (p. 30). But historian Maurice Isserman (2009) observes however that Casey's "book would have benefited greatly from a sturdier historical frame" (online).

From the beginning Casey positions the Cuban revolution as "a top-selling cultural product, an international brand, and...its ultimate expression: the Che-T shirt." (p. 88) In a puzzling shift however he also writes: "Che was already available in 1968 in a wide variety of political brands" (129.) Together these statements seem nonsensical: that the Cuban revolution is a brand represented by a Che T-shirt but that Che is simultaneously a variety of different political brands. If we make note of the brand literature alone, this would be at odds with the very *raison d'être* of branding. The representing of "different political brands" clouds our understanding of what Che represents, thus compromising clarity and credibility. Erdem and Swait's (1998) study establishes that, "the clarity (i.e., lack of ambiguity) of the product information contained in a brand is an antecedent to brand credibility" (p. 192). It would seem the image is behaving in a way that is difficult to commercialize according to a brand strategy, and therefore difficult to categorize simplistically as a brand.

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<sup>7</sup> "But at the very core of it all is the manipulation of cultural sensibilities. Branding isn't just the unloading of stories on manufactured products but actually the systematic suturing of cultural texts into commercial products. Patronising those products becomes a vicarious way of being part of the cherished universe of approved social values" (Ugor, P. June, 2011, personal communication)





Intent on pushing the brand thesis, Casey's book neglects historical data. Maurice Isserman (2009) sighs:

Casey's determination to pinpoint the moment of the "brand launch" of "Guerrillero Heroico" is simply irrelevant to the actual political history of the 1960s. Even though the image had gone unpublished outside obscure Cuban newspapers, the mainstream American media, as well as the radical press, had kept Che's name and face in the public eye for years: (<http://www.thenation.com/doc/20090629/isserman>)

Casey's ahistoricism begs the question of history's relevance, and consequently politics' relevance for the so-called brand of the *Guerrillero Heroico* making it problematic for him to claim historical and political grounds for the image's prominence in the Cuban public's imaginary. Casey (2009) claims that the "Korda image launched into public consciousness in Cuba, where it was in effect employed as a logo or brand for Castro's PR campaign" (p. 93). Likewise, he assumes that the "general public, which had not seen a single photograph of Che since his mysterious disappearance in April 1965, was now shown an image [Freddy Alborta's photograph of the dead Guevara] begging for a myth to be built around it...a crucified Che" (p. 186). Isserman (2009) swiftly debunks both assumptions:

Mainstream American media, as well as the radical press, had kept Che's name and face in the public eye for years: from his days as Castro's sidekick, to his disappearance from view in Cuba in 1965, to his life as an international man of mystery until October 9, 1967 (online).

So how did this myth of the *Guerrillero Heroico* as brand for Castro and Cuba arise? What happened in Cuba in the decades prior to the copyright lawsuit? First, the year 1968 was officially declared the year of the *Guerrillero Heroico* in Cuba to memorialize Guevara. Artists and designers in Cuba generated numerous works representing Che and the revolution to commemorate the first anniversary of Guevara's assassination. At the same time, artists were developing techniques and styles for poster art and evolving the unique genre of Cuban poster art. In those years Cuban designers were moving away from influences of advertising and realism and towards creative interpretation as an artistic vanguard influenced by pop art, art deco and other Japanese and North American art movements.

The international political context included large movements mobilizing against the Vietnam War, dictatorships in Latin America and Africa, colonialism and the accompanying assassinations of important leftist leaders around the world. All of these movements against imperialist power and people fighting for social progress flowed into each other. This context created a creative environment where Korda's image became a malleable tool to be contextualized artistically in order to comment on history or current events, and produce salient political observations.

The *Guerrillero Heroico* quickly became a glyph in the exploration of collective memory by Cuban artists. Larson & Lizardo (2007) describe collective memories as "traces of the past remembered and reenacted in the present, periodically reinvigorated in commemorations, celebrations, poetry, images, and other symbolic displays" (p. 431). In their study, they analyze



how memories of Che Guevara are produced after interviewing 3000 Spaniards across social, economic and generational lines between 1991 and 1993. Larson & Lizardo (2007) conclude that; “Instead of his memory falling victim to trivialization by commodification... remembering Che Guevara has become a highly structured collective act of distinction” (p. 431).

The artistic and political use of the image run counter to a branding effort by their very nature as non-commoditized and favorable to appropriation for further artistic comment. Billboards, signs and all kinds of advertising had gradually disappeared from the Cuban public sphere under Castro’s government from 1961 onwards. The focus in post-revolution Cuba shifted from celebrating the qualities of products and their consumption, to political state-run messaging explicitly designated as informative and educational. As part of the political signage, Che’s image appears representing the Communist party, announcements regarding social works, and on the occasions of the anniversary of his death or other commemorative events. His face thus became a representation of the revolution accruing meanings on a specific register congruent with Guevara’s own stance and prior governmental position. Additionally Cuban institutions (like the health system) with relations abroad used it to express messages of solidarity with what they perceived as similar revolutionary causes (Campos, 2010). That is, an institutional use of the image for certain kinds of communication is politically but not commercially motivated. In Castro’s Cuba, the image behaved in a metonymic, rather than metaphoric manner. Its relationship to the prototype was factually similar (icon) and contiguous (index), rather than imputed (symbol)<sup>8</sup>.

According to Cuban historian Campos, (2010 personal communication) 1985 onward saw a resurgence of limited advertising activities in Cuba. In an effort to manage foreign firms and entities accustomed to publicity campaigns and advertising norms authorized to operate in Cuba, and Cuba established protective paternal policies to regulate the iconography of women and children, and policies prohibiting the use of national symbols, revolutionary martyrs and heroes. Campos (2010) provides this background to show that the Cuban government’s use of the graphic image of Che was devoid of commercial interests. Political signage used by organizations are not sold, Campos confirms, but distributed through internal structures to fulfill social functions. However much one might push this as a branding effort, the image use in this case does not fulfill the requirements.

After 1992, following the USSR’s dissolution which caused an economic crisis that annihilated 85% of Cuba’s trade, the Cuban graphic industry was paralyzed due to lack of funds, and the sale of political posters to tourists and foreigners was initiated (Campos, 2010). The sales included Korda’s image of Guevara primarily as a cost recovery effort to keep people employed. Interestingly, that commercialization and sale was not extended to the Cuban public. In 1994, many people that thought the Cuban revolution had come to its end took advantage of the crisis, to publish and profit from reproductions of signs and posters with emblematic images of Che and of the revolution without crediting artists or the authorizing institutions. These historical events can be seen as forerunners to the copyright lawsuit that Korda eventually launched.

To make matters worse for the island, the US government saw the crisis as an opportunity to finish off the Cuban economy and bring down President Castro. On an initiative by Robert Torricelli, member of the US House of Representatives, The *Torricelli Act* was enacted in 1992. This act intensified the harshness of the economic blockade on Cuba by preventing food and

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<sup>8</sup> Following CS Peirce’s three principal semiotic classifications for signs; icon, index, and symbol.



medicine from being shipped to Cuba.<sup>9</sup> An intense global solidarity movement from communities supporting Cuba emerged in response. As Cuba moved to establish ways to protect items it defined as crucial to Cuban national heritage, it installed copyright regulations for books and documents authorized to leave the country. Under these conditions, Guevara's widow Aleida Más created the *Che Guevara Studies Centre*, to house photos and documents salient to Guevara's historical legacy. According to Campos (2010) the Centre sees the prevention of the "improper use" or "for commercial ends" of the photos and posters as part of its task. Since the *Guerrillero Heroico* is considered by Cubans to be part of their national heritage, they exercise some control over its use. The Guevara children are involved in the *Centre* and on occasion publicly criticize what they consider unscrupulous uses of the image of their father. As recently as 2008, *The Guardian* correspondent Rory Carroll wrote a piece called, "Guevara children denounce Che branding" (Saturday June 27) where Aleida Guevara "denounced the commercialization [sic] of her father's image ... 'Something that bothers me now is the appropriation of the figure of Che that has been used to make enemies from different classes. It's embarrassing.'" She added, "We don't want money, we demand respect" (online). But Carroll (2008) is also compelled to comment on the image itself writing, "If you want to shift more products or give your corporate image a bit of edge, the Argentine revolutionary's face and name are there to be used, like commercial gold dust" and on Cuba, "Cuba's government has used the image to promote its revolution and to rake in tourist dollars through state-run stores which sell Che paraphernalia" (online). The appeal of any image based on Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* is indisputable; and so far, it seems inexhaustible. But Carroll's assumption regarding the state-run stores is inaccurate unless considered within the context of a specific reaction to a historical event. Additionally the copyrighting moves, and the way different actors are involved and influencing the image's use, are not a convincing indication that the Cuban state is moving toward a wholesale commercialization of the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

According to the historian Campos, Korda's daughter Diana Diaz, as the inheritor of her father Korda's work, also has the right to protect that photograph. However even her rights are within a specific framework. Cuban copyright policy holds that when an institution pays a salary for someone to occupy a post that permits their production of a work, he or she is recognized as the creator or author but the work is property of the institution. And when a work becomes iconic or emblematic, it grows to be part of the national heritage. Campos (2010) insists Che's image retains its original symbolism in Cuba, and does not function within the nation as a commercial logo on a souvenir. Considering the context, Hernandez-Reguant (2008) might want to rethink his hyperbolic comment that "Che Guevara has been the object of state worship since his death in 1967" (p. 254).

## FROM CUBA WITH LOVE

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<sup>9</sup> *The Torricelli act designed to paralyze the Cuban economy and cause the fall of the president forbids American companies, and subsidiaries abroad, from engaging in any trade with Cuba. Foreign ships using American ports were forbidden from Cuban ports for a period of 180 days and foreign ships returning from Cuba were also detained. Cuban families living in the U. S. were barred from sending any cash remittances to Cuba-. Torricelli corruption - [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/congress/july-dec02/bkgd/torricelli\\_09-30.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/congress/july-dec02/bkgd/torricelli_09-30.html)  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/24/nyregion/24torricelli.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/24/nyregion/24torricelli.html?_r=1)*



Cuban institutions use the *Guerrillero Heroico* in relations abroad to express messages of solidarity in that they are acting *in the image of Che*. For example doctors sent to aid Haitians after the 2010 earthquake wore Che Guevara T-shirts. This kind of official Cuban usage is exploited by Michael Casey (2009) to situate interest not along ideological grounds but “economic factors” (p. 153). If we suppose someone just discovering that Cuba sends doctors and educators to developing nations might mistakenly call it a branding attempt, what kind of branding would they see it as? The presence of Cuban doctors in Bolivia in 2006 is described by Casey as a “re-brand[ing]” effort to portray Cuba “as a source of medicine and education services worldwide” (p. 189). Yet the Cuban practice of sending doctors to hardship zones has been in place for decades (the first medical brigade of 58 doctors was sent to Algeria in 1963) and certainly does not receive sufficient press to warrant it a re-branding attempt. In fact, when Hurricane Katrina ripped through the southern United States in 2005, the Cuban government responded to the governor of Louisiana’s call for aid offering:

...within 48 hours 1,600 doctors, trained to deal with such catastrophes, would arrive with all the necessary equipment plus 36 tonnes of medical supplies. This offer, and another made directly to President George Bush, went unanswered. In the catastrophe at least 1,800 people, most of them poor, died for lack of aid and treatment (Ospina (2006) <http://mondediplo.com/2006/08/11cuba>).

Casey misses the fact that in 2007, “Cuban doctors volunteering in Bolivia performed free cataract surgery for Mario Teran, the Bolivian army sergeant who killed the legendary guerrilla leader Ernesto “Che” Guevara in captivity” (AAP *Brisbane Times*, 2007). While Casey observed Cuban doctors wearing Che t-shirts in Bolivia, he failed to ask them why they did so. After all, Che Guevara was also a doctor. While Casey worries about the doctors’ Che T-shirts, he ignores President Bush’s criminal negligence with regards to Katrina. With all the focus on the image, it may benefit us to observe the *anti-capitalist* force of Cuba’s 25,000 volunteer doctors that by March 2006 were working in 68 nations. “This is more than even the World Health Organisation can deploy, while Médecins Sans Frontières sent only 2,040 doctors and nurses abroad in 2003, and 2,290 in 2004” (Ospina, H. 2006 *Le Monde*). It is for good reason that: “The medical associations are afraid that if the Cuban medics bring down prices or even offer some services free, medical treatment will cease to be a profitable, elitist service” (Ospina, H. 2006 *Le Monde*). Thus, if this is a branding effort then it undermines capitalism itself, of which perhaps Guevara would approve. The barefoot doctors’ practice has been sustained long term quietly saving many lives<sup>10</sup>. I have belaboured many details to show clearly how “branding” language fails to accurately depict the social and cultural impact of this image.

It is misleading to conflate Cuban use of the image in Bolivia with Bolivian appropriations but the way the discourse is mobilized is nevertheless useful to examine. For example, Bolivian salesmen such as Fernando Porras uses the Guevara image on all kinds of paraphernalia to target his market of 16-20 year olds (Casey, 2009 p. 211). In Bolivia, President Evo Morales’ government uses this Guevara image politically to link with notions of Cuban

<sup>10</sup> In 2005 alone the barefoot doctors program helped the most poverty-stricken of six Latin American countries and 20 in Africa. The staff delivered more than half a million babies, carried out 1,657,867 operations and gave almost 9 million vaccinations. In Haiti, Cuba has been providing 2,500 doctors and as much medicine as its economy permits since 1998.





independence but also to remind its citizens of Guevara's death in Bolivia and the reasons behind it. For Casey, (2009) Porras' "shameless commercial exploitation" is tantamount to the Bolivian government's image use: "Porras might have been exploiting Che to sell rum and cola, but Morales and his supporters were using him to sell ideas" (p. 213). He concludes, "what we find is the same symbol representing contradicting brands" (p. 213). In this statement we see the image no longer being considered a brand and instead being reduced to an ingredient, like the logo or symbol. But we know that the same symbol *cannot* represent contradicting brands and still be viable. Thus, a reader of Casey is presented with a false analogy, that is, two cases not sufficiently parallel for readers to accept a claim of connection between them. The situation is obfuscated by the mutual use of the image, albeit differently, yet is pressed into service in a simplified and misleading parallel. We can learn from how confusing such narratives might be that part of what we require in image saturated societies is a more nuanced language to describe what is happening on the visual level, in other words we need more sophisticated visual literacies.

For understanding image use, Larson and Lizardo (2007) provide three options. They state that the malleability of a memory (or an image) can be reduced in 3 ways (Olik and Robbins 1998 in L & L) First actors using the memory of Che as instrumental symbol, second a canonical or institutional use of the image, and finally the routines marking consumer goods that keep the image visible on products such as T-shirts and posters (p. 438). All three reductions have come into play for the *Guerrillero Heroico's* use inside and outside Cuba so far, but do not indicate a convincing shift in signifying practices of authorship because the photograph and its derivatives as cultural products of artistic labour did not translate into copyright directed commodities for individual profit and corporate speculation. The *Guerrillero Heroico* is more elusive than that, no one disputes its ownership rather the contest is over how it is used.

#### OUTSIDE CUBA IT'S A DIFFERENT GAME: A BRAND WITHOUT A PRODUCT?

Outside of Cuba, the use of the *Guerrillero Heroico* was hardly regulated, regimented or controlled except for its banning in some nations (i.e. in Kenya possession of the image was punishable by imprisonment or death). For the most part, artists and movements focused on overtly and broadly political uses: "Most commentators agree that Che has become a general symbol of various causes and political movements, but here exists wide disagreement and confusion in the literature as to what exactly his image has become a symbol of" (Larson & Lizardo 2007, 433). It has been widely established that:

As early as the student movements of 1968, the image of Che Guevara had already acquired a measure of status as a symbol for the student movement (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991:90; Jasper, 1997; Zolov, 1999). Furthermore, given the continued presence of posters and T-shirts bearing his image at contemporary global justice rallies (Lechner and Boli, 2005: 153), it appears that Che Guevara continues to stand for the same complex set of values and causes usually associated with the 'new social movements' (NSMs) that emerged in the 1960s (Larson & Lizardo 2007 433-434).



Yet, in 1999, just before the copyright suit against Smirnoff, the flamboyant fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier ran an ad with an artistic rendering of the *Guerrillero Heroico* sporting his brand of sunglasses. Accordingly British writer/curator Rick Poyner (2006) could glibly write: “Since the 1990s, the Korda Che has been adopted as a style icon. Madonna strikes a Che pose in a beret for the cover of her American Life album (created by trendy Paris design team M/M)...*No one seriously imagines they are attempting to bring about the downfall of capitalism.* (V & A Magazine: p. 39 my emphasis.)

Style icon or not, the news about trying to bring down capitalism does not seem to have reached the FARC<sup>11</sup> in Colombia, nor the less violent but also armed Zapatistas<sup>12</sup> in Mexico. Again, Larson and Lizardo’s (2007) research tells us, “Che Guevara, in stark contrast to most other major twentieth-century revolutionary figures of the left (e.g., Mao, Lenin, Trotsky) continues to be a vibrant symbol and galvanizing figure for contemporary antisystemic movements, from the Zapatista rebels in Mexico and Basque separatists in Spain to Palestinian nationalists in the Middle East” (p. 426). They emphasize, “The Zapatistas in Mexico have flaunted images of Che on their clothes, banners, flags, and posters since 1994 (p. 429).



<sup>11</sup> In the Colombian region of Cauca. Al Jazeera correspondent Teresa Bo (2010) writes, “Colombia is still at war. You find trenches in every corner, tanks, Blackhawk helicopters and lots of soldiers. Fighting takes place here almost every day ...But we managed to find the left-wing FARC rebels, who are still fighting the Colombian government. ... They were coming out from the mountains, from the sewage canals, from everywhere. They said that a fight with the military was coming.... Commander Duber ...gave us an exclusive interview: “Our main enemy is president Uribe and the armed forces. ... There are elections in Colombia. People can vote for whom they want. But we will continue fighting. The ideology of the FARC is to win or die, that's what Che Guevara said,” Duber told us. In Cauca the fighting is still ongoing. Duber adds: “Presidente Uribe offers money [and] cars to those guerrillas who turn themselves in. Those who sell themselves are not guerrillas. They should give that money to those who are still starving in this country. We don't need it.” (One might ask where exactly the FARC obtains their funding) Photo credit: “Guerrillero colombiano de las FARC, montañas del Caquetá, Colombia” (2001) by Venezuelan photographer Pedro Ruíz -- <http://www.zonezero.com/kordasche/ruiz/ruiz.html>

<sup>12</sup> Indymedia photograph under copyleft license.





Still the simultaneous phenomenon of the Korda inspired image of Che Guevara on all kinds of kitschy products like refrigerator magnets and coffee mugs, create an ironic juxtaposition to the figure of someone who fought to the death against, among other things “the hegemony of American-style consumer capitalism” (Larson & Lizardo 2007 p. 426). If the image were to be considered a brand, it would be demonstrating instability, if not utter unreliability.



The professional literature on brand strategy examines different brand behaviours that might lead to some hypotheses regarding the behaviour and uses of this image. Moore (2003) examines three “insider phenomena of branding: genericide, ingredient branding, and so-called ‘viral marketing’” (p. 336) to probe the troubled relationship between a word (brand name) and an object (product). Viral marketing focuses on branding services and communications through email attachments where “the sender of the email message lends an involuntary ‘personal endorsement’ to the brand” (Moore, p. 352). Thus, genericide and ingredient branding are more salient.

When a brand name becomes synonymous with a product regardless of who produces it, it becomes generic; so that the trademark is unable to carry the message producers want to communicate. Moore (2003) tells us, “*Brand* enters upon phenomenal reality as a mode of connection, of communication, between two parties” (p. 335) when this fails it is called “genericide” because the loss of the identifying power of the name essentially kills the brand. Kleenex for example was once a brand, but since the word became so ubiquitous that it was used for any tissue, the trademark became insignificant.



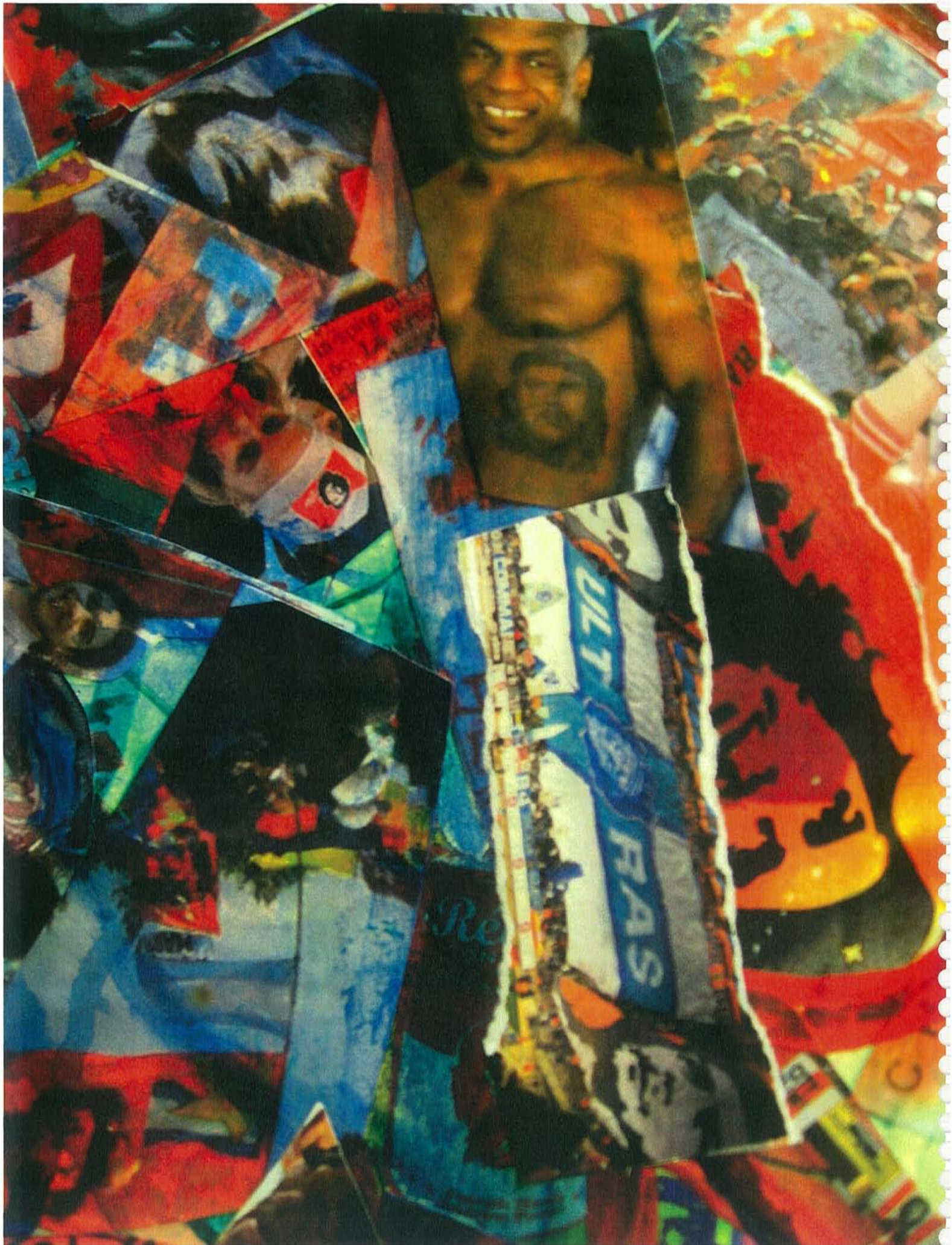
Those clamouring for the *Guerrillero Heroico* to be considered a brand push for the image to be understood as the brand for intangible or virtual thing like the notion of rebellion. Leaving aside contradictions with the professional literature, let's think through the genericide scenario. The image has been used widely as some designer-cool type look and at the same time adapted to so many different kinds of anti-something struggles that Robert Massari "Italian publisher, wine merchant, and head of his country's Che Guevara Foundation" can say, "There are probably forty million in the world who have that image. And if you ask them what it means to them, they'd all have a different answer" (Casey 2009, p. 336). Not only would we have a genericide in the register of historical and political events with the delinking of the image from its context (and source meaning), and genericide commercially where it cannot bring to mind any one product, but we would also have genericide in terms of its inability to consistently link to one idea.

Erdem & Swait (2004) follow Kottler (1997) in the basic understanding of a brand as "a name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Erdem & Swait 2004 p. 191). As a result, they see the roles of brands to be "their effect on consumer brand choice and consideration" (Erdem & Swait 2004 p. 191). No *Guerrillero Heroico* brand of any particular product for a consumer to even be able to consider and choose between exists. Since the product is virtually irrelevant, can we consider this a classic case of genericide in the way branding strategists would classify it? Not really, it is on another register and does not make one product generic. If we consider that people do not buy products, but brands, *anything* with Che's face on it will sell regardless of its inability to communicate the goals of a seller, so it sells but *not* as a brand.

In ingredient branding, the product rather than the name is vulnerable, "one branded product is absorbed or incorporated into another (think NutraSweet, as a branded ingredient of Diet Pepsi, or 'Intel Inside')" (Moore, 2003 p. 337). Because consumers can tune in to the ingredient and consume the "host product" almost as an effect rather than a cause of their choice, the branded ingredient can lift off and adhere to other hosts thereby making the product vulnerable. Within the ingredient branding phenomenon, there is a possibility of "image transfer" (Moore, 2003, p. 349). In other words, when paired with a leading manufacturer, "the ingredient brand takes advantage of their premium image.... [and] signals that the ingredient is of a high quality" (Moore, 2003, p. 349). Additionally, the branded ingredient can absorb the status of the host brand by association, and can subsequently pass it on to other possible host brands. Ingredient branding makes a product vulnerable because the ingredient can just as easily attach to a competing product thus making the host product marginal and weakening its inherent perceived value in the marketplace. If the branded ingredient is transferred elsewhere, the original product could easily disappear.

Uniquely in the case of the *Guerrillero Heroico*, the ingredient is a virtual and fluid one in that it is whatever the image may represent to a given individual. The commercial rhetorical gesture of putting Che Guevara's face on a pot of lip-gloss thus shares meaning with (and gains cultural capital and power from) a broad social movement, however illegitimately. The product is more or less irrelevant, in the way we have seen for objects attached to branded ingredients and is clearly a case of unsuccessful branding. Furthermore, in this case the ingredient can behave in unpredictable ways. Kopytoff (1986) reminds us that commoditization is "best looked at as a process of becoming rather than an all-or-none state of being" (p. 73). He adds, "extensive commoditization is not a feature of commoditization per se, but of the exchange





technology...associated with it..."(p. 73) so that the way this image of Che is mobilized has a great deal to do with its immediate context.

We know from Durkheim (1912) that societies need to set aside a certain portion of their environment marking it as "sacred". Things marked by societal singularization include monuments, and other symbolic inventory of a society. Commodities can be singularized by being pulled out of commodity sphere (diamond to 'crown jewel'). They can also be singularized through restriction of numbers. Non-commodity, however, is not equal to sacred. Something can be priceless by being above level or below (e.g. Manioc is not tradable). Commodities can be de-activated (personalized), or terminal (e.g. Food, service, mattresses?), or non-terminal (cars). "Everyone" is against commoditizing what has publicly been marked as singular and made sacred...Lincoln Memorial...African art, becomes "collectible" to mask the feeling from before where it was immoral to sell it for money. Kopytoff (1986) also tells us people have a yearning for singularization (stamp-collecting). The paradox is: "as one makes things more singular and worthy of being collected, thus more valuable and if valuable they acquire a price and become a commodity and their singularity is to that extent undermined" (p. 81).

The singularity of something is confirmed by its periodic appearance in commodity sphere (a Picasso), where it shows its 'priceless-ness' by the feeling it's worth more than the money...people feel need to 'defend' themselves against 'charge' of 'merchandising art' (Kopytoff, 1986 p. 83). The status of a thing is ambiguous except at actual point of sale. We know from Marx that commodity 'worth' is determined by social relations, and it is allowed to be socially endowed with a fetishlike 'power' unrelated to its 'true worth'.

If Moore (2003) is correct in saying, "Successful branding, then, is successful communication, successful in the sense that it 'secures uptake' from its interlocutors in the market" (p. 335), then the *Guerrillero Heroico* cannot be considered successful as a brand. Some individuals may have just as many reasons *not* to buy a product with this image on it as others do who do buy the product; culture, class and ethnic identity of course come into play. Perhaps the contested terrain of this image and its progeny can be illuminated by tracing its activities as *art* and by looking at how artists appropriate and manipulate the image?

## ART OF APPROPRIATION- APPROPRIATION OF ART

Copyright laws are part and parcel of institutional use of the *Guerrillero Heroico* by states and organizations for ideological purposes, and commercial use by corporations as radical chic bereft of historical memory. In a different way, these laws also bear on uses by groups such as left-wing soccer supporters (think South Winners of Olympique de Marseille and their a passionate north-south rivalry with Paris) landless workers in Brazil (1997), striking university students in Mexico City (1999), peace activists in Italy (2002)" (Larson & Lizardo 2007 p. 429) as a marker of group solidarity are usually seen using a mass produced version of the *Guerrillero Heroico*. Part of the confusion stems from claims that this image became famous, was widely reproduced and freely distributed simply because it was not copyrighted: confusion that is partly due to an overlooking of its status as fodder for artists who may not be concerned whether something is copyrighted or not. These kinds of claims also ignore the historical fact that before 1976, the term of copyright was only 28 years after which the license would have to be renewed otherwise the work would become part of the public domain. Had the US Congress not changed



copyright law, *Guerrillero Heroico*, along with a multitude of other works, would likely be in the public domain today.<sup>13</sup>

The unique situation of this photograph as the most reproduced image in the history of photography, and its copious derivatives, reveals how the creation of value in Western society is inextricable from the cultural context of a particular object. Additionally, collective memory research indicates “that the culture industry that sells his image and the antisystemic movements that revere him are emblematic of a contest over his memory” (Larson & Lizardo 2007 p. 447). It is important to recall that even *Time* magazine recognizes Ernesto Guevara as one of the top 100 most influential people of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; this is not a photograph of just anyone. Tension exists in every economy between forces driving toward commoditization, countered by those of cultures and individuals who discriminate, classify, compare and sacralise: they are intertwined in multiple and subtle ways, and are constantly in flux. Che Guevara’s image has not been domesticated by capitalism or the tension around it would not exist: so far it has refused to settle. Can we learn from what happens with the *Guerrillero Heroico* in the hands of artists and individual hand-made vernacular appropriations and figurations, borrowings or extractions, and inspirations bestowed by this image?

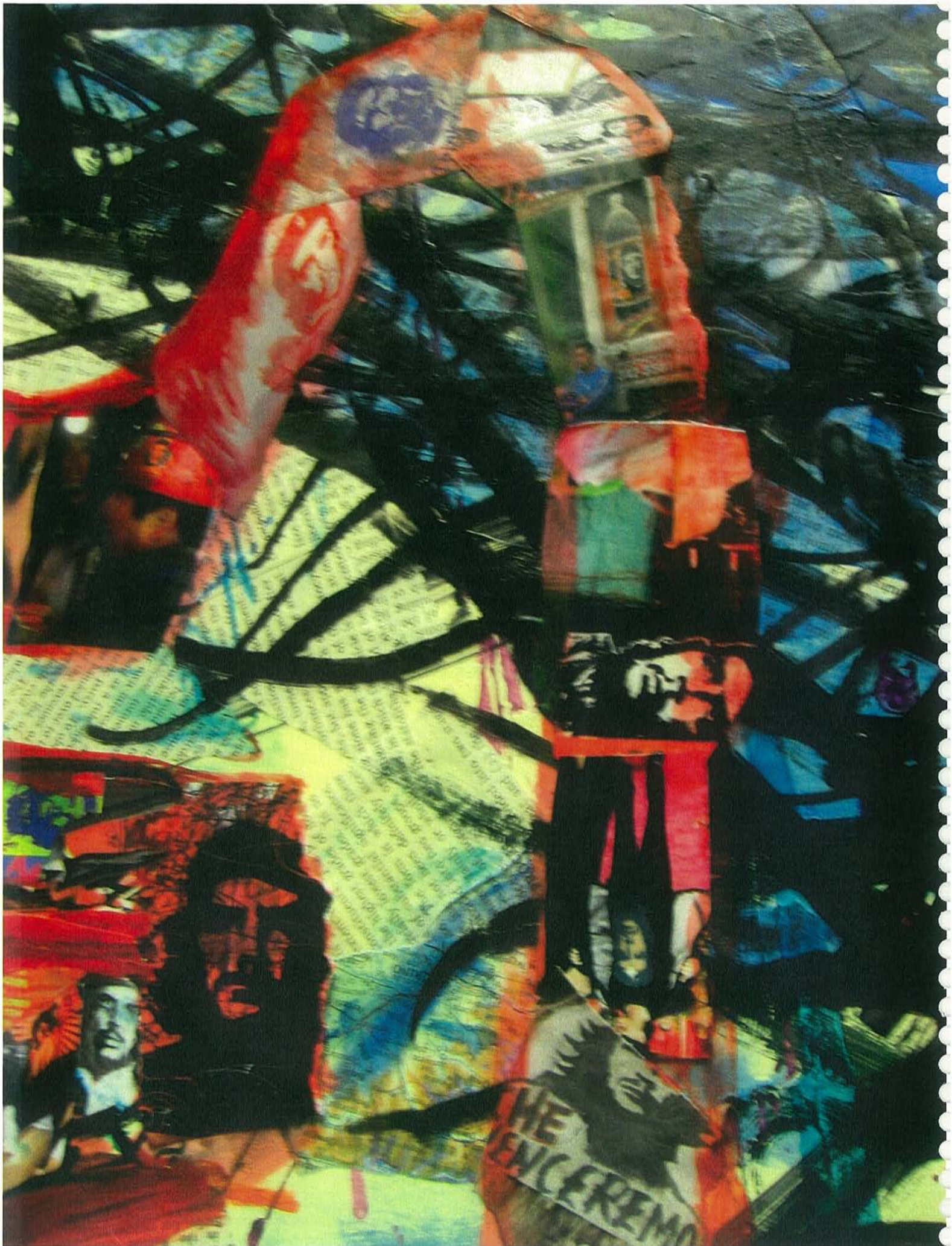
Artists have always appropriated or quoted ideas, techniques, approaches, colours, shapes, or a combination of these. Whether borrowing from a master to whom they were apprenticed or from a combination of inspiring images or even from a natural, environmental, or object surrounding, the appropriation of material for artistic purposes has been widely acknowledged as standard practice. However, with the blurring of the boundaries between material and virtual objects, and shifting notions of ownership, more and more artists are being accused of stealing images and ideas. Correspondingly, the policing of the image-scape is also increasing. Nevertheless, thanks in part to digital media, proliferation of derivative arts continues unabated. Part of this spread could be due to the unprecedented growth of “postproduction art<sup>14</sup>” as French art historian Nicolas Bourriaud (2005) calls it. In Romana Cohen’s (2007) online interview with for *PLAZM magazine*, Cushing states, “creative appropriation is the lingua franca of activists, and there is no shame in artful reinterpretation of powerful imagery.”

In a fascinating interview with legendary French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, Lañamme and Kaganski (2010) ask him whether he claims any rights to the images in his movies. Godard responds, “of course not, in fact many artists are already appropriating my images and posting them on the Internet. But I don’t have the sensation that I am being robbed” (On-line, my translation). He explains:

... Norman Mailer’s book on Henry Miller, is 80% Miller and 20% Mailer. In the sciences, no scientist pays copyright fees to use the formula developed by a colleague...in my film there is another kind of borrowing not citations simply

<sup>13</sup> In 1976, Congress decided that the term of copyright protection should be life of the author plus 50 years. See also illegal-art, an organization devoted to collecting artworks that challenge current conventions of intellectual property law, or that have been involved in litigation for infringing on someone’s copyright. Launched by the *Stay Free!* magazine, a publication that critically analyses mass culture commercialization, ... Their work proves that in the remix and “copy & paste” age, the right to criticism, parody and freedom of speech is easily repressed through the demands of culture mega-corporations using the current restrictive regime to their advantage.

<sup>14</sup> Postproduction art is art that uses other *ready-mades* following the notion originated by the brilliant surrealist artist Marcel Duchamp, and builds a piece on or with those already circulating. A handy example would be the DJ music scene where music is “sampled” or quoted in innovative ways. People recognize the citation and understand how the DJ is playing with it; they are in on the joke.



extractions. Like an injection that takes a blood sample for analysis. ... for example, the scene of trapeze artists' from *Les Plages d'Agnès*...it is an extract that I grab and incorporate in a very concrete moment that symbolizes peace between Israel and Palestine. I have not paid for that scene. But if Agnès asked me for money I would calculate what I owed her.

Thus Godard's explicit appropriation of Varda's scene for artistic commentary is not seen as a *violation* in any way nor does he pretend to have authored it. Asked why he did not simply create images of his own, he further clarifies saying:

I thought the metaphor in Varda's film was very good.

*But she didn't give it that signification.*

No of course not. I am the one that constructed the recontextualization of those images. At no point did I think of being faithful to the original. Simply, those images seemed perfect for what I wanted to do...It was exactly what I wanted to express. So I grabbed the images because they already existed.

For Godard then, the Varda scene was simply viewed as pre-existing material that he was free to use artistically. His philosophy is instructive: "I do not believe in the concept of "work." There are works, there are some new, but the work as a whole, the great work, is something that does not interest me. I prefer to talk of a road. In my career there are ups and downs, there have been attempts ... I put a lot of bullshit" (online). The processual, unfinished nature of Godard's view of his art leads him to view his experiences of the *works* of others as part of a living mental, spiritual or emotional nourishment through his incorporating, consuming, digesting and changing others' creations in order to come up with a layered, nuanced and allusive piece that participates in additional conversations, a polyphonic approach. Perhaps this kind of "stealing" is behind the long misunderstood phrase by Pablo Picasso, "*Good artists copy, great artists steal.*" In other words, it is not simply about adopting ideas from others, or even of appropriating aesthetic flourishes and stylings practiced by master artists. Rather, the zone of activity is one where the *Guerrillero Heroico* in this case, inhabits different renderings and works as part of the artists' visual vocabulary and commentary through artifice on a political or social idea. The "stealing" of this image, allows it to both participate in salient conversations, and add its own layer of meaning.

However there is a code of behavior amongst artists, particularly those working in political ways. Part of the concern artists such as Mark Vallen (2010) voice, is that with the soaring use, reuse and expropriation of images, the "relentless mining and distortion of history will turn out to be detrimental for art, leaving it hollowed-out and meaningless in the process" (online) As we have noted, this is part of the debate around the *Guerrillero Heroico*. Vallen and other artist/activists such as Lincoln Cushing, Josh MacPhee, and Favianna Rodriguez have publicly discussed the nature of plagiarism vis-à-vis subvertisement and parody. Cushing (2007) expresses the complex unwritten understanding between artists as follows:

...IF it's noncommercial, and IF one isn't claiming personal credit, and IF it's helping a progressive cause, it's pretty much OK to grab other art and use it. This was more dominant during the "long 1960s" than it is now, but it's still a valid working model. Current formulations such as CopyLeft and Creative Commons



have a similar approach. The above guidelines are just the beginning, however. I'm particularly concerned with the erosion of our own art history with the mashing and appropriation of artwork without credit (online).

The issue for Cushing and others is on the register of a moral economy where an artist who intentionally copies artworks must not pretend to have been the originator of it, or attempt to deceive viewers. Not only do Cushing and Vallen advocate for a transparent process, but they also support the appropriation of existing art to maintain the spirit in which it was created. For example, if an image was created for political and nonprofit purposes, then its derivatives must remain free of copyright restrictions. Artists who would profit from an exploitation of images such as the *Guerrillero Heroico* are seen as sellouts that ally with those very forces that the image was seen to protest against. MacPhee notes: "... Posters and graphics made in the heat of political struggles are often made by anonymous individuals or groups that want to keep the images in the public domain for use in further struggle" and decries those who would "personally capitalize on the generosity of others and privatize and enclose the visual commons" (Vallen, M. 2010 online). In the debate on attribution and recognition, this kind of "stealing" is seen as a *copywrong*, to adopt a neologism of Siva Vaidhyanathan's, contributing to historical amnesia and cultural imperialism. The metamorphosis of corporatizing a work shifts it from being considered art to the realm of brands. The difference does not merely reside in the articulation but in the nexus of social and cultural circumstances. Acknowledging that the language of branding "is a product of modern U.S. capitalism" Casey (2009) claims, "it is really just a commercially practical way to describe how symbols and images are used in many forms of communication" (p. 340). We have seen, however, that not all communication is commercial, nor is all adoption or use of symbolic representation.

#### A CASE IN POINT: THE EXAMPLES OF TWO ARTISTS

Carlos Latuff is a Brazilian freelance political cartoonist, while Allan McDonald is a political cartoonist born and living in Honduras. Both are among the many artists inspired by the image of Che Guevara based on the *Guerrillero Heroico*. Their work characterizes them as "semionauts" (Bourriaud, 2005 p. 18) in that they invent paths through visual culture by using pre-existing forms and imagining links and relations between a network of signs. Skillfully and eloquently they navigate a vast sea of images cartographically following ephemeral and temporary lines in order to reveal alternative meanings, while at the same time fusing moments of production and consumption. Thus, "the culture of use implies a profound transformation of the status of the work of art: going beyond its traditional role as a receptacle of the artist's vision, it now functions as an active agent, a musical score, an unfolding scenario, a framework that possesses autonomy and materiality to varying degrees" (Bourriaud, 2005 p. 20).

Latuff is particularly famous for his provocative work on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict that has been seen as controversial in its challenge to mainstream versions of the conflict. Latuff explicitly takes the side of the oppressed. Correspondingly, he places his work in the Creative Commons. The kaffiyeh, an Arab-Palestinian scarf and Che are brought together as two global symbols of resistance against oppression, bringing into alliance the struggles in Latin America





Halkların Katli  
Nato'yu Dağıtalım  
MUCADELE

with those in the Middle East. This particular image was also reincarnated as a t-shirt and worn in protest marches in England and elsewhere.



In a personal communication, Latuff (2009) comments, “my intention is to associate an universal, established and popular icon of resistance with the Palestinian struggle for independence. Using well-known symbols and giving them a new dimension and meaning is part of my job as a political cartoonist and image-maker” (personal communication). Likewise, McDonald, who has dedicated a great deal of his life to anticapitalist struggle and social and political criticism, find inspiration in the image. In his articulation, the Korda image becomes the “sacred” heart of Jesus, another anti-imperialist rebel himself, and explicitly allies their spirits but places Che as the inspiration, or source at the centre of Christ in an odd thought-provoking alliance.



I see these images as being beyond the art of appropriation, inhabiting instead “...a culture of the use of forms, a culture of constant activity of signs based on a collective ideal of sharing” (Bourriaud, 2005, p. 17). For artists involved in programming forms rather than producing them Che’s face has become a tool to manipulate and interrogate in order to produce different results. Interestingly this image manifesting from the original photograph is also acting in its own right by acting upon the artist affectively being “independently capable of stirring the forces of human imagination and of tapping into deep-seated longings for a better world” (Casey, 2009, p. 342). The continuing motivation of these and other artists to use this image, confirms its persistent resonance in the visual public sphere; it continues to speak, and both artists and their intended audiences are listening.



## CONCLUSION

In Hernandez-Reguant's (2008) wrap-up where he states, "However, at the end of the affair, it was still unclear whether the now copyrighted Che - and his legacy to Cuban late socialism - had really beaten the forces of capitalism or rather surreptitiously joined them" (p. 256) is really just the beginning. True, many would like to dismiss this image as having been incorporated into the market logic of the culture industry, and consequently losing its power as a political symbol. Most would agree that the *Guerrillero Heroico* lives a "...strange and by now unstoppable afterlife since his murder in Bolivia in 1967, at the age of 39" (Poyner 2006 p. 34). Despite having strong characteristics of a material commodity in its ability to be a repository for added value, it also resists the force of iconographic commercialization and continues to be a viable political banner. In part, this may be because of its material iterations. "Webb Keane (2003) ...observes that part of the power of material objects in society consists of their openness to 'external' events and their resulting potential for mediating the introduction of 'contingency' into even the most hegemonic of social orders" (Moore, R. E. 2003, p. 334).

The exceptional case of Che Guevara, embodies the contest visibly being waged between the culture industry and anti-systemic movements that some scholars contend "is shaped and manipulated by elites in order to establish dominant, hegemonic meanings and interpretations of the past, while others argue that groups can reconstruct and recover memories in order to imbue them with new counterhegemonic interpretations (cited in Larson & Lizardo 2007. p. 427). Either way, the presumption that Guevara's image is little more than a fashionable accessory sapped of all political meaning, or that processes of commoditization have undermined its power to signify and activate political or ideological action is countered by Larson and Lizardo's (2007) conclusion that "it is by no means clear that Che Guevara has been de-politicized in the face of unbridled commercialism" (p. 429).

The reality is far more complex, as artists have shown through their adoption and appropriation of this image:

In the contemporary context, it is possible to have both processes of commoditization and radicalization of the memory of historical figures at the same time. In fact, the collective consumption of material culture objects might be associated with a renewed radicalization of political struggles and a strengthening of collective identities and ideological commitments (Larson & Lizardo 2007 p. 449).

As a result of their extensive work Larson and Lizardo advise us to consider that the material consumption of Che Guevara's image can actually coexist with commitments to political resistance: "In contrast to the dire predictions of mass culture theorists, commoditization does not result in the irrevocable termination of the power of political images and symbols" (p. 450).

Branding attempts to insert stories between us and objects in a way that foster desire of the object in order to participate in a specific story. In this way, branding is geared to interrupt our own processes of singularization (Kopytoff) so that a more homogenous story can become a source of profit. These shallow "brand sagas" (Twitchell, 2004, p. 489) are discussed by James Twitchell (2004) in *Brand Nation* in looking at the commercial strategies adopted by museums, universities, and churches and so on as if they constitute proof that everything is a brand. Further, Twitchell (2004) notes, "Transient materialism. Secular epiphany. Yes, brand owners talk about

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the soul of their brands, brand aura, and of their brands as icons, to be sure. By this they mean that their brands have a symbolic, almost a religious significance, which goes way beyond their worth as products” (p. 488-489). These discourses of “brand soul” and “brand icon” (p. 488) and the “process of spiritualizing commercial brands” (p. 488) are supported by Douglas Atkin, in *The Culting of Brands* as a way for brand owners to copy churches and cults in turning their brands into some kind of source of community (Casey, 2009, p. 306) in order to promote goodwill and broaden the meaning of branding to make it all-encompassing of any symbolic representation under which people can group together. To some extent this strategy succeeds. “How else to explain something so irrational as Evian water, a Dior purse, or a Martha Stewart rolling pin?” (Twitchell, 2004, p. 488). Nevertheless, this tactic does not succeed in all cases, particularly in such politically charged and contested cases such as that of the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

While the “intrinsic logic of brand protection” follows the notion that the brand’s intangibility makes “brand owners worry about the fragility of their vital piece of property,” since its value can vanish overnight if it is somehow given a bad reputation. Casey (2009) believes the Korda estate lawyers are doing something similar since they are demarcating acceptable and non-acceptable usage of the image (p. 335). In spite of this, it is likely that the usage of the *Guerrillero Heroico* as governed by the Cuban Government, Guevara’s family, and Korda’s daughter Diana Diaz represents an awareness of and compatibility with the meaning of Guevara’s own death and life. Just as there was a perfect emotional correspondence between Guevara’s death as a result of his attempt to change the world because “anything less would have meant that he found the ‘intolerable’ tolerable” (Berger 1975, p. 207). For John Berger (1975), Guevara “represented a decision, a conclusion” (p. 207)

In a letter to his parents when he left Cuba, Guevara wrote: “Now a will-power that I have polished with an artist's attention will support my feeble legs and tired-out lungs. I will make it” [p. 113 (translation by Berger)] (1975, p. 208). Certain of his own death in the fight against imperialism, Guevara called for those who would embrace the same ideals to welcome death as long as “our battle-cry, may have reached some receptive ear and another hand may be extended to wield our weapons...” (cited in Berger 1975, p. 204). Responding to his call, millions interpellated by the *Guerrillero Heroico* around the World take up the image as a way of noting the intolerable state of the world, the need to change it, and the commitment (to varying degrees) to participate in that change. To those who re-render this image on the streets, (in the vernacular handmade sense such as that of a graffiti artist on the street in Guatemala), attempts to brand products with this image of Che fail absolutely and its copyrighting is irrelevant. Thus, the image continues to function as a virtual prosthetic of the man himself, and of his ideas. Both continue to be politically charged and salient.



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## Revolution Within the Revolution: A Caracas Collective and the Face of Che Guevara

*Carolina Cambre*

We are living in a topsy-turvy world,  
a world where we cannot find our way by  
abiding by the rules of what once was common sense

—Hannah Arendt

In this case, the struggle itself is the great teacher

—Ernesto “Che” Guevara

Caracas, Venezuela, is a city of stark contrasts and extreme inequality. Space is at a premium in this densely built city squeezed into a valley between two mountain ranges so that buildings rise higher and higher. Entire neighborhoods are vertical communities located in *bloques*, buildings unique to Caracas designed in the late 1950s specifically to house large numbers of the urban poor. By contrast, the middle classes live in a variety of condo-like securitized *edificios*. In this crowded and stratified context, and between the cracks of a nation divided and struggling in a battle of media and images, I began my field work.<sup>1</sup>

In the ongoing image war, the role of one image in particular (and the subject of my research) drew me to a neighborhood called the *23 de enero*. The image, Alberto Korda’s photograph of Ernesto “Che” Guevara known as the *Guerrillero Heroico*, visually occupies a central place in the community. After weeks of communications and negotiations, I met with the youth-led grassroots collective in charge of the *23 de enero*, the Colectivo Alexis Gonzáles Vive Carajo (C.A.G.V.C.). With them, I had the opportunity to explore the



significance and practice of this famous image. I found that the C.A.G.V.C. use and experience the image of Che Guevara in ways that creatively reconfigure spaces in a revolution *within* the socialist revolution trumpeted by Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. As such, the question I explore in this article is to what extent and in what ways does the Collectivo's use of the Che image suggest an operative sign system that continues to nurture dynamic forms of political and cultural change in Venezuela? To explore this question, I draw on research from a case study that is part of a larger project I have undertaken examining the *Guerrillero Heroico*.

#### IT BEGAN WITH A FACE

Peter McLaren (2000) writes about a bus ride he took in Latin America where he felt a sudden impulse to greet a young man who was walking down the street wearing a Che T-shirt. He distinguishes his sense of connection with the T-shirt wearer as a link with all people with a common resolve to fight injustice and free the world from cruelty and injustice (xix). Across the globe, other people resonate in similar ways with the *Guerrillero Heroico* (1960) (Figure 1<sup>2</sup>). It appears and reappears, sometimes as a two-tone picture, occasionally as a drawing, but always evoking, if not reproducing, the unforgettable expression on Che Guevara's face. Many times these reproductions are made simply to exploit the image as designer revolutionary-ism for trendy popular consumption. At the same time, it is crucial to remember that this image also emerges repeatedly in the midst of social protests and demonstrations happening around the world.<sup>3</sup>

On the streets where people claim to walk in the footsteps of Guevara, his face seems to function transtemporally and transnationally as a reminder of the connection between struggles near and far. Latin American intellectuals observe that *Guevarismo* is present as a resistance to the established order in certain social movements (Löwy 1997, 2). In these contexts, just as much as in the *23 de enero*, the meaning of the image is explicitly linked with Guevara's ethical and political stance. That is, people seem to be declaring that they will continue what he began. This sentiment surfaces in marches against NATO in Istanbul, in rallies against Bush in Berlin, in marches against the privatization of education in Australia, in marches for democratic rights in Sarajevo, and in rallies among illegal immigrants in the United States and elsewhere.





Figure 1. *Guerrillero Heroico*: Alberto Korda.

If rebellion and resistance are common themes in these instances, it of course remains problematic to assume that rebellion signifies the same thing to people regardless of time or place. Indeed, the moment when the photograph was taken was not in itself a rebellious instance, though it was within the greater context of the Cuban revolution. On March 5, 1960, Che Guevara was unaware and photographer Alberto Diaz Gutierrez, later known as Korda, took the shot by chance: "This photograph is not the product of knowledge or technique. It was really coincidence, pure luck," commented Korda (Sridhar 2002, 5). The previous day, a bomb had killed sailors and stevedores on the French freighter *La Coubre*, carrying a Belgian arms shipment. Rescuers boarding the ship were killed by the detonation of a second bomb. As Fidel Castro eulogized the victims, Guevara was on the podium with others.



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Panning across the figures on the dais, Korda saw Guevara's face come into view:

The look in Che's eyes startled Mr. Korda so much that he instinctively lurched backward, and immediately pressed the button: There appears to be a mystery in those eyes, but in reality it is just blind rage at the deaths of the day before (<http://www.netssa.com/che.html>)

At the time Korda was unaware of exactly how the image would materialize. "[I]t was only later, while developing the film, that he realized what his camera had captured" (Anon. 1999).

Professionally, Korda had taken more than 12,000 intimate portraits of Fidel and others (Sridhar 2002). Some of his photos had earned international acclaim; yet he chose to display this particular photo on his studio wall for years. Later, he chose this photograph to give to Italian publisher, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, who published it. Soon after, over two million posters featured Guevara's face as students demonstrated on the streets of Europe in the spring of 1968.<sup>4</sup> In one form or another, this image has been on the streets ever since.

Scholars in the disciplines of art, design, and art history discuss the genesis and flourishing of this image with reference to the aesthetics of pop culture. Others participate in countless discussions of Che's photo on Web logs and in magazines. Recognizing this, it is perhaps surprising to note that little analysis of how the image functions in its wider social, political, and cultural uses is available.

This said, David Kunzle's (1997) *Che Guevara: Icon, Myth and Message* provides a starting point. In the preface, Carol A. Wells remarks on "the omnipresent image of Che Guevara as a heroic figure, and the vitality of the protest poster as a weapon against injustice" (11). T-shirts, murals, and protest posters or prints are the most frequent canvases for vernacular versions of this image. Because of this, Wells observes that

Posters have transmitted and promoted Che's ideals, hopes, and dreams and those of millions of others who dare to challenge the status quo... Hastily slapped on walls "guerrilla-style" or carefully fashioned by recognized artists in well equipped studios, they communicate instantly and directly to both literate and non-literate audiences... [At the same time, the] visage of the hero who helped transform history has [also] to a degree become a commercial logo (Kunzle 1997, 11).

If this is so, Che Guevara's image most certainly has *not* become just another commodity. Rather, Kunzle (1997) points out that there



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is a paradox to political posters: "obviously in the forefront of commercialization insofar as they are sold . . . [they] themselves raise the cry against a process in which they are inevitably implicated" (21): a paradox that seems to echo the life of this particular image. The iconography emerging around Che's image is anything but universal: in fact "there are, it seems, as many ways of seeing Che as there are artists" (22). This seemingly endless proliferation, which shows no sign of slowing down, provokes Kunzle (1997) to ask: "Why do the artists return again and again to the face, and so often the same single 'matrix photograph' of the face" (24)?

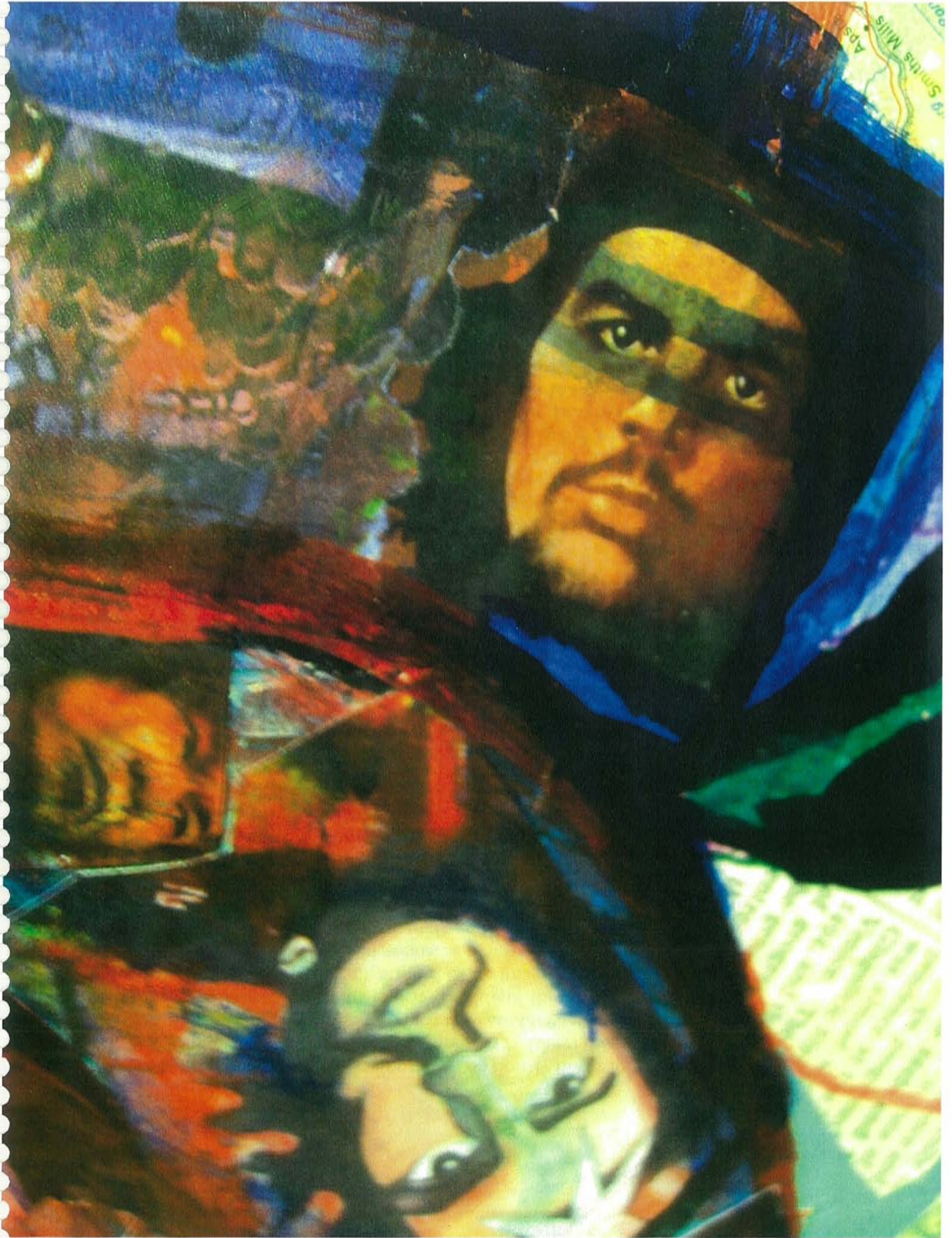
For youth, this image appears to have a unique status generation after generation. Perceptively, García, Sola, and Sánchez (1997) suggest reasons why this is so:

While in Cuba the public dimension of his figure persists, in the capitalist world it endures above all as a central topic for youth counterculture. The poster marks the freed territory of an adolescent's bedroom, where *nonsense* is charged with signification. Certainly, Guevara is not the sole source of this imaginary for youth but in his wake, some of his principle aspects converge: the nomadic impulse, the anti-systemic bent, the ideal of a heroic death, all provisions of a certain nocturnal appearance. A rebel *look* that has nothing trivial, given that the icons are thin only in guise . . . keeping above all, the spirit of egalitarian utopia, in a reference that persists mainly in youth militancy (209; author's own translation).<sup>5</sup>

Through their subtle understanding of a poster's role in a teenager's bedroom, what these authors suggest, in other words, is that there is more to the choice of this image for many teenagers than a countercultural fashion sense. More is happening *there* than the "rebel *look*." The authors do not tell us what this something other might be. But they do explicitly recognize the orientation of youth toward this image and what it has to offer them. Similarly, among members of the Colectivo Alexis Vive, there is an implicit recognition that this image is actually more than an image.

#### CHAOTIC CARACAS

After the attempted coup of 2002, the polarization of Venezuelan society into pro- and anti-Chávez groups became extremely marked. During my stay in the city, for instance, the almost daily demonstrations and events staged by the right wing opposition to President Chávez' administration were answered in kind by his



supporters, also known as "Chavistas." Television stations that had taken critical positions concerning the government provided furious and intense media coverage of the recent controversy galvanized by the closing of Radio Caracas Television (RCTV). For a time, the nonrenewal of RCTV's concession became a lightning rod for mass protests and virtually all but the government-run television stations exploited, broadcasted, and analyzed every incident as criticism of the Chávez administration. The response to any public action was always immediate as both pro- and antigovernment supporters struggled for control of words such as "liberty," phrases like "freedom of the press," and television images partially representing what had transpired on the streets on any given day.

The Chávez administration's refusal to renew the concession for RCTV's public broadband, though legal, resulted in a series of organized mass protests on the streets that sometimes forced stores to close by noon. As momentum built and university students nationwide decided to march, classes around the country were suspended. Every day brought a new crisis and it seemed as though a virtually unending stream of contradicting stories were being televised. If it was difficult to understand what was happening in Venezuela from outside the nation, the view from inside was equally confusing.

In the midst of these events, I found it difficult to discern whether pro- or anti-Chávez groups were stronger at any given moment. Although Chávez' support was strong and stores would quickly run out of the red T-shirts representing socialism, the opposition regularly made itself heard. For example, during one two-week stretch, evenings were subject to deafening nightly *cacerolazos* from 8:00 to 8:30 pm as city dwellers stood in windows and doorways banging pots and pans, sounding sirens, and other noisemakers. Paradoxically, the streets themselves stood empty. Meanwhile, Chávez appeared nightly on television, voicing his response to the accusations of the opposition and their powerful media and middle-class allies. Interestingly, many grassroots movements still publicly expressed support for Chávez' presidency. They recognized his errors, but expressed forgiveness for them in the hopes that he could still create positive change in their daily lives.

Due to these events, one of these grassroots groups, the C.A.G.V.C., whom I had been trying to reach, had gone underground. Their safety was at risk because they had issued a public



declaration claiming responsibility for spray-painting graffiti (in red) on RCTV's office building. They accused those who were generating waves of unrest of attempting to destabilize the government, and of constricting life for youth with their "fascist-democratic bipartisanism."<sup>6</sup> As a result, I had to wait some time before trying to gain permission to enter their barrio,<sup>7</sup> which is famous for its murals of Che Guevara (see Figure 2). The C.A.G.V.C. had named themselves after a former member of the community, Alexis Gonzalez, who had been shot and killed during the countercoup upheavals of 2002. It was actually in response to these events that the Colectivo was officially formed. In daily use, the Colectivo typically call themselves "Alexis Vive," which translates as "Alexis lives." In songs they repeat their dedication of themselves and their works to those who have died in the struggle for what the Chávez' government calls, "Socialism of the Twenty-first Century." In this sense, the role of the dead is a constant presence; they are repeatedly and explicitly invoked.

The 23 *de enero* where members of the Colectivo Alexis Vive both live and operate, is a neighborhood historically famous for directing coups and anti-establishment activity. According to



Figure 2. Mural near the entrance of 23 *de enero*.





Ciccariello-Maher (2008), these “young militants” are “one of the best organized of Venezuela’s revolutionary collectives, and one whose platform for struggle and everyday practice entails the construction of popular militias fused with organs of communal power” (11). But they are one of many:

Decades of rural and urban guerrilla struggle in the pre-Chávez years have given way *not* to a pacification and disarmament after his election, but rather to the proliferation of networks of armed, local self-defense units concentrated in the poorest parts of Venezuela... These groups have always existed in a sort of gray area vis-à-vis the revolutionary government, providing the backbone of militant support for Chávez and in the process, occasionally receiving logistical support from various levels of government (Ciccariello-Maher 2008, 6).

In their barrio, which is like other poor areas containing *bloques* overflowing into rickety self-built shanties, the C.A.G.V.C. work on developing their social justice face. Accordingly, the Colectivo protects and cares for their neighborhood, which is like a shrine to Che Guevara and is famous for its murals covering just about every available wall.

To make sense of how the image of Che is used and understood in this context, my field work relied extensively on a mutually respectful relationship with the youthful twelve to thirty-plus year-old members of the C.A.G.V.C., a self-described vanguard movement. To establish this relationship, I drew on the help of Professor María Victoria Canino,<sup>8</sup> a colleague with a trusted record of activism supporting grassroots movements, who was able to coordinate a meeting between myself and a group of leaders from the Colectivo. We met at the Universidad Central de Venezuela in an empty classroom one late afternoon.

During the meeting, I presented a video montage to help explain my interest in the image of Che Guevara and how it operates in relation to cultural and political practices around the world. I also shared ideas about my interest in learning about how the C.A.G.V.C. create new social and cultural spaces using this image, how they bring the local to the global, the past to the present and transform it through their practice. They listened. A few days later, Professor Canino informed me that they had decided to grant me permission to enter the barrio. However, Manuel, an established member, cautioned me that if I wanted to understand what was going on, how socialism was being constructed in this part of



Caracas, I would have to be prepared to experience it first hand. To translate, he said

Sometimes foreigners, or others from outside are interested to learn about the reality here. And we take them to see all the areas of the *barrio*. Why? Because basically that is how we see socialism being forged. They must know what the socialist revolution is from within, and through experience. They [researchers] can't bring people to stay in luxury hotels, they must learn from staying right in the *barrio*, learn from the base, from the people (field notes 2007).

Without doing this, he added, visitors, whether academic or otherwise, will simply have "discussions from and between the views of the elites, not discussions from the base, with the *barrio* . . ." (field notes 2007). Aware of my own privileged position, my response to these concerns has been to consult with the *Colectivo* members and to incorporate their suggestions throughout the research.

Manuel's cautionary comment revealed to me that while the *Colectivo* members are open to cultivating outside contact and collaboration, they have a specific idea not only about what socialism is for them but also about how one should undertake the process of learning about it. Their explicit pedagogical stance is one of praxis so that having "discussions," or simply theorizing is insufficient. On the contrary, they insist that those who wish to collaborate or learn from them must live in the *barrio* and learn directly "from experience" or practice. At the time I found this to be a surprisingly theoretical understanding from which to base their actions. It became much clearer through our interactions, however, that their theory is action, and their actions are in turn understood to be theory lived out.

At the outset, everyone I spoke with treated me with suspicion because of my university affiliations, because I was an outsider, and because I was explicit about doing research. On one occasion, for instance, Ana, another member of the *Colectivo*, forcefully reminded me of my position when she commented that my *bandana*, a significant symbol and mark of a specific membership status within the community, had come to me too easily. The *bandana*, which is worn only by full-fledged members who had undergone lengthy training and which represents the group to outsiders, had been given to me as a welcoming gift. Ana's comment, however, was a way of saying that I had not earned my place in the



community yet, and thus could not fully appreciate the meaning and weight of the bandana. Concurring, I voiced appreciation for the gift as a token of their recognition and trust in an alliance in its infancy. As agreed, I presently continue to correspond with, and share my work with, the Colectivo and respond to their concerns, both in order to contribute to the community, and in the spirit of researching *with* rather than *on* others. My hope is that this will go some distance in ensuring that this research is not parasitic in nature, but rather is oriented toward giving back and sharing with the community.

### LIVING WALLS OF PRAXIS

The Colectivo members made their world known to me through a tour of the neighborhood murals. Through this, I learned of their stories and their histories. As a result, it became clear to me that the constant visual presence of the murals is more than mere decor. For instance, an abandoned and decaying swimming pool was recovered through the voluntary labor of the Colectivo and commemorated with a mural (Figure 3).

The pool had been a dumping ground for seventeen years and part of an urban jungle where drug dealing and other illicit activities would take place. When it was declared unsalvageable by municipal grounds officials, the young Alexis Vivistas decided to clean it up and make it operable through voluntary labour fueled "by the example of Che Guevara" (interview transcripts 2007). What they produced was "more than a physical result"; they also created *conciencia* (interview transcripts 2007). As a result, the pool is now a free facility for local children and is operated by the Alexis Vivistas with help from community members. In these sense, the reclaiming of the pool was an act that, in Jose's words, "raise[d] the flags of working for love" in the Guevarist philosophy they "fervently" follow (interview transcripts 2007).

In a corner of a parking lot in the barrio, there was another mural, this one the image of a masked man (Figure 4) presiding over a spot where people used to dump garbage. The bandana masking the face matched the one used by Alexis Vivistas with the yellow, blue, and red of the Venezuelan flag, and notably the face of Che Guevara prominently located in the center of the mask in the mural. The effect of this was to render Guevara's face as the





Figure 3. Mural marking the recovery of the community pool.

face of the now faceless person behind the mask. Whosoever is behind the bandana/mask, literally speaks *through* Guevara's image. After clearing the original mountain of garbage from that spot, and having the painting done, Jose and others observed that after the mural appeared, the garbage permanently disappeared. The lack of services, such as garbage collection in these barrios, means refuse is so visible that when seen from afar rivers of garbage appear to be snaking down the hills. Clearing a habitual dumping spot is thus quite an endeavor. The success of this work suggested to members of the Colectivo that the image functioned in a particular way: more than a symbol that stood apart from people's lives, Guevara's image worked in concert with those lives, as part of the practice of people's daily experiences.

Another mural (Figure 5) became the subject of an award-winning photograph. Ana noted this with disapproval, explaining that while the photographer won a prize, nothing was given back to the Colectivo, even though they had helped and demonstrated solidarity with the photographer when he came to the *barrio*. Beside these and other murals interspersed throughout the neighborhood, most of which carry themes, slogans, and songs to accompany the





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Figure 4. Parking lot mural where garbage used to be dumped.

image of Guevara's face, I want to mention two other important landmarks.

First, the Cuban-run and staffed medical clinic that is part of a government initiative is taken by Alexis Vivistas as a sign that the government is serious about change and has noticed their plight. This initiative made it possible for most of them to see a doctor for the first time in their lives. Manuel and others told me the Cubans' presence was in keeping with the internationalist philosophy of Che Guevara and the collective has decided to protect the Cubans. Thus, this clinic is a virtual link to the image of Che.

Second, another mural makes visible the story of Kley, a twenty-year-old leader of the Colectivo who was gunned down in

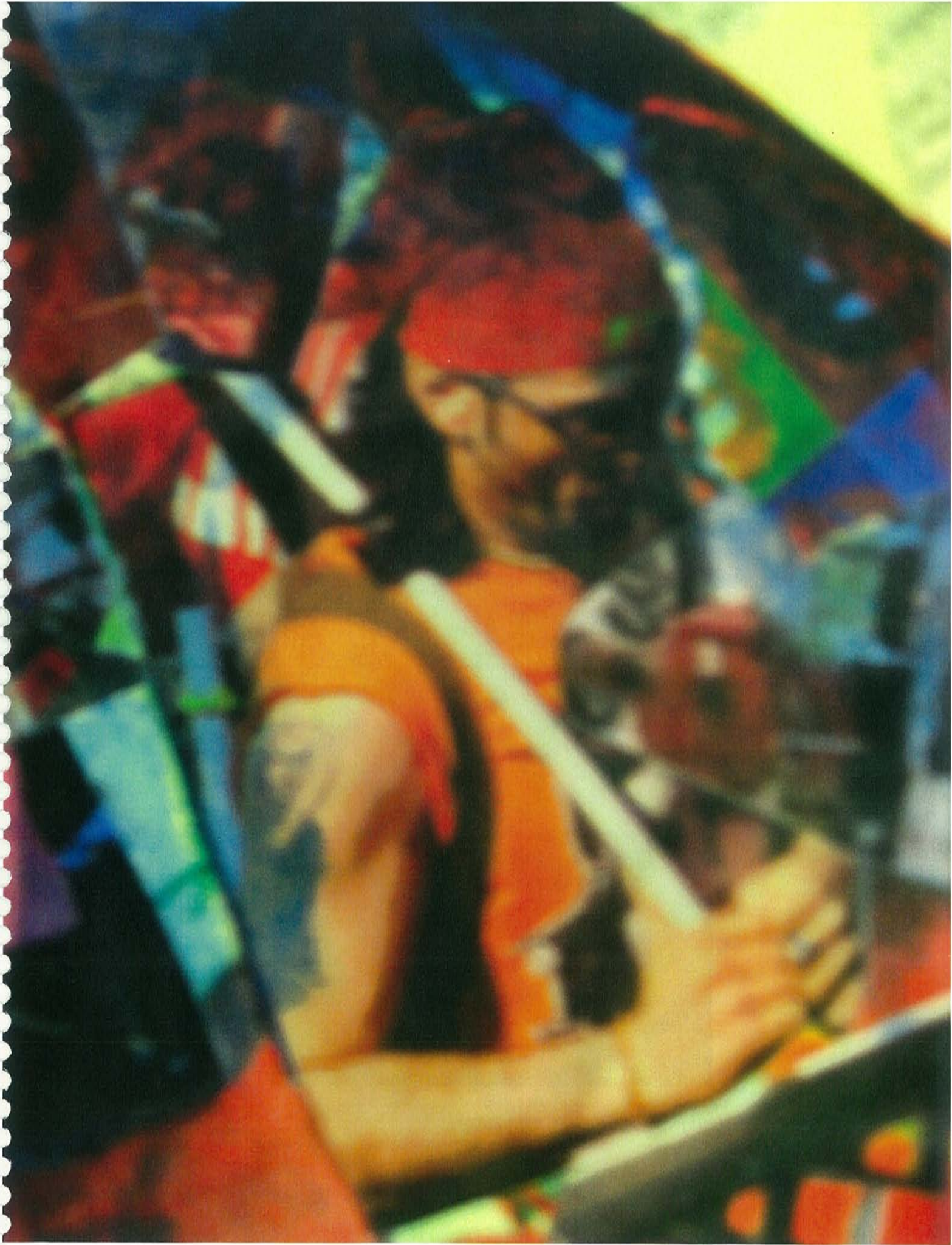




Figure 5. Elaborate mural on the other side of the parking lot.

a parking lot by thieves in August 2005. I draw attention to this mural because its purpose for the members of Alexis Vivistas is not just as a memorial; rather, as expressed by Jose, "it is our task to keep him alive" through the mural (Figure 6). That is, the mural embodies an important link between these young people and social change. The presence of the mural is a call to action, a call to struggle, which itself is meant to keep Kley's leadership, and by extension that of Alexis alive. As the words on the mural exclaim *peleando vive en cada compañero*, which is to say, only in the act of struggling does he return to life in each companion. Importantly Kley is also shown in the mural with the Colectivo's bandana and consequently, Guevara's face. When members of Alexis Vive wear the bandana over their faces while engaging in social actions, this image in this mural recognizes that they share the space with Kley behind Guevara's face.

#### ACTING IN THE "FACE" OF CHE

Members of the Colectivo Alexis Vive are explicit about including images of Che's face, predominantly the various renderings of the famous 1960 photograph, in all the murals, banners, T-shirts, and



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Figure 6. Commemoration of Kley.

visual media representing them and their community. Because they are in a context filled with urgency and precarity, I view their use of this image as an important political act: this is not a trendy cool face to have on a T-shirt in Venezuela, in other words, and certainly those who *do* wear it, do not do so carelessly. Rather, they use this image to create something new: new stories, new relationships between word and image, new ways of working outside of words.

This became increasingly evident to me when I attended a public meeting at C.A.G.V.C. headquarters. While there, I repeated the presentation I gave at the university to the leaders of the Colectivo and outlined some of the ideas I had about Guevara's image. We discussed what the image was doing in their neighborhood, on their insignia, including why and how they had chosen it, and what power it had for them.

As various members of the collective repeatedly explained, part of Guevara's influence stemmed from what he stood for, his theory of the New Man, his ideas of praxis and voluntary labor, and his anticapitalist stance. Enrique also told me that Che Guevara's face is more than an image, it is a *frontera* (frontier). It is a possibility, a kind of threshold through which the truths of C.A.G.V.C. are



brought into being. Their truths become visible in the image of their actions. And they see both their truths and their actions reflected in Guevara's face, and projected through a creative visioning. In the ways members of Alexis Vivistas use Guevara's face and slogans, then, the site of figuration becomes both mirror and message, springboard, and anchor for social change.

#### THIS IS NOT AN IMAGE

Here, Che Guevara's image is not really an image in the sense of a static thing. It is rather both an object and a relationship in the world. I contend in fact that among the members of the Colectivo, they "use" the image, and yet, at the same time, the image acts and also "uses" them. Thus we might say the image is "brought into play." This matrix image is not only incorporated into the collective visual archive but it demonstrates an "ability to 'retrieve' (Schudson 1989) so many past images. [And yet] retains its own 'life'" (Kampf 2006, 282). No longer merely a photograph for members of the Colectivo, the image of Che is described as, among other things, a symbol like "the red cross in a combat zone" (interview transcripts 2007). Following this and thinking discursively and performatively, we might ask what does the Red Cross in a combat zone *say* and *do*?

Ideally, it tells people where they can go; it orients, indicates safety, and perhaps tells opposing forces that they need not attack, nor will they be attacked from that quarter. It speaks and acts. Cultural geographer, Mitch Rose (2002), following Thrift and Dewsbury suggests

Performativity is a perspective that is "chiefly concerned with the ongoing creation of effects through encounters...rather than with consciously planned codings and symbols." Instead of relying on the naturalized, sedimented, or ideological to explain the coherent nature of social meaning and power, a performative framework looks to the unpredictable process of interpretation, dissemination, and difference (390).

Thinking of the image as a verb rather than a noun, as essentially performative yet material, offers a different way of perceiving its function. Rose (2002) sees the forces that give meanings as "enactments" or engines of a performative system consisting of substantive acts and gestures. Enactments express primarily desire so that context is essential for comprehending practice. How do these





enactments manifest, and what meanings do they take on in doing so? I follow Hans Belting (1994) in the conviction that the meanings of images are best revealed through “people’s beliefs, superstitions, hopes and fears in handling [the] images” (xxii). In the case of this picture of Che Guevara, it presents not only a face, but also something that has been treated as a person, been spoken to, despised, or carried from place to place in ritual processions. However sacred this image has been made, though, it is not a cross, an icon of the Virgin Mary, or any other symbol whose authority resides in its religious connotations. Rather, its authority and being-ness are embodied in the public claims of a community where the image operates. In a sense, a community’s claims are always in the act of claiming, they are never quite done, neither then is the image.

Given this, we might ask: How does the Colectivo in Caracas demonstrate an understanding of how this image works? We have the example of the mural preventing garbage disposal in that corner of the parking lot. Here the image is not passive; rather it authorizes certain actions and attitudes while prohibiting others. It is dynamically militant. In addition, this “activeness” is something of which Alexis Vivistas are acutely conscious. The parking lot mural frees viewers from passive reception so that a space for dialogue can open, though not necessarily through language, which then engenders a capacity to act.

In terms of performative ways the image works for the Colectivo, let’s consider their bandana and crest (Figure 7). Why does Che Guevara’s face appear there? He is not Venezuelan, they have other heroes. In fact, are they not to some extent *de-facing* the national flag by using it as background for this image? Manuel asserts that he and other Vivistas do not see this as a case of defacement, rather it is the expression of an ideal:

We take it up, we believe in the revolution of Che, his ideas, his philosophies. We link [Venezuelan hero Simon] Bolivar and Che... the act of having his face over the flag is high impact. This is the ideal. It’s expressing a political ideal—to have Che there... modifying the landscape with the image. Che for us is the construction of the new man... to reach being like el Che, is to be more human (interview transcripts 2007).

Jose adds to this:

The figure of Che gathers all that is for us socialism, fraternity, *egalité*, giving others value, formation, he leaves to construct other paths, ... those





Figure 7. *Bandana Mural.*

the seeds of Che they are spread around the world. The proposal here is to work the basic things of the neighbourhood, as a grassroots movement, to raise social conscience and strengthen our purpose, the work we do is the raising of conscience, when we are constructing we are accompanied by Che and others who have died, "*la gente come con lo que ve.*" How do you convince people without showing them? And it is one thing to show, but each thing we do is a story, it had a debate and a story... Our constant practice is to create consciousness in the community (interview transcripts 2007).

In essence, wherever they do community work, it is seen as the incarnation of Guevara's thought and philosophy: a kind of reenactment of Guevara's own embodiment of his philosophy through his actions. They *want* their work to be an image of that ideal of Guevara's and they are keenly aware of the visual impressions they make. Let's think about that expression, *la gente come con lo que ve*, which would translate directly as "the people eat with what they see." Fundamentally, what is seen in terms of acts and actions is what people consume, that which nourishes, and is readily taken in. Accordingly, *seeing* is material and central to life: it, like



food, is real and transformative. It is what is seen, that convinces. As Manuel emphasized

When we are cutting the grass, people see what we are doing, when we are cleaning the pool, we are demonstrating the image of the practice, not using words to convince. If one studies the phases of Che, he is still having a revolution...he was always in the midst of a personal evolution from one form to another, that constant revolution, to keep working and constructing...is what we bring to life and our work here (interview transcripts 2007).

Building on this idea further, Manuel adds

Through that image there is a whole constellation of stories and messages...[As such,] it is...a form of resistance against the model and mechanisms of the superstructure of this society...it is concepts and theories...and an ideology...(interview transcripts 2007).

In this sense, I contend the face of Che Guevara is understood performatively among members of C.A.G.V.C. The Colectivo Alexis Vive produces its own images, murals, and scenes, not as reflections of the world, or as remembrances of the past; rather, they act as models of behavior, perception, and experience. The images propose action. Indeed, they act in the world by authorizing action.

At the same time, the act of cutting the grass through voluntary labor allows Alexis Vivistas to *enter* the image itself, to become an image of something, perhaps of what the face of Che Guevara is to them. This agentic role takes representation beyond semiotic notions of indexicality, symbolism, and iconicity, though all these relationships play a part. And so the pivotal idea on which all this rests is their understanding of action. The uniforms of the Colectivo Alexis Vive carry the slogan: Alexis Vive EN NUESTRO ACCIONAR (Figure 8). For Alexis Vivistas, the only way to bring Alexis back to life is through their actions. Not by memorials, ceremonies, or writings (though these are also acts), but by acting in the way Alexis himself would have acted. Through this, Colectivo members evoke him.<sup>9</sup> The direct translation for the word *accionar* would be actioning, so they say he lives in their actioning.

This is a powerful way to understand the space of action, and uncanny in its similarity to Hannah Arendt's vision of this term. Arendt believed that political activity is not just about coming to a consensus about what is good in society, rather action in view



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NO REGISTRATION  
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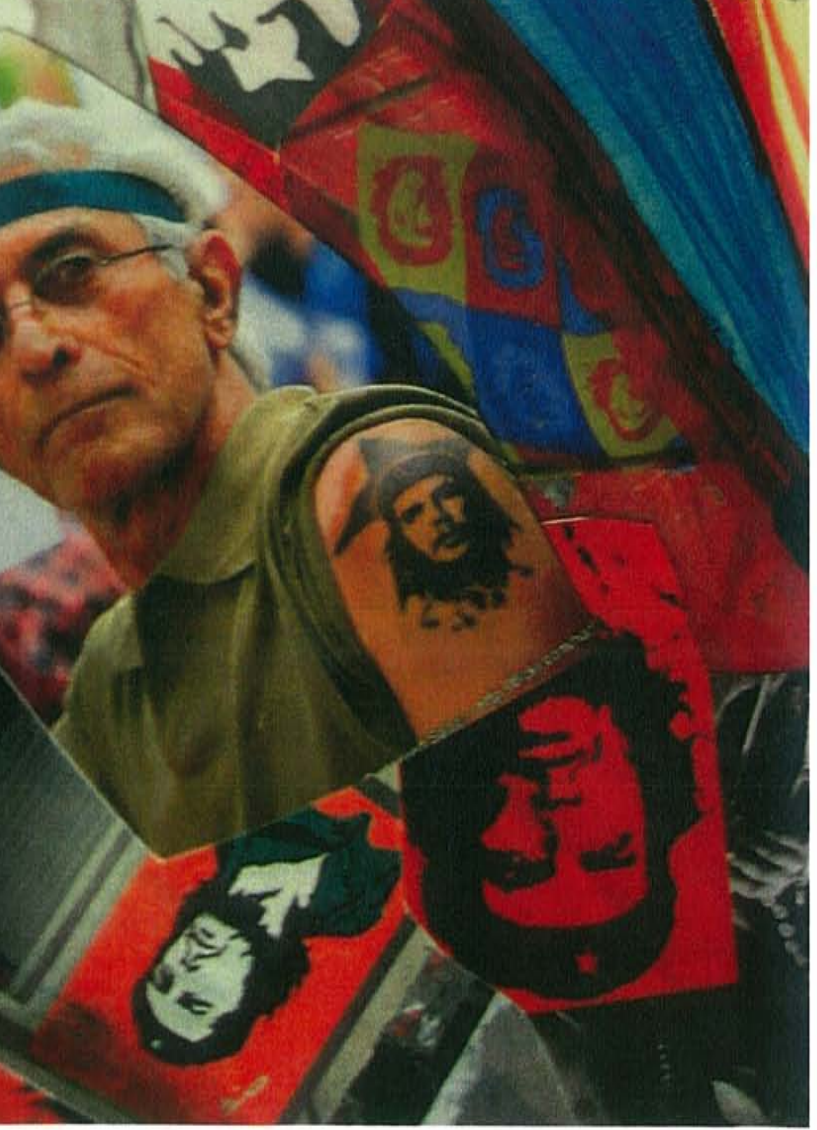




Figure 8. Uniform.

of others is what allows individuals to have agency in the first place. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt (1959) locates action as an articulation of human togetherness: "Action, ...no matter what its specific content, always establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries" (170). As d'Entreves (2006) observes, with this way of conceiving action "Arendt is able to develop a conception of participatory democracy which stands in direct contrast to the bureaucratized and elitist forms of politics so characteristic of the modern epoch" (6). For the youth in the Colectivo Alexis Vive, cleaning out a pool or providing security for their neighborhood are neither labor nor work. They are action in the Arendtian sense, which is a good fit with Guevarist philosophy. "Arendt's theory of action and her revival of the ancient notion of praxis represent one of the most original contributions to twentieth century political thought" (d'Entreves 2006, 6). On the ground, Alexis Vivistas are living this praxis and working through questions of meaning and identity in creative ways.



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The Hands of Che Guevara

What then does this Colectivo's actioning have to do with the image of Guevara's face? Arendt (1959) gives us a hint in her epigraph from Dante Allighieri:

For in every action what is primarily intended by the doer, whether he acts from natural necessity or out of free will, is the disclosure of his own image. Hence it comes about that every doer, in so far as he does, takes delight in doing; since everything that is desires its own being, and since in action the being of the doer is somehow intensified, delight necessarily follows. Thus, nothing acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self (155).

In action being is intensified, made manifest, revealed, and thus *imaged*. Dante's words resonate, expressing an idea that is strikingly similar to what Alexis Vivistas say. His words also characterize Arendtian action as having something inherently *visual* in its intent. Can we say then that resistance and visuality are intimately linked? When the members of the Colectivo not only emulate Guevara by bringing to life his ideas in actioning them, and breathing life into their fallen by actioning in their name, do we not see how they literally become that image (and more) as they act, or, more properly, how they are imaging. The imaging, as disclosure, becomes an unmasking. Even if, paradoxically, they always act with Guevara's face over their hearts and often over their own faces. We understand in motion and not just any motion but a flickering oscillatory one. Action is the key. In this sense, we can say that we image the world.

#### HOW DO IMAGES IMAGE?

Images work in the world differently from words. In the context of the relations between people and images in informal settings and more specifically the conditions of dissent, images can challenge the regimes of representation governing a society and have the power to recompose subjectivity and praxis. French philosopher Alain Mons writes: "The new legitimacy is authorized by mediatic forms . . . and overall by the image in the broad sense of the term" (quoted in Gilberti 1998, 5). In other words, we contend with an *other* legitimacy, other than the institutional one, capable of resituating one's satisfaction in defying the conventional order while forming "the light shining from an ethic that concretizes something more than accepted regulatory infallibility" (Mons in Gilberti 1998,



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5). Where does the legitimating power of images come from? This is not a legitimacy that has legality or law at its source.

Testimony to the efficacy and vitality of images exists in what they *achieve*. This stands apart from what people do in relation to imaged form, and is enhanced by the possibilities they envision an imaged form might achieve. Images are happening. Numerous scholars and thinkers wrestle with the slipperiness of grasping what images do because semiotic (art historical), phenomenological, or anthropological languages do not suffice. For example Mieke Bal (2003) writes, "the verb 'happens' entails the visual event as an object, and 'emerges' the visual image, but as a fleeting fugitive, subjective image accrued to the subject" (9). The event/experience *as* image: but what is our place? Can we say it also looks at us: that we feel regarded if we take a moment to contemplate, confront, and be compelled with/in image?

Similarly, art historian Hans Belting (2005) understands that an image "... *may live in a work of art, but it does not coincide with it*" (42). His notion resonates strongly with Emmanuel Levinas' (1987) understanding that "a person bears on his face, alongside of its being with which he coincides, its own caricature, its picturesque. The picturesque is always to some extent a caricature-... there is then a duality in this person, this thing, a duality in its being... We will say the thing is itself and is its image" (6). There is a virtual "something-more" that is essential, and not an excess that is part of the being of any "thing." And thus, "images (are something that) happen between we who look at them, and their media, with which they respond to our gaze" (Belting 2005, 46). Just as freedom, for Hannah Arendt, does not exist until the moment it is exercised, in other words, the image only happens when someone is creating or responding to what they feel, or perceive of it. The young Alexis Vivistas reveal an awareness of the dynamics of image-ing when they describe it as a place where they can enter, and act, yet at the same time, tell me it is a frontier, or an interface through which they can speak (See Figure 9).

Listening to the Alexis Vivistas describe how they conceive of this image shows they do not see it as static, nor as a unitary object. Perhaps the route is to ask not what, but when image is. Or how can images be seen to *work* or occupy roles in the particular places they create? Discursive models of "reading" images ground a number of interpretive strategies tending toward blurring the text-image boundary. Thinking of an image as something that can be read is misleading. Images are not things that can be deciphered through



image saying, "thus touched and drawn by it and into it, I get involved, not to say mixed up in it. There is no image without my too being in its image but also without passing into it, as long as I look at it, that is as long as I show it consideration, . . . *regard*" (7). Thus, we can understand viewers themselves as becoming the ground for an image only when they enter it. Understanding image this way follows an *other* logic, it requires a different psychic organization, it is outside of what we now conceive as culture or cultural, or at least it is not bound by it in its existence as a force. These thinkers, in their considerations of image, reveal the complexity inherent in explicating what happens when one encounters and is encountered by an image, while highlighting its significance.

## CONCLUSIONS

In light of the actioning and imaging of the Alexis Vivistas and the literature on understanding image, my reflections on the figuring of Che Guevara's face lead me toward seeing it as both exceeding the frame as well as providing an empty space. It is more than and less than image. It no longer belongs to the world as we know it, as we have learned it, but images combining energy and ideas, authorizing people to make something, giving direction, and creating new iteratives through the praxical element of authorization. The Vivistas' use of the Che image results in the concentration of and redispersion of meaning, and generates new permission to act or dream or realize. Being interpolated by the image of Guevara's face means not only that the viewer animates it somehow but also that the viewer is animated by it in turn. The process is not unidirectional. An image images through a process of inter-animation whereby the potency of its interfacing is subject to the conditions of possibility provided by the particular and unique viewer as well as between viewers, and the material and virtual context expressed by the figuring figure.

Thus the imaging of "Guevara transcended that original to project itself on the . . . struggles of liberation multiplying the myth" (García, Sola, and Sánchez 1997, 202).<sup>10</sup> Correspondingly, and not by accident, the political writings of Guevara "co-form a theory oriented to . . . immediate action"<sup>11</sup> (García, Sola, and Sánchez 1997, 202). The members of the Colectivo Alexis Vive understand themselves as *hermanados* (en-brothered) by the image, as well as being marked by its capacity to be *sin fronteras* (frontierless) (interview transcripts, 2007).



In the unpredictable and claustrophobic chaos of Caracas, the youth of the *23 de enero* have strategically utilized the government's occasional logistic support made available to community initiatives (Ciccariello-Maher 2008) and grassroots movements to articulate their own truths and expand beyond the space they were originally allowed. The recovered swimming pool for example was officially out of their sphere of influence but they battled to reclaim this space. Though they call themselves the *vanguardia* and see their task as consciousness raising, it is not in the sense of a messianic role of becoming leaders who have a patent on a better way to do things and would thus impose it on society. On the contrary, they seek to have an impact on society by acting in the image of Che Guevara and leaving it up to individuals to decide what he or she will take from the living examples they offer. In this way they are imaging as a way to feed the community and fortify themselves, which "translates concretely in the re-appropriation of one's true nature through liberated labour, and the expression of one's own human condition through culture and art" (Guevara 2000, 191).

In their creative actioning, they enact another revolution, not the one touted by the Chávez administration, but one where they are always re-creating themselves and their community through their reimagining of the world: an ignescent revolution always in the unfinished process of revolutioning and as such, a revolution within the revolution.

## NOTES

1. I gratefully acknowledge the Research Abroad Scholarship administered by the Faculty and Graduate Studies and Research, University of Alberta, for a four-month field work grant beginning in April 2007 supporting this case study. Additionally, this research was made possible by the support of Dr. Daniel Mato, my host mentor, responsible for the *Programa Globalización, Cultura y Transformaciones Sociales* de la Facultad de Ciencias Económicas y Sociales de la Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) in Caracas. In this program, joint projects are undertaken with and supported in part by the Latin American Association of Sociology, and the Latin American Council of Social Sciences among others. I am grateful to Dr. Max van Manen for his help and judicious comments in editing the final version of this article. Likewise, the thoughtful and constructive comments of the anonymous external reviewers and others such as Dr. C. Adams and Dr. J. R. Kelly are well appreciated.
2. All photographs in this article were taken by M.-C. Cambre unless otherwise credited. This original was famously copyright free.
3. In a recent incident in Baghdad, Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zeidi flung his shoes at visiting U.S. President George W. Bush, and was immediately taken into





custody as a result. The Associated Press reported that one day after the incident, Mr. al-Zeidi's apartment "was decorated with a poster of Latin American revolutionary leader Che Guevara" (Reid 2008, A4).

4. The popular two-tone image also appeared around this time, the work of Irish artist, Jim Fitzpatrick, who slightly tilted the eye position upward prompting many to describe Guevara's attitude as defiant and courageous. Although this was not the raw, more vulnerable feeling transmitted by the original, it was just as infectious and promoted further spread of the image.
5. (Spanish original) Mientras en Cuba persiste la dimensión pública de su figura, en el mundo capitalista perdura ante todo como un tópico central de la contracultura juvenil. El póster marca el territorio liberado en el cuarto del adolescente, donde el *nonsense* está cargado de significación. Ciertamente, Guevara no funda por sí solo el imaginario juvenil, pero en su legado confluyen algunos de sus rasgos principales: el impulso al nomadismo, el sentimiento anti-sistema, el ideal de una muerte romántica en el esplendor, todo ello dispuesto en una cierta facha nocturna. Un *look* rebelde que no tiene nada de trivial, dado que los iconos sólo son delgados en apariencia . . . manteniendo, sobre todo, el espíritu de la utopía igualitaria, en una referencia que perdura fundamentalmente en la militancia juvenil.
6. They used this expression in their declaration to contrast with their self-identification as Marxist-Leninist Bolivarians (after Simon Bolivar who contributed to Venezuela's gaining independence from Spain in the early 1800s).
7. The word *barrio* normally indicates neighborhood in Spanish but the way it is used in Caracas is to designate the ghettos where self-made shanty homes sprout up, usually on hillsides or around the *bloques* to house the overflowing numbers of people living in poverty.
8. Professor María Victoria Canino teaches at the School for Sociology at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and at the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research (IVIC). Her research projects include the sociology of science and technology, knowledge, and development, as well as studies on petroleum, power, and social organization.
9. And yet it is Che's image rather than Alexis' on their shirts because their struggle and the hope they nurture transcends the boundaries of their neighborhood, city, nation: they feel the link with all other groups who, one might say, "fly the same flag."
10. "... Guevara trascendió ese origen para proyectarse en el . . . luchas de liberación multiplicaron el mito."
11. "... conforman un teoría orientada a la acción inmediata. Ensayos de agitación, relatos de la experiencia guerrillera, están escritos en un lenguaje llano y despliegan la retórica emotiva del panfleto."

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## 10

## Virtual Resurrections

### Che Guevara's Image as Place of Hope

MARIA-CAROLINA CAMBRE

*Thus a window is a window because a region of light opens out beyond it; hence, the window giving this light is not itself "like" the light, nor is it subjectively linked in our imagination with our ideas of light—but the window is that very light itself, in its ontological self-identity, that very light which, undivided-in-itself and thus inseparable from the sun. But the window all by itself —i.e., apart from its relationship to the light, beyond its function as carrier of light —is no longer a window but dead wood and mere glass. (Florensky 1996, 65)*

*Looking is also an action that confirms or modifies ... "interpreting the world" is already a means of transforming it. (Rancière 2007, 277)*

#### Introduction

In 2006, while reading news on the Internet, I came across an image of Hindu women demonstrating in the streets of Tamil Nadu, Chennai.<sup>1</sup> The special correspondent describes the crowd and its demographic composition under the banner "Expressing Solidarity" and reports on the reasons they have publicly gathered to protest. The caption under the photograph reads, "Student activists from Assam taking part in the procession to mark the beginning of the national conference of the AISF in Chennai on Tuesday." I read on in an effort to better comprehend this image:





They came from Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal and different parts of Tamil Nadu. And they marched along Anna Salai and Wallajah Road on Tuesday in traditional costumes, raising slogans in different languages.

But the young girls and boys, who participated in the procession to mark the beginning of the 26th national conference of the All-India Students Federation (AISF), had a common mission: oppose "all attempts to commercialise or communalise education." ("26th AISF National Conference Begins" 2006, n.p.)

Questions boomeranging in my head, I peered at the image and hunted through the text while conscious that I was not exempt from what Jacques Rancière tells us in the second epigraph: each time we witness we know *something*; when we try to think of what that might be, we are transforming it by interpreting it. Confirmation that I was seeing what I thought I was seeing came in the form of the correspondent's descriptive note: "The activists, carrying AISF flags and portraits of *Che Guevara* and freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, P. Jeevanantham and K. Baladhandayutham, raised slogans ... [and] called for effective measures to stop collection of capitation fee in schools and colleges" (my emphasis). Odd but true, in ancient Tamil territory, southern India, near the Bay of Bengal, it is *Che Guevara's* posterized face (multiple copies) born aloft by sari-clad women. I cannot discern other "freedom fighters" in the photograph, and it really looks like *Che* alone is accompanying these protesters. The textual confirmation serves only to make the image that much more bizarre: Why *Che* and not Gandhi or someone local, or perhaps a more relevant figure? Why here, and what is the link with India or any issue in Hindu education? The sight of *Che's* posterized face in this photograph was like an inexplicable anomaly, compelling my disoriented eyes to contemplate it.

This image has not only appeared in Chennai: in countless situations and places around the world, Cuban photographer Alberto Korda's iconic face of *Che Guevara* is an image that goes beyond T-shirts, key chains, and other knick-knacks, beyond being a brand appropriated by one or another movement, and beyond being a symbol of some type of rebellion.

The demonstrators in Figure 10.1 have a dream not just for themselves but for a better education for their community; it is a hope in the sense that it is not a case of "us" or "them," but "we." My wonderings about this and other such experiences led me to a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology enables me to conjecture why *this* image accompanies the people in the photograph. Why here? Why now?<sup>2</sup> How is it being experienced? In the spirit





**Figure 10.1** "26th AISF national conference begins." (Photo credit: R. Shivaji Rao, *The Hindu: Online edition of India's National Newspaper*, January 4, 2006)

of Gabriel Marcel's method of concrete description and personal invocation, I adopt an approach or "methodology that has been called *d'après Heidegger*, ontological-phenomenology" (Grady 1970, 56). While mindful that particular lived-experience anecdotes may provide *reflective* understandings of phenomenological topics, I study them "as a concrete example of a possible phenomenological topic" (Max van Manen 2008, personal communication). Thus, this process is not methodologically objective; rather, it is open at every turn through "heuristic attentiveness, creative insight, interpretive sensibility, and scholarly preparedness" (Max van Manen 2008, personal communication).

In the first epigraph Florensky cautions that ontologically, windows are not *like* the light but rather are inseparable from it, as inseparable as light is from the sun in our experience. Without light no *window* really exists, just wood and glass. Like windows, images can be conceived of as structural possibilities, although they are not limited to that alone. Without the viewer looking, it is not an image, just paint or pixels on a surface. So how can we know when an image is imaging?

Roland Barthes (1982) offers us the concepts of the *studium* and *punctum*. Although Barthes is generally regarded as a structuralist, in *Camera Lucida* he provides notions that are more fluid and transitive in that they exist in a relation and move back and forth without being synthesized. The *studium*, for example, functions to inform, to represent, to cause to signify, to provoke



desire. In contrast, the *punctum* is of the order not of form but of intensity—not the “detail” but “time.” It is uncoded and unnameable; it *acts*. The *punctum* speaks more to the limits and contradictions missed when we assume visual representation is made up of legible signs that scholarly systems can classify. When people describe their experiences of this image of Che Guevara, we can ask if they felt a *punctum*. Did the image act; was it imaging with/for them, as wood and glass become a window when the light shines through?

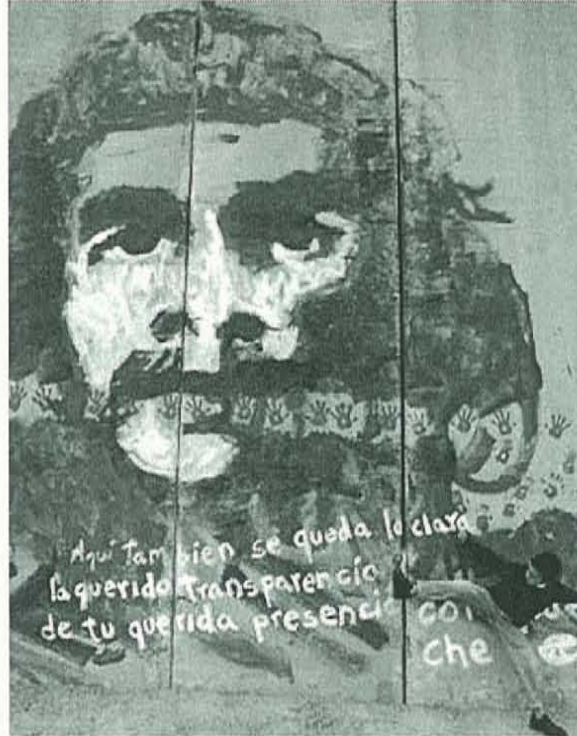
In the following experiential account, a Lebanese student is “stopped dead” when she encounters a graffiti version of the Korda photograph.<sup>3</sup> The anecdote was a response to a widely distributed request for experiential accounts about confronting the image of Che. Abbey<sup>4</sup> describes her experience of this image transfiguring the “apartheid” wall in Palestine:

When I saw the image on the walls that enclose Ramallah and Bethlehem, I was stopped dead in my tracks. I mean, I’d already seen it on key rings and T-shirts in the markets, but this was different.

Bigger than life and almost bigger than the wall—looking out at a future—a possibility—over the wall and beyond the occupation. At least that is what it felt like to me. And this image, offering solidarity—not just his own—but reminding Palestinians living under military occupation that they are not alone in either their suffering or their resistance. Reminding Palestinians imprisoned behind those walls that there are people beyond who are working and struggling in solidarity—reminding them that there is a global structure that is oppressing them, that this is not a tribal war but a war that feeds on patriarchy and capitalism. That there are millions who are imprisoned behind walls. The wall is an oppression and is guarded and watched all the time. To manage to get an image on the wall is, in itself, an act of subversion and resistance. His image there speaks to the meaning embedded in that iconic gaze and face.

Does the image somehow displace or dissolve a wall built to divide, demarcate, and decide territorial boundaries in Abbey’s eyes? She was able to see beyond the wall, not physically but temporally. The coordinates of the place have been revised; no longer is the painted area simply part of the wall. It reconfigures that physical place as well as the lived experience of the beholder. Recognizing its very presence as transgressive, she wonders how an image like that came to be painted on the ever-watched wall. This is the aspect that grabs hold of her, that strikes her. On this wall that seems to never end and reaches forbidding heights, the image seems to override rather than be overwhelmed. Its presence demonstrates that, though watched,

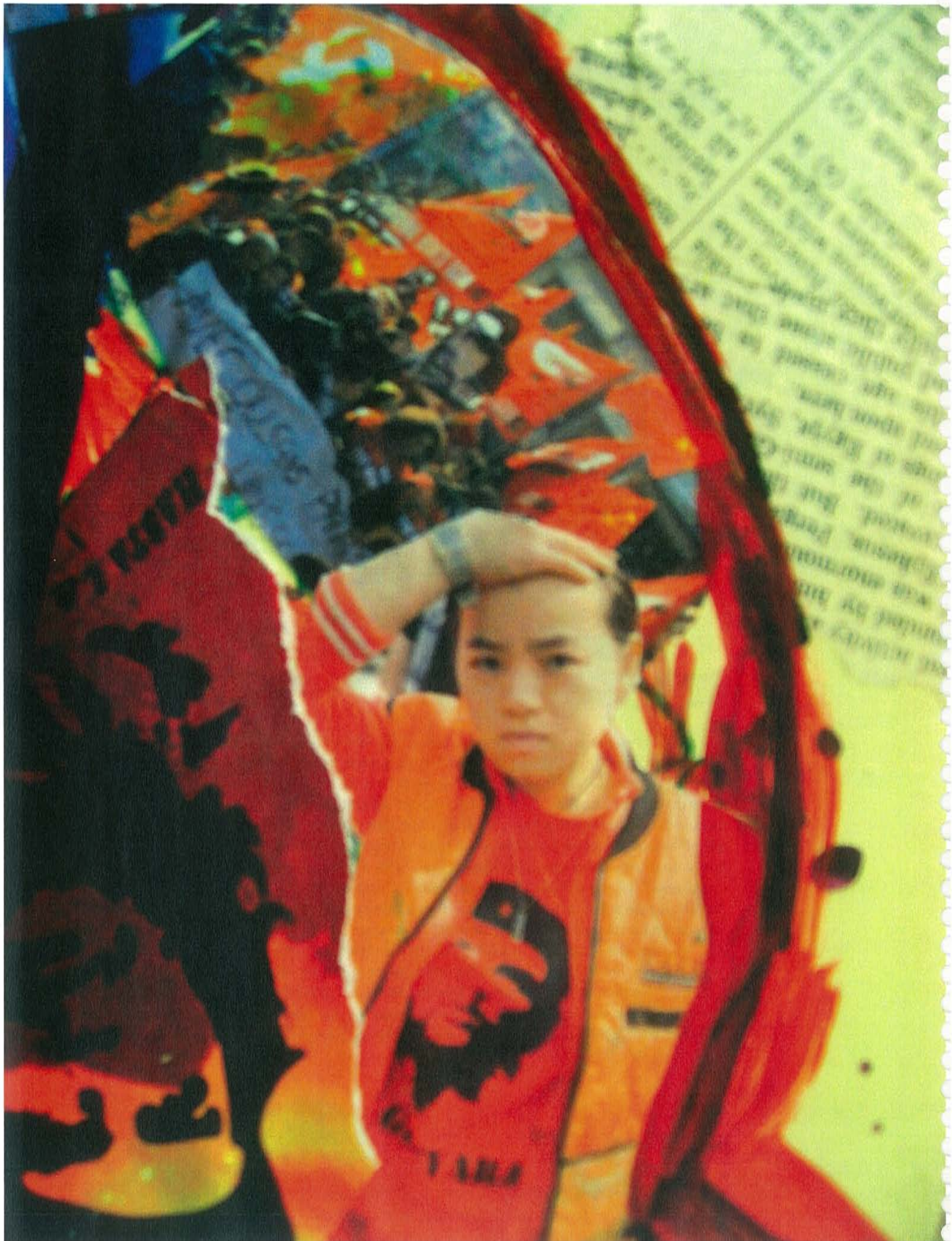




**Figure 10.2** West Bank barrier Che Guevara. (Photo credit: <http://www.heyche.com>; used with permission of the webmaster. Image is no longer at the site but is available at Wikimedia Commons)

the artists created their graffiti unseen. Just as the vision through a window can be larger than the wall in which it is embedded, her sense of solidarity and the possibilities of resistance seem to “outsize” the oppression. Does the image bring those “beyond” into contact with those others trapped behind the wall? Does it act as a “reminder,” making present those invisible allies and reinforcements who seem to be at hand? If the image transforms that which is empirically already there with an almost alchemical “as-if-ness,” it is not because of some projection of political allies but rather for the unseen act of imagining an *other* future. Abbey expresses the hope of seeing a barrier become a bridge through the image.

Viewing the image not only brings about the effect of displacing the wall, but also helps Abbey relocate herself in relation to that place, and become other than who/what she was. Martin Heidegger (1962) tells us the *phenomenon* is that which shows itself, and through logos “that” is made manifest, so with the aim of letting “that which shows itself be seen from itself





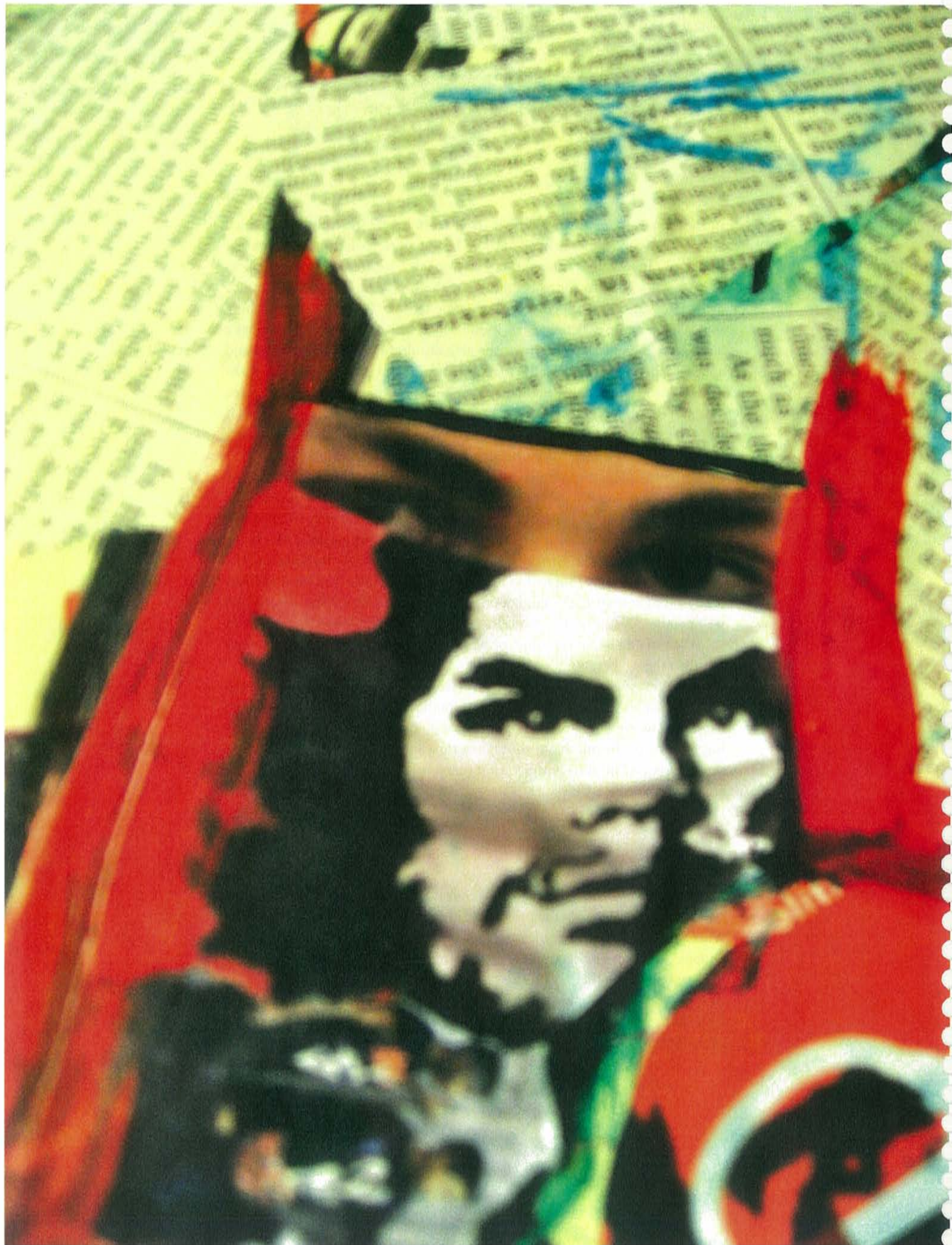
in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (58). But that which shows itself can also hide itself and can be dynamic, flickering between visibility and invisibility, transparency and opacity, legibility and indecipherability. This goes to the very nature of the image as such. Philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (2005) coincides when he writes, "[T]he image is a thing that is not a thing; it distinguishes itself from it, essentially" (2). As in Abbey's account, her experience of the image actively altered her sense of time and space as she lived it. The wall was made present and at the same time withdrawn by the image in the moment of her being "stopped dead" in her tracks. The metaphorical figure of being "stopped dead" hints at how dangerous it is for her to imagine the future. Was she the walking dead in that place under the shadow of the wall, until Che stood in for the future?

In that moment the image brought with it another dimension, it *became* the thing that is not a thing. In both places, Chennai and Ramallah, the image of Che Guevara's face had more than informational value. It also had agency in the sense that it was not merely the communication of a thing that can be known, the portrait of an Argentine-Cuban revolutionary (*Che-studium*), it is a thing that makes things happen or at least somehow anchors a hope that something, a change, will happen (or *Che-punctum*). At this point some questions arise regarding the nature of this hope that seems to translate to any language, time, or place and the quality of its relationship to this image.

At the same time, although we have witnessed the forceful impact of the image of Che's face on the mural in Ramallah, and there are many such examples, we cannot ignore one of the most ubiquitous mediums for presenting this image, the humble T-shirt. Does the visual effect when we see someone wearing a Che shirt parallel what we have heard thus far? When we see someone wearing a Che shirt, is it a sign of hope or merely desire? What is the difference?

### How Is Hope Experienced?

When a couple finally buys the house they had been saving their money for, when a professional gets the promotion she or he had been working toward, when people achieve significant successes in their lives, as soon as these "hopes" are satisfied, we realize they were not much more than desires or lesser hopes. Benedict XVI (2007) gives us a more nuanced understanding of hope than the standard dictionary definition of an expectation or wish by helping us distinguish between lesser hopes and greater hopes. Though these lesser hopes can keep us going, they are not enough. Once satisfied,



they reveal themselves as meagre and misplaced, failing thus to qualify as true hope and being, rather, “hope for myself alone, which is not true hope since it forgets and overlooks others” (28).<sup>5</sup>

In Gabriel Marcel’s comprehensive and rich doctrine of hope published in *Homo Viator*, he takes great care to distinguish between hope and desire. Joseph Godfrey (1987) explains, “Marcel insists that to hope is not to desire: desiring is essentially insistent, fixated and covetous or self-centered, while hoping is none of these” (235). He adds, it is not that all wanting is like this, but there is a difference in the “*quality* of the wanting” (236). With Marcel, then, I take one of hope’s definitions to be

essentially the availability [*disponibilité*] of a soul which has entered [*engagée*] intimately enough into the experience of communion to accomplish in the teeth of will and knowledge [*à l’opposition du vouloir et du connaître*] the transcendent act—the act establishing the vital regeneration [*par lequel elle affirme la pérennité vivante*] of which this experience affords both the pledge and the first fruits. (quoted in Godfrey 1987, 235)

Vital to this understanding of hope is recognizing its essence as both act and attitude. In other words, hope is performative in that taking the attitude of opening one’s soul to the “experience” is at the same time an opening to that experience. And it is not just any experience but one of “communion,” that is, in unity or close relationship with others. Hope is necessarily social. Thus Marcel emphasizes “the difference between essentially material results and those that engender true human community” (Godfrey 1987, 236).

Hope invites our participation in the experience of this communion that, while including human others and human community, is conceived of much more broadly. Marcel’s conception of the “intersubjective” dynamic of hope is core. To elaborate on the concept, Godfrey draws on Martin Buber’s doctrine of the I-Thou as a complementary parallel to Marcel’s work to reveal how these intersubjective relationships extend to nature, texts, artworks, and other things. Although the absolute hope for, Marcel claims, “beyond all data, beyond all inventories and calculations, a mysterious principle which is in connivance with me” (Godfrey 1987, 238), it does not dissolve in abstraction, but instead is always empirically mediated. Thus “a person does not hope in God without some relation to something experiential” (238–39). So the question remains, what are the vehicles opening experiences by which we can be called to participate in hope?



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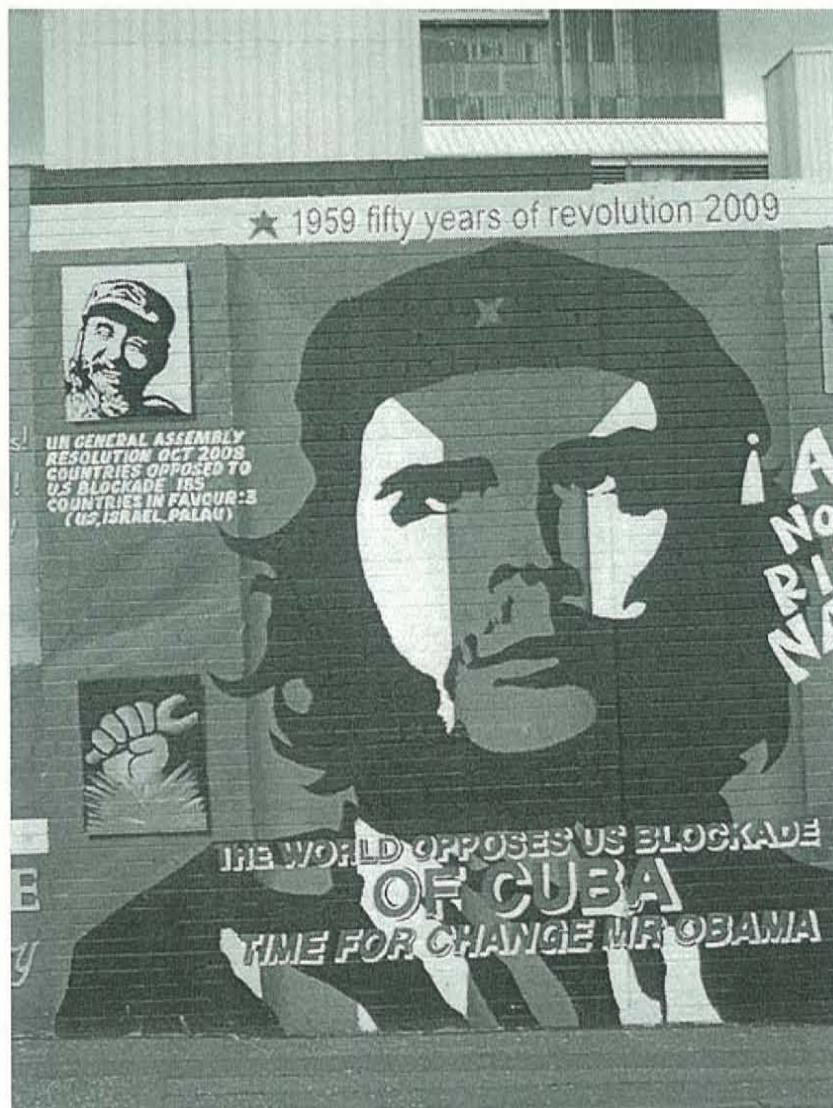


Figure 10.3 Mural, Belfast, Ireland, 2009. (Photo credit Anna McClean)

### Representing Hope

Anchors are the most ancient symbols for hope and were used by the early Christians to signify the cross in disguise, thus elevating the safety represented therein to an image of eternal salvation. Yet long before this use of the anchor-as-cross, the anchor was seen as a sailor's last chance to steady



his vessel in a deadly storm, intimately connecting it to the notion of hope. In the biblical Epistle to the Hebrews, the writer describes “Hope” set before us “as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm” (Hebrews 6:19–20, New International Version). Metaphorically, hope is a ground. It is the particular ground we need in times of overwhelming struggle or when in danger of despair.

Opposing conventional ways of taking hope as something that can be aimed—“Hope has a target” (Godfrey 1987, 239)—Marcel’s analysis coincides with early understandings that “hope is precisely the holding off from despair when I’m sorely tempted to say: All is lost. Hope is ‘the act by which this temptation [to despair] is actively or victoriously overcome’” (ibid.). It is no surprise that places where people endure the direst conditions are also the places where the most resolute hope actively and visibly manifests itself. Thus, we find hope in Pandora’s box with all the evils and wherever there is a temptation to despair.

Returning to Marcel, hope “unites the human being, not to the world in general, which would mean nothing, but to a certain determinate ambiance which is as concrete as a cocoon or a nest. [Thus the] linkage is determinate, concrete to the point of being nest-like, conferring a sense of at-home and nurturing” (Godfrey 1987, 238). Using the localized image of an intimate home, a point of safety and trust, prompts Godfrey (1987) to write: “This seems a very fruitful way of imagining the strong hoping of finite people in finite situations, without requiring some sort of idolizing or absolutizing of the finite term of hope” (239). Building on these understandings of hope, we can turn back to the image of Che and wonder: If we can hope in the anchor for stability in the storm, does the action of this image resemble a kind of phenomenological anchor in a storm? Can this image function as a vehicle, or refuge, enabling that transcendent act of defying will and knowledge in opening one’s self in hope?

### Hope vs. Desire: Just Another T-shirt?

The Che phenomenon is challenging because its role in popular culture in terms of differentiating between its appearance as a form of “designer rebellion”<sup>6</sup> on the T-shirts of youth and tourist key chains, for example, co-exists with its ability to act as an anchor of hope, as in Abbey’s case and the image from Chennai. While recognizing the number of arguments on both sides of the problematic nature of the status Che’s image, Gabriel Marcel’s and Roland Barthes’ frameworks help engage the debate between those who hold that it is an either/or. Let’s examine the following anecdotes related by three people.



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When I was in high-school, my observational skills could not help but notice this image everywhere. Already developing an obsession with T-shirt designs, I had to hunt one down for my wearable collection. A family visit to T— finally gave me this opportunity. (Anna)

An almost immediate response in the impulse to “collect” a T-shirt with this “design” on it leads to a “hunt.” From what we have understood through Marcel’s distinctions between hope and desire, we can see there is desire in this case to possess one of these shirts. But Anna’s “obsession with T-shirt designs,” made her feel she “had” to have this one. In a sense, it was essential to the collection, creating a more intense wanting, a need. Why is it such an essential item to include in the collection?

The image makes me think about high school, when I just moved to Canada. A lot of teenagers seem to like wearing T-shirts with the simplified silkscreened photo of Che. Not that I’ve never seen this photo, it’s just that where I come from it’s not that fashionable. (Julia)

Julia is relocated to another time and place when she looks at the image. She attributes the popularity of the T-shirt to fashion, and it becomes a marker for her of the difference between Canadian society and her original society, as well as signifying youth. It stands out for her as difference and she is highly aware of its presence, and yet it is significantly powerless, almost uninteresting.

When I see/saw Che on the T-shirts in Ramallah and Jerusalem, I chuckled and passed by—went on looking for Za’atar and olives. The T-shirt Che is just a marketing tool—it doesn’t elicit any thoughts of resistance or activism. It’s just a T-shirt with an image. (Abbey)

Again, the image on the T-shirt calls one’s attention to it. In this case, Abbey, who had been so affected by the image on the “apartheid” wall, is prompted to chuckle and shrug off the image because “it’s just a T-shirt.” As a shirt, then, it does not have the *punctum* it had for her when it was on the separation wall. It is therefore easy to disregard.

The ubiquitous presence of the image of Che Guevara as a two-tone print on T-shirts has made it a cultural phenomenon. Frequently it is associated with the colour red, but all colours and sizes of shirts carry this reproduction of Che’s face. Most often it is accompanied by slogans such as, “Hasta la victoria siempre” or “Patria o muerte,” or by even the slogans of bands such as Rage Against the Machine. Generally, these slogans indicate rebellion,





**Figure 10.4** Palestine Nakba Commemoration, May 2008. (Photocredit: Amber Hussein)

violence, or resistance against the institutionalized dominant order. The image is more widely known than the history of the man. It has become a popular culture icon, and yet calling it either an icon or a symbol does not satisfy it. In fact, Cuban exiles who call him a mass murderer, and speak against Guevara's philosophies and policies, and Leftists who imitate Che or use him as an example, as well as politicians such as Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales all refer to the same image. Both sides argue against the fashion-centred uses of the image, insisting there is more to it (though for different reasons). Yet, as we have seen, this alone is not enough to endow the image with *punctum*, although the possibility of its transfiguration haunts it constantly. In this sense, Ariel Dorfman (1999) is able to look at the T-shirt and say, "Deep inside that T-shirt where we have tried to trap him, the eyes of Che are still burning with impatience" (1). Exceeding their medium, the eyes punch through the T-shirt from elsewhere. Possibly there is an expectation of something to come:

Just a sense of determination and focus. (Michael)

The gaze sometimes described as defiant, sometimes as pensive, leaves us feeling that there is a future anticipated. When people are asked about the image, they most often speak of rebellion, even if they are unfamiliar with the historical figure of Che Guevara himself. Words like *intense/passionate*,





Figure 10.5 Athens, Greece. (Photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft)<sup>a</sup>

*bravery, inspired, determination/defiance, Cuba, sight into the future, group and belonging, and confidence* often come up.

Che was all about change. (David)

Many people wear these T-shirts and carry memorabilia, but the image is often disconnected from memory. Do they understand or share his cause, or are they romanticizing the idea of revolution? A great deal of debate seems to exist, at least in North America, around the person, as well as the image.

No matter the degree of visual abstraction, this image still seems to have the ability to attract or *arrest* so many viewers. Barthes would say it is “without a code,” but it might be more fruitful to think of it as a code that devours any medium. Although we immediately decipher posture, such as rebellion, or socio-political context, such as 1960s Cuban revolution, or what Barthes would refer to as the *studium*, often something is still there that we cannot name. Barthes (1981) writes:

What I cannot name cannot really prick me. The incapacity to name is a good symptom of disturbance ... [it] *holds* me, though I cannot say why, *i.e.*, say *where*: is it the eyes, the skin.... The effect is certain but unlocatable, it

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does not find its sign, its name; it is sharp and yet lands in a vague zone of myself; it is acute yet muffled, it cries out in silence. Odd contradiction: a floating flash. (53)

This acute yet muffled paradoxical floating flash or *punctum* performs. The following anecdote illuminates the *punctum*'s operation by reflecting on a common reaction to buying the T-shirt:

Walking home from the pub, my eyes are caught by a mannequin in the window. Not unusual for this street designed to sell, the central hub of the latest trends, but unusual for me. Though in my years living here, out of self-preservation I have developed the ability of letting my eyes slide over the windows without seeing what lies beyond them. So today is different; my eyes slide right through the window, unusually drawn to this figure and the shirt she wears. It is red, silk-screened with the face of Che Guevara. I instantly recognize the face. The moment I see it I want it. I want that shirt. I think of going in, trying it on, buying it—but no!—I stop myself. I don't want that shirt, I tell myself, though my desire for it still flutters in my chest. I don't want that shirt. Think about it, my brain argues. I'm saddened, no; I suppose I don't want it. My desire gives its last few futile flutters and lies still, now heavy in my chest. This all in the minute it takes me to walk past the store. (Ed)

The inner tug-of-war Ed experienced in that moment of passing the shop window seems like a manifestation of the innate ability he had to differentiate between hope and desire. The wanting was there, but resistance was stronger. Like Barthes, he cannot immediately name his disturbance; we do not know why he resisted buying the shirt, but we do know his eyes were "unusually drawn" to the shirt with its image. Perhaps this experience gestures toward the *punctum* of this image for Ed because his eyes were simply unable to slide over that particular window. He had another experience:

Wandering through the streets of Venice, I am annoyed. The Biennale is on and the artists have taken over the city. Entire blocks are excluded to normal foot traffic (unless you pay to see the exhibits), and the canals prevent jay-walking to one's destination. I am lost somewhere in the back alleys, trying to find my way back to something recognizable.

The walls around me are high, old, growing moss, and periodically revealing a residence behind them. I see ahead of me a poster pasted on the alley wall, and, by sheer dint of there being nothing else to look at, my eyes are drawn to it. As I approach, I make out a recognizable face, a black-and-white photo, with text above and below. As I get closer, the face isn't quite as recognizable



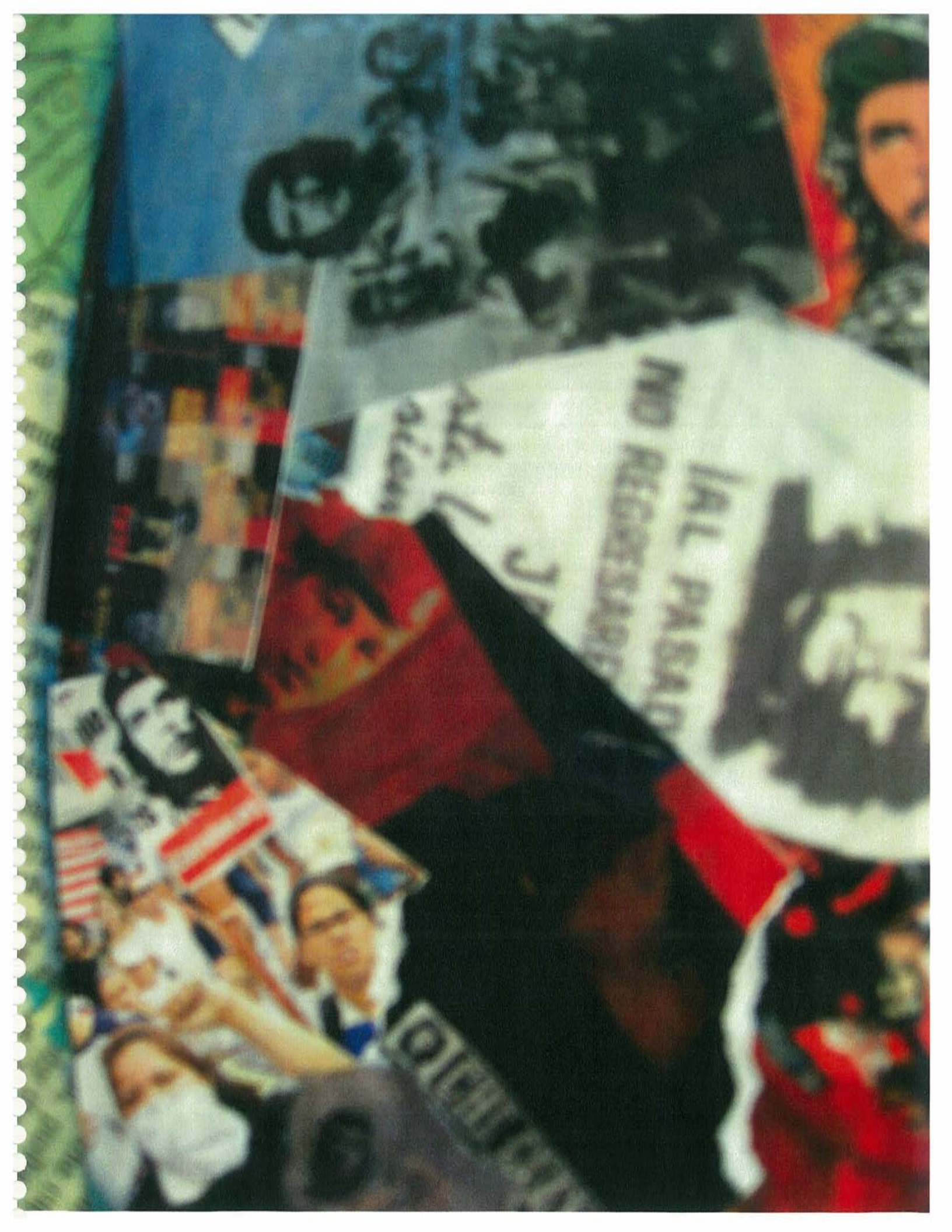


as I thought. No, something is definitely off. It is not the face I know, but an imitation of it. An identical imitation, if there can be any such thing. My eyes scan the text for some clue—Italian, which I don't read, but I can fathom the poster's purpose. An exhibit, by the woman who has put herself in Che's place. I am angered by the artist, by her nerve. Spitefully, however, I think "she's behind the times. That's been done. She'll never win." (Ed.)

The replacing of the original facial features with those of the artist angers Ed; he is jolted and disappointed. Although he assesses and processes information from the poster, the *studium*, he still experiences something powerful from the present absence of the face he expected (it is there evoked in him by its deferral by an imitation, but it is not concretely there). The comment "No something is definitely off" alerts us to the existence of the *punctum*. Although the original face is not concretely there, it is still virtually acting. Paradoxically, acting becomes other than being. From Elvis to Madonna, and even George Bush, almost every face imaginable has been substituted in to the frame provided by the silhouette of Che Guevara's long hair and starred beret. It is a kind of invasion of a territory, an assumption of a shared space, provoking indignation in those who might feel that place is not to be shared. For Bachelard (1958), looking and knowing are not separated, but the knowing of looking is of an altogether different order: "to specify that the image comes before thought, we should have to say that poetry, [or the visual image] rather than being a phenomenology of the mind, is a phenomenology of the soul" (xix–xx).

### Where Is the "Here" of the Image?

Deleuze and Guattari's notion of territory is described by Grossberg (1997) as "a consolidation across contexts, a holding together of heterogeneity by the expression of a rhythm among the elements" (20). It helps us describe what is happening when someone locates or is relocated by looking at any rendering of Che Guevara's face taken from the matrix photograph, however indirectly. The dynamic mode of existence that Deleuze and Guattari call "territory" can be imagined as a moment where all the lines of context converge—from the medium (T-shirt or other) onto which the image is rendered, to what an individual is thinking in the moment of detecting the image, to the colours and shapes, and how these strike that particular eye in that particular sighting, and any other thing that contributes the rhythm or "refrain"—allowing the "expression" of that rhythm to open up an inside of an outside and an outside of an inside of that experience, "a way of constantly holding back and opening up to the chaos, which is never only chaotic"





**Figure 10.6** School mural in Gonzales Catán, Buenos Aires, Argentina. (Photo credit: M.-C. Cambre)

(Grossberg 1997, 20). In this regard the experiences can be seen as places (“you had to be there”) that are neither geocentric nor anthropocentric. Thus, they are free to be mobile and intersubjective and open any passages and conduits matching the rhythm of expression. For example, when Turkish singer/songwriter Sezen Aksu (2005) sings, “Acinin yuzolcumu yeryuzunden cokmus aslinda,” or “The surface area of pain is (actually) greater than



the surface area of the earth," she reveals this kind of deterritorialization. Although we are bound to the earth and have an innate sense of "territoriality," we are called to recognize and tap our universal and boundless extra-territorial dimensions (dreams, hopes, and emotions). Consequently, to be able to respond appropriately to affective phenomena, we require philosophically deterritorialized ways of thinking, with all their complexity and ambiguity.

The dynamic of the construction of place, if we look at it in this way, has a great affinity for how places of hope do their "becoming." However, we need to differentiate how the place of hope is experienced differently, how it "folds out of revelations of renewal in our being ... at once a return to our authentic being as ex-istence (standing-out radiating) and the burgeoning of uniqueness" (Grady 1970, 61). Or, in Marcel's words, "as before, but differently and better than before" (in Grady 1970, 61): revived, resurrected, and yet transfigured.

Fittingly, this particular image authorizes a link to a similar rhythm when given the possibility of expression. In other words, the anchor does not become a place of hope until there is a terrifying storm, just as the face of "Che" does not become a place of hope until contexts converge. This is the link Marcel talks about whereby we are always already involved in every act of hope. The force of the convergence creating this experiential anchor or territory of hope can be life-altering, as this next account vividly depicts.

My first encounter with Che took place in the aftermath of a bloody student confrontation with the police at the University of Nairobi. Some protest leaders had used some Che portraits in the protest and this had greatly incensed the government. One of my friends on campus had smuggled a Che portrait into his room, and he was so proud showing it to us behind closed doors: a huge risk. I mean, associating with Che meant days and nights in a police dungeon; people perceived as having "Marxist/revolutionary" leanings were routinely tortured in Kenya in the '80s. Having a portrait of Che would be considered sufficient association to warrant a visit to the dungeons. I remember vaguely admiring the man, Che. How could a portrait be so powerful, how could it make a government run scared? But I guess I feared Che more than I admired him. Knowing him could mean the end of my university education, and possible detention. The fear pervading the country, then, was that bad. I have hardly "interacted" with Che since, but any mention or even the sight of his portrait reminds me of those dark, oppressive days in Kenya. I think Che was part of the oppression. Che was a household name, in the list of banned personalities. (Paul)



The fear Paul experienced resulted in part from his knowledge of the likely government reaction to finding the image of “Che” in a student bedroom, and yet testifies to the hope of those who were willing to risk “a visit to the dungeons,” as well as to the government’s phobic relationship, “running scared” with it. Through the alchemy of the image, a bedroom becomes a lair of resistance. An image that permits and incites police brutality against students transfigures a place of learning into a place of punishment, encouragement into reprimand. Paul remembers those days as dark ones, his fear linking Che’s image to them irretrievably.

A thread connects the life of the man represented in the image to its presence in the minds of students, but for Paul’s testimony, it accrues the additional history of being an image that did not ward off oppression but rather brought it on. Those accepting the likely possibility of detention, torture, and an end to their lives as they know them understand the risk; perhaps the hope they hold out is seen as something greater than their own individual lives. Or they may be engaging the fearful aspects of resistance that are usually left unsaid—that death is as likely an outcome as victory. An image takes the shape of the hope it’s invested with through a process of inter-animation. We animate the image, and in turn it animates us, renewing our vision as we look.

### **The Historical Image of Che**

To understand how this image is always becoming an anchor for diverse people globally, it is important to reflect on its sheer status and popularity, as well as some of the reactions evoked by it. It is almost always the same face gazing, unsatisfied, from flags, banners, murals, posters, and T-shirts. All the usual features, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, appear, depicting a man’s face, Caucasian, thirty-two or thirty-three years old, in two tones. It is devoid of background; a clear, cloudless sky behind the figure is virtually blank: nothing special about this empty space. These endless repetitions of Guevara’s face, sometimes printed and at times hand drawn, are the progeny of the original photograph whose publication rocked the world of photography like an explosion, as its author once observed. Somehow it became the most reproduced photograph in the world. Is it simply a matter of the subject, the man himself? Yet he appears in countless other photos unremarked. What is so special about the moment of looking at this image, and being seen by it?

The rough, roguish, unkempt hair and beard, a Robin Hood–esque tilted cap, eyes gazing up and into the distance, suggestive, and simultaneously expressive. We are constantly bombarded with images of aesthetically





beckoning, evocative faces, and yet this one stands out. Some say it is famous because of the timing of its publication: it appeared just as he himself disappeared—a mysterious kind of aura clings to it. Perhaps this image, this face, is not *just* there, but is actively showing itself, calling the viewer to confront it, to respond, to *see* otherwise. And viewers do respond:

The star. It shines so bright in the sky and so does he, he stands out from the crowd; he's so different. His hair, so long, experienced and gone through many struggles and life-threatening events, just like his soul, his body, his life. His eyes, sees everything, happiness, sadness around the world and tries to change it in some form of way. His nose smelt [*sic*] all different kinds of dirt, the smell of death, the smell of victory, the smell of change. His voice, persuaded many people, changed many lives with the interaction and his presence. The voice of many people. His face, everyone knows it's just you which describes it. (John)

And:

Revolution, romance, rugged lifestyle, protest, "fighting the man," erotic feeling. Makes me tingle, feel fierce, and it makes me feel powerful. I think that's what makes me tingle. Makes me nervous/uncomfortable. (Natasha)

John and Natasha have textured, affective experiences of this image. Ernesto Guevara was an individual who lived a unique and brief historical moment, and yet the face is one that "everyone knows." A presence that causes tingling, is energizing, and gives discomfort, and yet a "star" to be followed. Many people feel the reverberations and respond to this portrait of Che Guevara. It repeatedly emerges in the midst of social protests and demonstrations and gazes out from placards and banners. Masked participants protecting their identities make Guevara's image more conspicuous through the contrast. The visual outcome is, in effect, a face for the faceless.

The phenomenon does not pass unobserved, and poets, songwriters, and novelists attempt to capture it. Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano poetically writes of Che as "el nacedor"<sup>7</sup> which translates roughly to "the one who tends to be born" or "the one who keeps being born." In the poem he asks why it is that Che has this dangerous habit of repeatedly being born. Perversely, the more he is insulted, manipulated, betrayed, the more he keeps being born through the image—a movement remarkably like that of hope itself. "In fact, we could characterize the essence of hope as 'the very movement by which it challenges the evidence upon which men claim to challenge it itself'" (Grady 1970, 60). On another occasion, Galeano comments



that Che is resurrected in each one who believes in what Guevara believed in, and is resurrected in the great popular liberation movements of these lands that were not condemned by any gods to the disgrace that they endure. Rebirth and hope are intimately linked.

### Theorizing the Image: The Punctum and Access to the Virtual

Georges Didi-Huberman (2005) points out that the “relation of the soul to the world of the eye” is none other than the *not-synthesis* of an instance that is itself torn between consciousness and unconsciousness, and of a world that coheres only up to a point (141). So the structure is open in the sense that it will be breached at its centre—and in the eyes of the beholder it is ignescent, capable of bursting into flame. Just as an actor’s performance achieves its best result from the “polarity of the opposition between the mental representation evoked by the text and the action performed by the actors—it’s all about that disparity the gap, that is where it all happens, it is one of the underlying bases ... the opposition is a basic prerequisite—synthesized in the spectator’s act of interpretation which transforms both the representation and the reality in a flash of emotionally charged ‘seeing’” (Honzl 1976, 88).

In the original photograph, Che’s gaze does not engage us—we are positioned below, and he is unaware and lost in thought. Raw documentary feel transmits in black and white, but also in the seriousness and unposed quality of the figure. In discussing such “fugitive testimony” in the case of photography, Barthes (1981, 93) elaborates on *studium* and *punctum* writing. “It is not possible to posit a rule of connection between the *studium* and the *punctum* (when it happens to be there). It is a matter of co-presence” (Barthes 1981, 42). Che, the historical personage, is the *studium*. But simultaneously the image has become something else, more than just a rendering of a man, not Che but a *punctum* we might also recognize as the talismanic “Che,” Mireya Castañeda (1997) writes, “The photo is converted into myth ... revealed in his look is the super-concentrated rage for those deaths, there is an impactful force/strength in his expression” (para. 3).

Is that it? Is concentrated rage over injustice the *punctum* that makes this photographic image immortal and uncrushable by the fetishistic commodity sphere selling “designer rebellion?” An elusive essence, it somehow can transmit regardless of the varying media sporting the image. For Barthes (1981), “the Photograph sometimes makes appear what we never see in a real face” (103). It is what Didi-Huberman (2005) termed “visual.”





**Figure 10.7** Top left: Barcelona (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft); top right: New York mural (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft); bottom left: Honduras (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft); bottom right: Bolivian miners (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft)

Where the *visible* is all that is seen on the surface of the image, the *visual* is all those things seen but not apparent, such as the “mother’s eyes” in the daughter, or whatever the viewer brings, but it also includes indexical features; for example, hair blowing would be the *visible* indication of wind, which would then be the *visual* element. However, the alchemy of the photograph of Che Guevara is not just that it is *visible*, or *visual*, but that it also provides a space for the Barthesian *punctum* to act, or in Didi-Huberman’s terminology, the *virtual*.

Didi-Huberman (2005) writes:

The word *virtual* is meant to suggest how the regime of the visual tends to loosen our grip on the “normal” (let’s say rather: habitually adopted) conditions of visible knowledge.... The event of *virtus*; that which is in power, that which is power, never gives a direction of the eye to follow, or a univocal sense of reading.... It is irrefutable and simple as event; it is situated at the junction of a proliferation of possible meanings, whence it draws its necessity, which it condenses, displaces, and transfigures. (18–19)



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A TRINITY  
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...IE VEGAS EL BICHINO  
...EDIDOS PABLUS DOG  
...AG CAMBIA DA RUA

...SELLOS PAIS  
...A...



**Figure 10.8** Top left: Tehuacán, Mexico, and Marcos (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft); top right: Brussels, 2004 (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft); bottom left: Spanish protest (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft); bottom right: Protest rally, London, England, May 17, 2003 (photo credit: Indymedia, Copyleft)

This image provokes, holds a possible future, an almost-legible-yet-escaping-expression sense of a frontier or horizon that presents itself and yet withdraws in the sheer rawness of the image despite, or rather precisely because, it is delinked from the actual human being whose figure once deflected light onto the film. Although the Bolivian miner has only a small sticker on his helmet, the original is invoked, and the image is no less effective as an amulet, a much-hoped-for protection in the lethal context of the Bolivian mine.

### The Likeness: A Face in Time

John Berger offers the notion of “the likeness” to provide perspectives for approaching some of the elusive elements of the experience of this image,





while they fall short of explaining the unique impact of this specific photograph. We might accept that the photo's experience is something perhaps out of reach of the merely explanatory and take what we can from what they offer. Berger believes the transcendent qualities manifested through, but not necessarily on, the human face are the key to the mystery of the Other, both in art and in daily encounters.

As Berger (1980) discusses photographs of people experiencing terror, pain, and grief, he observes "these moments are in reality utterly discontinuous with normal time." Later, he reiterates, "such moments, whether photographed or not, are discontinuous with all other moments. They exist by themselves" (39). He recognizes first, that time can be interrupted by raw emotion, and second, that this ruptured moment can create a place in and through a photograph. Susan Sontag also defines the photograph as "a trace, something directly stenciled off the real, like a footprint or a death-mask" (in Berger 1980: 50). Digital photography and reproduction, far from doing away with this imprint of the subject, has actually absorbed it. The affective force, the feeling of witnessing, and that someone was there is still evoked; even with all the savvy photo-editing techniques available, there is still a possibility of a Barthesian *punctum*.

Berger aptly describes our media environment surrounding us as one where the volume of images, as in quantity and also as in noise, is unprecedented. In addition, a great number of these images are faces that "harangue ceaselessly by provoking envy, new appetites, ambition or, occasionally pity combined with a sense of impotence" (Berger 2001, 58). Not all of these faces represent the "likeness" of the person pictured; indeed, the opposite is true. For Berger, a "likeness" is characterized more by the absence than by the presence of a person and requires one to have somehow experienced the person him- or herself before a "likeness" is possible. He explains:

When a person dies they leave behind, for those who knew them, an emptiness, a space: the space has contours and is different for each person mourned. This space with its contours is the person's likeness and is what the artist searches for when making a living portrait. A likeness is something left behind invisibly. (19)

What does the eye perceive that the microscope cannot reveal? Berger would say, a "likeness." He illustrates this concept by narrating his attempts to draw the face of a friend. He drew her face many times in her presence but was unsatisfied because he could not capture the aspect he sought. Later, he redrew the picture from memory and found the remembered face had the missing



essentials: it was a “likeness.” Somehow, via memory, essences animating, giving life to a person’s face can be envisioned. Berger and Benjamin use the metaphor of a broken jar lovingly reassembled, thus becoming “both flawed and more precious” to compare to the “image of a loved place or a loved person when kept in the memory after separation” (Berger 2001, 59).

The likeness cannot materialize without the artist, and the emotions the memory of the Other serve to trigger in the artist, who then seeks to transmit them, to become a medium for this contour, or space, noticed but not understood. A “likeness” cannot exist independently of the interaction between one and the Other; the resonance or vibration occurring in the human relation makes the “likeness” possible. For Berger, the eyes of the viewer are essential, but the eyes cannot be looking in an indifferent way.

In *About Looking*, Berger’s theory of the likeness is still undeveloped, but its root can be detected when he writes, “A person loved is recognized not by attainments but by the verbs which can satisfy that person” and thus “their contour or shape is not a surface encountered but an horizon which borders” (1980, 130). A horizon (the idea of the horizon in me?) can be understood as something not visible, but visual, always receding, present and absent. Berger ends *The Shape of a Pocket* (2001) with a reference to Alberto Korda’s photograph of Che:

A likeness is a gift and remains unmistakable—even when hidden behind a mask.

A likeness can be effaced. Today Che Guevara sells T-shirt, that’s all that’s left of his likeness.

Are you sure? (258)

**“The face speaks. The manifestation of the face is already discourse”<sup>8</sup>**

In Davis’s *Levinas: An Introduction*, we learn, “the encounter is not an event that can be situated in time; it is rather a structural possibility that precedes and makes possible all subsequent experience” (1996, 45). It is a space, and it is the kind of space where hope’s manifestation is possible. For Berger, this time-transcendent element can be transmitted, but not tamed, in images of the Other. And for Barthes, the photograph itself is invisible yet provides a vehicle for the image, just as the physical face provides a mobile map, features, and contours, for emotional expression. In either case, the “epiphany” or “revelation” is located not inside but between the Other and the Same. Or



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as Levinas tells us, “the face of the other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me” (Levinas in Davis 1996, 133).

Although the face is present to our vision, at all times we see the “plastic” image, yet there is always more. In a parallel comment Derrida (1978) states, “[T]he face is not in the world because it breaches and exceeds totality” (134). Faces are profoundly communicative, and we need no lessons in how to decipher the myriad expressions that can manifest themselves on such a mobile surface. The face’s expression is also key as it “expresses the expression itself, it always remains master of the meaning which it delivers. ‘Pure act’ in its way, it [*il*] refuses to be assigned an identity, cannot be reduced to what is already known, brings help to itself,... speaks” (Levinas in Davis 1996, 132). If the expression is present, communicating, and “acting,” the way Levinas believes, it can permit/authorize the emotionally charged “look” to penetrate the medium of the picture. This is a new space. Yet the dependency on inter-animation with the viewer also can facilitate commodification of the image, and consequently indifference. This possibility is exploited by popular culture continuously. Nevertheless, enormous numbers of receptive viewers continue to be “arrested” by the image today.

Overflowing its medium via the expression, the “Che” image is always beyond reach as Other. At the same time, the look on Guevara’s face turns the receptive viewer into Other. Since the expression of intense emotion can invoke a facial response—for example, we may grimace or frown when we see someone experiencing a tragic moment, or we may smile when we see someone having a particularly joyful moment—we have the capacity to mirror what we see. This photo can other us because the expression recreates and dislocates.

### Conclusion

The “likeness” left behind by Ernesto Guevara is invisible but perceptible in the matrix photograph taken by Korda, or virtual but not visible. This photograph authorizes, for individuals who are inclined to the experience, the gift of the Benjaminian jar to reassemble for themselves, to *renew* the jar, so that it is the same as before, flawed but better. Thus the image, as jar, becomes an intersubjective place. Witnessing the image sanctions relocation: we can thus reassemble a more precious place in and through it, though imperfect, because as relationship it now includes the viewer.

The exceptional possibility offered by the matrix image of Che Guevara is of an expression of a rhythm matching the dynamic of hope whose essence is movement challenging the ground upon which claims “to challenge



it itself" (Grady 1970, 60) are made. Whenever/wherever despair rears its head, hope is reborn, resurrected anew. Those who see hope in the image are perceiving the light that makes a window *happen*.

### Notes

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- 1 Note on photographs: Every reasonable effort has been made to trace and acknowledge the ownership of the copyrighted material. Any errors that may have occurred are inadvertent and will be corrected in subsequent editions, provided notification is sent to the author. Because I have been collecting photographs in which Guevara's face appears since 2004, many of the Internet sites that once featured them are no longer available. Regardless, I downloaded only images that were designated "in the public domain," and the primary source for these has been the Indymedia network.
- 2 I am grateful to Dr. Magda Lewis of the Faculty of Education at Queen's University for her guidance. She helped me first frame this enquiry so long ago when it began as a paper in her class. She would always ask: why this? Why here? Why now? She has provided a fruitful springboard indeed.
- 3 I use the term *image* to designate all derived versions of the original matrix photograph of Che Guevara's face taken by Alberto Korda. Thus, they can be in different mediums, colours, and sizes, and by various authors, but they always recognizably refer back to the original.
- 4 In order to preserve the anonymity of participants, some proper names, places, and circumstances have been changed.
- 5 Benedict XVI has written an extremely thorough encyclical on hope in the Christian context. The encyclical does not reference the work of Gabriel Marcel, whose doctrine on hope was written much earlier, but the definitions and concepts are complementary. Similarly, Martin Buber's work within the Judaic tradition is in harmony with the Christian understanding. In comparison to other philosophical concepts, there is comparatively scarce literature on hope; however, Marcel's *Homo Viator: Introduction to a Metaphysic of Hope* is widely regarded as a seminal text.
- 6 "Designer rebellion" is a term coined and used by Dr. Jan Jagodzinski, Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta (personal communication).
- 7 All translations are the author's unless otherwise indicated. Original: "¿Por qué será que el Che tiene esta peligrosa costumbre de seguir naciendo? Cuánto más lo insultan, lo manipulan, lo traicionan, Más nace," by E. Galeano, available at <http://eddafediz.blogspot.com/2008/06/che-en-su-80-renacimiento.html>.
- 8 Levinas 1979, 66.



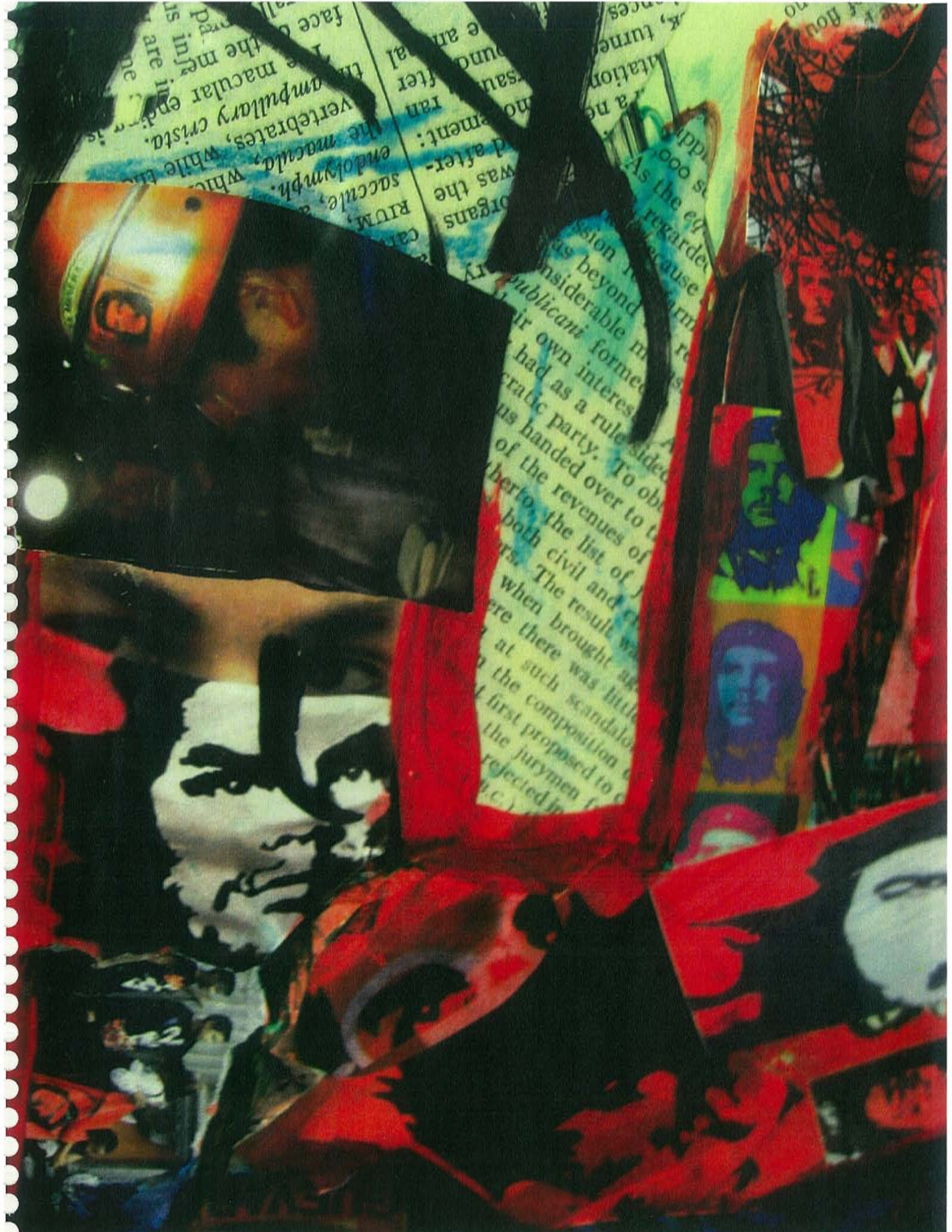


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## PART 1: A TOUR THROUGH SEMIOTICS

### Introduction

My search for a way to talk about an image – an image that began as a photograph but one that soon assumed different social, cultural and political functions (e.g. the banner in a parade, the graffiti in a camp, and a bikini on the catwalk among other things) – led me to semiotics. Semiotics was better able to provide theoretical space for conceptualizing the complexity and variety of representations based on Korda's image of Che. The media vary as do the times, places, and contexts where everyday people occupy and find themselves interpellated by some rendering of Che Guevara's face that recalls the Korda photo. The key question became how to speak about an image represented on Mike Tyson's midriff in the USA for example, at the same time as it is a Bolivian miner's hardhat icon, a Swiss cigarette logo, Chinese actress Fan Bingbing's 'look,' fodder for artists such as Vik Muniz, and a mural for indigenous Zapatista rebels in Chiapas, Mexico. Can these disparate figurations of Che's image be brought into conversation with each other without arbitrarily reducing them?



My principal objection to the ways semiotics is often applied within sociological and anthropological methods is the ontological tendency toward reductionism. Knowledge is more than mere information: it encompasses understanding the articulation of information within a constellation of human interests and societal influences (aesthetics, affect, community,

spirituality, intellectual traditions) beyond a utilitarian paradigm that characterizes so many academic disciplines implicated in technocratic, individualistic and consumerist worldviews. As an instrument to further understanding of our multi-dimensional being in the world, semiotics needs to be correspondingly multi-dimensional. It is useful to recognize how the “academic apartheid” (Sandoval, 2000 p.4) of artificially dividing disciplines (nutrition from medicine being a classic example) actually generates exclusionist epistemologies. Reductionism as a partial vision of a phenomenon stimulates dogmatism. Semiotics has the potential to provide transdisciplinary inclusivity and dialogue, but it must be applied so that the multidimensionality of a phenomenon is kept in view, as well as the epistemological limits of the science.

I ask then, what is the potential offered by semiotic theory as a way to “see” this image and push its limits conceptually and functionally to show how this particular image is not only socially reinvented as part of a “counterpublic” (Asen and Brouwer 2001; Coleman and Ross 2010) discourse but also to see how it authorizes and motivates actors in turn? The purpose of this piece is to engage the thematic/discursive multiplicity essential to Korda’s image of Che Guevara while still having some structure to orient myself around it, I approach representation as something that does more than *stand for* other things. I understand representation in this case, as inseparable from *acting* and *being*, it is kinetic, and mimetic. Understanding the term this way gives my conceptual framework space and permission to incorporate different ways of speaking to/with the object (theoretically and practically in terms of modality i.e. alternatives to text) and that would provide coherence yet allow the results to be emergent.

In the first half of this piece, I explore the theoretical context by examining the rich and varied history of semiotics with particular attention to Umberto Eco’s work and a brief consideration of social semiotics. Because the literature on semiotics is so broad and varied with little consistency with respect to approaches, I provide a focused review of the literature underpinning some key ideas I collate with an eye to applying them to the case of Che’s image. Beginning this way allows me to show where I am situated in semiotics, and subsequently reveals what I am doing differently with regards to relationality, performativity and openness. With that literature review in place, I can locate the subsequent trajectory influenced by Alfred Gell’s (1998) anthropological concepts of art and agency and the role of the concept of the *virtual* for which I will rely primarily on Rob Shields’ (2003) sociological understanding of the virtual.

### **Semiotics: The history of a broken frame**

Semiotics today operates from post-structural frameworks and, as I will show through an examination of its history and specific moments in its development, is an open and transitive *structuring* rather than *structural* approach. Quite literally, the movement ‘post-structuralism’ was a transition within one variant of semiotics itself though it happened differently in different schools of thought. For example, it was an earlier and much more belligerent rupture in France than the later, more gradual transition in Italy. Notably, many of the key structuralist figures also became important post-structuralists, the most obvious example being Roland Barthes. Michel Foucault’s shift from architectures to genealogies can also be seen in this light, though he denied being either structuralist or post-structuralist. Additionally, Umberto Eco has been labelled transitional because his work does not comfortably fit in either category. Jacques Derrida



deconstructed the assumptions underlying structuralism in *Structure, sign, and play* critiquing Claude Lévi-Straus's *Mythologiques* among others, and thus changed forever the European philosophical panorama. Speculating that "perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an *event*," Derrida observes that the very word event had "a meaning which it is precisely the function of structural—or structuralist—thought to reduce or to suspect" (1978, p. 278). He realized as long as semiotics was oriented towards structure, there would be no room for movement, performativity or play and perforce there would be one stable Truth at the centre; so in one earth-shattering move, he helped break the frame that had held for so long.

Many years later, he is echoed by Bal and Bryson (1991) who understand that "to think of semiosis as process and as movement is to conceive the sign not as a thing but as an event, the issue being ... to trace the possible emergence of the sign in a concrete situation, as an event in the world" (p. 196). Derrida's critique of Lévi-Straus's work still recognized that Lévi-Straus himself was struggling with having to put history in giant parentheses and ignore discontinuities and chance. Lévi-Straus's own understanding of the impossibility of totalizing explanations that "brush aside all the facts" (1978, p. 290) prompts him to end *Mythologiques* by self-critically calling it another myth: "In wanting to imitate the spontaneous movement of mythical thought, my enterprise, itself too brief and too long, has had to yield to its demands and respect its rhythm. Thus is this book, on myths itself, and in its own way, a myth" (in Derrida, p. 288).

The struggle to sustain a structural analysis forced thinkers like Barthes and Lévi-Straus to admit the limits of this paradigm and recognize that, before the rupture initiated by Derrida, they were enacting "a series of substitutions of centre for centre, as a linked chain of determinations of the centre (Gasché, R. 1986 p. 353). Even the rupture, observes Derrida, is structural: it has "the structurality of an opening" but he pushes us to recognize it cannot be so simply understood. "It is thus as little a structure as it is an opening; it is as little static as it is genetic, as little structural as it is historical. It can be understood neither from a genetic nor from a structuralist and taxonomic point of view, nor from a combination of both points of view" (Gasché p. 146). An opening still needs a frame to be seen as an opening. The intimate and inseparable relationship between structuralism and its 'post' cannot be forgotten, clearly, that empty centre, or lack, can also be seen as a structural element.

Historically speaking, Ernesto Laclau (n.d.) in *The philosophical roots of discourse theory* neatly traces three moments in the twentieth century distilling the structuralist tradition. The first moment began with the work of de Saussure and his distinctions between langue and parole, signifier and signified, and "sintagma" and "paradigm" (Laclau p. 2) which were seen as flawed and limited and thus gave rise to the second moment, the "radicalization of the structural formalism by the Prague and Copenhagen schools" (Laclau p. 3). At this time, "semiotics frequently operated on the assumption that the meanings of signs were determined by sets of internal oppositions and differences mapped out within a static system" (Bal & Bryson, 1991, p. 175)<sup>1</sup>.

Correspondingly, Louis Hjelmslev, among others, attempted to solve the problem in language with an atomized analysis that eventually "made possible the extension of structural analysis to the ensemble of social life and opened the way to a generalised semiology, as the one practised by Barthes and others since the 1960s" (Laclau, p. 3). Chandler (2002) notes that

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<sup>1</sup> Some might think Greimas work on the semiotic square would fit here.

structuralist semioticians tended to focus on internal structures, rather than on the processes of construction or interpretation (p. 145).<sup>2</sup>

The highlighting of the dilemma around the “notion of closed totality” gave rise to the third moment, post-structuralism. Laclau notes that Barthes, Derrida, and Lacan all found ways to confront the internal aporias of structural organization. Barthes did this by questioning the “strict separation between connotation and denotation... Derrida’s notion of *écriture* ... and Lacan’s logic of the signifier, which radically questions the relation between signifier and signified” (p. 4). Thus Bal and Bryson (1991) can describe Derrida’s semiosis as a process that refuses a logic of enclosure, framed without a frame: “[He] shows visual semiosis to be a matter of disframing: an unending dissemination that, nevertheless, as Derrida himself but also Eco and many others have repeatedly pointed out, always occupies specific social and historical sites (pp. 194-195). They add, we are prompted to think not only of context but also about how signs are “constituted (framed) by various discursive practices, institutional arrangements, systems of value, semiotic mechanisms” (Culler cited in Bal & Bryson, 1991 p. 175).

In these ways we are distanced further and further from the simplistic style of questioning that seeks to find the magical “meaning” of something. We are forced to acknowledge that reception of a work [an image, text, object, etc] is impossible to standardize. As Walter Benjamin (1985 [1968]) reminds us in *The task of the translator*:

Not only is any reference to a certain public or its representatives misleading, but even the concept of an "ideal" receiver is detrimental in the theoretical consideration of art, since all it posits is the existence and nature of man as such. No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener. ... For what does a literary work “say”? What does it communicate? It “tells” very little to those who understand it. Its essential quality is not statement or the imparting of information (p. 69).

So what then, *is* the essential quality of a work of art or an art form? It is not about communication in the Lockean sense of understanding something by bringing it to the Same, or the consensus model, rather it is an interruption. It is an event, and thus calls for comment but does not necessarily condescend to become whatever someone wants to make of it.

However, semiotics is “centrally concerned with reception”; in fact, its object is to describe the “conventions and conceptual operations” shaping what viewers do; “...it will not provide or even discover a meaning but will describe the logic according to which meanings are engendered” (Bal & Bryson, 1991 p. 186). Crucially, semiotics recognizes there are many other

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<sup>2</sup> A curious fact, often omitted, is Charles Saunders Peirce’s position as a forerunner of structuralism. In his 1976 lecture, Roman Jakobson quotes Peirce at length:

In one of his letters of 1905, Peirce says: "on May 14, 1867, ... I produced the ... "New List of Categories" in the Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences [Vol.III, pp. 287-298]... we may classify objects according to their matter; as wooden things, iron things, silver things ...etc. But classification according to structure is generally more important... I hold that a classification of the elements of thought and consciousness according to their formal structure is more important... I examine the phaenomenon and I endeavor to sort out its elements according to the complexity of their structure"... he adds “I thus reached my three categories of signs” (p. 1535).

viewers besides those whose observations can be discovered:

We should remember that the reserve of unheard viewers is there, even when they cannot be retrieved; notice the absences in the record as much as what survives; and shift the terms of analysis from the actually documented viewers to the way the latter's discourses produce their own exclusivity. ... *As a canon has its exclusions, so has an archive: we need to look away from the obvious traces and the official records of reception, in order make the archive admit those whom it has set aside* (Bal & Bryson, 1991 p. 187, original emphasis).

The numberless trajectories of seeing made possible in the visual text does not mean that reception is abandoned as a goal, rather the claim is shifted to one of asking about the location from which the viewer operates.

If we understand reception in the manner being described by Bal and Bryson we must acknowledge viewers are being constructed by the object viewed at the very moment their viewing is also constructing the object. Thus, reception is always simultaneously production [and a kind of immersion]. Here, Peirce's definition of meaning is critical. Peirce asserts that meaning is "in its primary acceptance, the translation of a sign into another system of signs" (Eco, 1976, p. 1464). But the process is continuous; it can be followed, so it is like a metamorphosis rather than a metaphor. This dynamic view of the sign, "can help to denaturalize the exclusions that have resulted from those particular framings, as well as, conversely, to use framings to counter these exclusions without falling back into positivistic claims to truth" (Bal & Bryson, 1991 p. 204) and helps make the analysis historically responsible. The question for me becomes, how can Che Guevara's image be recognized, which features of the Che image are indispensable in terms of a viewer's ability to relate the translation to the original photograph or at least its interpretants in their minds and understand something by the altered renderings?

From these general ideas I will turn to the situated and specific concerns of social semioticians, although the extent to which Social Semiotics has so far answered some of the critiques above is debatable. Since Chandler (2002) sees Social Semiotics as an incomplete project still under construction, I briefly explore some of these further on in this paper.

Pressing forward, it is helpful to keep interrelated debates in mind as well as the "elementary ideas that underlie Peirce's" (p. 1539) inquiry that Jakobson (1976) sums up as the problem of the role of symbols in our creative life because they belong to the future and enable us to prefigure it, while icons belong more to the past and indexes to the present.

Jakobson would later elaborate a fourth essential kind of sign to assist the study of the role of symbols. Though he did not publish his work in this area, we are aware of this development through Donald Preziosi (2003) who mentions his conversations with Jakobson and how they debated this fourth term. This fourth, the artifice, will be central to my development of a theoretical frame. Rather than explore this fascinating segue into very specific debates within debates here, I will outline some of Jakobson's and Preziosi's ideas, and attend to them in depth separately. By elaborating Jakobson's construct of the artifice, Preziosi's (2003) contribution is significant. Yet while his work is prominent and well cited in the art historical and museum studies fields, few scholars have pursued the possible openings offered by his development of the construct of the artifice to the field and it appears little known outside its boundaries.

For background, Preziosi's concern with the impossibilities of representation prompt him to explore the implications of the invention of art, so that he returns to Jakobson's lecture critiquing modern linguistics, semiotics and poetics, where Jakobson demonstrated differences between factual and imputed relations between signifiers and what they signify (p. 143) identifying, in the process, the missing term, the sign type that indicates relationships of "imputed similarity" or artifice. A term used by Jakobson corresponding to what Preziosi (2003) refers to as "ostensification" (p. 144) or the ostensible, what is presented as being true, or appearing to be true, but usually hiding a different motive or meaning. Characterizing this mode of practice as something at odds with modern practice, and more in line with medieval and ancient times, Preziosi (2003) returns to "Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, in which there exists a representational relationship between words and things, or, as the scholastic dictum put it, *veritas est adaequatio verbi et rei* (where *res* can mean not only thing or object but thought, feeling, or opinion)." (p. 145) Adequation as a relational term hints at movement back and forth from what is being fit to, and expression of truth in words or things is always this kind of *adaequatio* or approximation, a tending toward, an as-if. Thus this is not a "representation" as such, but a movement towards something. Preziosi (2003) writes:

An iconic sign relationship (all these terms refer to relationships between things, not kinds of things) is primarily one of factual or literal similarity; an artifice(i)al sign is one of imputed similarity, of adequation rather than equality... I have been drawn to this notion of artifice in no small measure because it allows us to deal with the extraordinary complexities - the fluid and open-ended relativities- of visual meaning in a clear yet nonreductive manner (p. 146).

The notion of artifice may serve as "the locus of working on memory and meaning as processes of adequation" asking us to see artworks not as "representations" but rather as questions soliciting our engagement pedagogically (p.147).

### **Has Anyone Seen the Field?**

Regardless of whether anyone calls semiotics a field, discipline, approach, movement, regime, paradigm or method, what becomes clear upon investigation is that there is no agreement amongst theorists as to the character or nature of semiotics, what it looks like or how it is to be "done." This fuzziness may account for its lack of presence as an institutionalized discipline in North America. The situation was and is particularly depressing, as Marcel Danesi (1991) complains: "A large part of this predicament has been due, no doubt to the fact that the North American educational landscape has always been partitioned into clear-cut disciplinary domains. As an interdisciplinary form of inquiry, semiotics has simply never found a niche in this sectorialized territory" (p. 6).

In his treatise concerning images, Göran Sonesson (2003) similarly comments, "it still seems impossible to establish a consensus among all semioticians on what semiotics is all about; and many semioticians (including the group  $\mu$ ) will not even care to define their discipline" (p.

3). It was once the case that semiotics was seen by Europeans as a science of the nature of structural linguistics, while some in the United States, “tend to look upon semiotics as being merely a meeting-place of many different sciences, a kind of interdisciplinary framework common to the humanities and the social sciences, including, on some accounts, biology and neurology (Sonesson, 2003, p. 8).

Perhaps we can begin from a premise of understanding semiotics as simply the study of signs, but what signs might be defined as is also widely debated. For example, Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio (2005), ask, “What signs are, and *where* they are, depends on the model of sign at hand” (p. xvii). Their approach opens the possibility of allowing the objects to inform the models, and the models to then define the terminology as it is used. Umberto Eco (1984) weighs in on this point commenting, “it is doubtful whether semiotics knows anything about signs” (p. 204). If, then, I described semiotics as a set of groups or schools (e.g. Tartu school or Paris school) with inter-related disagreements about the definitions of definitions, it might sound trite, but would not be too far off the mark. Traditionally, two influential historical moments initiate modern-day understandings of semiotics. In Europe, Saussure’s ideas published posthumously by a group of students who collected their lecture notes, is seen by scholars as a fair place to start. The North American moment begins with Charles Saunders Peirce and his voluminous rarely read, partially published and often misquoted work.

The roots of semiotics are ancient. Some theorists (cf. Eco, 1984; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) draw on medieval writers like St. Augustine and Boethius, or hearken further historically to the Stoics and Aristotle. Petrilli and Ponzio (2005) locate Hippocrates and Galen as being among the very first semioticians. Despite developments, few scholars today would disagree with St. Augustine’s claim: “all instruction is either about things or about signs; but things are learnt by means of signs” (*Omnis doctrinal vel rerum est vel signorum, sed res per signa discuntur*) (Augustine De doct. chr. I 1, 1963, p. 9)<sup>3</sup>.

Saussure coined the term ‘semiology’ to describe what he saw as a model for understanding where the study of language fit as a meaning-making system. The model, later widely criticized as far too idealistic among other things, was a binary understanding of signs as being composed by signifiers (e.g. the word frog) and signifieds (a frog, or the concept of frog). The Saussurean emphasis on the arbitrary nature of the link between signifier (for example the word tree) and the signified (the thing called tree in English, or the mental concept of tree) can be seen as what distinguished his ideas at the time, though he did not at any point stress that the degree of arbitrariness was equal and the same for all signs.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Having said this, the domain of contemporary semiotics has developed so vastly even since the modern moments with Saussure and Peirce that taking up the conversation any further back becomes unwieldy unless there is a specific purpose. Yet, I cannot resist mentioning the intriguing medieval proposal put forth by the French theologian Peter Abelard (1079-c. 1142) who suggested that, “the ‘truth’ that a sign purportedly captured existed in a particular object as an observable property of the object itself, and outside it as an ideal concept within the mind. The ‘truth’ of the matter, therefore, was somewhere in between” (Danesi & Perron, 1999 p. 43). Almost one thousand years ago, Abelard had grasped and expressed the complexity of perception in a way that did not create a dualism like the materialist or idealist poles seem to do, and that gestured toward a third position anticipating later developments of the Saussurean and Peircian models.

<sup>4</sup> Notably, Derrida’s (1976) critique of the rigidity of this structural approach in *Of Grammatology* caused an earthquake in theoretical circles primarily of the French variety, leading many thinkers to abandon the purely Saussurean stance, including Barthes with his work in image and pictorial semiology, and Kristeva who shifted toward the psychoanalytic approach with the Tel Quel group. Later this was recognized as the move from “structuralism” toward “post-structuralism”. Sadly Saussure took the brunt of critique for the structuralist stance

Meanwhile, Charles Saunders Peirce developed his triadic model of the sign composed of the object, representamen, and interpretant. The object would be similar to the Saussurean signified, or the thing to which the sign refers. The representamen would correspond to the signifier, or form the sign takes, and this can be a gesture as much as an alphabetical cipher. Peirce insists the thing becoming a sign only does so when it begins to evoke its interpretant: “A Sign is a Representamen with a mental interpretant” (cited in Bal & Bryson, 1991, p. 190). Where he differs significantly from Saussure is with the inclusion of the interpretant, not interpreter, but the sign created in a person’s mind to make sense of the sign. This idea can be seen as a kind of deferral of the ultimate meaning of the sign or Eco’s “unlimited semiosis” (in Chandler, 2002, p. 23) to indicate this could lead to successive interpretants. (This process also can be seen as a kind of incrustation or accumulation of meanings rather than the replacement of one by another). Besides his admission of a fascination with the number three, theorists disagree about how the analysis should be taken up. Lyons (1977) reflects the vagueness at the source of the debate when he comments that even those accepting all three components ask:

Should A be defined as a physical or a mental entity? What is the psychological or ontological status of B? Is C something that is referred to on a particular occasion? Or is it the totality of things that might be referred to by uttering the sign...? Or yet a third possibility, is it some typical or ideal representative of this class?” (cited in Chandler, 2002, p. 24).

Additionally, Peirce developed a typology classifying kinds of signs but most scholars mention the three principle types: icon, index, and symbol which are differentiated by the nature of their respective links to the objects (not necessarily material) they represent. For example, a symbol would be the most arbitrary of the three, but also the most conventionally bound. Little concrete connection exists, in other words, between a white dove, and the concept of peace, or for that matter the letter ‘A’ and the sound linked to it. An index can be seen as something that bears a trace of the object “out there” for example smoke can be seen as indicating the presence of fire (or a ‘natural’ sign for Augustine). Finally, the icon can be understood as a sign having some similarity in relation to its object for example a pencil streak representing a geometric line, this would have a common aspect, just as a scale model would have something in common with the original and a portrait with its subject. It is important to remember that a sign may be all three of these types simultaneously, in varying degrees and depending on context. From these Piercean and Saussurean notions, many varied and occasionally opposed streams of thought (i.e. biosemiotics, music semiology, computational semiotics) have emerged within the domain of semiotics, including the one called social semiotics discussed and developed most explicitly by Gunther Kress, Christian Metz, Michael Halliday, Theo Van Leeuwen, Michael O’Toole and Robert Hodge.

One may wonder, in light of this discussion, why bother with semiotics at all if it is such an amorphous blob. Yet there are definite benefits to an ambiguous domain: Mieke Bal and Norman Bryson (along with Michael O’Toole and the Australian school) defend a useful side to the lack of disciplinary status of semiotics because it,

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even though he mentions the word “structure” only twice in the *Cours*, preferring “system.” It cannot be stressed enough that the work attributed to Saussure was based on student notes, *not* his own writing.

... offers a theory and a set of analytic tools that are not bound to a particular object domain...[and] lends itself to interdisciplinary analyses, for example, of word and image relations, which seek to avoid both the erection of hierarchies and the eclectic...Considering images as signs, semiotics sheds a particular light on them, focusing on the production of meaning in society... (1991, p. 176).

Since I am concerned with the workings and offspring of a specific photograph and how different people have taken and used it, this particular perspective seems promising. Sonesson (2003) observes that the point of view of semiotics “is to study the point of view itself” or “it is mediation, i.e. the fact of other things being presented to us in an indirect way” (cf. Parmentier 1985). And adds, “perhaps this ...science of mediation” should really be rebaptized *mediology*, as [Regis] Debray (1991) proposes” (p. 4).

What semiotics, regardless of its “name” or category, gives me is a specific language parcelled out between the works of various theorists (in Europe and beyond) who wrestle with the various inherent conundrums of semiotics. In a nutshell, “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Eco 1976, p. 7). Semiotics involves the study not only of what we refer to as 'signs' in everyday speech, but also of anything that “stands for” something else. In a semiotic sense, signs take the form of words, images, sounds, gestures and objects. Whilst for the linguist Saussure, “semiology” was a science which studies the role of signs as part of social life, for the philosopher Charles Peirce “semiotic” was the “formal doctrine of signs” which was closely related to Logic (Peirce 1931-58, 2.227). For him, “a sign... is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity” (Peirce 1931-58, 2.228). He declared “every thought is a sign” (Peirce 1931-58, 1.538; cf. 5.250ff, 5.283ff). Contemporary semioticians study signs not in isolation but as part of semiotic “sign systems” (such as a medium or genre). They study how meanings are made. By making more explicit the codes by which signs are interpreted we may perform the valuable semiotic function of 'denaturalizing' signs. Deconstructing and contesting the realities of signs can reveal which meanings are privileged and which are suppressed. To decline such a study is to leave to others the control of the world of meanings that we inhabit. Sonesson (2003) concludes:

The domain of semiotics is meaning (or “mediation”), in some wider, yet to be specified sense. However, since everything, or almost everything, may be endowed with meaning, any object whatsoever (or almost) may enter into the domain of semiotics, but only in so far as it is studied from the point of view of its capacity for conveying meaning. Semiotics, I will contend, is not about what something means; it is about *how* it means (p. 30).

His emphasis is on a processual model rather than an irretrievably reductive explicatory one. The same object can mean something in one context, and nothing in another, so that is it not a “what” question but more of a “when” and “how.”

The task of reviewing the literature in this immense domain is daunting and writers, depending on their inclinations, have chosen different paths (as indicated in Petrilli and Ponzio’s subtitle, *Interpretive routes through the open network of signs*, which might be seen as a

directive to go where you think you need to). Scholars leaning toward linguistic models, for example, would review the work of Roland Barthes and Group  $\mu$  (with respect to text and image). It is worth giving Barthes credit for developing the distinction between denotation and connotation in media texts, and more importantly for bringing semiological analysis to the study of images and resisting dogmatism. Additionally, Barthes has provided fruitful bases for anti-colonial theorists such as Chela Sandoval (2000) to ground her manifesto on the necessity of radical semiology: “a contemporary method for sign reading... argue the importance of radical semiology to all academic studies interested in further developing de-coloniality and human liberation... (*Methodology of the Oppressed*, p. 186)

For more narrative oriented models the Lithuanian structuralist Algirdas Julius Greimas and the Paris school would be appropriate, whereas those looking for atomistic models would go with the Quebec group and some of Floch and Sonesson’s work. Those coming from the pictorial stream would lean towards Mieke Bal, Norman Bryson, Rosalind Krauss (sometimes) and so on depending on the trajectory. Additionally, I would include theorists who might not identify themselves as semioticians, like Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Pierre-Félix Guattari, Homi Bhabha and Ernesto Laclau because they use semiotic language and address issues in a manner that can be seen as semiotic.

Umberto Eco uses his wide scholarly scope not only to combine Saussurean and Peircian perspectives but also to reach beyond them to blend in the thoughts of earlier scholars. Theorizing is a critical process generally, but theorizing the sign in semiotics is akin to open combat as academics clash over different models and their possibilities. In the midst of these skirmishes we find Eco consulting, as it were, with various camps, but instead of joining one side or another, he collects various implements from each of them, recombines them, and arms himself. Beginning with *Trattato di semiotica generale* (1975), “Eco contributed significantly to the encounter between Saussurean ‘semiology’ and Peircean ‘semiotics’” (Petrilli and Ponzio 2005, p. 310). It is worth taking a closer look.

## **I hear an Eco**

Eco (1984) prefaces *Semiotics and the philosophy of language* by declaring his main purpose is to show that:

The sign is the origin of the semiotic processes, and there is no opposition between the ‘nomadism’ of semiosis (and of interpretive activity) and the alleged stiffness and immobility of the sign. The concept of sign must be disentangled from its trivial identification with the idea of coded equivalence and identity; the semiotic process of interpretation is present at the very core of the concept of sign (p. 1).

He directs our focus toward interpretive processes and away from reductive notions of messages to be decoded. Throughout this work, Eco (1984) reviews semiotic theoretical problems by examining the concepts: sign, meaning, metaphor, and symbol with reference to the historical development of the sign model. He writes, “semiotics initially emerged as reflection on the sign;



but subsequently this concept was gradually put in crisis and dissolved, and interest shifted to the engendering of texts, their interpretation, the drift of interpretations...” (pp. xiv-xv). Eco (1984) stresses the need to recover earlier notions of the sign as dynamic semiosis (action involving tri-relative cooperation of representamen, object, and interpretant) and not a code to be deciphered with its built-in assumption of fixed correlations. However, some concepts, according to Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio’s (2005) critique in *Semiotics Unbounded*, are not directly dealt with in Eco’s approach. The most significant one of these, and one they believe must be developed, is “the dialogical character of the sign and its essential otherness or alterity. As clearly emerges in Peirce’s formulation, interpretation semiotics calls for this type of development” (p. 325).

Overall, a useful conceptualization Eco (1984) provides us with is the careful differentiation he makes between general (or theoretical) semiotics and specific (or applied) semiotics. What he terms general semiotics deals primarily with the philosophical questions, while the specific variants of semiotics are divided by method of application, and how they deploy terminology in order to study their respective objects whether they be narratives, textual discourse, objects, artefacts, behaviours and so on. He describes specific semiotics as one that “aims at being the ‘grammar’ of a particular sign system, and proves to be successful insofar as it describes a given field of communicative phenomena as ruled by a system of signification” (p. 5). In the case of Guevara’s image, I am concerned with general semiotics in the sense of developing a generative model as well as with specific semiotics that deals with the visual.

Social semiotics considers all three of these perspectives and still falls short. Structural relations are examined in Social Semiotics under the rubric of multimodal cohesion (rhythm, composition, information linking, dialogue). A pragmatic (sign-interpretor relationships) point of view would correspond to van Leeuwen’s dimensions of semiotic analysis (discourse, genre, style, modality) in Social Semiotics. Finally, semantics (signs’ relationships to what they stand for) is considered within the area of semiotic principles (resources, change, rules, functions) in van Leeuwen’s method. In light of these correspondences, we can validate Eco’s (1984) assertion that “every specific semiotics is concerned with general epistemological problems. It has to posit its own theoretical object ... and the researcher must be aware of the underlying philosophical assumptions that influence its choice and its criteria for relevance” (p. 5). He does not elaborate extensively on specific semiotics except to note that each needs to take into account the ambiguities of the sign system in question and that the objects are usually “stable” that is, they enable researchers to understand which expressions are “produced according to the rules of a given system of signification, are acceptable or ‘grammatical’ and which ones a user of the system would presumably produce in a given situation” (p. 5). Eco describes the contributions of specific semiotics as direct impacts on society giving the example of how a study on the internal logic of road signals can help municipalities in improving the practices of marking roads. However, the basic problem of general semiotics is philosophical, and is addressed through three different questions:

- (a) Can one approach many, and apparently different phenomena as if they were all phenomena of signification and/or of communication?
- (b) Is there a unified approach able to account for all these semiotic phenomena as if they were based on the same system of rules (the notion of system not being a mere analogical one)?
- (c) Is this approach a “scientific” one? (p. 7)

These broad questions parallel the ones I have so often asked myself regarding the famous Korda image of Che. The object of study is the concept of sign itself insofar as it can explain a series of behaviours, “vocal, visual, termic, gestural, or other” (p. 7). What this philosophy provides is explanatory power for what might otherwise be disconnected data. In other words, it provides coherence, one that may not be sustainable outside the framework of the philosophical assumptions but nevertheless provides a way for considering things as a whole. Eco points out the various commonalities and differences between philosophy and science concluding that, “philosophies can say everything about the world they design and very little about the world they help to construct” (p. 12). They function in explanatory ways rather than predictive ones and cannot work on concrete evidence “if not as already filtered by other specific semiotics (which depends on a general semiotics to be justified in their procedures)” (p. 12). Eco believes: “that semiotics is philosophical in nature given that it does not study a particular system but proposes general categories in the light of which different systems may be compared. And for general semiotics philosophical discourse is neither advisable nor urgent: it is simply constitutive” (1984, xii).

Because a general semiotics studies signifying activity, but is itself a signifying activity, it cannot avoid influencing its course: “A general semiotics transforms, for the very fact of its theoretical claim, its own object” (p. 12). Therefore, the models developed within general semiotics need the specific semiotics to prove their explanatory power. Having situated himself with thorough justifications within this philosophical realm, Eco (1984) turns to the various concepts he wishes to address.

Beginning with signs, he aligns himself with Morris who held that something can only be considered a sign if someone interprets it as such, and ascribes to the three principle categories of sign as described by Peirce (index, icon, symbol). In this discussion, Eco (1984) recognizes the complexity of some signs that can be stylized so that comprehending what they stand in for as icons is not as important as “recognizing a content ‘other’ for which the represented object stands (cross, crescent hammer and sickle)” (p. 17). They are also called symbols “but in a sense opposite to that adopted for formulas and diagrams. Whereas the latter are quite empty, open to any meaning, the former are quite full, filled with multiple but definite meanings” (p. 17). He does not avoid the ambiguities and inextricable overlaps between these categories; instead he uses the metaphor of a maze to guide his analysis.

Positing, “If the cloud which announces the storm and the portrait of the Mona Lisa are to be taken as signs, there must be signs without expression *figurae*, and perhaps without content *figurae* as well” (p. 21), Eco (1984) turns to previous critiques and probes further into the past to recall Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and the Sophists who had already discussed these problematics. He ends up choosing a middle road:

Those who oppose a pragmatics of discourse to a semantics of sign units shift the attention from the systems of signification to the process of communication (Eco 1976); but the two perspectives are actually complementary. One cannot think of the sign without seeing it in some way characterized by its contextual destiny, but at the same time it is difficult to explain why a certain speech act is understood unless the nature of the signs which it contextualizes is explained.

Thus, Eco moves us toward recognizing that the essential matrix is between presence and absence, referring to Derrida but also Leibniz. Essentially, a sign must stand for something outside itself: it paradoxically presents an absence, but the presentation itself contains an absence as well. As expressed by Petrilli and Ponzio (2005), meaning “is inseparable from the work of translation carried out through the processes of interpretation, to the point that we can state that signs do not exist without another sign acting as a translantant sign” (p. 302).

This conceptualization gives weight to the Stoic model of the sign where the variables are not physical realities or even events, but the propositions expressing the events they call “incorporeals.” Thus, “smoke is not a sign unless the interpreter sees the event as the true antecedent of a hypothetical reasoning (if there is smoke) which is related by inference (more or less necessary) to its consequent (then there is fire)” (p. 31). What matters is not the smoke or the fire but “the possibility of a relationship between antecedent and consequent regulating of any occurrence of the smoke (and of the fire)” (p. 31). The structure that general semiotics is concerned with tracing is that of the “inference which generates interpretation” (p. 38) so that understanding a sign is not only a process of recognition but also always interpretation.

The understanding of a sign is always already contextually bound as was recognized by semiotic theorists breaking from structuralism. Chandler (2002) gives us an example: “The same signifier may be used iconically in one context and symbolically in another: a photograph of a woman may stand for some broad category such as ‘women’ or may more specifically represent only the particular woman who is depicted” (p. 29). Kent Grayson (1998) writes, “When we speak of an icon, an index or a symbol, we are not referring to objective qualities of the sign itself, but to a viewer's experience of the sign” (in Chandler 2002, p. 29). This explains why the image of Che can in some cases be a symbol, and in others an icon or simply an index as the first original photograph was to its photographer. Signs may also shift over time. Using the example of a Rolls Royce, Jonathan Culler (1975) observes it can be “an index of wealth in that one must be wealthy in order to purchase one, but it has been made a conventional sign of wealth by social usage” (p. 17). But we are not looking at a closed system since a sign, finally, does not denote its own meaning. So that, “To know that ‘water’ means the same as H<sub>2</sub>O and that H<sub>2</sub>O means the same as ‘acqua,’ and so on, without knowing what these terms refer to, is not enough for them to function as signs” (Petrilli and Ponzio 2005, p. 318).

The metaphor of the encyclopedia epitomizes Eco’s (1984) theorizations. The encyclopedia represents something that has no centre, we are always somewhere in the middle of a labyrinth made up of a network of interpretants that is practically infinite because “a given expression can be interpreted as many times, and in as many ways, as it has been actually interpreted in a given cultural framework; it is infinite because every discourse about the encyclopedia casts in doubts the previous structure of the encyclopedia itself” and “it does not register only ‘truths’ but, rather, what has been said about the truth or what has been believed to be true as well as what has been believed to be false or imaginary or legendary, [*imputed*] provided that a given culture had elaborated some discourse about some subject matter” (p. 86). In this context, interpretation becomes a matter of hypothesis where one can posit a local description of the net or labyrinth, but it will necessarily result in a myopic vision as no one can see “the global vision of all [the labyrinth’s] possibilities” (p. 83) from their particular node. In this light, the dictionary is an encyclopedia in disguise, a useful pragmatic device as long as one remembers it is not stable and univocal.

Defying every dictionary as well as every encyclopaedic entry, the metaphor “becomes a source of scandal in a merely linguistic framework, because it is in fact a semiotic phenomenon

permitted by almost all semiotic systems” (pp. 87-88). Eco (1984) discusses a number of definitions for metaphors to show how they are confusing and contradictory observing that dictionaries are somewhat ‘uneasy about defining the metaphor” (p. 89). Turning to Aristotle for some coherent theory of metaphor because it has become fragmented and disconnected over time, leads him into a complex analysis of types and functions of metaphors. However Eco emerges with Aristotle’s key in understanding metaphor as a tool of cognition that is “at once a source of clarity and enigma” (p. 102). Eco (1984) reformulates this as, “the best metaphors are those in which the cultural process, the dynamics itself of semiosis, shows through”<sup>5</sup> (p. 102). Understanding the work of semiotics as interpretation rather than decoding can account for the “irreducibly other as theorized by Bakhtin and by such philosophers as Emmanuel Levinas” (Petrilli and Ponzio 2005, p.327). Peirce signals this essential interconnectedness through a relation of otherness “as being present in all signs when he says that their interpretants are somehow always other than themselves” (Petrilli and Ponzio 2005 p. 339).

With regard to opacity, symbols take on a dual operation for Eco (1984) that not only coordinates experience but also communicates it (p. 134). He reviews Lévi-Strauss’s structuralism, Lacan’s three registers and Cassirer’s work on Kant’s theory of knowledge to show how the symbolic and semiotic coincide for all three theorists. Additionally, “Saussure called symbols what Peirce called icons, and Hjelmslev ranked diagrams and games [like chess] among the ‘symbolic systems’” (p. 137). For Freud symbols are tropes, they appear in dreams and function through substitution. Eco grounds himself with Hegel’s any symbol is “an enigma and ‘the Sphinx stands as a symbol for symbolism itself’” (p. 144). He sees Hegel as helpful for showing us that the symbolic is “a specific semiotic phenomenon in which a given expression is correlated to a content nebula (see Eco 1976, 3.6.10)” (p. 144). Jung is also whispering in the background and tapping into the fundamental vagueness of the expressed content of symbols in his theory of archetypes. Eco concludes that a symbol is “not only a textual modality but a modality of textual use” (pp. 162-3).

Symbolicity expresses how conventions impact the relations between a sign and its object as established on the basis of a code, or law. The symbol is related to, and made possible by, its object through the interpretant. However, even if the symbol is founded on a code, a convention, a law, the latter in turn is also founded on endless deferral from one sign to the next. Peirce defined a symbol as “a sign which is determined by its dynamic object only in the sense that it will be so interpreted. It thus depends either upon a convention, a habit, or a natural disposition of its interpretant, or of the field of its interpretant (that of which the interpretant is a determination)” (cited in Petrilli and Ponzio 2005, p. 334).

While a sign exists and develops in the relations between symbolicity, indexicality, and iconicity, it simultaneously contains elements of symbolicity, indexicality, and iconicity to varying degrees. Eco, but also others such as Peirce and Bakhtin, agree it is not the sign itself that functions as a container of meaning, rather meaning exists in the relations among signs.

## **Social Semiotics: Review of the literature with consideration of whether it is a viable option**

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<sup>5</sup> Enigmatically expressing himself through metaphor in order to get the idea of metaphor itself across, Eco illustrates the concept with Saint Paul’s “we see through a glass darkly (Corinthians, 1, 13:12)” (p. 102). When Saint Paul uses this metaphor to describe how people can only see God in partial glimpses and that in looking at others they see God as if through a clouded mirror, he is describing an encounter with alterity.

## for images of Che

Daniel Chandler (2002) has observed that “contemporary social semiotics has moved beyond the structuralist concern with the internal relations of parts within a self-contained system, seeking to explore the use of signs in specific social situations” (p. 5). In their work to establish a Social Semiotics, Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988) look to integrate social dimensions of semiotic systems by recognizing first that they cannot be divorced, and that the systems cannot productively be studied in isolation. Although scholars have begun to apply the work Hodge and Kress (1988) and van Leeuwen (2001: 2005) have done in developing Social Semiotics, the literature is still thin and only a handful of publications were available at the time I was scouring databases.

In particular, van Leeuwen (2005) emphasizes the description of resources (in both production and reception) people use for making meaning instead of on *the* meaning of texts, dominant or otherwise. Past uses of such resources add layers onto their meaning potential, and though there can be multiple meanings by virtue of existing in the sociocultural sphere, they are regulated. To some extent we can easily imagine meaning layers accruing on the image of Che. So, what is 'social' about social semiotics? Theo van Leeuwen (2005) stresses that semiotic resources can only be created by humans in social contexts and need to be studied with that in mind. The rules are not “immanent” so, “every instance of using semiotic resources takes place within a particular social setting, and needs to be explained on the basis of the interests prevailing in that setting, whether they are highly institutionalised or arising from more contingent circumstances” (Reitstaetter and Rheindorf 2005, p. 3). For van Leeuwen “what this can contribute is, above all, the possibility of asking new questions” (in Reitstaetter and Rheindorf 2005, p. 3). So far, social semiotics seems to reach out and embrace the complexity of context for an image-object, as well as being overtly rule-free.

## Turning to the visual...

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), conceptualize the visual (in its widest sense) as a fully communicative system in order to meet “several representational and communicational requirements” (p. 41). These “macrofunctions” that Michael Halliday theorized were adopted by the New London group (which included Bill Cope, Norman Fairclough, Mary Kalantzis, Gunther Kress and others in an international collaboration) over ten years ago but still underpin the social semiotics of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). For the New London group principles or grammars of languages are macrofunctions: either ideational (knowledge), interpersonal (social), or textual; and they position discourses as knowledges “articulated through particular subject positions” (New London group, 1996, p. 74 cited in Halliday, 1978). Their approach seems to derive somewhat heavily from a paradigm of viewing any mode through the model of language. That is, I find myself implicitly resisting the idea that all image-objects can be understood on that one level of symbolic communication.

Through the New London group’s lens, signification can operate in three layered and intertwined modes simultaneously. Thus, significance is based on the general social context, which then can be influenced by the particular context of the iteration in the moment, and finally

it becomes part of a larger complex of meaning cohering internally and externally with its environment. Unfortunately, the object (image of Che) is positioned as mute and static.

For Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), multimodality is the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined. The distinction between *content* and *expression* of communication is further stratified, content becomes discourse and design and as a result of modern communication technologies, the expression stratum could be further stratified into production and distribution. Also in *Multimodal discourse*, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) propose, “production and distribution produce their own layers of signification... that semiotic modes and design ideas usually flow out of production, using principles of semiosis typical for production, such as provenance and experiential meaning potential.

They provide arenas of action with fairly detailed description and principles thus the methodology is here but not an actual set of tactics. The four basic strata they outline are discourses (socially constructed knowledges), design (conceptual side of expression and the expression side of conception), production (material articulation), and distribution (reproduction technology described as mode and medium)<sup>6</sup>.

Theo van Leeuwen’s (2005) key impetus was Halliday’s social semiotic view of language (1978) elaborated by the Sydney Semiotics Circle in the 1980s and 1990s. Halliday also influenced Michael O’Toole who explicitly states: “Halliday's own suggestion concerns language, but he makes clear that the same dynamic relation between the code and its instances of use, or texts, obtains for any semiotic system” (1994, p. 216). In *Introducing Social Semiotics*, van Leeuwen (2005) divides his attention between three broad areas: semiotic principles (resources, change, rules, functions), dimensions of semiotic analysis (discourse, genre, style, modality), and multimodal cohesion (rhythm, composition, information linking, dialogue). Rather than repeat the question of what semiotics is, van Leeuwen (2005) outlines three characteristic semioticians actions, they:

1. Collect, document and catalogue semiotic resources- including their history.
2. Investigate how these resources are used in specific historical, cultural and institutional contexts, and how people talk about them in these contexts.
3. Contribute to the discovery and development of new semiotic resources and new uses of existing semiotic resources (p. 3).

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<sup>6</sup> Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2001) strata are described at great length in their book on Social Semiotics:

Discourses- By “socially constructed” developed in specific social contexts in ways appropriate to the interests of social actors in these contexts.

Design- “design stands midway between content and expression”

Production- “refers to the organizations of the expression, to the actual material articulation of the semiotic event or the actual material production of the semiotic artefact”- not about semiotic modes – but semiotic media- “medium of execution”.

Distribution- technical ‘re-coding’ of semiotic products and events for purposes of recording and or distribution, reproduction technologies can acquire semiotic potential of their own and include the concepts of *mode* and *medium*.

Media “are the material resources used in the production of semiotic products and events, including both the tools and materials used” and modes are “semiotic resource[s] allowing simultaneous realisation of discourses and types of interaction.

These three characteristics, for example, parallel what I have been doing with the image of Che Guevara. I have amassed a collection of hundreds of photos and objects sporting the image, and have followed up a number of stories of their particular ‘lives.’ The term ‘semiotic resource’ is preferred to ‘sign’ by van Leeuwen (2005) because it refers to actions and artefacts used to communicate and avoids the impression that the ‘signified’ is somehow pre-given (p. 3). In other words, he distances himself from discussions defining signs in order to provide a broad umbrella term. These resources have what van Leeuwen (2005) calls “semiotic potential” (p. 4), which means all their past uses and potential uses as well as social contexts can impact significance (may be related to the idea of provenance). He explains that, “studying the semiotic potential of a given semiotic resource is studying how that resource has been, is, and can be used for purposes of communication, it is drawing up an inventory of past and present and maybe also future resources and their uses...(p. 5). The assumption circumscribing the potential analysis is that the purpose seems to be relegated only to communication and not other forms of action. Conducting such a study allows a semiotician to make a key contribution to interdisciplinary projects: “inventorizing the different material articulations and permutations a given semiotic resource allows, and describing its semiotic potential, describing the kinds of meanings it affords” (p. 4). At this point, I will stress that these are *versions* of what something can signify, always plural, a snapshot of a moment of signification. Recall Doreen Massey (2005) who describes place as specific constellations within wider spaces and as in process, never quite finished. Meaning happens in such “places” and is correspondingly mobile, volatile and fruitful.

Social semioticians study registers or, “how semiotic resources are used in the context of different social practices, and how people regulate their use in these contexts” (p. 14) by examining visual salience of an object, that is, the “way in which elements in a visual composition are made to attract the viewer’s attention to different degrees because of the way they may be placed in the foreground or background ...” (p. 24) and so on. Additionally, social semioticians attend to the “motivations” of semiotic resources. In other words significance is produced through a combination of the producer’s “interest” and by characteristics of the object but roughly within a rule-influenced range (p. 49).

On the micro-level, van Leeuwen (2005) identifies four key dimensions of semiotic analysis: discourse, genre, style and modality. He also identifies two closely related issues that need to be explored in the analysis, material resources of communication, and social regulation of use. Material resources are socially regulated because “communication always takes place within - or sometimes in opposition to - socially defined boundaries of specific situations” (p. 93). Social Semiotics joins two aspects of semiotic resources, their physical /technical nature, social regulation and the semiotic potentialities this affords, together with their history (p. 93).

Foucault’s influence<sup>7</sup> underpins van Leeuwen’s (2005) understanding of the notion of discourse . He sees discourse as both modelled on social practices and transforming them (i.e. as soon as we start to examine a discourse we have altered it). van Leeuwen (2005) asks how is “reality” changed in a discourse, or what is the relationship between the version offered and the real? He describes four basic types of transformation:

1. Exclusion: for example a discourse of war that doesn’t mention the victim
2. Rearrangement- detemporalize elements - or insert a sequence

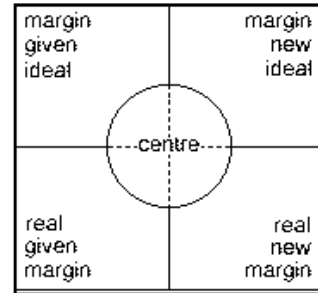
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<sup>7</sup> For Foucault, discourses have a history, a social distribution, and can be realized in various ways such as action, representation and images.

- 3. Addition: can add elements- evaluations/purposes/legitimation
- 4. Substitution- substituting concepts for the concrete elements of actual social practices- abstracts it// generalization- visually- stereotypes or blurring// objectification- representing actions/events as if they are objects (p. 110)

If discourse is a Social Semiotic approach to the “‘what’ of communication, then the concepts of ‘speech act’ and ‘genre’ can be used to outline a Social Semiotic approach to the ‘how’ of communication” (p. 117). J. L. Austin’s revolutionary “speech act” showed how some statements create their own truths. Prior to his work, language was seen as a *representation*. These “performatives” only work under certain conditions and are context bound. For example, the vow of marriage can only really come into effect as speech act in specific places and when uttered by specific people. What we have, then, are a combination of linguistic, non-linguistic, and contextual features (p. 119). With respect to images, it is not difficult to understand how they can also act to offer, demand, instruct, explain, and warn (p. 120).

The fourth dimension of semiotic analysis van Leeuwen describes is modality. Modality is related both to questions of representation and to questions of social interaction, in other words a semiotician would ask not “ ‘how true is this’ but ‘as how true is it represented?’” (p. 161). As Hodge and Kress (1988) have put it:



Social control rests on control over the representation of reality which is accepted as the basis for judgment and action...Whoever controls modality, can control which version of reality will be selected out as the valid version in that semiotic process. All other versions exist briefly, but are deprived of force in the longer term unless a group refuses to let that force be negated. (p. 147)

Halliday (1978) adds a key aspect; we can choose not only degree of truth with modality but also kinds of truth (p. 163). All means of expression have modality resources and because all these means of visual expression are gradable, they allow the relevant dimension of articulation to be increased or reduced and thus cue viewers judgments of modality of 'as how real' images or parts of images are to be perceived (p. 167). Since there are “always several visual modality cues at once, and they can contradict each other... more than one interpretation is possible” (p. 174).

The final area van Leeuwen (2005) addresses in detail contains the four semiotic functions providing multimodal cohesion: rhythm (composition in time), composition, information linking, and dialogue. The functional aspect speaks to the balance between the social and the individual, hierarchical and non-hierarchical relations, and occurs across many fields. In architecture for example, functionalism emerged as a style that avoided all ornamentation. Van Leeuwen (2005) affirms that the “elements of a picture or page layout are balanced on the basis of their visual weight. This ‘weight’ derives from their perceptual salience, which, in turn, results from a complex interaction ... relative size; sharpness of focus ... amount of detail and texture shown; tonal contrast” (p. 198).

Oppositions can be examined semiotically, for example, ‘up’ can stand for positive affects and power but also for excess of abstraction and idealism; ‘down’ can stand for negative affects and lack of power but also for groundedness (p. 200). In turn, ‘left’ stands for traditional,



known, ‘right’ stands for new, unknown; foreground and background can be seen as something highlighted, or something ‘in the environment of’ respectively (p. 200). The justifications for the meanings associated with these various elements are fully explicated by van Leeuwen (2005) using a wide range of historical documentation. But I am concerned that these are so embedded in Western epistemology that other ways of thinking are not even open for consideration even though Van Leeuwen (2005) in his distillation of distinctions in spatial organization, notes when it is a particularly Western framework (p. 201). Che’s image, as found outside Western (or colonial) historical moments of meaning-making is often the resource of those who are marginalized in official political discourses, those who must mobilize subversive alternative media to comprehend and comment.

Information linking in terms of causal or temporal relationships is the third function yielding cumulative and cognitive value. These categories make items of information meaningful to each other (e.g. a recipe needs temporal links to be meaningful) (p. 225). The following chart provides a tidy summary of some of van Leeuwen’s image-text relations (p. 230).

<b>Image-text relations</b>		
Elaboration	Specification Explanation	The image makes the text more specific (illustration) The text makes the image more specific (anchorage) The text paraphrases the image (or vice versa)
Extension	Similarity Contrast Complement	The content of the text is similar to that of the image The content of the text contrasts with that of the image The content of the image adds further information to that of the text, and vice versa (‘relay’)

Linking analysis allows the researcher to compare and contrast and ask: what explains differences between two or more photographs and their captions? What aspects of events are re-counted? What remains un-depicted? Why? (p. 247). Finally, “Multimodal cohesion can be looked at in terms of interactional dynamics, of dialogue” (p. 248). (Dialogue has become a central concept in semiotics). van Leeuwen often stresses the point that none of these processes are linear; they are to be understood as overlapping, reversible, and multidirectional.

The method outlined has limitations, it is primarily descriptive and can be reductive when faced with the richness and complexity of the variety of ways images operate and are responded to. Social Semiotics can move us towards the multiplicity and multivalence of ways people have used a media image, appropriated it through their various reinterpretations, and had it return to different media outlets, intentionally or not, inscribed with another understanding, still resisting closure, replete with meanings but still secretive.

*How has social semiotics been used in the literature?*

In order to understand what semiotics with a social focus might look like; I examine three studies. Phillip Vannini’s (2007) “Social Semiotics and Fieldwork: Method and Analytics” is derived explicitly from van Leeuwen’s method combined with ethnography. He devotes almost half of the article to defining his terms and defending his use of them out of a (reasonable) perception that: “most sociologists still perceive semiotics as an arcane, precious, and unintelligible intellectual enterprise” (p. 113). Theoretical, methodological, and empirical works

on the “connection between semiotics and interpretive sociology (e.g., Denzin, 1987; Gottdietner, 1995; MacCannell & MacCannell, 1982; Manning, 1987, 1988, 2004; Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994; Vannini, 2004)” (p. 113), in North America especially, still appear to have an uncertain role. Vannini (2007) recalls that the recent International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry “featured no sessions on semiotics, and the sole significant mention of semiotics in the highly influential Handbook of Qualitative Research edited by Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (2000, 2005) dates as far back as its first edition (Manning & Cullum-Swan, 1994)” (p. 114). Vannini (2007) claims originality because “examples of published full-blown sociosemiotic ethnographic studies are scarce if not altogether inexistent” (p. 138).

Using a combination of semistructured, open-ended interviews, unstructured conversations on and off the “field” with 40 participants, analysis of text, and participant observation, Vannini (2007) dissects the meanings associated with artificial tanning. Without ideological, social, cultural, or structural totalities in socio-semiotic interpretation, researchers examine “systems of interaction of multiple meanings and different social agents with diverse goals and life worlds” (p. 127). Thus Vannini (2007) is able to *allow contradicting interpretations to coexist* and expose a multifaceted phenomenon, as he explores interpretations of tanned skin as both “source of seductive meaning, and/or as medical evidence” (p. 127). Collections of resources were made through a combination of observation, interviews, field conversations, various degrees of participation, gathering of textual material, and so on (but really I wonder is this any different from a case study in terms of data collection?). Different interpretive communities may assign different meaning to heteroglossic resources. “Not everyone views tanned skin as aesthetically pleasing, for example” (p. 129).

Following van Leeuwen (2005), Vannini (2007) utilizes the concept of semiotic change, or transformation, (semiosis) to discuss the importance of going beyond the cataloguing of semiotic resources to a diachronic, or time-sensitive perspective on how resources can be used differently at different times. This is probably the most difficult aspect to study since change is uneven and inconsistent and “subject to contestation and resistance” (p. 130). In terms of theoretical perspectives, Vannini (2007) holds the door open for almost everyone, “contemporary critical theory, cultural studies, queer theory, feminisms, and symbolic interactionism” (p. 137). Methods for both data gathering and analysis include observation and participant observation, reflexive introspection, biographical methods, interviewing, text analysis, and others.

In *Stealing the Signs: A Semiotic Analysis of the Changing Nature of Professional Sports Logos*, Ron Bishop (2001), addresses the political economy of logo wearing by champion Chicago Bulls fans versus wearing the logo of a less successful team like the Cleveland Cavaliers or the Miami Heat. With Baudrillard as his theoretical muse, he observes “The logo as a sign has been changed to the point that it “mask[s] the absence of a basic reality” (p. 26). Through the article he guides readers through the morphing of logos toward “pure simulacrum” and describes their manifestations as signs moving quite rapidly through different orders of simulacra.

Bishop (2001) observes an emphasis on marketing means: “consumption is more important than allegiance” (p. 40). True fans and casual fans watch from the same passive televised vantage point. And he concludes with Debord’s words: “it is not just that our relationship to these commodities ‘is plain to see’; these commodities, the endless logo and colour changes, are ‘all that there is to see’ (1994: 29)” (p. 40). The implications, at first glance, are immense, not only is any ‘reality out-there’ irrelevant and unnecessary, but also mass media has the power to decide what is or isn’t important, or simply what IS. As one of the only cases available to

examine, the study was useful, but the image-object of team logos is much less complex than the image of Che Guevara that gets rendered in innumerable vernacular ways.

Thirdly, in *Teddy Bear Stories*, Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulth and Theo van Leeuwen (2003) present a social semiotic analysis of teddy bears. After introducing the iconography of the teddy bear, they analyse stories from children's books, reminiscences by adults about their childhood teddy bears, and children's accounts of what they do with their teddy bears to show how teddy bears are endowed with meaning in everyday life. They position teddy bears as artefacts that "provide a cultural channelling for the child's need of a transitional object," (p. 5) and assert that teddy bears have changed and "have recently been institutionalised and commercialised" (p. 5). Thus, they describe the teddy bear as a multi-modal object, produced by the toy industry to fulfil an intimate role in the lives of children, and now also taken up in the world of public institutions as a key signifier of and substitute for affect.

The *object* in Social Semiotic approaches still seems to me to be passive and couched in terms such as meaning, conduit, communication, and resources, rather than engaging in an analysis of processes of being/becoming and relationships with objects/bodies. The terminology implicitly restricts space for play: something I find deeply dissatisfying. I return then, to philosophical semiotics as Umberto Eco had conceived it, in an attempt to understand the alternative possibilities offered by Jakobson's (1968) novel idea.

### **Jakobson's fourth sign-type: Artifice**

Jakobson proposed a fourth type of sign, the artifice, to address the relationship of "a message which signifies itself, [and] is indissolubly linked with the esthetic function of sign systems" (Jakobson 1968:704–705, in Allingham, p. 2008 p. 171-2). It seems to be a productive option that would not neglect intention, expressivity, and affect.

This fourth type resonated with some of Umberto Eco's work. For Eco, comprehending what signs stand in for as icons is not as important as "recognizing a content 'other' than that which the represented object stands for (cross, crescent hammer and sickle)" (p. 17). They are also called symbols "but in a sense opposite to that adopted for formulas and diagrams. Whereas the latter are quite empty, open to any meaning, the former are quite full, filled with multiple but definite meanings" (p. 17). Luckily, he does not avoid the ambiguities and inextricable overlaps between these categories. Consequently, Eco writes: "The nature of the sign is to be found in the 'wound' or 'opening' or 'divarication' which constitutes it and annuls it at the same time"(p. 23). I conceive of the nature of the sign type Jakobson put forward just such a 'wound' or 'open' type sign in that, as artifice, it ceases to be once it is recognized as such, while yet being, simultaneously providing a multiple beyond. Artifice is in a sense designed to be pierced, it is the only self-conscious sign type and the only sign type whose intention is to represent something other or something more than what it seems to. Like disguise, once it is seen-through it ceases to disguise it ceases to act in that way. Yet, we can still derive pleasure and an aesthetic knowing from seeing and seeing through the disguise. It is artful and beautiful. And we can move in an oscillatory motion in the seeing/knowing. I contend that the aesthetic is part of the meaning content of a sign but that not any sign-type will do (for example a natural sign not human made [index] with not have intention behind any of its aesthetic aspects).

Eco's centerless, labyrinthine encyclopedia and its almost infinite network of

interpretants provide a useful way to think about the image of Che. There is no one place or space that the image exists, and it is always linking to new debates and reconnecting with old ones, the definition can never be finished one must always refer to volumes A-Z with their interdependent interpretations and manifestations of the image. In other words, the image means, but its meaning isn't static or unidirectional as it gets reinvented across time and space, and both horizontally and vertically. An encyclopaedia entry is thus a collage. Each entry is incomplete, a fragment of information on a topic with multiple tentacles reaching out in connection to other entries endlessly. Similarly, the renderings of Che's image are always the same image, or topic, but being reproduced in limitlessly varied media, contexts, and figurations. There is structure and yet it is open, I propose that the format of the four sign types is similar in many ways. The fourth position, which Greimas regarded as explosive, is occupied by artifice, which is a modality that splinters like a fractal into multitudinous possibilities. It is material, but virtual, in the sense that it is actual and possible at the same time depending on when/if it is recognized<sup>8</sup>. Thus though related to a structure, it is fluid. Such a relation allows us to see the structure as something artificial that allows us to look at form through abstraction but does not generalize, or reduce it.

Donald Preziosi (2003) says artifice “allows us to deal with the extraordinary complexities - the fluid and open-ended relativities- of visual meaning in a clear yet nonreductive manner (p. 146). In short, artifice might be a conceptual tool to face kind of challenge posed by the image of Che Guevara in being fluid, open-ended, and irreducibly complex. Like Eco, Preziosi (2003) is clear the sign is “a *relationship* between things (of any kind).” (p. 31, my emphasis) Preziosi's (2003) pivotal observation is that Jakobson demonstrated the differences and importance of “factual” and “imputed” (or conventional/virtual) relations between signifiers and what they signify.” (p. 143)

Thus, Preziosi (2003) pairs up the notions of artifice and ostensification to show the relation is “presented as being true or appearing to be true, but usually hiding a different motive or meaning.” (p. 144) He also links it to the Aristotelian *adaequatio*, or adequation, or “fitting,” “adjustment” (p. 145). In this sense the artifice is an invitation to imagine *otherwise*. What is the final fit that cannot quite be represented?

The notion of artifice requires a necessarily participatory relation. This allows us to understand how “artworks are questions posed and adequations mooted, soliciting engagement so we may learn to see” (Preziosi, D. 2003 p. 147). It is a *pedagogical* relation at the core not only of ostentation or adequation but of presentation and a pointing to something that one can only co-construct. It is a double motion because in a way the artifice is telling us that it is pointing to something and not pointing to it at the same time, but *being*, inhabiting or embodying, it in some way that can only emerge when we catch on. Additionally, artifice tends to point at its own constructedness. Because only this sign type emphasizes and exemplifies human skill in doing something, as such it stretches into the realms of finesse or cleverness, as well as *intention* something that none of the other sign types incorporate. But this is also what makes it delightful and effective, we are always negotiating artific/ial signs in our daily lives, and we are more skilled at it than we imagine ourselves to be.

Preziosi delineates the difference between the icon and the artifice: “An iconic sign relationship is primarily one of factual or literal similarity; an artific(i)al sign is one of imputed similarity, of adequation rather than equality” (Preziosi, D. 2003 p. 146). I would further explain

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<sup>8</sup> This might be similar to the effect of looking at a calligram, when one sees the words the image is not apparent for example. Additionally, one who does not perceive or recognize the artifice as such but takes it strictly on face value, will not be aware of this oscillation.

by differentiating from the relationship that a symbol has as a sign. A symbol's relationship to the signified is more or less arbitrary and not necessarily similar to imputed similarity.

At the close of 2008 both Peter Allingham and M. J. Sidnell published works addressing artifice. Both are worth looking at. Allingham writes:

The artwork (and perforce a palpable cultural artefact, object or practise) is taken to bear a relationship of resemblance (a metaphorical, and hence substitutional, relationship) as well as a part-to-whole relation (a synechdochic, and hence a metonymic or juxtapositional, connection; an index) to its circumstances of production (Allingham, P. 2008 p. 171).

A metonymic connection is not juxtapositional but contiguous and I think it might be a stretch to call it an index because it is not an effect but a part closely associated to the thing. Additionally, I am not sure what he means by a "substitutional relationship" when we know the artifice is not intended as a substitute, nor a part-to-whole, but more of an "as-if" which I take to mean pretending to substitute but clearly not. As Preziosi (2003) noted: "The truth - the veritas - in words or things is always one of *adaequatio* or approximation or a tending toward, an as if." (p. 145) A metaphorical relation means one object is understood in *terms of* another, but is more complex than the merely substitutional. One of the key words in understanding this semiotic mode should be "parallelism" but also the notion of the virtual.

Let me interrupt this discussion of the artifice to briefly introduce the virtual, though I will elaborate on it further on in the paper. I draw primarily on Rob Shields' (2003) characterization. Shields (2003) assumes: first, the virtual "is neither absence nor an unrepresentable excess or lack" (p. 20); second, reality is not a monolithic thing it needs to be treated as "more fine-grained concepts" (p. 20) so that the real can be seen as multiple and more than simply the tangible "allowing us to being to conceptualize processes such as becoming in terms of emergence and dialogism (cf. Bakhtin, 1981 in Shields, 2003, p. 21); and third we are already accustomed to "day-to-day manipulation of virtual and actual objects" (p. 20) so that we can see ourselves as literate in terms of understanding the virtual though we may not have come to an explicit structuring of those knowledges.

Allingham (2008) adds: "Metonymic presentation works through design, layout and, e.g. the signatures of brands and logos. These space types catalyse experiential selection and creative interactive behaviour through, e.g. branded space (cf. Höger 2004)" (p. 174). There seems to be an overlay of metonymy and metaphor to produce the artifice. But I would reverse the statement: "Metonymic presentation works through design," to read, "Design works through, among other things, metonymic presentation" because we need to acknowledge the creative role of design as something that can invent new connections. The metonymic is perhaps one tactic in an entire constellation of possibilities within the creation process of artifice. I am hesitant to give it a leading role. Having said this, it is easy to recognize the images of Che that do not even remotely endeavor to gesture towards the man because they are being used to represent attributes such as rebellion. This is a *symbolic* move, and I wish to differentiate it from artifice. Finally, Allingham (2008) turns to Preziosi to observe the four kinds of semiosis afforded by the four types and remark on the ability of artifice to: "represent by presenting, by showing,

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<sup>9</sup> Rob Shields (2003) situates the virtual as an "as-if" (in *The Virtual*). He defines it as real- but ideal not actual. So it includes intangibles (such as community) and as "as-if" real objects (such as trust).

producing, which is why artifice or presentation must be on, or simply be the limit of representation, i.e. the aesthetic form or expression that captures and engages the human senses before any cognitive processing or understanding takes place” (Cf. Preziosi 2003:137ff in Allingham, P. 2008 p. 173). Artifice seems to be about to slip off the map of semiotics.

Allingham’s (2008) critical observations lead to two very useful insights: first, “it seems that Peirce’s typology of signs is insufficient when it comes to dealing with the expressivity of these objects.” (p. 171-2: my emphasis) In observing the expressivity of objects, I contend that Allingham is looking at their *virtual* qualities. I see a clear link between what artifice is able to do, the notion of expressivity, and the virtual. Expressivity must be addressed, and would say that only artifice can do so.

Secondly, Allingham (2008) introduces the idea of liminality with respect to artifice. Again he is actually dealing with the real of the virtual. He writes: “In the quadrant of metaphoric presentation, physical space tends to be virtual, i.e. being established through aesthetic means for the sake of pleasure or growth” (p. 175). So the space for the event is real but virtual, and aesthetic means are the vehicle for creating it. This space is extremely productive because it provides an alternate place where one can be free to think differently from how one is colonized to think in everyday life. For Allingham (2008) the physical space both tends to be virtual in the 4<sup>th</sup> quadrant<sup>10</sup>, and is volatile and about-to-be-destabilized, or in his words: “a semiotic mode that is liminal, interfacial, as it represents through presentation” (p. 177). In being liminal it is at the edge of the relationship of representation common to other sign-types in that it is always-about-to-become something else. It teeters on the edge of unpredictability.

Sidnell, (2008) rightly observes that, “Jakobson may have designated *artifice* a distinct mode rather than a kind of *symbol*, within the Peircean triad, in order to make the 'artistic character' distinctive at the modal level. (p. 18) But he critiques Eco for not offering a semiotic understanding of beauty in his broad survey in *History of Beauty* (2004). Something that, for Sidnell, is critical to a concept of semiotic praxis. Indeed Sidnell seems to stop dead with the remark: "With this Beauty, semiotics, intriguingly, has nothing at all to do... In a very wide-ranging survey, he [Eco] has seen no need to broach the issues of whether a sign may be beautiful, insofar as it is a sign; and whether beauty as such be a sign." (Sidnell, M. J. 2008, p. 23) For me this is the critical opening where artifice and by extension the virtual enter the dialogue. (Perhaps I can say that in so far as Beauty is expression, it is the virtual of the sign).

### **Exploring artifice: The *semiotic black market*<sup>11</sup>**

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<sup>10</sup> In Allingham’s (2008) words, “In the quadrant of metaphoric presentation, physical space tends to be virtual, i.e. being established through aesthetic means for the sake of pleasure or growth. Here, we can list ‘framed structures’ of amusement parks, shopping malls, casinos and the like” (p. 13).

<sup>11</sup> The term semiotic black market expresses the essence of artifice, and was coined by conceptual artist Vik Muniz: “I grew up in Brazil in the seventies, under a climate of political repression during military regime. You're forced to live in a sort of a semiotic black market, where you can never say what you really mean and everything that you hear is not what really is.” - Vik Muniz [http://www.ted.com/talks/vik\\_muniz\\_makes\\_art\\_with\\_wire\\_sugar.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/vik_muniz_makes_art_with_wire_sugar.html)

*“The discussion over the primacy of art or nature – does art imitate nature or does natural beauty imitate art? – fails to recognize the simultaneity of truth and image..it is the very structure of the sensible as such. The sensible is being insofar as it resembles itself”*

(Levinas 1987, 7-8)

C.S. Peirce’s basic sign theory provides for three basic relationships between signified and signifier, icon (based in resemblance), index (based in causality), and symbol (based in convention). As we have seen, Jakobson proposed artifice mainly to show a 4<sup>th</sup> relationship not accounted for by the index, icon, symbol triad. Peirce’s initial distinction among three relations between signans and signatum, (Peirce 1931:1.558) is:

1. –An indexical relation based on factual contiguity<sup>12</sup>;
2. –An iconic relation based on factual similarity;
3. –A symbolic relation based on imputed contiguity.

Jakobson wrote:

[The] interplay of the two dichotomies—contiguity/similarity and factual/imputed—admits a fourth possibility, namely, imputed similarity.

And so the table looks like this:

	<i>contiguity</i>	<i>Similarity</i>
<i>factual</i>	index	Icon
<i>imputed</i>	symbol	Artifice

In other words, something can be said to be artifice when it is done in an ostensible manner. Something created by artifice is said to be “effectively” real.

Something can be said to be artifice when it is done in an ostensible manner – avowedly, declaredly, professedly. Something created by artifice is said to be “effectively” real. Artifice is usually distinguished from, and often implicitly or explicitly opposed to, actually or really: in other words something that *is* apparently, but not necessarily or really.<sup>13</sup> We can say that artifice

<sup>12</sup> Contiguous; intimate association; nearness; proximity- The concept was first set out in the Law of Contiguity, one of Aristotle's Laws of Association, which states that things which occur in proximity to each other in time or space are readily associated.

<sup>13</sup> Etymologically, artifice has three different routes/roots, one is as the Greek techné, (TEKHNE) who was the goddess or the spirit (daimona) of art, technical skill and craft. Another derives from the word for artifice, stratagem, or plan: metis (may'-tis). Odysseus (or "Ulysses") is associated with metis in the Homeric Epics as polymetis, or "man of many wiles" and the famous stratagem (metis) of the Trojan horse. Finally, there is the Latin root , artificium "making by art, craft," from artifex (gen. artificis) "craftsman, artist," from ars "art" (see art (n.)) + facere "do" (see factitious): meaning "device, trick" (the usual modern sense). Other definitions include: artifice, to name or make by art: An ingenious expedient, a man{oe}uvre, stratagem, device, contrivance: human skill as opposed to

is a self-conscious sign. At the core of my understanding of artifice as the fourth sign-type is the idea that it is performative, in the sense that it “brings about” the allegorical connections as well as presents mimetically the structure of the sensible. The idea of the structure of the sensible<sup>14</sup> is something that Rancière takes up and applies to both politics and aesthetics which links it back to what he says about changing the world when you interpret it. If we have more nuanced ways of interpreting the world, we can have new shades and tones to our understandings, which in turn enable us to act in new and perhaps more powerful ways. In other words, if we can see how some representations are not simply what they appear to be but at the same time are other things, without losing whatever it is they apparently had, it means we don’t have to categorize them as one thing only, it allows for more fluidity and possibility. We can connect this idea to what Peirce writes about experience being our only teacher as cited by Portis-Winner; “its action takes place by a series of surprises, bringing about a double consciousness at once of an ego and a non-ego directly acting upon each other” (CP 5.53) (Portis-Winner, I. 1999, 29). The pedagogical moment of a sign exists only at the moment of its making or becoming in the recognition by the viewer or interpretant. Learning always already works through virtual levels and through our ability to comprehend artifice. The masking of the object in order to speak to it more directly is how we can see this functioning. Therefore the role of intention is central, as are the parts played by guise and disguise, gaps and misrecognition. The sign that effectually disappears as soon as you recognize it is disguise. Yet it is no less really representing what it purportedly represented in the first place.

For Rancière, the artifice is first and foremost a political sign mode. In *On the shores of Politics* he looks at what both Plato and Aristotle think democracy is and compares them. He writes: “...in Book IV of the *Politics* where Aristotle proposes that there should appear to be elements of both types of regime (oligarchy and democracy) and yet at the same time of neither, *a good polity being one in which the oligarch sees oligarchy and the democrat democracy* (p. 42 my emphasis). How is it that one group can see one thing and another sees something completely different? We know the oligarchs are controlling the “appearance” of the regime to suit themselves and to manipulate the democrats. There is an art to making something look like something it is not quite, it is an “as-if” redistribution of the sensible, in a word-- artifice. Rancière continues and directly links to the notion of artifice: "It is worth pausing to consider the function of artifice here, for it embodies all the complexity of Aristotle's conception of politics (42-3). He sees Aristotle considering politics "not as illusion or machination but as the art of life in common" (43). Artifice is the principle whereby people play each other's games and it is not simply reducible to being cunning. Rancière wonders if there is a connection to be found between the art of dissemblance as theorized by Aristotle and the principle of division which Claude Lefort sees as the essence of modern democracy, as the site of a disembodied power, splintered between diverse agencies of legitimacy, such as law and knowledge<sup>i</sup>. *We can understand artifice as an ignescent sign, one that is capable of bursting into flame at the moment of recognition, the moment one recognizes it as an as-if, and as also not-that-but-other.*

The artifice as a sign type and the specific relation it bears to the signified can be better understood if we keep in mind the idea of having a duplicity of awareness to better grasp the quasi-presence and imminent visibility of the oscillating imaginary. Since C.S. Peirce said that,

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what is natural.

<sup>14</sup> By structure of the sensible, Rancière is making a Platonic link to the later dialogues particularly the *Timaeus*.



“The index asserts nothing; It only says “There!” We may claim that artifice says “not there but elsewhere” and points while presenting the lack by performing *as-if*.”

### **From artifice to the virtual via parallelism**

Artifice can aesthetically impute similarity through aesthetic means and so it becomes an “as if” in a relationship that can be characterized as a *parallelism*. Thus, artifice is an actualization of the virtual (relationship). For Jakobson, following Hopkins, the principle of parallelism does not connote identity but rather correspondence through either points of similarity or contrast. The artifice **is** virtual (because what we ‘see’ is other than what we are being shown, though we also see that) and intrinsically ambiguous, while it represents through a parallelism, represents by showing something that it is not to talk about the thing that it is. In other words, aesthetically an artifice is what it is not, and thus seeks its meaning in unlikeness by triggering the viewer’s recognition through visual cues and thus embodies a different relationship with the signified than an icon, index or symbol. At this point Gell (1998) reminds us that: “some ‘representations’ are very schematic but only very few visual features of the entity being depicted need to be present in order to motivate abductions from the index... Recognition on the basis of very underspecified clues is a well-explored part of the process of visual perception. Under-specified is not the same as ‘not specified at all’ or ‘purely conventional’.”(25) We can see this in many of the instances when Che Guevara’s image is little more than a silhouette. Jakobson saw parallelism as equivalence rather than identity; the equivalent pairs are, in turn, juxtaposed according to the principle of similarity or contrast.<sup>ii</sup> (p. 6) In order to move on, we need to keep in mind such things as Merleau-Ponty’s “duplicity of awareness” and Foucault’s (1968) discussion of Magritte’s painting *C’eci n’est pas une pipe* as a calligram that inaugurates a play of transferences that run, proliferate, propagate and correspond.” (p. 49)

A number of times I have referred to the term *virtual*. My use and understanding of this concept is built on four separate but interrelated developments of “virtual” by Peirce, Shields, Rancière, and Didi-Huberman. I will briefly explain each of their approaches to the concept, while noting that they do not necessarily contradict each other. The virtual is key to understanding the workings of imputed signs. “The dictionary definition of ‘virtual’ was penned by none other than Charles Sanders Peirce.” (Skagestad, 1998 p. 2) For Levinson, “Peirce defines a ‘virtual’ X as what you get when the information structure of X is detached from its physical structure” (Skagestad, 1998, p. 2)<sup>iii</sup>.

In a four part ontological frame, Shields (2003) positions the virtual as “real without being actual, ideal without being abstract.” (p. 25) He pairs it with the concrete as the other part of the axis of the real. He follows Deleuze in seeing the opposite of the really existing as the *possible*: “The possible is never real, even though it may be actual; however, while the virtual may not be actual, it is nonetheless real” (Shields, 2003, p. 25)<sup>iv</sup>.

The sign-type of artifice is functioning as an “as-if.” Bergson (1988) writes “the virtual image evolves toward the virtual sensation and the virtual sensation toward real movement: this movement, in realizing itself, realizes both the sensation of which it might have been the natural continuation and the image” (cited in Shields, 2003, 26-7). There is a duplicity here a double movement that fits with artifice. Our experience of the aesthetic object necessarily *authenticates* a perception of the world beyond the senses through the authenticity of the virtual. Thus we can say that an object happens, that is, it enters into experience. Artifice is purportedly one thing,

while it also is virtually another, it is the trickster's favorite. The Trojan horse for example was a gift and at the very same time a weapon.

As I noted earlier, Rancière speaks directly to the notion of artifice in discussing Platonic and Aristotelian definitions of democracy. I would posit that artifice as a sign-type works precisely in this manner, as Rancière explicitly elaborates. He considers the function of artifice, as artifice, not explicitly as a sign, but I see them working in the same way. He writes, "In Aristotle, artifice actualizes that principle of life in common which goes by the name of friendship, thwarting the unilateralism characteristic of each of the constitutive elements of politics. It is a way of playing the other's game, of catching him out at his own game, and it cannot be reduced to some 'cunning of reason' (43) The art or *artifice* of life in common, the way in which a regime must make itself unlike itself, may still have something to do with the thinking and practice of politics under modern democracy. Perhaps there is a connection to be found between Aristotle's art of dissemblance and Claude Lefort's principle of division and the essence of modern democracy. (50?) The space of shared meaning that makes legal words effective is for Rancière, a virtual space. He emphasizes: "Those who take the virtual for the illusory disarm themselves just like those who take the community of sharing for a community of consensus" (p. 50).

Finally, in a fourth variation Georges Didi-Huberman (2005) elaborates his theory of visual figuration by distinguishing between what he calls the visual, the visible, and the virtual. In his triad, the visible equals what we can see, the visual indicates something that cannot be seen (for example in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* her hair seems to be blowing in the wind as she arrives on her shell, the wind itself [indicated by the hair but unseen], is the visual), and the virtual is a presentation of something unrepresentable. Using Fra Angelico's painting of *the Annunciation*, as his primary exemplar, Didi-Huberman takes the whiteness of the walls and the blank paged book in the Virgin's hand to illustrate the virtual. He writes: "The whiteness is so simple, yes. But it is so altogether like the blank inside of the little book held by the Virgin: which is to say that it has no need of legibility to carry an entire mystery of the Scriptures" (22) Thus, "Fra Angelico simply used the *presentation* of the white – the pictorial modality of its presence *here* in the fresco – to 'incarnate' on his level something of the unrepresentable" (24). In this way the white paint, while being white paint, is also an act and an acting of whiteness, the un-inscribed, the blank, the yet-to-be-but-promised, an event in the making, and all that it would have been for Fra Angelico. His conceptualization of the virtual resonates strongly with the performative aspect of artifice I underlined earlier. These four conceptualizations of the virtual, are compatible yet different elaborations of how the virtual can be described. Without ignoring the multiple trajectories and nuances in the concept, I will understand the virtual as real but not concrete, noticeable but not visible, recognizable through its effects, impact, or actions designating its information structure. I recognize there are deeper issues to be explored with regards to representation and the conundrum of what is there and what is "as-if" there, that are beyond the project I have undertaken here.

In the second part of this exploration, I engage salient concepts and application in a concrete example. I hope to show that artifice IS in fact virtual, it is the politically motivated *other* aesthetic depiction, in creating a parallelism it is a manoeuvre. Alfred Gell's (1998) work provides traction and the next move from the semiotic platform. Although he openly repudiated semiotics, he employs Peirce's term 'index' (out of the triad of index, icon, and symbol) to expound the relationship between the art object and the creator's or subject's agency: "An "index" in Peircean semiotics is a "natural sign" ... from which the observer can make a *causal*

*inference* of some kind, or an inference about the intentions or capabilities of another person” (Gell 1998: 13). However, Gell’s rejection of a specifically linguistic model for visual communication is a position I share.

## PART 2: THE EFFICACY OF THE VIRTUAL: FROM CHE AS SIGN TO CHE AS AGENT

“*Aixo era y no era*”  
(*It was and it was not*).

Majorca storytellers

“*In the contradiction lies the hope*”

Bertold Brecht

### Introduction

I started with traditional semiotics as a ground from which to approach the dialogic nature of the sign and its alterity; it’s essential woundedness simultaneously constituting and annulling it; its ability to register divergent relationships between signified and signifier; its coherence contingent on the framework; its insufficiency when it comes to the expressivity of objects; and its failure to address the art of dissemblance directly. I also found that these limitations with respect to affect and the world of movement and fluidity could be responded to through some of the work done by Roman Jakobson, and later Donald Preziosi on the notion of *artifice*. Some useful aspects of this notion relate to the possibilities provided by the “as-if” or the enveloping of the *virtual*, in the nature of artifice achieved through multiple coding and other tactics that appear as a general strategy of *parallelism* and the way one was able to interpret these events seemed to happen through abduction<sup>15</sup>.

When a viewer recognizes the virtual (and invisible) qualities of visible image (of Che Guevara), the possibility of the agency of the art or artifact is created, and thereby the efficacy of the virtual. I am going to develop this theory through an example. By looking at how the image of Che Guevara has mobilized in East Timor, I will link artifice with parallelism and the virtual to show how the virtual is efficacious in allowing an image to become a social agent. I chose to look at this particular part of the world because I was somewhat startled at the magnitude of the image’s presence and impact in a place so geographically distant from where Guevara himself was active.

As a way to tie semiotics and the notions of the virtual and artifice with visual images, my

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<sup>15</sup> Abduction or hypothesis was characterized as guessing by Peirce. (I.e. All the beans from this bag are white. These beans are white. Therefore these beans are from this bag.)

approach draws on some of Alfred Gell's (1998) principles from *Art and Agency*. Gell (1998) agrees most "literature about 'art' is actually about representation," (p. 25) and thus sidelines the performative and agentic aspects of objects, something the social semiotic approach fails to fully appreciate. Second, I would accept Gell's definition of art as "a system of action, intended to change the world" (p. 6) and thus the emphasis is clearly on "*agency, intention, causation, result & transformation*" (p. 6) rather than mere symbolic communication. Art without some kind of intent or motivation for its aesthetic tactics and/or flourishes is merely ornament. To ground his theory, Gell (1998) expands the notion of index far beyond traditional semiotics by re-framing the notion of cause. He posits that an artist is the 'cause' of a work of art in the same way as fire is (usually) the cause of smoke. But smoke does not always mean there is a fire, and a smile does not always mean there is a happy friendly person behind it, thus Gell (1998) insists that art does not ALWAYS function semiotically.

However, I think it possible if we expand our notion of semiotics to include a kind of semiotics of the virtual. It is more accurately a kind of an anti semiotics because it is not direct *representation* being evoked, rather active *presentation*. Although broader, this tactic would still exclude the issue of expressivity. Gell's heuristic is limited by his failure to address *intention* in his expanded approach to index as the key difference in how "cause" comes to be vis-à-vis the traditional formulation. This intention is key to the notion of artifice because the similarity or link between signified and signifier is an imputed one, the sign is operating primarily on the level of the virtual. However I will draw on his terminology laid out in his four-part matrix where: "The main players in any action-context in the vicinity of objects are identified and related as follows : a material (artefactual) Index made by an Artist « represents » a Prototype and appears before a Recipient" (Arnaut, 2001, p. 192).

### **The case of Che Guevara's image in East TIMOR**

*"In the beginning was the eye, not the word."* (Otto Pächt, 1995).

*Another day, I head out of Dili towards the rugged hills that fracture the countryside. The trip takes a little longer than expected, as the road is a graveyard for careless drivers, twisting and turning upon itself like an itchy snake. My own vehicle is nearly run off the road by a bus and later suffers a blowout... Other requisite stops include photo opportunities, stops to ask directions, and the obligatory gape-break, when the totally amazing presents itself - such as a warrior-clad cowboy with Che Guevara medals on his chest, riding a pony along the roadside. In this region, altitude means attitude.*

*(Graham Simmons, 2003)*

On the blog, *East Timor – I was there before it became big* I came across this photo (above) taken in Dili. It was entitled *Che* as a simple indication of the subject. There Guevara's face appears in two-tone on the billboard within an unknown building's enclosure. What is the image doing so far from home? I would venture it is acting and thus performative in the sense that it: demarcates, announces, and protects to some extent that territory while interpolating those who resonate with that particular image. It is accompanied by one of the usual slogans "Hasta la victoria siempre" as well as other words too blurred to decipher.



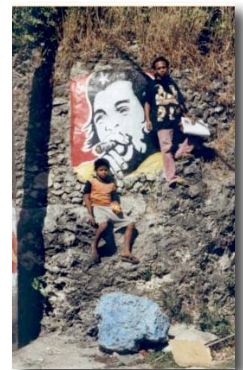
Abutting the mural/billboard is another one depicting a room with three windows and a figure speaking at a podium with some kind of lamp or microphone being held on a rod extending towards him. Yet this more involved depiction is completely disregarded and made ambiguous by the puzzled photographer/blogger Daniel Gerber who writes beneath the photo:

"Che Guevara seems to be really popular here, I don't know why." Clearly, the image does not speak to everyone.



Indeed my brief Internet searches seemed to confirm the popularity of Guevara's image in East Timor as it quickly revealed a number of references to, and images of the revolutionary guerrilla fighter; for example this mural where the two girls are posing for the shot, in St. Crus, Dili (Flickr, franjer79).

The far right photo can be seen as a riff on the famous Korda image where the artist has Che with the cigar to his mouth, but retains the frame with the hair and beret. It was taken in Baucau, East Timor (J. Patrick Fischer, 2002) and called *Wall painting of Che* though a definite wall is not apparent. I did read that when travel writer Norman Lewis visited Baucau in 1991, he described the city as "one of the most disturbing places in the world... a disheveled town full of barracks and interrogation centres with high, windowless walls and electrified fences. Baucau had been the end of the road for so many real and assumed supporters of Fretilin." (Simmons, G. 2003) A suitable place for Che's image?



Why is the image of Che in East Timor? Why at this time? Why this particular figuration?

## Background/Context

The tiny half-island a thousand miles from nowhere of approximately 850,000 people speaking languages Tetun, Portuguese, and Bahasa Indonesian seems irrelevant to global business or power politics. (Rogers, B. 2002) After 455 years, the Portuguese abruptly abandoned this colony in 1975. Only nine days after East Timor declared independence; Indonesia invaded and installed a genocidal regime. “The thought of East Timor falling into the hands of Che Guevara look-alikes horrified Henry Kissinger, and so he gave Suharto the nod to invade. Australia, too, wanted to get its hands on the oil ...” (Rogers, B. 2002) Rogers’ description of “Che Guevara look-alikes” made in hindsight is telling. It indicates something was happening in the East Timor of 1975, and indeed a resistance movement *Fretilin* (the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor) had been born, and an enigmatic leader, Xanana Gusmão had emerged. It also indicates a virtual link between a mental image of Che Guevara that somehow contaminates those who have similar ideals and are willing to act on those notions in terms of sovereignty or independence.

During the 24 years of Indonesian brutality, Xanana Gusmão and a handful of guerrilla fighters, who numbered no more than 160 at their peak, waged war against 22,000 Indonesian occupation troops in the island's dense jungles. In 1992, Gusmão was captured and imprisoned. “He quickly became one of the world’s most prominent political prisoners, writing poetry and letters to keep the dream of independence alive. In 1997 Mandela visited and called for his release.” (McCarthy, T. *TIME Magazine Online* 2000) In an article called *Xanana Gusmão, el Che de la jungla*, Luisa Futoransky (1999) recounts “They have frequently compared him to Che Guevara, Robin Hood, and Ho Chi Minh.” Elsewhere he “was described by the press and analysts as a “poet-revolutionary” with the charisma of Argentine-Cuban guerrilla leader Ernesto “Che” Guevara, who had become an almost mythical icon of revolutionary struggles around the world” (de Queiroz, M. 2007).



From prison, Gusmão issued a challenge of a referendum on full independence for East Timor: “Whoever is afraid of a referendum is afraid of the truth.” In 1999, Suharto’s successor, B.J. Habibie, surprised everyone – particularly his own military – by taking up Gusmão’s challenge.” (McCarthy, T. 2000 *TIME Magazine*) Again, the image of Che is noted in the press:

As the massive Indonesian ship left Jakarta, thousands of people filled its seven tiers. ... Among them were hundreds of East Timorese returning home to vote in the referendum. The majority were students, ... but there were also many refugees from the violence of anti-independence militias in East Timor. ... The clothes and luggage of those filling the decks were decorated with East Timorese and Falantil<sup>16</sup> flags, independence slogans and pictures of Xanana Gusmão and sometimes Che Guevara. (King, S. 1999)

<sup>16</sup> FALINTIL “*forças armadas da libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*” translates as “The Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor” originally began as the military wing of the leftist political party FRETILIN.

When Indonesia lost the vote, Indonesian-controlled militias butchered the Timorese and unleashed mass destruction causing the majority of the population to flee their homes in sheer terror. However less than a year later, *TIME Magazine* reported in 2000:

But something remarkable is happening on this half an island. Gusmão, 53, a former guerrilla leader and political prisoner, has tapped into reserves that are out of reach of the World Bank and the IMF, reserves of willpower and pride the people themselves barely knew existed. Exuding the authority of Nelson Mandela and the charisma of Che Guevara, Gusmão has been traveling the country spreading his vision of the future...

Clearly there is a striking political and ideological parallel between Gusmão and Guevara that is reiterated by mass media outlets but also pulses steadily at the grass roots level. And, in fact they fought the same enemy, for the same reasons, just in different times and places, and with different outcomes in terms of their own personal stories. The rebels demonstrate a self-conscious adoption of some aspects of the Korda image, as well as of the linked slogans, haunted by this famous matrix image. For example, in this old black and white photograph<sup>17</sup> we see Xanana standing in the centre with some of his rebel troop and the banner with the phrase “Patria ou Morte” the Portuguese version of the famous cry by Fidel Castro on the fateful day in 1960 when the famous photograph of Che was taken. And there it stayed, stuck. Here there is a clear alliance with the revolution in Cuba which became, in Che’s words: “the image of what is possible through revolutionary struggle, the hope of a better world...an image of what it is worth risking your life for, sacrificing yourself until death on the battlefields of all the continents of the earth...” (Guevara, E. “Lecture in Santa Clara” 1961 [my translation] online)



How can this old photo from East Timor somewhere in the jungle *represent* the Cuban revolution, its victory, and the Guevarist stance? Gell (1998) differentiates between modes of representing in a useful way: “The ideas of ‘representing’ (like a picture) and ‘representing’ (like an ambassador) are distinct, but none the less linked” (p. 98). The slogan on the banner is an index of Castro’s words in a sense. The banner is there like a representative of the Cuban revolution, not iconic but an “artefactual *body*”<sup>18</sup>. (Perhaps one can say this mode of representing is indexical?)

The basis of the agency of an artifact is rooted in the notion of the distributed object or distributed person in the Maussian understanding of gifts as actual extensions of persons so that in a parallel way the reproduction of an image whether it is of an object or of another image is as-if a gift from that prototype. For instance, “Constable’s picture of Salisbury cathedral is a part

<sup>17</sup> I have no information on this photograph, I don’t even know where or how I found it, but it seems to have been taken in the 1980’s judging by Xanana’s looks.

<sup>18</sup> Gell explains in more detail: “...An ambassador is a spatio-temporally detached fragment of his nation...to whom foreigners can speak, as-if they were speaking to his national government...Although the Chinese ambassador in London does not look like China, or the Chinese government or people, he does *have to be visible* and he does *visibly represent* China on official occasions. He does not look like China, but in London, China looks like him.” (98)

of Salisbury cathedral. It is, what we would call, a ‘spin-off’ of Salisbury cathedral” (p. 104). Similarly, every iteration of Che Guevara’s face taken from the Korda photo can be seen as a spin-off. Consequently, if “appearances” of things are considered material parts of things, “then the kind of leverage which one obtains over a person or thing by having access to their image is comparable, or really identical to the leverage which can be obtained by having access to some physical part of them” (p. 105). This would explain many of the attacks on art works representing historical figures such as the ‘slashing’ of the *Rokeby Venus* by an angry Suffragette.

Even more dramatically evocative, is the color image, where there seems to be in direct conversation with Che’s image; the hair-beret-facial hair combo is unmistakable for those familiar with the Korda photograph (though they have adopted red for the berets). Judging by how young Xanana looks, I would place it in the earlier years of their resistance. We can look at this photograph in more than one way. If we see it as the image entering into Xanana and his troop, then it is as-if a case of possession. The image (prototype) is an agent motivating the fighters (index) to take on its qualities both visible and virtual in a cause-effect relationship and we the viewers of the photograph are the recipients in a passive position but again motivated by our knowledge of the image to infer that it is the source of these fighters looking as they do, with the particular stance in preparation for the photograph.



We can also look at this photograph and see it as Xanana and his troop entering the image. In this case it would be as-if a dramatic performance where Korda the photographer would have the agency of a playwright in taking Che’s photo which becomes the prototype represented by the actor (fighters) who actively index and are thus in an agentic position along with both the photographer and the image, in contrast to the audience (us) who witness the dots connecting through abduction.

However, at the exact same time, we know this is neither a possession nor a play. We know

this is East Timor and these fighters are revolutionaries in their own right. The image-inhabiting, or image-becoming is an artifice and the transformation, while visually signaled is virtual. However, it may serve to provoke fear in those who see these fighters or this photograph and remember the success of Guevara in the Cuban revolution. In this way it can be seen to be efficacious. The artifice is a compass (it can point to it) of the virtual (relationship) manifesting belief in victory for one: it is not actually Che Guevara, but through a parallelism, it is just as if it is. Xanana is never completely Che, but neither is Che completely free of Xanana in the image, in other words there is no synthesis but a gesture and an incomplete merging Shields describes as “syncretism” (Shields, 2011, 120). The notion of syncretism also accounts for the fluid mobility between (in this example) Xanana and his becoming-image: “*Syncretism* designates this exchange or mobility between the ideal and actual as continuous actualization and virtualization”(Shields, 2011, 120).

In the student rally shown here, there is an emanation or leaking of the image onto one of the young supporters, who dons the beret as if to match the image: a black and white portrait of Xanana in profile. In a way I





see it as Che's image *in* Xanana's image *in* and acting *with* this youth.

Finally, and at the root why I was compelled to write about East Timor, is this intriguing photograph taken supposedly<sup>19</sup> in "Malibere village, East Timor" according to *The Globalism Institute RMIT Report* in 2004. This institute based in Melbourne, Australia manages a number of research projects and one in particular under the umbrella of *Sources of Insecurity* focuses on East Timor: "social conflict in East Timor, violence, nationalism, social movements, globalization and global protest movements" and is supervised by Damian Grenfell. Oddly, nowhere else in the over 70-page document did another reference to this image, or an explanation of why it had occupied an entire page in the document appear. Neither was there another mention of Guevara outside the fascinating caption reading: "Che Guevara graffiti on Artorde de Araujo's house in Malibere village, East Timor, 2003. In part, because it was illegal to depict images of Xanana Gusmao, graffiti of

other bearded revolutionaries was used as a sign of resistance" (2004 online report).



If this caption is accurate in describing the situation, this is something of a reversal of the situation found in the color photograph of the rebels discussed above. This is an image clearly labeled "Che Guevara" but for those in the "know" it is really a virtual Xanana Gusmao. The image becomes the site where subordination is transformed into resistance through tactical conversions that allow what Sandoval (2000) calls a "dialectical movement of subjectivity that disallows, yes—but at the same time allows—individual expression,

style, and personality." (p. 35) Che's image "is a congealed residue of performance and agency in object-form, through which access to other persons can be attained, and via which their agency can be communicated." (Gell, 1998, 68) The notion then, resonates with but goes beyond what Roland Barthes' had explored in his denotation (literal), connotation (socio-cultural, personal) approach to visual meaning. It does this because its tactic is one of disguise, and of imputed similarity, rather than a gesturing at different levels or orders of signification. Gusmao is invisible in the image, and yet it is an image of Gusmao, at the same time as being no less an image of Guevara.

We can conceive of Gell's (1998) agency for an artwork/image as a "modality through which something affects something else" (p. 42) and is absolutely relational and context dependent (p. 22). So, given the necessary context, "whatever type of action a person may perform *vis-à-vis* another person may be performed also by a work of art, in the realms of imagination if not in reality." (p. 66) But we know that a more nuanced understanding of reality takes into account the real of the virtual yet not concrete realm. Because we recognize agency by its effects, only when someone acts as an agent can they become an agent and not before. They must "disturb the causal milieu in such a way as can only be attributed to their agency." (p. 20) An artifact is rarely a primary agent, but can act as a secondary agent. For example, when a child feeds a doll because it is hungry, the doll is a secondary agent to the degree that it is able to

<sup>19</sup> I write 'supposedly' because nowhere can I find this village mapped.

channel, or become a conduit for the primary agent's action. Similarly, "social relations only exist in so far as they are made manifest in actions."<sup>20</sup> (p. 26)

In the case of this particular mural we can say that it functions similarly to the example Gell (1998) gives of the Rokeby Venus (pp. 62-65) in his discussion of the shared biographical spaces of persons and images. In other words, the prototype Che Guevara appears as agent since we know the activities of the artist in that case were subordinate to prototype (Korda did not plan the original photo and in various interviews he speaks of it *snapping itself* when Che suddenly appeared in his viewfinder). The index here (a material entity motivating abductive inferences) is the painting on the wall done by an unknown Timorese artist. The prior index is the photograph of Che taken by Korda. While the prototype is Che Guevara, the virtual prototype is (for the Timorese artist) is Xanana Gusmao. This Timorese artist is inspired by the Korda image: it acts on him/her and makes him/her its recipient. At the same time, the public and possibly those censoring institutions of the establishment are also recipients that may either be incited to violence if they understand the artifice at play, or simply allow the mural to pass. Those who understand the process of "masking as survival under colonization" (Sandoval, 2000, p. 84) and the place of the "trickster who practices subjectivity as masquerade..." (Sandoval 2000, p. 62) are those who have developed skills of semiotics as resistance and a consciousness that can identify oppositional expressions of resistance.

There is a perpetual oscillation between the material and virtual of the image. This shimmering is especially salient when the intent is one of imputed similarity signalled through the use of artifice to create a parallelism that can be recognized by those interested in the subversive restructuring of knowledge and who hold an elective affinity with the oppressed.

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<sup>20</sup> "What is seen is the visible knot which ties together an invisible skein of relations, fanning out into social space and social time. These relations are not referred to symbolically as if they could exist independently of their manifestation in this particular form.... Therefore involute character of the index which may objectify a whole series of relations in a single visible form" (62)

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<sup>i</sup> Perhaps the work of Huichole stonemasons can provide a quick example of artifice. In Mexico, in the village of Santa Cruz Xuchitlán (place of the flowers) stands the 300 year-old chapel of *La Santa Cruz*. The façade seems to be the heavily ornamented baroque style of the time with floral and plant life crowding the stone relief, but this work breaks with the established baroque canon and is atypical for the era in style and design and founds instead an alternative aesthetic current. Later dubbed New World Baroque, there was a special element in these particular stone ornaments. Ingeniously, the Huicholes had carved the floral and Christian motifs that they were required to produce, but simultaneously made these carvings serve as indicators of their own gods and spirituality through artifice.

This dilemma of signification is clearly embodied by these ornaments because they are liminal and interfacial. They decorate but they also do other things, depending on how one is looking at them. They are also performative because despite being concretely one thing, they are simultaneously virtually something else. There is much work to be done toward understanding the cultural and social roles of these ornaments, both theoretically and historically.

<sup>ii</sup> Parallelism thus conceived creates variations amid the invariant: variations, since every combination of a pair is different; the invariant, since parallelism is inherent to poetic work (p. 6). For Hopkins: "... all artifice, reduces itself to the principle of parallelism. Now the force of this recurrence is to beget a recurrence or parallelism answering to it

in the words or thought and, speaking roughly and rather for the tendency than the invariable result, the more marked parallelism in structure whether of elaboration or of emphasis begets more marked parallelism in the words and sense. Additionally, "in manipulating these two kinds of connection (similarity and contiguity) ...an individual exhibits his personal style, his verbal predilections and preferences. Parallelism is "- a correspondence" -impressive range of possible configurations" (p. 110).

<sup>iii</sup> In 1902, Charles S. Peirce defined *virtual* as: 'A virtual X (where X is a common noun) is something, not an X, which has the deficiency (virtus) of an X.' (see also Edmund Burke's doctrine of virtual representation, which is not representation but is supposedly as good as.) Peter Skagestad observes that: "The concept of virtuality is deeply embedded in Peirce's doctrine of signs" (p.1) Skagestad's statement makes me wonder: why is the virtual so rarely, if ever addressed when semioticians work with sign theory?

<sup>iv</sup> Shields (2003) cites Bergson (1988) insisting "that the (human) mind establishes a gap between stimulus and response which enables remembrance of experience (memories similar to virtual images in optics) if in a rather passive manner, and thereby opens the possibility of unpredictability and freedom" (Shields, 26-7). It is precisely in this gap that Bertold Brecht locates hope in the epigraph, Didi-Huberman also talks about this gap. Can this gap be connected to our perception of the object as per Deleuze: "Objects are 'the point of indiscernibility of two distinct images, the actual and the virtual' (Deleuze, 1986, II: 82; Deleuze, 1994: 209-210) (Shields, 27).



## AlChemy: Collage, ceremony and decolonizing methods for understanding the work of Che Guevara's image

*Truth lies hidden within the various interpretations from which it is built*

*Che Guevara*

*And so dreams are the images that separate the visible world from the invisible  
- and at the same time join them*

*Pavel Florensky*

### Introduction

There is only one image of Che Guevara amongst the many that were taken of him that has been chosen as a calling card for protesters and the oppressed around the world who are “seeking affective forms of resistance outside of those determined by the social order itself” (Sandoval, 2000, p. 45). This is not an examination of all of the photos of Guevara, but of one particular photograph, the *Guerrillero Heroico* taken by Alberto Korda in 1960 and its unique trajectory and endless renderings ever since. The question of why this particular picture is special moves this work into a different space of inquiry. In other words, this work is not about images and what they do, but is concerned with one particular image and the widespread response it provokes and actions it allows at the level of a persistent non-institutionalized global phenomenon.

To some extent, each person creating, modifying, appropriating or using this image whether in the interests of social justice or not, contributes to a global collage of Che Guevara portraits. UCR/California Museum of Photography director Jonathan Green considers that, “Korda's image has worked its way into languages around the world. It has become an alphanumeric symbol, a hieroglyph, an instant symbol. It mysteriously reappears whenever there's a conflict. There isn't anything else in history that serves in this way” (Lotz, 2007 online). Although I would insist it is more than “an instant symbol,” the picture does reappear practically everywhere; it does this because people continue to choose this particular image to reproduce, again and again.

The historic figure of Ernesto “Che” Guevara himself embodies a stance of integrity in resistance to, and recognition of, Anglo-United States of America imperialism anywhere in the world. For many, he also represents values of collectivism, humanism, modesty, integrity and an uncompromising pursuit of social justice. And those who wish for a visual cipher with an anti-imperialist position that is “revolutionary, anti-capitalist, a different socialism” (Löwy 2009, p.2 my translation), this particular image of Che Guevara incarnates those kinds of sentiments bolstered by ardent desire for change and social justice. The image also indicates solidarity with the political or socioeconomic underdog, the powerless in the class struggle. Perhaps a global vacuum of moral and ethical leadership also provokes a turning-to this image, people look to do





it justice (by honouring Guevara's historical memory and his work) and do the people who use it justice, because it is often marginalized people struggling for change who are interpellated<sup>1</sup> by it.

I explore this image as an agent of struggle and inspiration guided by Chela Sandoval (2000) whose *Methodology of the Oppressed* provides an umbrella under which I infuse principles of Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRMs) to inform and pilot the artistic method of collage enabling a "surrender to what the work in progress suggests" (Eisner, 2003, p. 378). In the end, it is the experience of the image itself and its community of interlocutors who are my teachers.

However, working through artistic methods facilitates a process of investigation and learning that is alchemical: the creative process, despite its focus on a particular project at hand, necessarily transforms both the artist and material through the creation of the work/s. Hazan (2001) echoes "Gell's comment that the essential alchemy of art is to make what is not out of what is, and to make what is out of what is not" (p. 8). I would add that the artist does not escape from this process of metamorphosis. Creative consciousness becomes in an artist through the process of creating the work<sup>2</sup>. In this way the artistic process parallels the IRM principle of a personal journey in accordance an Aboriginal epistemology that follows the "basic assumption that individuals and society can be transformed by identifying and reaffirming learning processes based on subjective experiences and introspection" (Ermine, W. 1995, p. 102). What I attempt is complex and fits only awkwardly in the dissertation form. Because my research and learning permeates and is permeated by my personal experiences with the image, I have attached what I call a soundscape (for lack of a better term) to this piece, which can be read either before or after this exploration. The soundscape indicates an immersive and ambient experience; a holistic seeking that was made possible by learning from Aboriginal epistemologies and artistic processes. The Cree ethicist Willie Ermine (1995) best expresses this simply as: "The experience is knowledge" (p. 104).

Throughout, I locate collage as an anti-fascist and de-colonizing method, corresponding to Guevara's own ethic. The soundscape is also a theoretical framework with epistemic priorities and principles highlighting Sandoval's (2000) "differential consciousness" (pp. 91, 96, 111, 141) and consistent with IRMs. I thus tell a story of the research journey of coming to the final collaborative collage: *Chenigma: medif[ ]ations on life and death* representing my ongoing

<sup>1</sup> There is a push to sell this image in the USA as a type of designer rebellion. Being divorced from its original or continuing political context, it is strictly a de-politicized and de-historicized figure commercially. See my piece called, "Stealing or steeling the image? The failed branding of the Guerrillero Heroico image of Che Guevara" in this dissertation.

<sup>2</sup> Reflecting afterward, the artist can come to new understandings of how and what he or she has learned through the process of creation. Creativity is not something born inside the artist that grows on its own, in a vacuum, and spontaneously emerges; on the contrary, creativity emerges through interacting with material and the environment. Creativity also requires attunement and receptivity. When immersed in creation, we attend to our materials responsively and fluidly; they work on us, as much as we work on them. Our conscious mind stops driving so that we can better concentrate with all our senses, and our subconscious is given greater play. Biologically, this is the most efficacious approach considering the human subconscious processes 20 million items of incoming environmental information per minute, whereas the conscious mind is significantly slower (Lipton B. 2005). Much of the deeper work of interpretation is done by the subconscious mind. How many of us have awoken in the night with a sudden clarity regarding a problem of the day before, or had a startlingly clear advance in our understanding while we were busy doing something else? Because I regard creativity as an alchemical process, a comment was warranted. However, I am aware creativity is an entire field of study and I am not going to explore it beyond this note. Interdisciplinary work inherently has the limitation of involving the researcher in areas outside of her expertise, yet the move is not invalid intellectually.



learning on and with the famous image of Che Guevara called the *Guerrillero Heroico*. The collage I will describe, and most significantly its process of collective creation emanates from a period of three or four years of participation in IRMs such as research circles, dreams, ceremonies and the guidance of elders toward understanding the image.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, this work is influenced by principles of Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRMs) informed by Shawn Wilson's (2008) *Research is ceremony* in response to Sandoval's (2000) call for a "theory uprising" (p. 79). Additionally, I draw primarily T. P. Brockelman's (2001) *The Frame and the Mirror: On Collage and the Postmodern* to flesh out a tentative philosophy of collage. Ontologically consistent, both IRMs and artistic inquiry emphasize relational and contextual understandings over atomized information, holism over hierarchies of epistemology, participation over institutionalized expertise and reject the artificial separation of research and daily life. Ross (in Hanohano 1999) expands:

There is a wide-spread Aboriginal understanding that thought or information must be shared in ways that leave it open to the listeners to take whatever meaning they wish to find in what they have heard. That is the premise of storytelling, where the storyteller will never say, "That's not what I meant." The Western preoccupation with such questions as "What did Shakespeare really mean in Hamlet?" is nothing more than our preoccupation; the pertinent question for most Aboriginal peoples seems to be something like "What did Hamlet cause you to think, feel, or do?" (p. 208).

Additionally, using collage as a mode of presentation<sup>4</sup> as well as a mode of investigation I am able to include and honour all my known and unknown collaborators who continue to work and be worked by the *Guerrillero Heroico*. This image opens diverse interpretive possibilities and allows me/us to show rather than simply tell something about the image. Rooted in art making under IRM principles, the process is less reductive and more evocative; and can become a process that opens space to honour both Che Guevara himself and all those whom he has inspired with or without his image. As I work through the ontological and epistemological features and challenges of collage, I attend to congruencies with IRMs. However, to do justice to these IRMs and their impact on my work/self requires an entire piece that I have yet to write from my position as a non-aboriginal Latina/artist/nomad/student.

### **Understanding the collage form: Ontology and epistemology**

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<sup>3</sup> The influence of IRMs was so vital that not mentioning them would be like concealing the parts of my experiences that have had the most profound impacts –I also keep in mind that not all things can be explained. Yet, it was in the research circles, in Dr. Weber-Pillwax's course, and in ceremonies that I started understanding what the dissertation needed to be/do and it seemed dishonest to pretend it was coming from me, when it was really coming from all the different things people said in those circles and the ideas and directions they gave me. I must underline that I do not know whether I would have engaged in this collective collage had it not been for IRMs.

<sup>4</sup> As representation of research, "an artistic composition pithily provides a synopsis of some of the salient features found in the data." (*Sage Encyclopaedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (2008) Ed. Lisa M. Given)



*Everything is collage, even genetics. There is the hidden presence of others in us, even those we have known briefly. We contain them for the rest of our lives, at every border we cross.*

*Michael Ondaatje*

Crucial to the process, is the artist/researcher's ceding of control, and allowing things to happen. When creating a collage, I notice that different pieces of the fragmented images seem to resonate better with each other than others. Some images and fragments, I notice for the first time although they have been sitting there on the table from the beginning. When I move them and they sit in a different relation to the other material around them, something starts to happen; ideas form<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, other images become less interesting and seem to fade away from my attention. Eliot Eisner (2002) has keenly observed:

In the process of working with the material, the work itself secures its own voice and helps set the direction. The maker is guided and, in fact, at times surrenders to the demands of the emerging forms. Opportunities in the process of working are encountered that were not envisioned when work began, but that speak so eloquently about the promise of emerging possibilities that new options are pursued. Put succinctly, surprise, a fundamental reward of all creative work, is bestowed by the work on its maker (p. 7).

Just as the images based on Korda's *Guerrillero Heroico* are inexhaustible and belong to no one location or identity but still respond to a set of coordinates with respect to meaning-construction, the work of collage has that torn edge that evokes the missing piece while reconfiguring the fragment as part of another image. Collage honours fragments by listening to how they call to one another, and in so doing creates a space of *play*<sup>6</sup>. Ideas develop through the process as active documentation, though they may later be layered over or altered, at the same time a "set of coordinates" evolves with categories dimensions/scales, and interpretive possibilities opening through "contextual aptness" and "economy of means." (Brockelman, 2001, p. 224)

Today, more and more, researchers are turning to collage as a fruitful method of data collection, analysis and representation. Its use is also a burgeoning area within arts-informed methodologies (Seymour, 1995; Brockelman, 2001; Butler-Kisber *et al.*, 2003; Finley, 2003; Robertson, 2004; Butler-Kisber, 2007). This shift is due, in part, to a growing recognition that our world is suffused in collages whether in magazine, newspaper or billboard advertisements and on the Internet. We understand that everything is connected, layered and fragmented. We find collage in family photo albums, quilts, and handmade birthday cards.

Collage, we would argue, is a particularly democratic art form. It can be technologically sophisticated, as in the use of image manipulation software; it can be composed in a dispersed fashion, and then combined, like the AIDS quilts; or it

<sup>5</sup> See also Anamnesis: Of the Visible lyotard, *Jean-François in Theory, Culture & Society* Volume 21 (1): 107 SAGE – Feb 1, 2004 "Anamnesis constitutes a painful process of working through, a work of mourning for the conflicting emotions, loves and terrors, associated with these wounds. Perhaps the process is beginning"

<sup>6</sup> I use play in the following sense: play does not mean not to be rigorous, but to refuse being paralyzed by the constraints of scholarship... shake off rigor mortis hiding the embryonic idea, rework-reword and move things around do things differently follow uncharted paths... work on coherence...co-here stick together.



can be very low-tech, using glue, scissors, paper and images or found objects (Norris et al. 2007, p. 483-4).

A collage method is led by experimental and creative practices. And collage ontology assumes certain properties as essential. The Oxford English Dictionary defines collage as “an abstract form of art in which photographs, pieces of paper, newspaper cuttings, string, etc. are placed in juxtaposition and glued to the pictorial surface” [OED online]. The final collage is not always abstract although we can see that the composite pieces have been abstracted from their original context. The materials used may or may not be pictorial and textual representations of recognizable objects. For example a paint chip doesn’t represent a recognizable object, it *is* the object. When placed next to each other, however, these materials may modify their earlier meaning by creating a new constellation of meanings. The effect is cumulative though non-linear:

For most of the twentieth century, collage has been understood as being a unique mixture of “real” and “represented” elements. *The Encyclopaedia of World Art*, for instance, says that collage’s chief innovation is the “inclusion of a piece of reality within a painting [that] projects it into the world of objects, narrowing the distance between painting and spectator. (p. 597)” (Beyers, 2004, p. 2)

Thus we can state that the connective yet generatively fractal-like principle of multiplicity is the core of the collage ontology. For Brockelman (2001), “collage practices – the gathering of materials from different worlds into a single composition demanding a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element – call attention to the irreducible heterogeneity of the “postmodern condition” ...also resists...pure difference.” (p. 10) Each fragment has more than one being, or life, and participates in multiple dialogues. In a sense, each fragment can be said to be heterotopic.

Non-closure, in the sense that something can be added or removed without necessarily making the piece look more or less finished, is another core ontological property. The property of non-closure is intimately related to that of multiplicity but is focused more on the possible combinations. (When is a collage finished?) Art critic Donald Kuspit (1983) observes, “that the indeterminacy of collage, its compositional narrative, does not gel fully. As such, ‘conrescence is, in effect, never finished, however much there may be the illusion of completeness...the incongruous effect of ...collage is based directly on its incompleteness, on the sense of perpetual becoming that animates it”” (pp. 127-128). Any gesture toward closure in a collage is an illusion and impossibility because no fragment exists in a hierarchy above or below any other. Both on the level of the art piece itself, and also in terms of my own research journey, the focus is on it being ongoing.

While closure is imaginary and impossible, since one fragment cannot be privileged over another: possibility for meaning is created between them and only their relations to each other define them. Collage is relational internally and externally, and requires the artist and the responsive viewer to think or act modally, as one does when engaging in performative speech (such as a vow or promise, to say it is also to *do* it). Because meaning construction with/in collage requires a “metatransitive relationship between an agent, an act, and an effect...” at once productive of an effect on an object and “constitutive of a particular kind of agent...by means of an action” (White, p.181 in Sandoval 2000, p. 155) a specific mode of consciousness is required.





This consciousness is crucial to interacting with the form of collage as an intervention in social reality: as the agent (viewer or artist) comes to form meanings through a dual action on the collage and at the same time on oneself, oscillating back and forth. Sandoval (2000) insists, “it is only in action and BY action that the practitioner can be said to exist...becomes *constituted*”<sup>7</sup> (p. 155). The agent both acts and is acted upon simultaneously and “calls up a *new* morality of form that intervenes in social reality<sup>8</sup> through deploying an action that re-creates the agent even as the agent is creating the action—in an ongoing, chiasmic loop of transformation.”<sup>9</sup> (Sandoval, 2000, p. 185) Although the artistic process can be more emergent than deliberate, the intuitive choices are part of the evocative meaning-making structure. (Norris et al, J. Sage Encyclopaedia p. 95) This type of consciousness finds harmony with the principle of relationality in IRMs, or the interconnectedness of all things, and insists on the “transformative nature of research” (Weber-Pillwax, C. 1999 p. 31-45).

Like the Aboriginal storyteller in Ross’s account (see page 3 above), there is not one “story” or “interpretation” viewed as “correct” in collage. In terms of truth claims, collage never fails to engage the shadow of doubt by resisting representation. Brockelman (2001) helps us understand this property of resisting representation: “collage problematizes any view of art as medium for truth...[and] is *both* representational and antirepresentational...On account of its representational peculiarity, collage questions dogmatism of all kinds...” (p. 7). He notes there is, “in collage a compelling rethinking of philosophical issues of truth and history that has otherwise failed to gain adequate articulation...” (Brockelman, 2001, p. 8). For example, in WWII Germany, collage emerged as a form to criticize Adolf Hitler: it was recognized as having an anti-fascist political stance. It is widely known that artists such as John Heartfield, some members of the Berlin Dada group, such as Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann and Hannah Höch were pioneers in critical collage and photomontage and were forced to flee from Nazi persecution (Schwitters for example had his art confiscated by the regime and was wanted for an “interview” with the Gestapo). In an in-depth analysis of the political praxis of John Heartfield’s collage, Spence (1981) writes about how juxtaposed elements set the viewer’s thoughts in motion “as she seeks to resolve the enigma they present” (p. 56):

This enigma cannot, however, be solved within representation because its solution lies outside the montage in the world of political action and struggle. Drawing on Brecht’s theory of distancing, Stephen Heath views Heartfield as calling ‘commonsense’ beliefs into question by restructuring signs in such a way that he ‘punctuates “representation” with “formulation”, a process Brecht refers to as “literarization”’ This then is not ‘a “form” but a mode of analysis, the very mode of understanding of dialectical materialism...where the spectator is placed in a critical position’.” (p. 56)

<sup>7</sup> This notion corresponds beautifully with Hannah Arendt’s theorizing of the freedom, and Che Guevara’s notion of action which I explore further elsewhere in this dissertation. “Revolution within the revolution: A Caracas collective and the face of Che Guevara” in *Review of Education, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies* 31:4, 338-364

<sup>8</sup> An excellent example can be found in the 1967 “Collage of Indignation” put together by a group of over 150 New York based artists to represent their anger at the Vietnam War.

<sup>9</sup> Each individual alchemical experience of the image cannot be determined exactly. The position and energy of any particle defies simultaneous determination. The role of elective affinity also manifests itself, for those who are interpellated by the image are also inclined to hear it. Quantum physics’s famous Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle is based on a non-deterministic view of the fundamental building blocks of the material world.



Thus form itself is already a mode of analysis. Additionally, it is a form that has emerged worldwide, it has no nationality, no home – essentially collage finds home in exile, like its many fragmentary components (who nonetheless call to each other), and like the image of Che himself. Che's image is at home wherever there is a need for revolution and radical change in favour of oppressed groups. Historically, as a man he was decidedly anti-bureaucratic and relentlessly open and honest in developing his philosophy, a truly innovative Marxist humanist thinker<sup>10</sup>. When one has a point of reference, one is at home anywhere: I will return to this notion.

Another feature of collage is its foregrounding of its own constructedness and artifice as well as the aspects of non-form vital to the style. Again, it pushes forward the viewer's necessary participation in creating meanings from his/her experience. When we create space by revealing the evidence of surgery, textual scars, or imperfect seals, in a piece of writing or art, which is not open in the sense of being lost, but has openings, we also make it possible for something to happen in that space. We can understand, then, the form itself as meaningful and calling upon the viewer to act while creating opportunities to learn. Gilles Deleuze (1995) understands this space as a place where meanings can come to be. "Things and thoughts" he writes, "advance or grow out from the middle, and that's where you have to get to work, that's where everything unfolds" (p. 161). The space of the opening is a present-non-presence, a place of possibility where the impossible can be/come and the reach of the creative arena expanded:

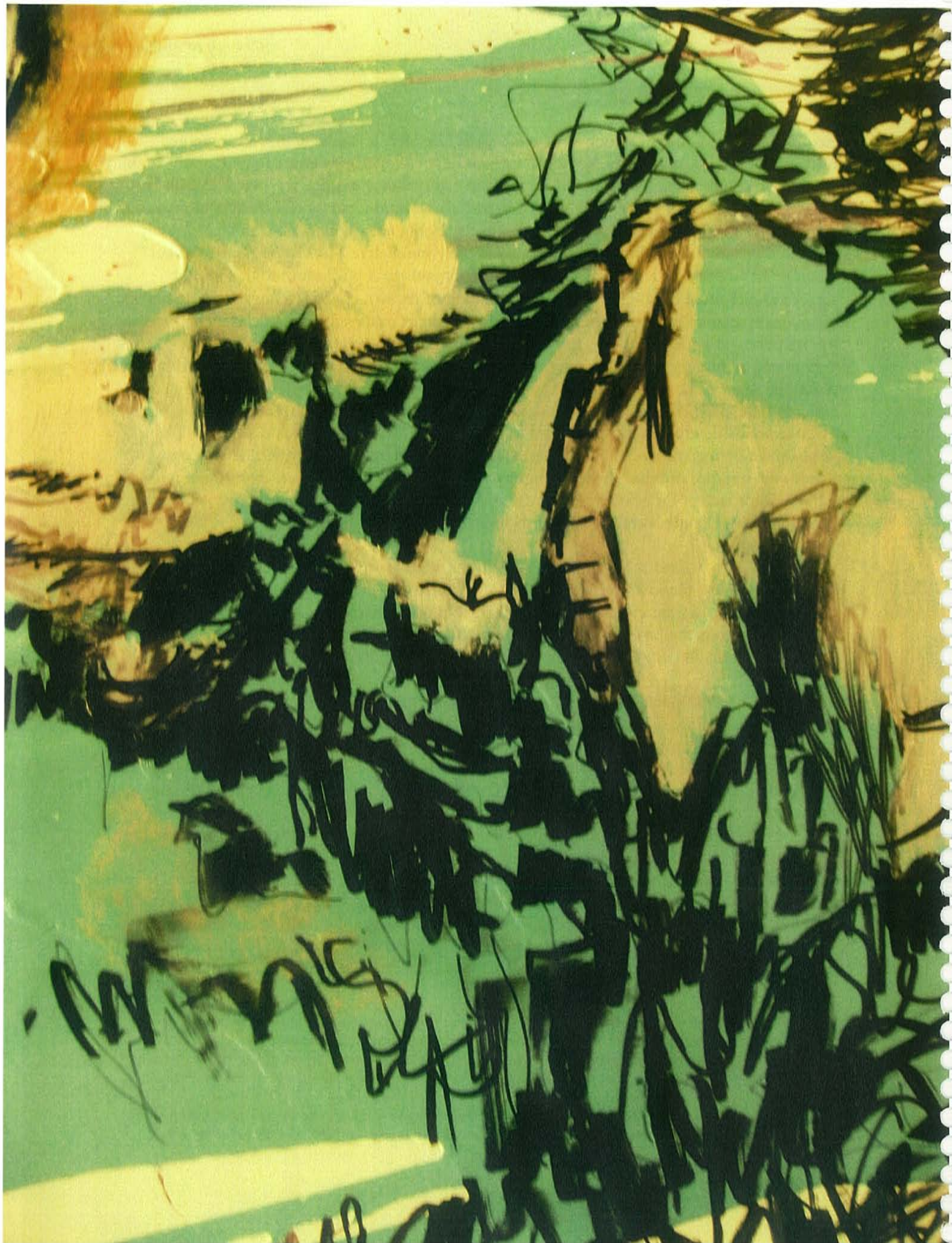
Form in its widest meaning, the visible universe that envelops our senses, and its *counterpart*, the invisible one that agitates our mind with visions bred on sense by fancy, are the element and the realm of invention; it discovers, selects, combines the possible, the probable, the known, in a mode that strikes with an air of truth and novelty at once (Hammacher, 1981, p. 45, *my emphasis*).

Abraham Marie Hammacher's (1981) counterpart to form, invisible and agitating at the same time always becoming, in process, and in relation to the visible (form) is considered vital to invention. The non-form that must exist but cannot appear can be usefully conceptualized as the *chora* (receptacle/place). For Jacques Derrida, *chora* is in-between the sense and intellect (Brockelman, 2001, p. 88). Similarly, Julia Kristeva explores the *chora* as a space of ambiguous relationality. In her early work, Kristeva proposes a space capable of holding impulses and ambiguous sensations predating language as a poetically disruptive mode of being that enables the rupturing of the monolithic paternal discourses. Kristeva also describes the semiotic<sup>11</sup> as "structuring"--that is, its 'role' is to make a space (the *chora*) on which language (the organisation of social [symbolic] interaction) can work. Her reworking of Plato's semiotic *chora* is potentially disruptive to the patriarchal symbolic because it ruptures the latter's normality by recalling one's own marginalized (and originary) selves and becomes central and compelling rather than peripheral and debased<sup>12</sup>. Essentially, as a space of possibility incarnated by gaps,

<sup>10</sup> His philosophical and political work is taken up by many Latin American thinkers: prominent among these are French-Brazilian Marxist philosopher Michael Löwy and Argentine writer, Néstor Kohan.

<sup>11</sup> Julia Kristeva's idea of semiotic differs from those of C.S. Peirce and Roland Barthes. However, she bases her early work (*Sémiotikè: recherches pour une sémanalyse*, 1969), on the great semiological theories (of Saussure, Peirce, Barthes)

<sup>12</sup> "Repression of the nonlinear, i.e., an alternative consciousness and perception of the world, is the result of the ascendancy of patriarchy and logocentrism that privileges male rationality, see Murphy P.D. (1995, p. 75).



and the missing elements of the fragments included in a collage, the semiotic chora is never manifested. In Plato's Dialogue, Timaeus asks, "What is that which always is and has no becoming; and what is that which is always becoming and never is?" (p. 8). Brockelman (2001) states:

*Chora* is neither space in general (the universal form of space) nor a place (the specific sensuous material of myth). It is place, rather, as a relationship that can only be induced, can never directly appear – since every appearance follows either the path of logos or of mythos (p. 88).

Furthermore, if we have an "image" of what place is, that means we conceive of that image as *in* a place. "Since there is a place that it doesn't include, the image can't give adequate picture of place itself" (Brockelman 2001, p. 88). Pedagogically, the non-form that is constitutive of collage as a form, reminds us of how inextricable form and content are. Eisner (2003) concurs, "The discovery that form and content are inseparable is one of the lessons the arts teach most profoundly. Change the cadence in a line of poetry and you change the poem's meaning. The creation of expressive and satisfying relationships is what artistically guided work celebrates" (p. 379). He adds, "Getting it right means creating a form whose content is right for some purpose. ... In the arts there is no substitutability among elements (because there are no separate elements)" (p. 379). It may be stating the obvious, but to underline, the materiality of experience is profoundly pedagogical as Ellsworth (2005) insists when she writes about sensations as vital to learning. As such, the form (relations with time, space, bodies and objects) must be considered part and parcel of content (learning/knowledge/understanding).

Recognizing collage as something not completely open-ended, but resisting closure by containing openings, allows us to attend to non-discursive elements and glean potential, albeit uncertain meaning from them. These fragments/spaces are like a broken frame through which spirits can enter and perhaps play. Breaks in a message's continuity disrupt its unison and make us stop temporarily whether to imply emphasis, critique or to denote a change in direction or form. With these ideas in mind, we can examine apparent interruptions and physical dis-unities and ask what is present in the non-presence of these fissures. Thus, the figured aspects become no more or less interesting than the *not* figured, or not presented. It is important to recognize that the pieces comprising the collage are acting both individually in their own right as well as in relation to the other pieces with which they coexist. Everything is related and connected. Within and between pieces is the idea/act of collage that allows for them to both form and inform each other in productive ways. Additionally, the device of repetition (if used) can function rhetorically as a trope to emphasize something or it can further the notion of an incomplete discursive space, paradoxically tracing inscriptions and indirectly dismantling the idea of artist as singular.

In sum, it is vital to recall the paradox that collage brings together interpretability while denying any satisfying explanation because it "demands attention to each of the individual elements *as* individual...we can't just look at the picture, instead we must figure it out," (Brockelman, 2001, p. 134) and oscillate "back and forth between several interpretations in a kind of *free association* of forms" (Brockelman, 2001, p. 137). Viewers of collage are not given direction but space, and we are invited to act: this is a powerful pedagogy. In collage, any figure can function simultaneously as the field for another figure, positioning can inform the surface and though certain directions may be privileged, they are never univocal or final.



Thus, collage practices “the gathering of materials from *different* worlds into a single composition demanding a geometrically multiplying double reading of each element” (Brockelman, 2001, p. 10, original italics). It is a postproduction art that “testifies to a willingness to inscribe the work of art within a network of signs and significations, instead of considering it an autonomous or original form.” (Bourriaud 2005, p. 16) If each element has at least a double reading, then the interpretations of relationships between elements correspondingly multiply. It is multiphonic and borderline, full of intersecting and ruptured borders. It can also be conceived as a borderline site/sight, it becomes a Derridean “passe-partout” (master key, or universal pass). Derrida (1987) describes this space as being:

Between the outside and the inside, between the external and internal edge-line, the framer and the framed, the figure and the ground, form and content, signifier and signified, and so on for any two-faced opposition. The trait thus divides in this place where it takes place. The emblem of this topos seems undiscoverable. (pg. 12)

Essentially, the key to learning how to understand is recognizing the necessity of continual movement, or oscillation between the binaries in order to even experience or pass through the places where meaning can erupt. These slippery terms that Derrida coins are important to take into account, for they not only help form what Roland Barthes (1973) calls an “anti-language” (p. 9) but they allow us to see the important role of collage as an art form whose epistemological stakes are parallel to both Derridean and Barthesian projects.<sup>13</sup> Brockelman makes it very clear that collage is philosophically “a practice negating of all static space for epistemological reflection...” (Brockelman, 2001 p. 49) No dogmatic static or entrenchment of hierarchies is permitted in the collage as theoretical framework.

Philosophically, collage can be understood as a method ethically corresponding to Sandoval’s (2000) *Methodology of the oppressed*. She describes the five principle sites in its topography or, “a set of critical points within which individuals and groups seeking to transform dominant and oppressive powers can constitute themselves as resistant and oppositional citizen-subjects.” (p. 54) According to Sandoval (2000), her outsider methodology calls for the development of the skills necessary for “accomplishing sign reading across cultures; identifying and consciously constructing ideology; decoding languages of resistance and/or domination; and for writing and speaking a neorhetoric of love in the postmodern world” (p. 3) thus the “technologies” guiding this methodology are “semiotics<sup>14</sup>, deconstruction, meta-ideologizing, democratics, and differential movement”...” (p. 10) that then become, “dialectically linked when viewed through a ‘differential’ mode of oppositional consciousness and social movement” (p. 3). This differential mode or differential consciousness is the key to maintaining a mobile and efficacious resistance. She understands Derrida’s notion of *différance* as a way to decode and deconstruct ideologies of domination (such as patriarchy, and colonialism) and thus to “develop

<sup>13</sup> Both Derrida and Barthes were concerned with absence, presence, temporality, haunting and mourning, the limits of language, iterability “the very concept of constitution itself needs to be deconstructed.” (Derrida J. (1973) *Speech and Phenomena*, p. 85) Both were concerned with unsettling the very notion of structure itself.

<sup>14</sup> I note that Sandoval’s use of semiotic differs from Kristeva’s. Kristeva uses the term semiotic to differentiate from the symbolic. For her it is a modality that signifies based on the marks of drives of the other-of-language, that she has explored through work on abjection, love, horror. Because I see it as not contradictory to the Barthesian position Sandoval takes, rather it has the potential to enhance and deepen it, I am holding them together in this piece.





an *new tongue*” as Derrida calls it (as cited in Sandoval 2000, p. 148, her italics). Notably, Derrida insists: “not only is there no realm of *différance* but *différance* is even the subversion of every realm (p. 153, original italics)” and “unsettles every rule...always in the process of transformation,” just as we can see happening in collage. In fact, Derrida also emphasizes the notion of play that helps generate a fresh sign system with a “certain laughter and with a certain dance,” modes of proceeding that are “foreign” to the Western dialectic (Sandoval 2000, p. 148).

These multiphonic possibilities created through collage are rooted in the act of juxtaposition: “mixing up the earnest, eccentric, unpredictable, and ludicrous elements” and “present[ing] juxtapositions of images and gaps, theories and descriptions” (Hooke, 2001, p. 14, 13). It is built on principles of juxtaposition, on the *interplay* of fragments from multiple sources, whose piecing together creates connections and insights that form the basis of discussion and learning. The very nature of collage is interdisciplinary, juxtaposing multiple fields of endeavour and situating the practitioner and his or her work within and between them (Brockelman, 2001). He also holds:

The cycling between an awareness of fragments and origins on the one hand, and a unified meaning on the other, goes beyond static representation to a dynamic, almost animated sense of the relationships between meanings that is both the heart of the collage experience and the idea of “uncertainty as knowledge” (p. 187).

I see this uncertainty as a resistance to the desire to define and pin down a unified meaning of the artwork. Additionally, I understand it as being folded into Ermine’s (1995) equation of knowledge and experience because it is the ability and willingness to hold uncertainty that permits experience to take on a pedagogical aspect. Harold Rosenberg has also noted the condition of uncertainty essential to collage, writing:

...the use of collage marked a radical change in modern art by taking disparate images and signs to highlight the ambiguities of life and our understanding of it. ... In the hands of artists collage takes on a *revolutionary task* of bringing together disparate realities and fragments of identity (cited in Hooke, 2001, p. 13, my emphasis).

He adds, “Collage manifests itself, ...in modern art modes as a kind of adversary within the mode itself” [63]” (cited in Hooke, 2001, p. 12). By virtue of its very form, collage becomes a way of questioning the idea of representation itself. It is, by nature, political and has a “revolutionary task”. Cubists used collage to reveal an ambivalent attitude towards art as a commodity and condemn readings that excluded further or multiple interpretations. Thus for Brockelman (2001), “the collage gesture is as much pedagogical as it is oppositional” (p. 75) and viewers remain working through questions. “Collage” he states, “presents us to ourselves in the mode of doubt” (p. 113) as fruitful as it is unsettling.



Fruitful and pervasive as collage might be (even flower arrangements can be understood as collages), as the ultimate vernacular form,<sup>15</sup> we have few tools to unpack its significance. The *Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* includes an entry on collage as an arts-based research method describing the meaning making process as one based on juxtaposition of diverse materials:

It is not meant to provide one-to-one transfer of information; rather, it strives to create metaphoric<sup>16</sup> evocative texts through which readers, audiences, and patrons create their own meanings on a given research topic. Usually, material is taken out of context from a range of sources and used to create a new assemblage from the bricolage collected. What underpins the creation of research collages is the attempt to construct meanings about the research question and/or process, the participants, and emerging themes. (Norris et al p. 94)

And I would add to this list, the attempt to construct meanings about one's own self and place in the world.

### **Journey through the image: Coming to the collective collage**

I embraced collage as a mode of representation for my research journey when I recognized that images are actively *doing* something in/with the world rather than just representing the doing of other things, people, or agents. An image depends on the viewer to respond. These responses are like activations, things happen in the viewing and being viewed, you have to be some kind of receptive viewer—people are interpellated by the call or Barthesian punctum<sup>17</sup> of the image.

I understand image as a more nuanced and powerful way to express my awareness of the meaning and work of the *Guerrillero Heroico* than words and follow as well as honour those who take up this image as an expression of what they desire/hope/need, are or want to be. While I recognize the difficulty of evaluating images in academic work, I can only encourage viewers and readers to move toward a “differential consciousness”<sup>18</sup> (Sandoval, C. 2000 p. 12) and

<sup>15</sup> "It does not need developing, like film; it does not require electronics like PhotoShop, or the internet, though the internet is a particularly useful place for dissemination of such work (Global Collage, 2006). Collage can speak to children and youth through its accessibility and immediacy" (Norris et al.2007, p. 484).

<sup>16</sup> "Metaphor creates the relation between its objects, while metonymy presupposes that relation."(Bredin. H. "Metonymy." *Poetics Today*, 1984)

<sup>17</sup> In *Camera Lucida* Barthes (1981) discusses the “fugitive testimony” of photography (p. 93) evolving his concepts of studium and punctum. He writes, “it is not possible to posit a rule of connection between the *studium* and the *punctum* (when it happens to be there). It is a matter of co-presence” (p. 42). Very often the punctum is a detail, or a flash which sometimes crosses the field (p. 96). It cannot be named, it is an accident which “wounds” or “pricks” me” (p. 27).

<sup>18</sup> Understanding how Sandoval's (2000) differential movement, consciousness, or position operates is to remember



bypass institutionalized and standardized interpretive strategies based around a framework of cause and effect, or explication.

The word differential refers to a process once described by Derrida as unnameable and “defined by Anzaldúa as the workings of the ‘soul,’ and by Audre Lorde when she describes the...place where ‘our deepest knowledges’ are found” (Sandoval, C. 2000 p. 5) Images can help us reach the place of soulful knowledge: they have great potential for enhancing the differential consciousness Sandoval espouses. Words cannot escape ideological constraints as images may, because –in being nonlinear– they are necessarily more open to multiplicity and critique because the cracks are visible. Essentially, academic prioritizing of words over images is an artificial hierarchy that needs subverting in order to more fully reach the radical semiology called for by Barthes and echoed by Sandoval as well as being key in the process of recoding “all tools of “communication and intelligence” with one’s aim being the subversion of “command and control” (p. 171).

Exemplifying just such a differential consciousness in process, Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRMs) open paths to move toward this way of being and knowing and unlearning of “White expertism” (Graveline, 2000, p. 363). In *Research is Ceremony*, Shawn Wilson introduces an Indigenist research paradigm centred on recognizing the spaces between things as sacred and that ceremony can bridge that space as long as we practice relational accountability. In order to inhabit ways of knowing based on a relational epistemology we need to engage in research that is reciprocal, respectful, and responsible. Wilson explains how ceremony helps us build a closer relationship to an idea following a process that includes living a congruent lifestyle, preparing the space, assembling the ingredients, engaging in ritual (a thinking-together), experiencing illumination, and finally the incorporation of new knowledge into our approach. Through the process, meaning is revealed (partially/intermittently) rather than defined. Meaning, within IRMs, just as through collage, is not an analysis of “Hundreds of journal pages hand-tabulated/Dissected into relevant themes./Subjective data committed to linear form./ Decontextualized from their life narratives./Partial Stories clipped and coded” (Graveline, 2000, p. 364).

My own witnessing of the power and efficacy of this image in people’s lives prompted me to dwell with it for a long period of time in order to better appreciate how this happens. Despite my having lived and worked with Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara’s image intensely for years, only once has his presence surfaced in my dreams. Because of ceremony and engaging in a desire to honour the principles of reciprocal, respectful and responsible research, I was able to inhabit a place of thinking-together and hear what the voices of those with me were saying, thus I was finally able to receive the dream. My own difficulty with coming to terms with Guevara’s image was highlighted by this dream in which Che appeared. Recalling Florensky’s (1996) words, “...the dream happens whenever our consciousness *hugs the boundary of the crossing.*” (p. 44) I was moved to respond, knowing all the while that this was but one more phase in a journey that seemed to have no clear destination.

Wilson (2008) reminds us the space between things is sacred –these musings reveal the way my thoughts moved between things in that space where raw ideas were being formed and ingredients assembled. I wondered whether, something about the image had been sacralised, or

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that one must simultaneously be able to understand dominant viewpoints and how they sees their realities, as well as being able to see from ones’ own place and then "shuttling between realities, their identities reformatting out of another, third site" (p. 85).



was functioning through the spiritual similar to how a religious icon would. Those icons occupying a religious connotation operate on another level; these are not the icons that are simply based on resemblance that Charles Saunders Peirce talks about when he defines types of signs in semiotics<sup>19</sup>.

To address this kind of icon another level of analysis is necessary, one I cannot do justice to here that requires a spiritual journey and recognizes that the image is participating, watching, acting in its own stead. Like many others, I was drawn in “solicited” in the Derridean sense to follow where this research journey would lead me. He writes, “For “everywhere the dominance of being” is continually “solicited by *difference* –in the sense that *solicitare* means, in old Latin, to shake all over, to make the whole tremble” (153 in Sandoval p. 150). Like Barthes’s sublime abyss that disturbs, agitates, and incites meaning with its zero degree, the work of Derrida’s *différance* similarly rattles the cages of every kind of human categorization serving to rupture older meanings and provide space for the new.

Both Che Guevara and psychologist-philosopher Frantz Fanon examined the kinds of subjective position created by colonialism and its attendant imperialism. Sandoval (2000) identifies Fanon’s aim as “to deconstruct the kinds of citizen-subjects that colonialism produced.” (p. 85) The de-colonial process of transformation is a process of changing the world by re-creating yourself first in a conscious and on-going way. Frantz Fanon believed emancipation would only be possible if citizen-subjects “incarnate” (p. 129) a new type of subjectivity. Fanon describes this process as occurring through a “slow” painful, re-“composition of my self in an ongoing process of mutation” (cited in Sandoval 2000, pp. 111, 23, 51). The choice for Fanon is to speak in and along with the white world and to reflect its consciousness by embodying its rhetoric, or to found a new, unhabituated real with its own concomitant language forms, meanings, psychic terrains, and country people. The process Fanon identifies is one of endlessly creating and re-creating the self. Sandoval (2000) notices Fanon’s deep impact on Roland Barthes’ works of Frantz Fanon, but critically adds, “the problem for Barthes in *Mythologies* became how to go about describing the methodology that permitted the colonized to see, hear, and interpret what appeared natural to the colonizer as the cultural and historical productions that they were” (p. 87).

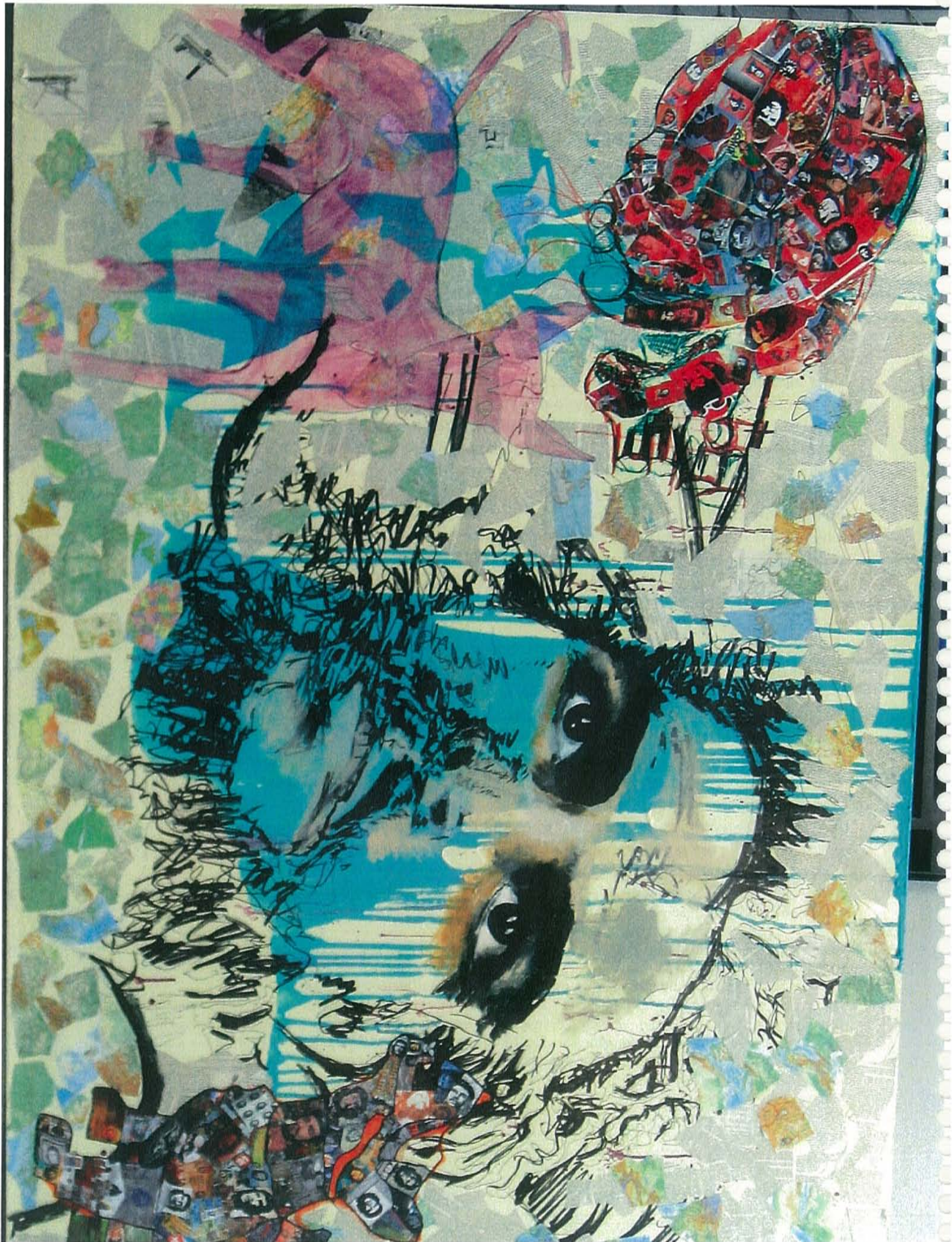
Guevara, who was also a close friend of Fanon’s widow, endorsed the idea of re-making, re-creating the self continuously through action: his stance led him to evolve a theory of the New Man<sup>20</sup>. For him, as for those who embody a Guevarist stance, one’s actions make the world. In this way, one’s actions represent and cohere with one’s beliefs and one thus becomes an example<sup>21</sup>, and is *imaging* Guevarist philosophy. Che was determined to work towards a post-

<sup>19</sup> They only appeal to certain types of people. Those people who are grounded in specific knowledges, but icons do so very powerfully, and the exact details don’t need to be accurate.

<sup>20</sup> Guevara’s develops his theory of the New Man in *Socialism and Man in Cuba* (March, 1965) originally titled, “From Algiers, for *Marcha*. The Cuban Revolution Today.” His article was written in the form of a letter to Carlos Quijano, editor of *Marcha*, a weekly published in Montevideo, Uruguay.

<sup>21</sup> Guevara’s thoughts on the New Man resonate with Henri Lefebvre’s (1959) earlier concept of *l’homme totale* where he suggests acting-on “all ‘Moments’ of revelation, emotional clarity and self-presence as the basis for becoming more self-fulfilled (*l’homme totale* - see 1959)”. ‘Moments’ become a motif throughout his work as a theory of presence and basis for a practice of emancipation: “They are ‘escape-hatches’ from the alienated condition of everyday life” (see Shields, Rob 2001 *Henri Lefebvre*, pp 226-237, in *Profiles in contemporary: social theory*, ed. Anthony Elliot & Bryan S. Turner (SAGE Pub. London). There may be a connection to be explored between Lefebvre and Guevara through one of Lefebvre’s good friends the famous Argentine collagist Antonio Berni. Incidentally, all three men were Marxists and concerned with countering alienation at the level of everyday life.





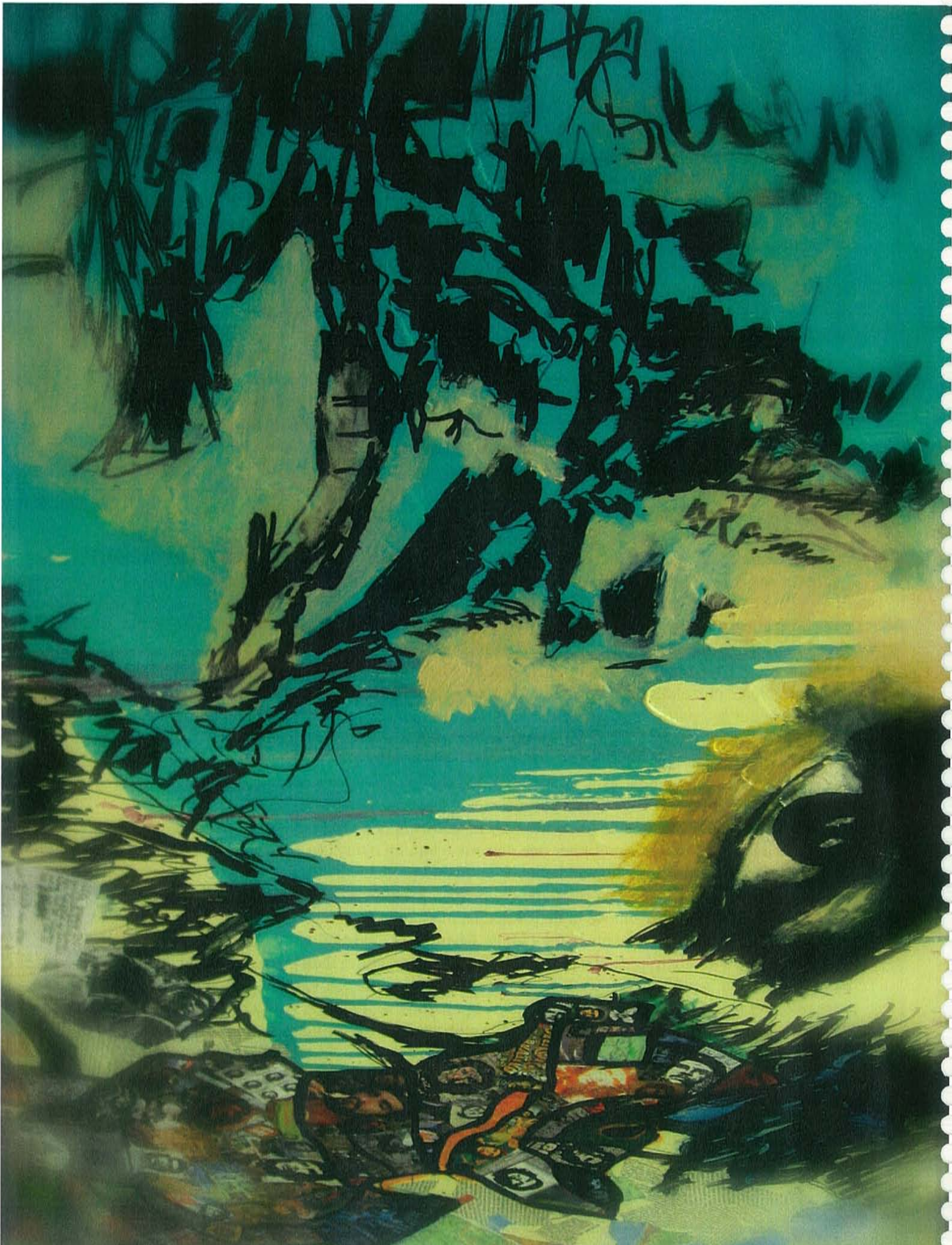
empire world regardless of the knowledge that the project would be much bigger and take much longer than one generation: he still gave his life to it. He knew that death was part of the picture of challenging empire and he accepted that he would have to personally pay that price as so many had before him, and so many would afterward. This research journey has illuminated the significance of Guevara's ethics in life as core to the theoretical underpinning of that famous Korda image and the way many people are being invoked (brought into play) by it. When people invoke and are interpellated by Korda's Che, they invariably participate in Guevara's mission as a living dream. After all, art is "materialized dream, separated from the ordinary consciousness of waking life." (Florensky, 1996, p. 44) Although the image is not always taken up that way, it can be said to be less alive in those cases, less agentic, more static, however those uses (that spur or authorize cultural/social/political action) are not at the heart of its unceasing popularity and capacity to *solicit* viewers. These viewers are the ones who maintain his image in perpetual motion and spawning of reproductions: these viewers are the ones who have made the image a global phenomenon and in doing so have all become contributors to the global collage. His arresting expression in the photograph is a mix of rage, grief and determination at the brutal deaths of over 80 people caused by the rigged explosion on La Coubre in the harbour of Havana. The act of terrorism organized by the CIA to weaken and undermine the young Cuban revolution was exactly the kind of cowardly act Guevara despised. Additionally, he would feel responsible for the innocent and was reportedly one of the first who ran to help the injured in the harbour<sup>22</sup>.

Those who re-member the dead, bring them to life again and again until justice is done and if you remember them, the dead always accompany you. Thus, when protesters in Argentina call out the names of the dead, their names are echoed in a chorus of "presente!" and those seen as martyrs are called to join in as witnesses to injustice. The image appears as a philosophy and way of commenting on the human condition, a spiritual element that most of the time we (in a Western paradigm) pretend is not there. The spiritual principle of self-renewal is one of recreating, not Che, but ourselves because that is what he did, if we are going to make change we have to recreate ourselves. There might be a fear that recreating his image is somehow colonial, but not when it is a participant where the "*alchemy* of identity, and potential metamorphosis of reality are made possible," (Sandoval, 2000, p. 133) not when the image works as a conduit to recreate ourselves, or a *point of reference*.

Underneath the popular uses of this photograph or some rendering of it, is a sense that it provides a *compass*, or at least a point of reference. In *Place/Culture/Representation*, Duncan and Ley (1993) write that "[t]he scientific way of knowing is no longer regarded as a privileged discourse linking us to truth but rather one discourse among many" (p. 28) and thus we can embrace other ways of knowing and being as valid and productive. Hugh Brody (1981) relates how the man he interviewed described the old people as knowing their point of reference. As a result, they can go hunting moose in their dreams, mark the beast and tell you where to find it in waking time. If they are in the bush, they know where they are standing; they have internalized compasses allowing them to find a point of reference from within themselves and their experiences. One's point of reference is the key to orienting oneself in the world, from the very core of one's being so that one can adopt many "positions" but there is really only one. Although we often lose what we are, and who we are, through academic training it is still our primary point, whether we recognize it or not. Without that life, that spiritual, personal and essential connection, academic work would have no life; it would be superficial and disconnected. Like

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<sup>22</sup> I describe the context of the photograph elsewhere in this thesis.



papers that cite and re-cite each other, echoing empty phrases that become pure ornament because they have no life outside of themselves, no umbilical cord tying them to their point of reference<sup>23</sup>. Informed by IRMs, collage as both theoretical frame and method allowed the theorizing of image as point of reference to emerge. Guevara's dream of a better world is always immanent, inspiring many people worldwide to share it in ways adapted to their own times and spaces. Reflectively, Subcomandante Marcos (2004) of the Zapatistas (EZLN) writes:

But what is the speed of a dream  
 I don't know  
 In our dream, the world is another...with those who always produce riches, and  
 today consume poverty. Our struggle, that is to say, our dream, doesn't end...  
 The reason that moves us is ethical. In it, the end is in the means. (N/a)

### **This is not a conclusion**

*Collage is both a process of learning to see and seeing to learn*  
 (Markus, 2004)

*Art has been the means of keeping alive the sense of purposes that outrun evidence  
 and of meanings that transcend indurated habit.*  
 (John Dewey)

Like much research the end is only another beginning, this project is no different. The artwork is not meant to merely illustrate theory but to be a theoretical exploration in and of itself, both for the artist who is in the process of creation and the viewer whose vision is a dynamic, reflexive and self-critical moment. I echo Roland Barthes in saying "I remove myself from Narrative" (Sandoval, 2000 p. 143-4). Similar to how he defiantly states that does not define his relations with the objects he observes and studies: the film, the restaurant, the painting. However much I may approach or gesture toward understandings of Guevara's image, and participate in it, I do not manage to explicate, define or manage my relations with it, nor should I.

Approaching the *Guerrillero Heroico* through collage in recognition of the thousands that have participated in the virtual global collage that Guevara's image has become pays tribute to, and witnesses, their struggles as well as his. Additionally, the piece as a mobile oppositional form and not subject to the ethno-philosophical limitations of Western rationality plays its own part in the agitation "for a revolutionary consciousness that can intervene in the forces of neocolonizing postmodernism" (Sandoval 2000 p. 4). Because collage embraces the very limits of figuration, it participates in "the kind of psychic terrain formerly inhabited by the historically

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<sup>23</sup> I hope my own points of reference have become apparent through this work.



decentered citizen-subject; the colonized, the outsider, the queer, the subaltern, the marginalized” (Sandoval 2000, p. 27). Today’s citizen-subjects may have become “anchorless” but they can still hold a point of reference, as Che Guevara himself did and as many who mobilize and are mobilized by this image do.

Therefore, the question is not about what the collage consists of or what it might mean. Rather it is about what it does as a form that brings together ontology and epistemology. Its ways of being and knowing (or onto-epistemologies) are anti-representational (undecideable/unfinished), generative (always becoming) and pedagogically disjunctive.

Collage provides a unique and powerful tactic befitting Sandoval’s *Methodology of the oppressed*, and embodies the “differential oppositional consciousness” she calls for where “one can depend on no (traditional) mode of belief in one’s own subject position or ideology; nevertheless, such positions and beliefs are called up and utilized in order to constitute whatever forms of subjectivity are necessary to act in an also (now obviously) constituted social world” (2000, p. 31). Sandoval (2000) is careful to note that the differential form of oppositional consciousness “is composed of narrative worked self-consciously. Its processes generate the other story - the counterpoise. Its true mode is nonnarrative: narrative is viewed only as a means to an end - the end of domination” (p. 63).

These three ways of being and knowing, anti-representational (undecideable/unfinished), generative (always becoming) and pedagogical disjunction, at the core of collage oblige viewers’ (including the artist) into active participation: they are forced to become self-aware of the process of seeing and viewing as performative subjectivity. No single notion of representation can settle in as *the* image. Compelled to imagine links and relations between disparate sites, viewers become what Nicolas Bourriaud (2005) calls “semionauts” who navigate “new cartologies of knowledge” because: “This recycling of sounds, images, and forms implies incessant navigation within the meanderings of cultural history, navigation which itself becomes the subject [and mode] of artistic practice” (p. 18). But a compass is necessary for this journey because taken alone these three aspects of collage are in danger of permitting “the unhinging of consciousness from its political commitment to the differential mode, permits any oppositional practice to become only another version of dominant ideology, another version of supremacism” (Sandoval 2000 p. 183). A fourth imperative and indispensable element must be suffused throughout and provide a point of reference. I refer here to that revolutionary love that Che Guevara so famously identified as the quality necessary to *guide* a true revolutionary. For Sandoval (2000) this “love is understood as affinity” (p. 170). With this compass, “subjectivity becomes freed from ideology as it ties and binds reality...a mixture that lives through *differential movement*” (Sandoval 2000 p. 170 original italics).

Just as Sandoval’s (2000) technologies for the Methodology of the oppressed “comprise a hermeneutic for defining and enacting oppositional social action as a mode of “love” in the postmodern world” (p. 147), collage onto-epistemology helps ground viewers’ identities differently with this love as their guide.

As anti-representational (undecideable/unfinished) collage resists representation. It is always the case that “something *could* be added or taken away without changing the work’s essence” (Brockelman, 2001 p. 30). In this way it is undecideable and unfinished. By being thus always broken and incomplete, it transforms a disadvantage into a new benefit. It responds to actual experiences of deprivation and political powerlessness and fragmentation but presents the wound, the break, as a place where critical intervention can occur for *anyone*, it is fundamentally



democratic. Kurt Schwitters<sup>24</sup> recognized as one of the twentieth century's greatest masters of collage, was able to see that: "Everything had broken down and new things had to be made out of the pieces. Collage was like an image of the revolution within me—not as it was but as it might have been." His revolution is motivated by the kind of hermeneutic of love Guevara spoke of, one that envisions another world and its possibilities. Brockelman (2001) also detects that, "Schwitters'...conviction that the purpose of collage is not to *represent* the nature of capitalist phantasmagoria to the viewer...rather to transform...to [be] an *active* participant in it" (p. 47) and reinforces the anti-representational bent at the root of its being.

In refusing to represent any kind of illusory wholeness, collage unmasks the constructed nature of narrative, discourse and other representational forms. Do *any* articles or essays exist that are not in reality full of cut and paste, whether of edits or of citations? Many of our thoughts are unfinished before our minds bound to the next idea; simply put, linearity is not natural, in fact it is a lie: Sigmund Freud famously concluded that, "Consecutive presentation is not a very adequate means of describing complicated mental processes going on in different layers of the mind." Yet the scars are smoothed over so that there is "flow" and "clarity" lest the reader be confused. Writers such as Homi Bhabha and Jacques Derrida worked against the flow/clarity paradigm and interrupted and frustrated readers instead because they were concerned with disturbing the very ideologies embedded in the form of narrative itself. For this same reason Sandoval (2000) endorses a "dialectical movement of subjectivity that disallows, yes-- but at the same time allows--- individual expression, style, and personality" (p. 35). She conceives that another level of tactical and strategic conversion is necessary. So for collage:

In "reality" when you hold a bottle of Suze, you consider the liqueur the "real" part. The label is the representational part. But in Picasso's collage, the bottle is painted in a particularly flat way, eschewing the painterly illusion of depth, while the label is real. Thus the collage can be interpreted as showing the constructed nature of reality and the materiality of representation. For this reason, Rosalind Krauss argues that collage challenges "any simplistic idea of reference" and "effects the representation of representation (p. 37)" (Beyers 2004, p. 3).

But collage resists in multiple ways, which serve to enhance its efficacy as a form, and so I turn to the second essential onto-epistemological trait of generativity. In *Collagemachine*, Kerne (2001) tells us that: "The findings of creative cognition research indicate that the methods of semiotic collage artists promote emergence and creativity both for the artist and for the audience" (on-line). Collage is always becoming because it provides multiple interpretive paths for the viewer's eyes to follow and one may easily see the same work as completely different on another occasion. Often the artist will show preference for one of these paths, but there is no way to compromise the heterogeneity guaranteed by the very form of collage. Thus it may imply "that there is a conceptual space for truth but only to the extent that it validates the proposition 'there is no truth'" but this space of truth "is itself a generated space." (Brockelman, 2001 p. 54) In the cross-currents of the temporal unfolding of collage hybrids form and provoke new ways of

<sup>24</sup> Schwitters' undogmatic, non-élitist and democratic collage work conjured up its own magic from the rejected and the discarded: small wonder that the Nazis found Schwitters' art subversive and tried to eradicate it. (see Freundel, G. 1998)





interpreting information. The generative trait of collage, like the quality of undecideability ensures resistance to representation because it provides a riddle rather than a clear relationship, it is a piece of newspaper as-if a table, but instead of choosing one or the other it oscillates between them. Like Barthes, it rejects the “so-called “healthy subject” that lives in the dominant “either/or” alternative by saying, “I have no hope, but all the same...” or “I stubbornly choose *not* to choose, I choose drifting: I continue (62)” (cited in Sandoval 2000 p. 143).

So how can these disjunctions be considered pedagogical? How can all this fragmentation be coherent enough at any one moment to permit action? Collage helps us recall that fragmentation is not an experience or a notion specific to an age or era. Just the opposite is true: “The scapegoated, marginalized, enslaved and colonized of every community have also experienced and theorized this shattering, this splitting of signifieds from their signifiers” (Sandoval 2000 p. 35). The gap provides the only uncolonized space, but it cannot be inhabited, only evoked and passed through, and it can serve as a punctum.

Drawing on Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997), Garoian and Gaudelius (2008) underline “the disassociation afforded by the disjunctive narrative of collage” as a pedagogical necessity in fostering critical thinking. Like Ellsworth, they argue that collage’s modes of address resist quick and easy conclusions. The discontinuity of their differing images and ideas prefers an “analytic dialogue” versus a “communicative” one.<sup>25</sup> The oscillating, slippery and unpredictable characteristics of analytic dialogue allow for diverse perspectives and unlimited creative possibilities unlike communicative dialogue, which pushes resolution out of a need to pin down meaning. They also cite a wall text (worth repeating) at *Interventionist Collage: From Dada to the present*, curated by Rudolf Kuenzli (2005) who observes the creative critical and political dimensions of collage as well as the intellectual work of the artists:

Newspapers were the ubiquitous mouthpiece[s] of ideological representations through the century, but for artists armed with scissors and paste, the ideologies they embodied and disseminated could be literally cut up, rearranged, and thus transformed. Similarly magazines, magnetic tape, vinyl albums, and film footage could be subjected to hands-on manipulations. Through these transgressive and critical manipulations of mass media, the collagist turns from being a consumer of mass media into a creative producer. Collage has proven to be a potentially powerful strategy for intervening in media representation of reality, since it uses socially coded representations and returns them in the form of a new critical contextualization” (Garoian and Gaudelius 2008, p. 103).

The ethic guiding the onto-epistemological process behind any hermeneutic of collage’s properties of being anti-representational (undecideable/unfinished), generative (always becoming) and pedagogical disjunction is the elective affinity of love. Sandoval (2000) writes that “love as social movement is enacted by revolutionary, mobile, and global coalitions of citizen-activists who are allied through the apparatus of emancipation.” (p. 184) Similarly, those choosing to use the image of Che Guevara participate in a global collage, though they may not

<sup>25</sup> Communication is not consensus; it is the breakdown or the gap. The interruption is more communicative than the agreement- now this is a true learning space- and ethical, recall how Emmanuel Levinas (*Totality & Infinity*) asks us to be interrupted by the Other in the face to face encounter.



have expressed it to themselves in that manner, they are also coalescing via this kind of love. And it is in the acting, marching, or being interpellated by this image that the image shows itself and the consciousness of the so-called subject is transformed in a way that can only be described as alchemical. They “realize their subjection to power (that people are the words the social order speaks). The radical form of cognitive mapping that differential consciousness allows develops such knowledge into a method by which the limits of the social order can be spoken, named, and made translucent: the body passes through and is transformed” (Sandoval 2000 p. 36). The image of Che brings a point of reference from which to theorize resistance into focus.

The chemical, alchemical transformation of the alchemist by his/her practice, *re-news his/her mind and spirit... Elective alchemies...* A resurrection is a re-birth, a re-naisance, or *re-appearance*. Although it is new, it is also the same. When ancient philosophers spoke of gold and silver, that the work of the alchemist was supposed to render from lead, it may have been an allegory for the practice of Alchemy that changed the mind and spirit of the alchemist. It is changed yet consistent: a *transfiguration*. The new body is immortal and agile. This transfigured “body” is a body that is not a body. Perhaps it shows itself somehow to an open consciousness. Still, that which shows itself<sup>26</sup> can also hide itself, and dynamically flicker between visibility and invisibility, transparency and opacity, legibility and indecipherability. Again turning to Sandoval (2000) is constructive:

This “open door” of consciousness is a place of crossing, of transition and metamorphosis. At this threshold, meanings are recovered and dispersed through another rhetoric that transfigures all others, and whose movement is its nature’s.... the consciousness it requires reads the variables of meaning, apprehending and caressing their differences; it shuffles their (continual) rearrangement, while its own parameters queerly shift according to necessity, ethical positioning, and power (p. 131).

Using revolutionary love as the point of reference indicated by the *Guerrillero Heroico*, critical collage has the potential to enhance a navigational agility that can ensure the survival of the oppressed through “the ability to perceive and decode dominant-order sign systems in order to move among them.” (Sandoval 2000 p. 183) All those people participating in the ever-expanding global collage of the *Guerrillero Heroico* provide an answer to Foucault’s call, echoed by Sandoval and many others, for ways to “generate access to politically revolutionary love, desire and resistance”...undo fascism by grounding identity differently...[and develop] anti-colonial oppositional consciousness and praxis (xiii).” (Sandoval 2000 p. 165) To do this we must be open to discarding institutionalized research maps, finding critical points of reference, and embarking on journeys to places of connection that, as Melville’s (1851) Captain Ahab says, are “not down in any map; true places never are” (Ch. 12).

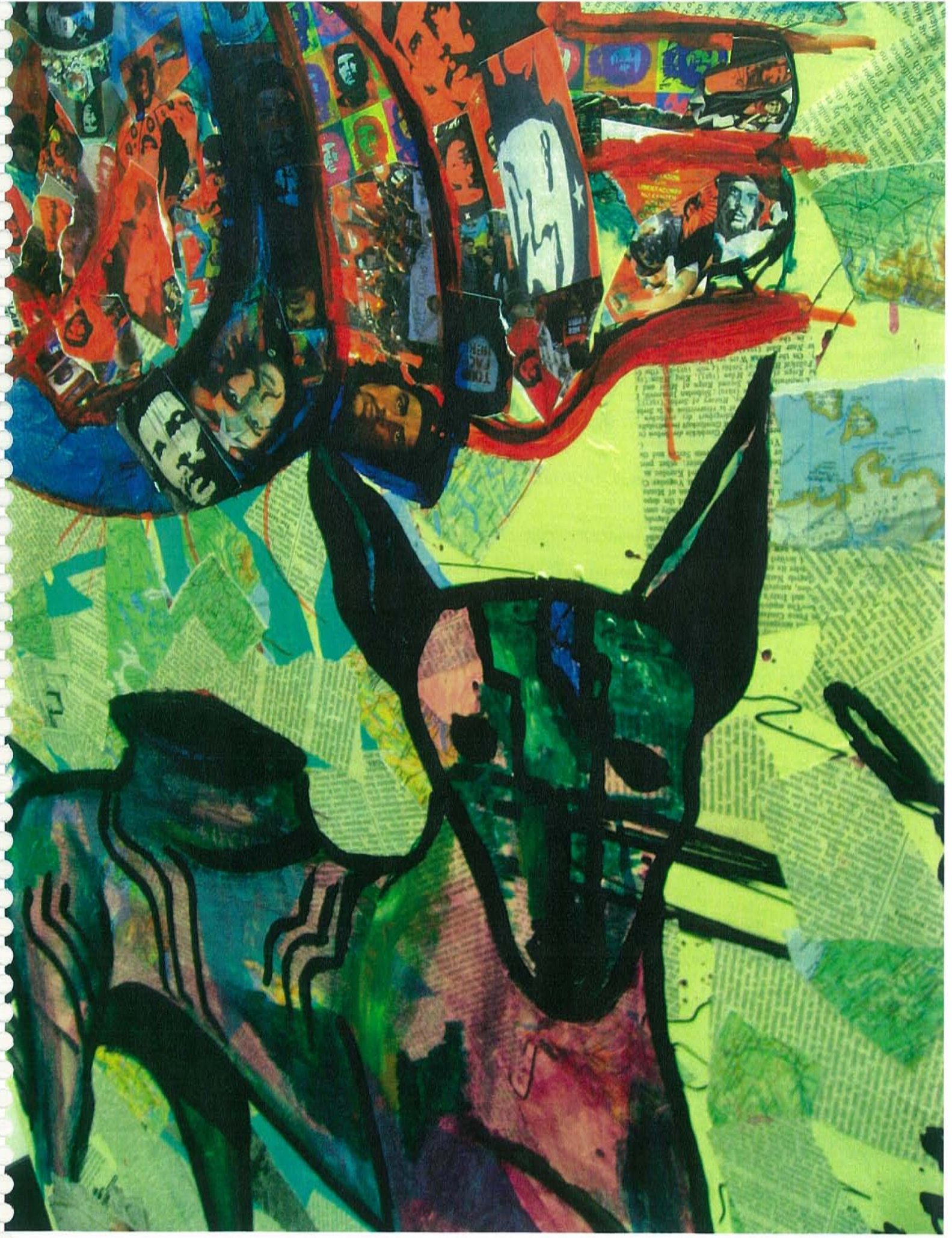
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<sup>26</sup> Because of this “showing” we trust, we believe and we hope, it will be shown again: “Trust your images more than you trust your knowledge, more than you trust your world.” (George Szirtes) and we turn to face the image. In this case, it is an image of a face.



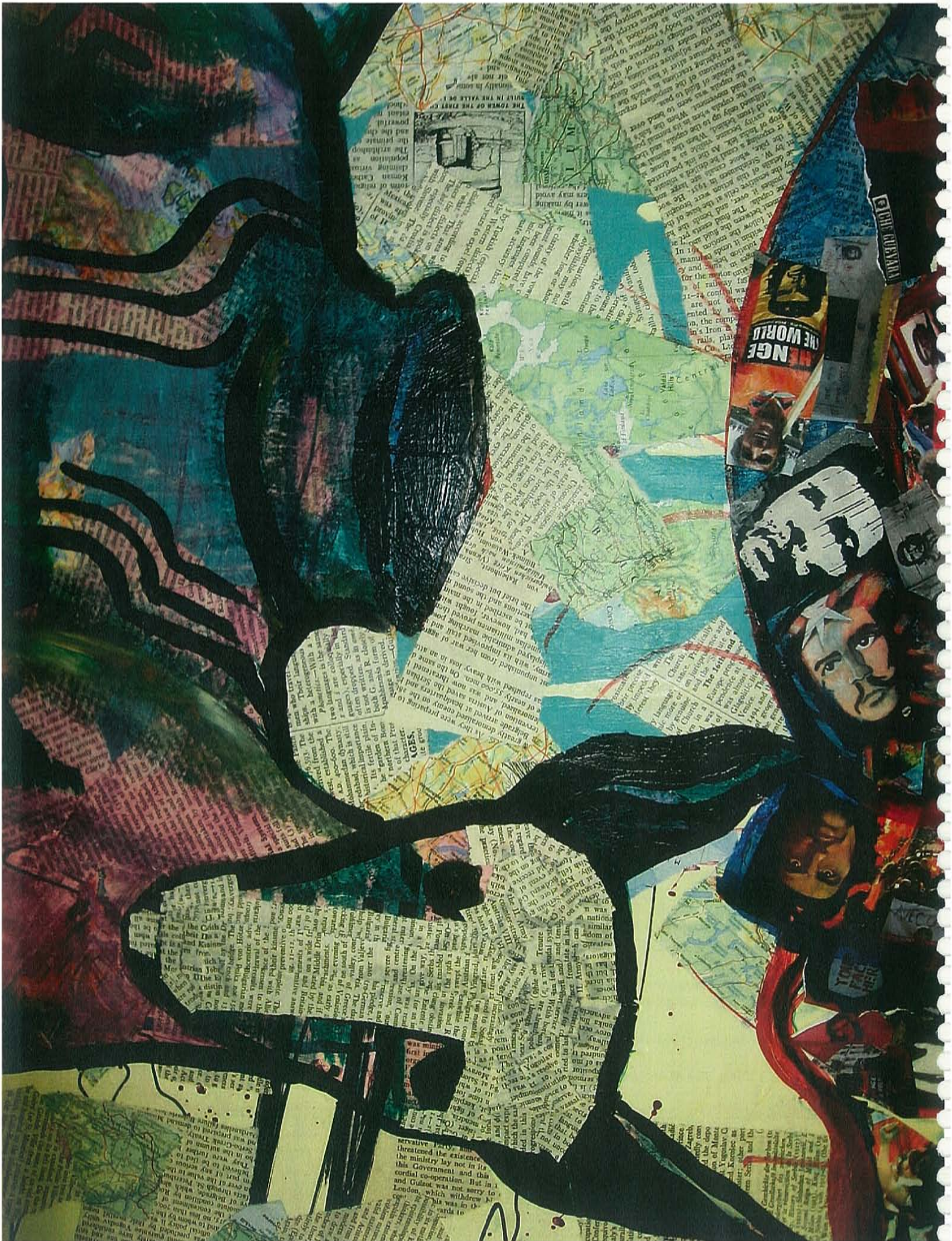
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## Soundscape

*You are thousands.*

*You are one.*

*Rumi*

*“El arte es una respuesta a la vida. Ser artista es emprender una manera riesgosa de vivir, es adoptar una de las mayores formas de libertad, es no hacer concesiones”*

*Antonio Berni*

My personal journey underwrites and haunts every word I have written, I do not manage to codify or separate it according to Eurocentric norms and strip my work of my individual identity. Following Graveline (2000), “I agree with Well and McGill (1989): ‘Meaning is not ‘out there’; we are part of that meaning and we can therefore convey it personally’ (p. xx). To declare ‘what I know to be True’ is a complex undertaking” (p. 162). Therefore I have settled on soundscape to describe something (my ambient self?) that is always present both contributing to the emergent research design and being generated out of the same process. The terms afterword, epilogue, postscript or even interlude did not seem to fit the immersive nature of the impact of the ecology of personal experiences. Here, I will share the dream given to me as a result of the IRMs and the resulting collage.

I feel connected to Guevara and his image because I was born in the Italian hospital in city of Cordoba at the foot of the Andes and the province where Guevara lived, Cordoba, Argentina. I am the only one in my family to have been born there, the rest were born in Buenos Aires. I comprehend on a very embodied level a lot of Che’s Argentinisms, as well as his nomadism (and that of the *Guerrillero Heroico*). Guevara’s nomadism is typical of that of Argentines abroad: agile adapters to so many other cultural contexts, and yet retaining something of the rootless about them. His efforts to spread the anti-imperialist revolution and to assist people’s struggle for freedom anywhere and in any way are underpinned by the themes of overcoming and of sacrifice in his life. He was not so much rebellious, as willing to make whatever sacrifice was demanded of him. None of his many detractors debate that he was a man whose actions and words were congruent. This is a rare quality (even more rare in politicians). Guevara was famous for never lying; if he said he would do something, he did it. When he instituted volunteer Sundays in Cuba, he participated and logged hundreds of hours harvesting sugarcane with a machete. Not only was he a man of action, but a philosopher and innovative thinker. He is a unique example of someone who, having power and a ministerial position, released it in order to pursue a project bigger than himself. In his case, the power of love was not subsumed by the love of power.

## Dreaming the way forward

After about six years of researching Korda’s picture – Guevara’s eyes piercing whatever media they ended up on with the sheer force of his expression – he showed no more than his back in my dream. I came to see my journey was not over, yet the dream was an effective

catalyst for the moment, and when I awoke I knew what to do. Florensky's (1996) words resonate: "A dream is therefore pure meaning wrapped in the thinnest membrane of materiality" (p. 43). Though I did not analyze this dream, it seemed to corroborate what had developed inside the research circle that opened me to that possibility and allowed me to see how to proceed.

In my dream, I was in a large greyish office space with buzzing fluorescent tube lights, divided into at least a dozen cubicles with five-foot moveable padded partitions: soft walls that you can stand up and peer over. I cannot recall if the weather was hot, but Guevara was seated at a cubicle, and it seemed he was concentrating on work, he had something, papers or maybe a book, in front of him. My friend Sarah was with me and while I stood surreptitiously looking at his back—I never did see his face—she ran over with a desktop fan and plugged it in to give him a breeze, hoping, all the while, that he would not notice. He did not respond.

For background, two days prior I had participated in a research circle with Cree and Métis colleagues and friends. There were a number of us working on academic projects and seeking insight from and through the circle. Although the research circle is an adaptation of the traditional Indigenous talking circles, or sharing circles, certain principles and ethical obligations still hold. Graveline (2000) poetically cites/writes:

Talking Circle as Methodology Enacted.

Traditionally a Sacred ceremony

a Gift from the Ancestors.

A physical reality

a Metaphysical experience.

An egalitarian structure

each voice acknowledged

heard in turn.

To choose words with care and thoughtfulness

is to speak in a Sacred manner.

We can each have our own Voice

speak our own Truth.

Tell our own Story.

In Circle all participants are encouraged to Be

Self-reflective

Culturally located.

To Listen Respectfully to Others

provides another lens to view our own Reality.

"Circle is a place of healing" says Elder Sarah (in Graveline, 1998, p. 148).

"Through the sharing you can find strength and you can see a purpose for what you've gone through, that it's making a difference in somebody's life if you do share it" realizes Phil (in Graveline, 1998, p. 178).

Circle Builds community, "gives everyone a sense of worthiness and being valued and listened to, and respected," acknowledges Char (in Graveline, 1998, p. 176)

Circle takes explicit modeling

clear Intent.

Re-refresh all minds

### Guide participants

Re-vitalize Traditional philosophies and practices.

To Hart: "the fostering of solidary [sic] relations among all the participants in a context of caring" (1991, p. 135)

is as Vital as the development of critical reflexivity (p. 364-365).

The circle is a ceremony that can only bear fruit when one is attending to relationships with an integral sense of responsibility, respect and reciprocity. Giving is as much if not more instructive than receiving. Through ceremony I gradually became aware that my writing block/stuckness was directly linked to my failure to connect my academic work with my own relationship to the image and, more importantly, I had failed to connect with the man whose face had first reflected light onto Alberto Korda's film. I had failed to directly acknowledge and honour the spirit of the one who was guiding me on this journey in so many ways. When the circle members clarified this for me, I realized the inward journey was stagnating and destabilizing the research process. I was encouraged to make an offering to Che within the next 48 hours to show respect for the research journey he was sharing with me and acknowledge this sharing of knowledge.

For participants, powerful psychic energies and anxieties we may evoke through inner work are contained via traditional ceremony with opening and closing rituals acting to contain and safely dissipate the forces raised through their work. The circle can be protective, an invaluable means for containing the interior energies and allowing them to unfold within us in a positive manner.

The dream alerted me to the passing of the 48 hours: he was waiting. That third day I bought a Cuban cigar, some snacks and trail mix. I also prepared a mate, the drink Che always requested from fellow Argentines. I shared in some of the offering before bagging it and hanging it from a tree branch. After the ceremony, I sat for a long time.

### From ceremony to catalyst

Indigenous research methodologies gave me a view to the interconnectedness of my research with my life journey, experiences and actions in a way that "disciplined" methods often efface. The insights surfacing are not seamless complete thoughts: rather they punctuate key moments during the formation of ideas and become points of reference, like guides, making possible the emergence of a differential consciousness (Sandoval 2000). Some of my raw wanderings are below to serve as interior points of reference. They are not edited, rather they reveal/tap my inward process. Drawing on a message of Linda Tuhiwai Smith's, *Graveline* (2000) writes: "We maintain the status quo through acceptance and use of "categorical and conceptual procedures that name, analyze and assemble what actually happens" (1973, p. 258). Eurocentric cultural norms are Revealed [sic] through what is named "Editing"" (p. 366).

Unedited it is:

*Visually, people respond in a myriad of different ways from artistically morphing of the photographic features so that different ethnicities appear through the image, and the most*

*popular image is in shadow, distortion none, changing the image, has it become a frame in a way?*

*This is vernacular this is people's individual expression, pedagogical but how?*

*Not as reductive, not a chart with bullets...*

*Pictures are speaking to each other, but less controlling of how someone is going to take it up...just want to produce something that everyone can use...*

*Not explicate because explicating covers things up, bring a phenomenology to it and some kind of semiotics...*

*Who would be telling their stories? People who had experienced seeing the image...*

*I have wonderings and wanderings*

*I still don't really understand why this image*

*Basic straightforward headshot*

*It has progeny it keeps giving birth people keep drawing it, duplicating it, so many people hating it that it seems it has its own life/personality*

*Got up and walked away...*

*Reaching something else that words don't reach*

*Expression and emotion on the face is the resonate...not reproduced every time but it is in the mental picture so you are projecting but projecting inward...*

*Lots of passion attached to it, people die and then they are associated with that image,*

*What do the people think? Whoever the people are? What does it represent to them?*

*An anti-frontier of becoming*

*Dressing up as Che an inhabiting of the image,*

*image as home*

*as place and point of reference*

*So many countries have these Che figures, people inhabiting, not the man but they are going to the image the picture that is what they want to inhabit...*

*In Manchester I asked the owners who opened up the Che bar, why Che? And it turns out they are from France, and they belong to the football fan club of south winners supporting Marseilles Olympique.*

*We are bringing Che to England...it is the passion,*

*the south against the north us against Paris...is it more superficial than how it is taken up in Latin America etc*

*My affective response to the image has not faded but I am always thinking of the man as well, I tried to write about why this image makes me cry...I think about his premature death, and his thinking process and how it was interrupted and where it might have gone...but also the dream of uniting Latin America, that has always been back there, because it is really artificially divided, partitioned, the lines drawn in places that don't make sense, 'we didn't cross the border the border crossed us'...*

*What would his descendants say about all that imagery...what would it mean to them, someone close to that person...If his children denounce commercial uses of the image,*

*it means the image means something to them,*

*it is not just a picture to them it is their father...*

**The story of collaging *Chenigma*: A life & death medi[t]ation**

Spurred on by the dream and the bubbling cauldron of raw thoughts and responses that were released through ceremony, the shadowy outlines of possible collages began to dance in my mind. Once the embryo of the collective collage idea took hold, a quick succession of events found me at Totem Building Supplies in Toronto with my friends Ben and MJ looking for a large surface or board who pushed me to begin. The dimensions I sought were 6x6 feet: a square surface to allow me to inscribe a perfect circle in it and link it to the notion of the circle of life and death. Working in circularity would allow certain things to happen. But it was not to be. Nothing was available, and my tight budget meant we got a door-sized 8x4 foot board, which we then cut down to 6x4. Ben and MJ helped me transport it to my work studio and we continued the art and research discussion we had begun the night before over MJ's pork roast.

Material aspects of this journey began to manifest themselves, as always, in continual sharing with friends as both a critical catalyst and as a grounding and founding force. As a result of collaboration, this collage embodies the venture of exploring the famous image of Che Guevara, the *Guerrillero Heroico*, born in 1960 from Alberto Korda's snapping the photograph with his Leica camera in a moment of utter surprise at the force of the gaze<sup>27</sup> emitted by Guevara to be a work of community. Both concrete and virtual communities participate in this collaborative work's becoming as a visual form. This artistic endeavour was a nodal point in the journey of appreciating this image and collage emerged as the ideal form. Norris et al (2007) explain that, "although collages are traditionally thought of as products, they can be effectively used in all stages of qualitative research. . . . to evoke disparate meanings in others and strive to communicate on a metaphoric, rather than a transactional, information-giving level" (p. 96).

Once I had the giant ¼ inch medium density fibreboard (MDF) canvas, the next step was to find paint to prime the surface. I used my *Facebook* page to request paint, any old house-paint that one might spare. Almost immediately I had a number of replies, and one of my friends, Leslie, had 6 cans of various colours she had used for a previous project that she dropped off. Although I had been ruminating and discussing a final piece to consolidate and figure forth the research on this image for a long time, once things began to happen they progressed quickly. The cream paint became the overall background and I spread it quickly with the board flat on the ground, in a cramped office where I could barely step around the piece. When covered and mostly dry, I poured a line of blue across the top third from end to end, taking the can and spilling paint more or less unevenly, with the images of walls and graffiti vaguely in the back of my mind. I leaned it up against a desk, and the blue dripped beautifully. By evening it was dry, and I asked some friends if they wanted to help work on it.

My friend Rawane showed up for the image work that night. In an empty classroom we talked about Guevara's death and how it gave coherence and meaning to the path he had chosen in life and the intimate relation between his death and the birth of the *Guerrillero Heroico*, a photo that once published abroad in 1967 was described by the photographer, Korda, as an "explosion" (Sridhar, 2002, *Frontline*) in the world of photography. We noted the resonance between the death image taken by Bolivian Rene Cadima of the assassinated Guevara, 1967 and Korda's photograph taken in life. Cadima's picture summons the memory of another famous posthumous photograph taken of Guevara (with military permission) by Freddy Alborta, another Bolivian photographer. Korda's and Cadima's images needed to combine and somehow reflect

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<sup>27</sup> Dice Korda: "Tengo el ojo pegado al visor de mi vieja *Leica*. De pronto surge el Che del fondo de la tribuna, en un espacio vacío. Cuando apareció así, con una expresión brava, en mi objetivo de 90 mm, casi me asusté, viendo la cara tan fiera que tenía" (Kalfon 1997, p. 312)



their continuing conversation. I ended up sketching out the Cadima face but having it inhabited by the Korda image's eyes, created a kind of haunting of death by life rather than the reverse. In this way the tension of life in death, and his eyes demanding a response even from the depths of the death mask *soliciting* a living response, brought an added tension to the work.

As we gazed at the painted board, Rawane suggested we play with its orientation, and try it upside-down with the blue drips going up. Something happened that could only be described as it *working*. We loved it, and began playing around with facial projections till we found a way to make size and angle blend in such a way as to seem one face with two countenances. After sketching the face from the Cadima photo and the eyes from Korda picture, we began gluing on fragments to create the background texture. In the meantime, Rawane had started documenting the process. I had not wanted to do this, as I preferred to remain wholly immersed in the piece without interruption. However, the photography proved a useful thinking tool by fragmenting the collage in time as we worked on it. Robertson (2004) notes, "Collage reflects the very way we see the world with object being given meaning not from something within themselves, but rather through the way we perceive they stand in relationship to one another (p. 483). By documenting the process, we were able to have a separate record of how the relationships between objects were formed over time.

For the next layer, our idea was to glue fragments from topographical maps and encyclopaedias throughout the piece. The maps came from outdated Atlases, dis/placed in time, scavenged from a used book sale. The encyclopaedias had been abandoned in a university foyer, their India paper pages were thin, a pleasure to rip, and easy to glue. We enjoyed it and ripped many more pages than we would ever need. Our gleeful tearing of maps and encyclopaedias felt like an anti-colonial gesture; traditionally both forms consist of naming and imposing structure on different kinds of knowledge in a way that favours linear hegemonic interpretations of what the world looks like and what knowledge is worth knowing. The cutting of pictures and phrases is also an analytic, interpretive, and aesthetic act. An image can be cut into specific shapes, like squares or circles with contextual or extraneous material remaining or removed, highlighting only what the artist/researcher deems essential. Each cut is a highly interpretive and artistic act that will later influence the entire product. Norris et al (2007) elaborate on the tactical consciousness engaged during the collaging process:

A phrase placed over an image has a different significance than the same phrase positioned to the side of the same picture. [...] Size, location, and juxtaposition along with styles of cutting are part of the collage's syntax and, like written sentences and paragraphs, have both epistemological and aesthetic dimensions (p. 96).

We avoided political maps and focused on topographical ones as we ripped them apart. Our choice was animically consistent with a Guevarist vision. Which represents the borderless, global and travelling without being detained at any crossing. Intellectually, it embodies free movement and re-visioning, re-visioning, of the world. Ripping these up felt just as anti-colonial a gesture as ripping up political maps would have been since the representation of the land forms are also based on a projection and a Western "knowledge" of what the world "should" look like.

An encyclopaedia<sup>28</sup> already gestures toward collage, it is a series of fragments, widely cross-referenced, and always incomplete and subject to change. It has no physical centre (though it might be said to have a virtual centre in following a coherent ideology) and no linearity, although it is organized hierarchically according to an alphabet or, less frequently, subject matter. However, a collage is more like an anti-encyclopaedia since it does not require experts to designate what counts as knowledge and what is valid. An entire set of 1951 Encyclopaedia Britannica volumes had lain in the 5<sup>th</sup> floor foyer of the faculty for weeks. I kept wondering about them, finally I suggested to someone that I could rip them up for art purposes. His one word response, “blasphemy!” confirmed the shredding of the imperial Britannica was its destiny. Rawane and I ripped and glued till 3am. The next day, I returned to the piece understanding I would need a huge intense block of time as well as a large “wet space” in which to work (the office floor was already looking teal bluish).

I attended the bi-weekly meeting of the ABR (Arts Based Research) Collective hoping to hear and share ideas and to be able to discuss the piece and its progress. Afterward, the founders of the group offered their studio for a 12-hour stretch. The situation was ideal: there was a sink, a projector and space to move around the piece as well as a couch to occasionally collapse on. After the meeting I collected my supplies, equipment and the piece and moved them in about 4 trips. Michael C. provided some additional glue and supplies (coffee), he also provided lighting and worked for hours cutting Che images and advising on the piece. Rawane had come back to continue and while she and Michael C. created fragments, I outlined the remaining figures: the heart and the dogs. For the portrait, I painted in the eyes to differentiate them further from the rest of the face (they were fleshed in and alive) while the rest was to remain loosely sketched. Michael C. also decided to document and was filming and photographing that evening.

That night Rawane and I worked until 6:00am alternating between the background textures and the figures. I worked on the pseudo-anatomical heart, positioned sideways, as if a gun but shooting blood – life instead of death. The principal colour was a garish red at first and I began tinting the fragmented images of Che as I added them. The arteries had not yet been sent out from the main organ, but the idea was there that they would cross the piece somehow. Meanwhile, Rawane worked on one of the dogs. These have interesting stories of their own beginning with an encounter I had with an artist in Ajijic, Mexico in the winter of 2008.

On a family trip, my sister and I had visited local artist Jesús López Vega’s studio. Vega, a muralist and multi-media artist, draws on the inspiration of the local folklore and the deep history of the Huicholes in his magic Surrealist style. I told Jesús about my interest in the famous Korda image of Che Guevara. By coincidence, he had an old yellowed photograph taped to his wall, like a newspaper clipping, of Che Guevara walking with two others. We talked late into the night about Che, history, politics, art, indigenous culture, and the hybrid differential place that so many Mexicans inhabit, as he put it, “between two worlds,” created as a result of Spanish colonialism:

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<sup>28</sup> Encyclopaedia (c.1500) is defined “training in a circle,” i.e. the “circle” of arts and sciences, the essentials of a liberal education; from *enkyklios* “circular,” also “general” (from *en* “in” + *kyklos* “circle”) + *paideia* “education, child-rearing.” The Koine Greek and Greek for “*enkyklios paideia*” means general education: “*enkyklios*” (*ἐγκύκλιος*) is “circular, recurrent, required regularly, general”. Literally “common knowledge” or “general knowledge.” Derived from the notion of circulating texts, encyclopaedia collect “knowledge” to set forth its general system, and transmit it to those who will follow like archives. Old encyclopaedias show history, because they record changes in thought and what is considered worth knowing. As of 2007, old encyclopaedias whose copyright has expired, such as the 1911 Britannica, are also the only free content English encyclopaedias in print form.

a psychic punishing place for so many who struggled to come to a consciousness with their fragmented identities. We had made a real connection and he gave me a gift to recognize that.

The next day we attended Jesús's show at the local cultural centre. His electric colours were almost fluorescent and the figures across his corpus featured a small black dog often placed near cemeteries. Two years later, this image insistently came to mind. Recalling the protrusion Vega had included on the dog's back, I ascertained its mythic role as guide and guard for Aztec souls in their journey to the other world as it was a dog that was neither alive nor dead. It seemed a perfect medium. In the collage we were creating, the Xolo<sup>29</sup> (bottom right) in profile as if beckoning to Guevara is rendered in a heavily outlined block style influenced by the Aztec sculptures. Rawane collaged within the design's lines using people's images of Che from my collection. By the time we left, the Aztec Xolo just needed some definition and weight, and the heart had some budding arteries.

After a break, I returned to the piece with the board vertical instead of flat as it had been. In a small interruption where I had to meet another friend, Rod, I asked offhand if he had any paint lying around his office. Oddly, he had a small jar of vivid blue fabric paint someone had left in the office before he had even moved into it and he gave it to me. That day, one of the heart's chambers became blue and Rod became yet another co-creator of the piece. MJ dropped in and gave input on how the arteries should wind around and critical corrections for the heart. Working all day and images covered images as the layers deepened as friends' contributions wove in and around.

Lynn, another friend, joined me and we continued together until midnight. She focused on the other Xolo, the one that is there for us, the viewers; it is only partially filled in and gazes out with empty eyes, being a threshold and reminding us of our mortality and of things neither finished nor quite unfinished, a figure of the in-between, interstitially in-tensioned. That same night, Michael H. and Ela P. contributed to the piece making suggestions about the hair, and the arteries, and the edges of the background that were all incorporated into the piece.

Along this processual path arose the impulse to include biographical images of Che: a scrap of a letter he had written as a child with a wandering swirling line in his signature and an image of him with his second wife as he looks up perhaps daydreaming. These images dwell near the Xolo calling for Che's soul. The other images near the waiting Xolo are a pair: one is of Rene Cadima sitting in the very hospital washing room in Vallegrande, Bolivia where Guevara's body lay for two days before it was secreted away<sup>30</sup>. This picture is a still image from the documentary by Dutch director Peter de Kock (2005) entitled "The hands of Che Guevara" detailing a search for Guevara's hands which went missing shortly after the body did.

The film traces the journey of the hands as they were smuggled, concealed, exhumed, stolen again and travelled, like Guevara in life, around the world through a layering of the stories and memories of those whose lives came into contact with the hands or were first hand witnesses. Thus, this documentary inhabits and blends the shady realms of history and legend. In the film, Cadima, by then the only surviving local photographer who witnessed the body of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, recalls, "when he died he had his eyes shut, but when they injected the

<sup>29</sup> This breed of dog is called Xoloitzcuintle (show-low-etz-queent-lee) from the name of the Aztec's Xolotl god of fire and of bad luck and Itzcuintli, the Aztec word for dog. The Xolo was sacred for Aztecs as well as Toltec, Mayan, Zapoteca, and Colima peoples as revealed by clay and ceramic figures in 3000 year-old tombs. Prized for their healing and spiritual powers, Xolos are also known to stick to their owners like Velcro.

<sup>30</sup> Guevara's body was buried in an unmarked mass grave along an airstrip in Bolivia and only discovered (or de-classified in 1997).

formalin to slow down decomposition, he suddenly opened his eyes” (film quote). In my piece, the image beside this man, that you could say kept Che alive in many ways is another mural image of a series of massive hands clenched into fists. But these are and are *not* Che’s hands, they are hands both for Che and belonging to, the hands<sup>31</sup> that continue his work and his fight as depicted in this Mexican mural. Multiplied and enlarged and defiant, each with its star embedded or enclosed but visible in each fists’ massive palm, they are accompanied by a rendering of Korda’s *Guerrillero Heroico*. Finally, a clipped advert for de Kock’s documentary comments on the other two.

After packing, Lynn and I worked until I had to go to the airport. We worked fast and intuitively through the day and by the time I left, the piece was virtually complete, two arteries had extended from the heart one flowing behind Guevara’s head while the other ended in space somewhere below his chin. Other collaborators provided the graffiti-like texts treating the canvas as if it were a wall. As an option, I suggested some of Che’s own words might be added, “The Revolutionary is not a portrait, It’s a landscape” as a paradoxical gesture. Behind this suggestion was the memory of a comment made by Che’s nephew, Taco Guevara, who told Argentine filmmaker Tristán Bauer that it would be better to make a documentary with all those unknown materials of Che. “Because according to him, Che would be upset by all this stuff about the heroic guerrilla that somehow, added to the Korda photo, had masked his deepest thoughts and capacity for constant analysis beyond his concrete action” (film interview). In other words, the concern is that the constant spotlight on the image holds the danger of obscuring the theory and action of the man himself. As a result, Bauer exposes intimate details in his new documentary *Che, UN hombre nuevo* [Che, a new man]. The Cuban government also contributed 20 unpublished photographs for this film, two of which participate in this collage.

Thus, in an indirect, unpredictable way the collage was co-created with over ten people physically participating in its preparation, composition and rendering, and hundreds in providing the images of which it is made. So that it might continue its life and metamorphosis, the collage remains with a group responsible for an event called *Solidarity Week* that calls attention to anti-colonial and social justice struggles around the world.

### **Towards a pedagogy of bearing witness**

The experiment and experience of an emergent design based in principles of IRMs and artistic inquiry oriented by Sandoval’s (2001) *The Methodology of the Oppressed* to appreciate Korda’s image of Che Guevara has nurtured my regard for the immanent and the emanating. One might ask: the immanent and emanating what? At this early point I can only respond with the notion of forces (energies? Magnetism?). As part of this chaotic and enjoyable process, this last section is intended as nothing more than a provocation and my thoughts are raw (or half-baked if you will).

I characterize the relation between a responsive viewer and the image as one of bearing witness (I will neither explore the interesting trajectory of Guevara’s own witnessing, nor Korda’s, but I believe they are connected to the creation of the image as something/someone to

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<sup>31</sup> Fingerprints carried by hands identify individuals like signatures, they are unique and singular, but these are the hands of the multitude they have many and all fingerprints, the little maps of identity gradually eroded from Che’s hands in formaldehyde thus making his hands accessible to all.

be witnessed). Those who carry reproductions of this image, Guevara's face, are not only showing it, being seen with it, but also have Guevara see them (reciprocal, or at least multidirectional).

Beginning with a notion of the witness, as being more than being a mere bystander, observer or onlooker, rather a witness only becomes such at the moment of recognizing one's own self as proof or evidence of something or someone. A witness responds to the call of the Other (person/event). For example one can sign a document to attest to the truth of its contents, as a witness. One can also confirm someone's character as a witness having personal knowledge of said person. Becoming a witness means not only that one can confirm or testify to an experience, but also that one's self actually constitutes proof. However, one can only become proof by fulfilling the responsibility to testify, speak publicly, vouch for or attest to that which one has witnessed. In other words, one cannot *become* witness without *bearing* witness. Additionally, an event/character calls for more than one witness to contribute fragments of the overall picture: the witness is thus part of a collage, and aware of the partial/located nature of testimony.

How is this an instructive process, a teaching and learning encounter or in a word, pedagogy? This pedagogical process is transformative and has the character of immanence-emanation. I express it as such because while one may witness something that is outside one's "self" it is only when it becomes part of the self that one can be said to have become a witness. In other words I see it as an internal process or incubation: there must be some kind of internal movement. But for the transformation to be complete one must give testimony, become evidence or emanate (from the Latin *emanare* meaning "to flow from" or "to pour forth or out of"). The outward expression of (yet still constitutive of) this alchemical change means one has decided somehow to bear witness. Such a transformation necessarily carries new awareness, sense of self and actions with it. These are not necessarily always manifested and can remain immanent.

Related to these theorizations is the question of what the difference between information and knowledge might be, and when/if information becomes knowledge. I understand the process as a parallel one. One might say knowledge simply is, exists, everywhere within and without one's self. But often we do not see it as such, we take knowledge as information and it is only through the immanent/emanation process of bearing witness to the information that it is incorporated into the self and becomes knowledge. It is not enough to feel that one *recognizes* something (aha!) although that is critical. The transmuting of information (base metal) into knowledge (precious) is only complete when one is able to give testimony to it while recognizing its partial nature. (The change from knowledge to wisdom is one I might characterize differently).

While I am aware of philosophical traditions (Christian theology, Indigenous, Kabbalist, Buddhist, Pagan) and continental social theories (Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, 1807; Baruch Spinoza 1660; Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, 1980; Carl Schmidt, 1922; Giorgio Agamben, 1993) addressing immanence and emanation (usually seen as transcendence and antithetical to immanence), I am not drawing on or referring to them here. Although I do not deny they would be useful and salient to the notion of pedagogy I wish to incite, they would require another dissertation. Then an interesting question might be: "What is the substance of an image?"

My curiosity, or impetus for this dissertation, rooted in my own witnessing of the *Guerrillero Heroico* and of individuals' interactions with that image (or one of its endless progeny), seems to have reignited itself.

