



Works 2005 - 2012



















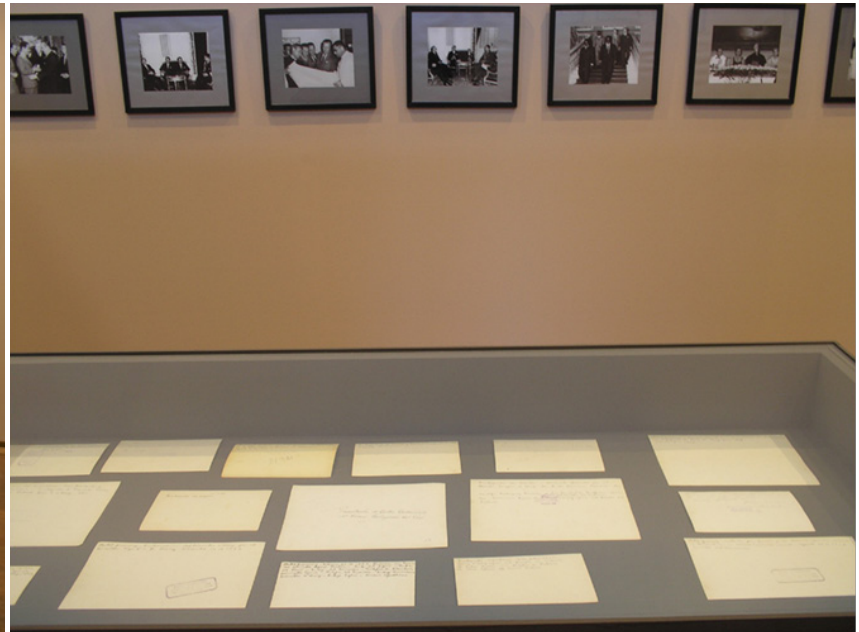


THE RETURN OF THE SORCERERS/2005

Vol. 1/ Disasters of Cold War



Exhibition at Valencia Biennial/ 2007





The Collateral Archives

Excerpt from an essay by Ticio Escobar
May, 2006

Disasters of the others' war

The whole of Stroessner's dictatorship developed in the context of a split world and an intensely static bipolar scenario. A space upon which the threat of the Third World War was suspended, the absolute threat whose imminence argued for the conversion of the other into an enemy. From that irrefutable assumption, many other things were justified. The brutal regimes located in the Southern Cone, for example, represented the inevitable consequences -the collateral damages as one would say nowadays- of an extremely precarious universal harmony maintained at the very edge of the Apocalypse, or its threat, effectively fuelled by the imperial. The end of this phase, which more or less started with the Perestroika (1985) and culminated in the collapse of Russia (1991), resulted in Latin American military dictatorships not being functional any longer. During the hard times of the Cold War, the global manifesto fomenting the dictatorships maintained a disciplined system of international relations among the aligned countries. Fredi Casco selected several photos depicting the intense diplomatic activity displayed

in Paraguay at that time, when, according to his sources, "there were more dignitaries and representatives performing diplomatic visits than in all of the country's history".

The tactics

Fredi Casco's work consists of two stages: the brief apogee of Stroessner's foreign relations and its decline. By means of minimal interventions, the artist presents the mediocre -although pretentious- display of provincial galas, organised not only in the occasion of the foreign dignitaries' or their representative's visits, but also in minor diplomatic receptions and royal-like small rituals. In general, these insignificant images have been rejected from the historical archive. They have, nevertheless, the indexical power of the residue: they can cover with the help of the imagination all the gaps and black holes where neither historical research nor political analysis manage to arrive. To suggest, momentarily all those meanings, accents and expressions is actually the task undertaken by the art work. Freud calls this Unheimliche, the strangeness, -meaning the imminence that suddenly disturbs an ordinary situation.

The photos, the narrations

Employing the double and the mask as disturbing narrative elements, Fredi Casco uses found photographs obtained in



the Sunday flea market of Asunción. Since 2001 he has been collecting this kind of objet trouvé, the pictures found by chance at the antiques fair.

The digitally processed photos maintain their original size (20 x 25 cms), colours and tone. Thus, only the doubles and masks act by becoming intruding elements that force the photos to refer to veiled aspects of the histories they narrate, setting in motion other scripts.

The use of ordinary photographs, as well as their digital processing at home, highlights the mediocrity of the public resources; but also reveals the skill applied to an optimal fiction staged by means of affordable procedures (special "low budget" effects, as the author calls them).

The Double I

The concept of duality, as already known, constitutes an obsessive presence within the contemporary world. Actually, it constitutes an obsession in the horizon of any culture; yet, in our horizon it is loaded with unexpected connotations that increase its power. By itself, photography guarantees a reliability and reproducibility, never achieved before by the process of representation.

Moreover, the cultural impact of biotechnology advancements nowadays ties together all duplications of the human figure with those of the clone and cyborg, hybrids that debunk the

idea of an original and natural body and assign the organic reproduction of the body to other keys-players: disturbing concepts that spur the imagination and raise uncertain threats, like other versions of the Unheimliche, the Freudian concept for the sinister.

When Fredi Casco duplicates the figure of specific characters who appear in the photos (referring meanwhile to the Stalinist practice of photograph forging), not only ridicules the ontological and representational scandal concerning the duplication of the figure and the multiple simulacrum. He also summons the presence of what is already present, re-emphasising the position and meaning of specific actors of the dark theatre he constructs within the photos. It is not the same to duplicate the picture of an anonymous person or a loved one than to clone Stroessner: the mythical imagery arising from the era of dictatorship induces the viewer to perceive this reiteration like a nightmare: the anguish to see Stroessner like a self-mutant character, who reproduces itself, election after election, omnipresent and eternal.

The offence of forging photographic reality is also added, as it alters one of the few guarantees of truth maintained by representation: to alter a photograph is to falsify reality. And if that photograph constitutes an official document, its forging is like committing forgery and fraud against public history. Duplication, thus, has serious collateral effects. The



displacement produced by the twin copy of the characters, allows, on the other hand, approaching the question of identity, which becomes especially complicated in the binary times of the Cold War, when anyone or anything different was considered not only abnormal, but the enemy.

The Double II

In parallel to the use of the double, Casco also makes use of another resource in order to intervene the original images to provide the photographic narrative with an abrupt turn that makes the story glide away, revealing another plot. In this case, we are referring to the introduction of masks which unexpectedly cover the faces of specific characters. There are three types of masks. As if we were confronted with funerary masks the face of the carrier is duplicated, replaced by an identical fake, a spectral copy of itself. In this case, the masks are, once more, facsimile copies of the character.

The second type are masks that reinforce the farce aspects of a situation like in a masquerade. The third ones are gas masks: they refer to the alien nature that the figure of the other acquires during the Cold War, the extreme intruder who exhibits the threatening non-face of discordance. Fredi Casco criticizes in parody this notion of the other as an obscured and hooded adversary, linking it, by means of a specific rhetoric, to Class B cinema. Through this movement, the direction of

the threat is disoriented: the dictator and his accomplices, the dignitaries and ambassadors who pay a visit and their mediocre suite of assistants and informers are filtered by the topics of specific popular narratives of espionage and science fiction, according to the artist himself, of "ambassadors-spies, men in black and double agents"; who -veiled and obscure- take the place of the other.

As in any masquerade -as in any allegorical process- everything has another meaning.

Graham Greene... photographer?

One of my first memories is a conversation over coffee between my parents and some relatives, in which my parents told a story about having run into Graham Greene at the terrace of the Hotel Guarani, lonely skyscraper of a provincial Asuncion in 1969. I faintly recall the smell of tobacco, some familiar voices, and the British writer's name.

Years later, when I asked my father if they had indeed ran into Greene or if the meeting was just a figment of my imagination, he told me they had actually met. He remembered vaguely that a diplomatic service officer had introduced them, apparently because my father was the only person who spoke English correctly and could handle a conversation. He also said that they had drunk a bottle of gin together, while Greene confessed that a bunch of undercover policemen had snatched his camera in front of the Partido Colorado's¹ offices the previous morning, just as he was shooting what appeared to be preparations for a parade. The Paraguayan diplomat added that the British embassy had dismissed any attempts of getting it back, as Mr. Greene insisted on avoiding a diplomatic incident.

Pressing him for further details, he remembered that they also discussed the government, foreign policy, a few exclusive parties Greene had attended, and the Nazis who had taken refuge in Paraguay.

A few months ago, while I was looking over police files from the Stroessner dictatorship related to missing persons during Operación Condor², I found an ordinary envelope which had "photos seized in front of the A.N.R."³ written on it. Inside, wrapped in newspaper, two strips of photo negatives, somewhat damaged. When I asked the person in charge of the files about the envelope, he simply answered that I would find hundreds of yet unidentified documents.

My father never read *Travels with My Aunt*⁴, the second part of which takes place entirely in Asuncion (and ends with a lavish party organized by an Italian smuggler and war criminal wanted by the CIA). In fact, he was pretty surprised when I pointed to the extraordinary coincidences between his story, the novel's final scenes and the photographs found in the envelope.

Notes

¹ General Alfredo Stroessner's (1954-1989) political party.

² Plan of coordinated operations between South American dictatorships —Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Bolivia— and the CIA that took place in the 1970's and 1980's .

³ A.N.R. (Asociación Nacional Republicana), Partido Colorado.

⁴ Graham Greene, *Travels with My Aunt*. The Bodley Head Ltd. 1969.



"The guests crowded the floor as the harpist and the guitarist played another polka: we could see beyond the terrace through the window of the sala the ebb and flow of the dancers" (Graham Greene, *Travels with my Aunt* p. 249).



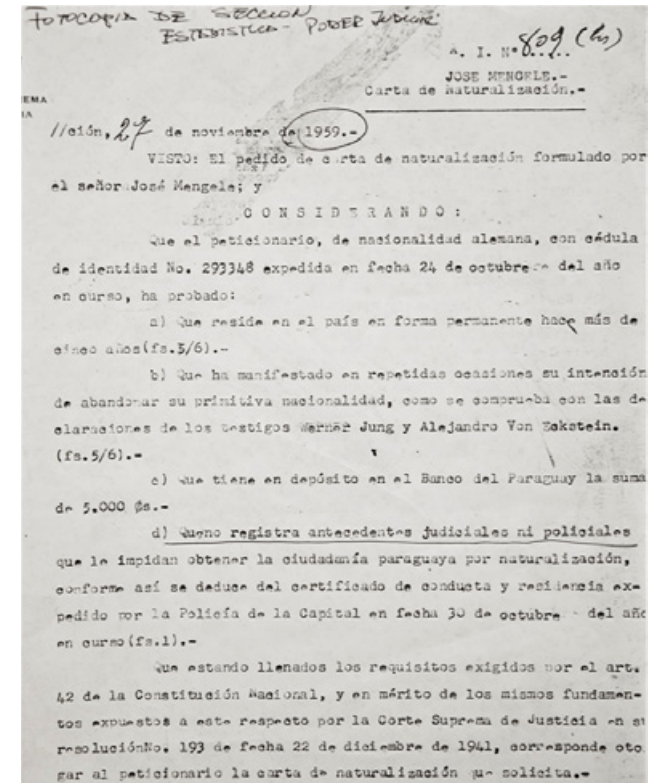
"Most of the men in the street wore red scarves round their necks, and many scarves were printed with a picture of the General. There were red flags everywhere: you would have thought the town had been taken over by the Communists, but red here was the colour of conservatism" (Graham Greene, *Travels with my Aunt* p. 216).

In the year 1964 Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele was about to be captured in Paraguay by a command called “The committee of twelve”, consisting mostly of Auschwitz survivors.

The incident occurred during a warm February night at the Hotel “Tirol del Paraguay”, located in the south of the country.

The command entered in the hotel and went directly to room 26, where was staying a mysterious man called Dr. Fritz Fischer¹. But they found the room empty except for a pajamas and a leather suitcase containing, among other things: a photographic camera Dacora Dignette, an album of photographs, most of them taken in a folkloric celebration of German immigrants in Paraguay, some old postcards from the decades of 1930-1940, a commemorative medal of the rise of Adolf Hitler in 1933, an old iron key, a Latin-German dictionary and a Spanish-German dictionary.

Five years earlier, Josef Mengele, obtained in Asuncion the Paraguayan naturalization card.



Photocopy of the Paraguayan nationalization of Josef Mengele. Asuncion, 1959.

Notes

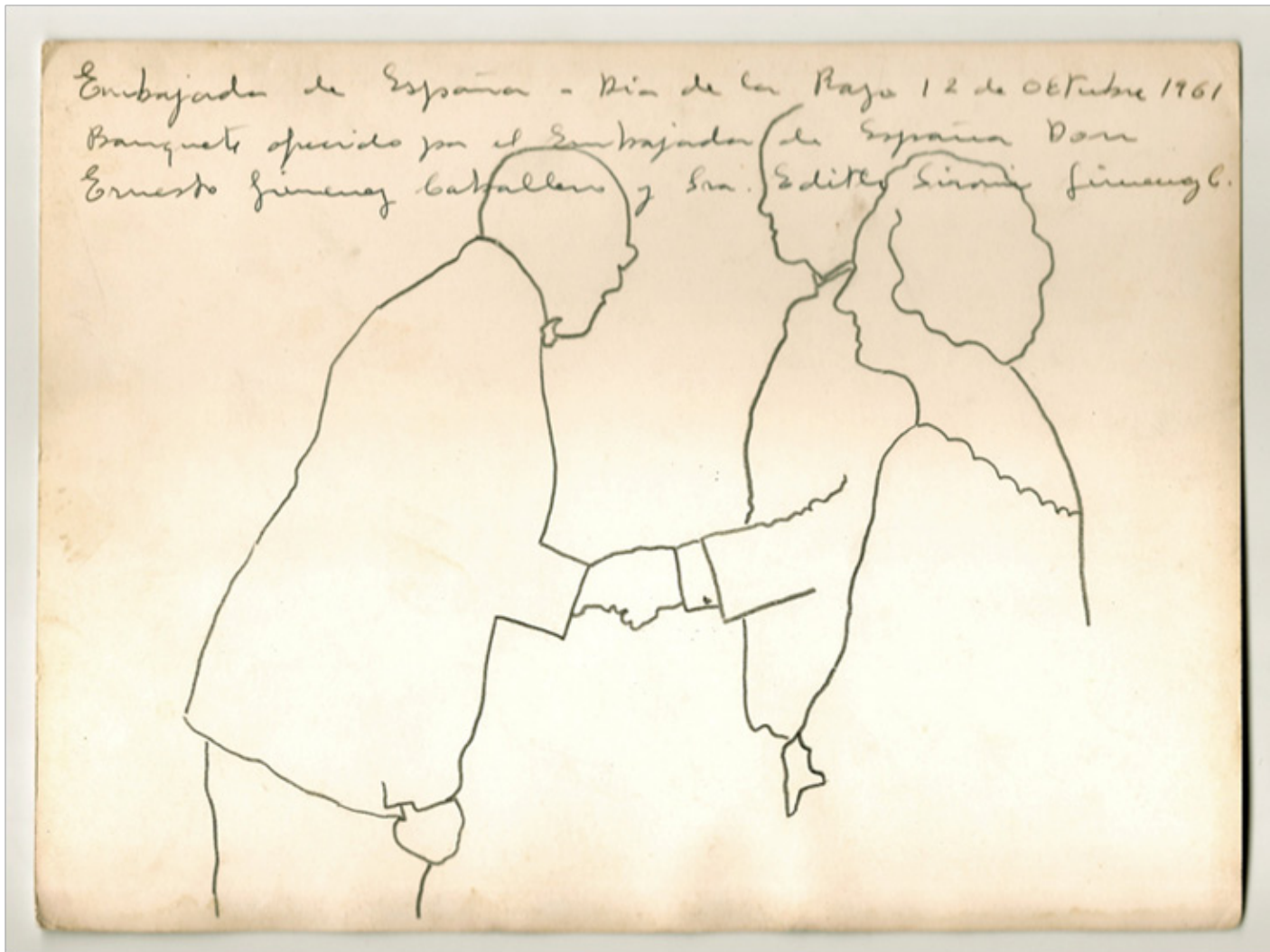
¹ One of the aliases allegedly used by Mengele in Paraguay



Objects found in room No. 26 of Hotel Tiro del Paraguay. Capitan Miranda, Paraguay. Circa 1964.







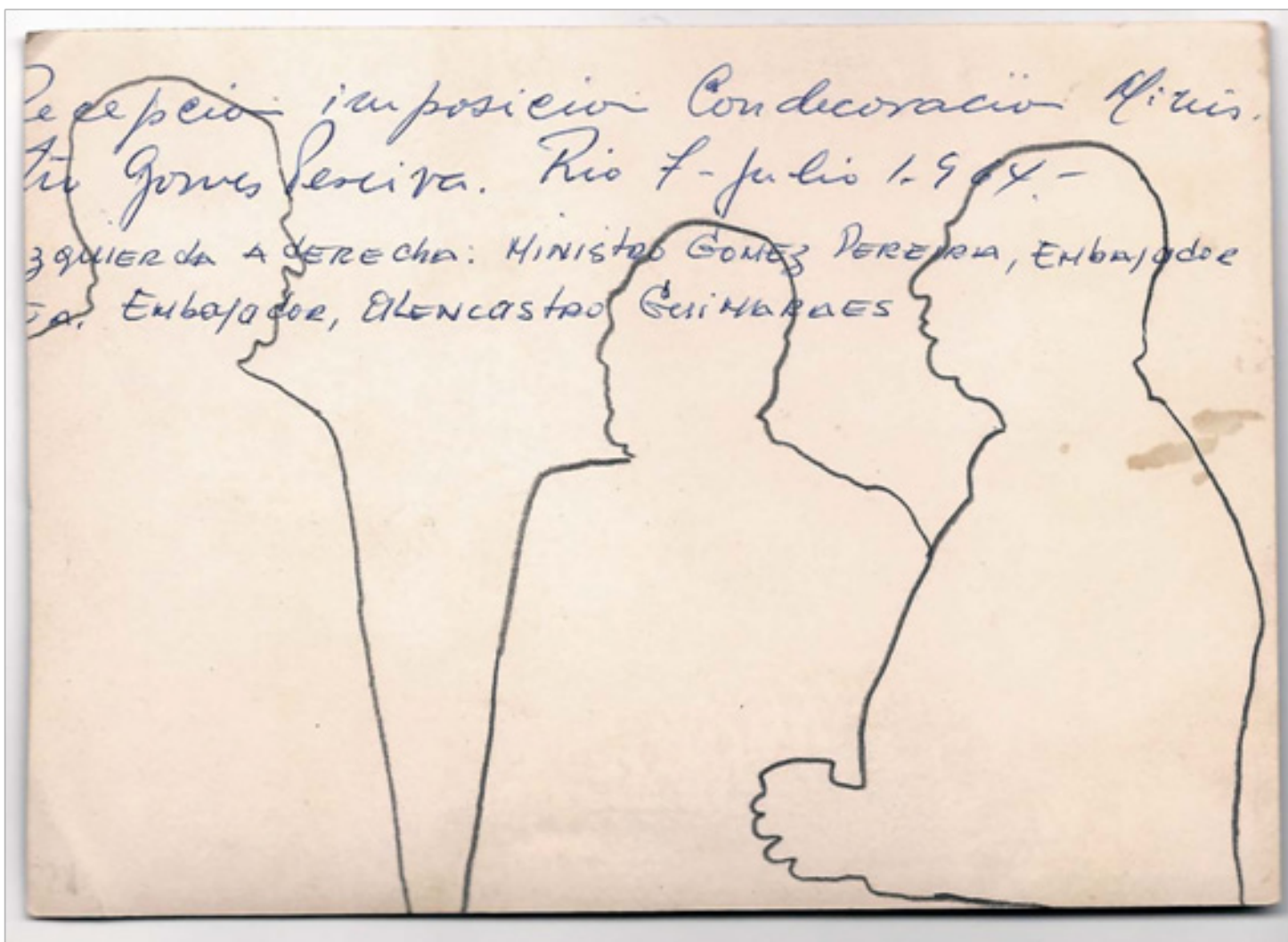
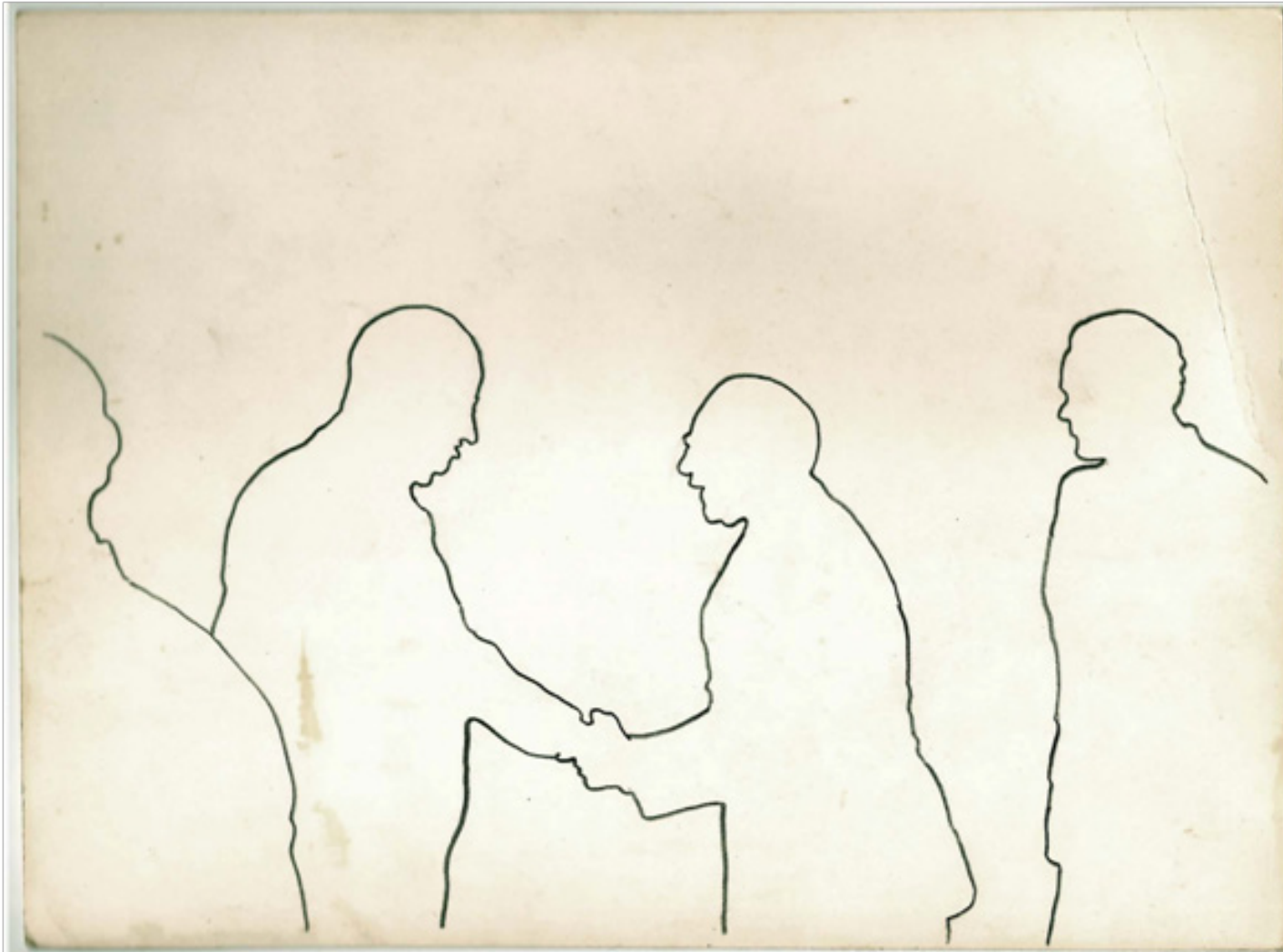


PHOTO ZOMBIE/ 2012

Pencil on photographic paper



Works



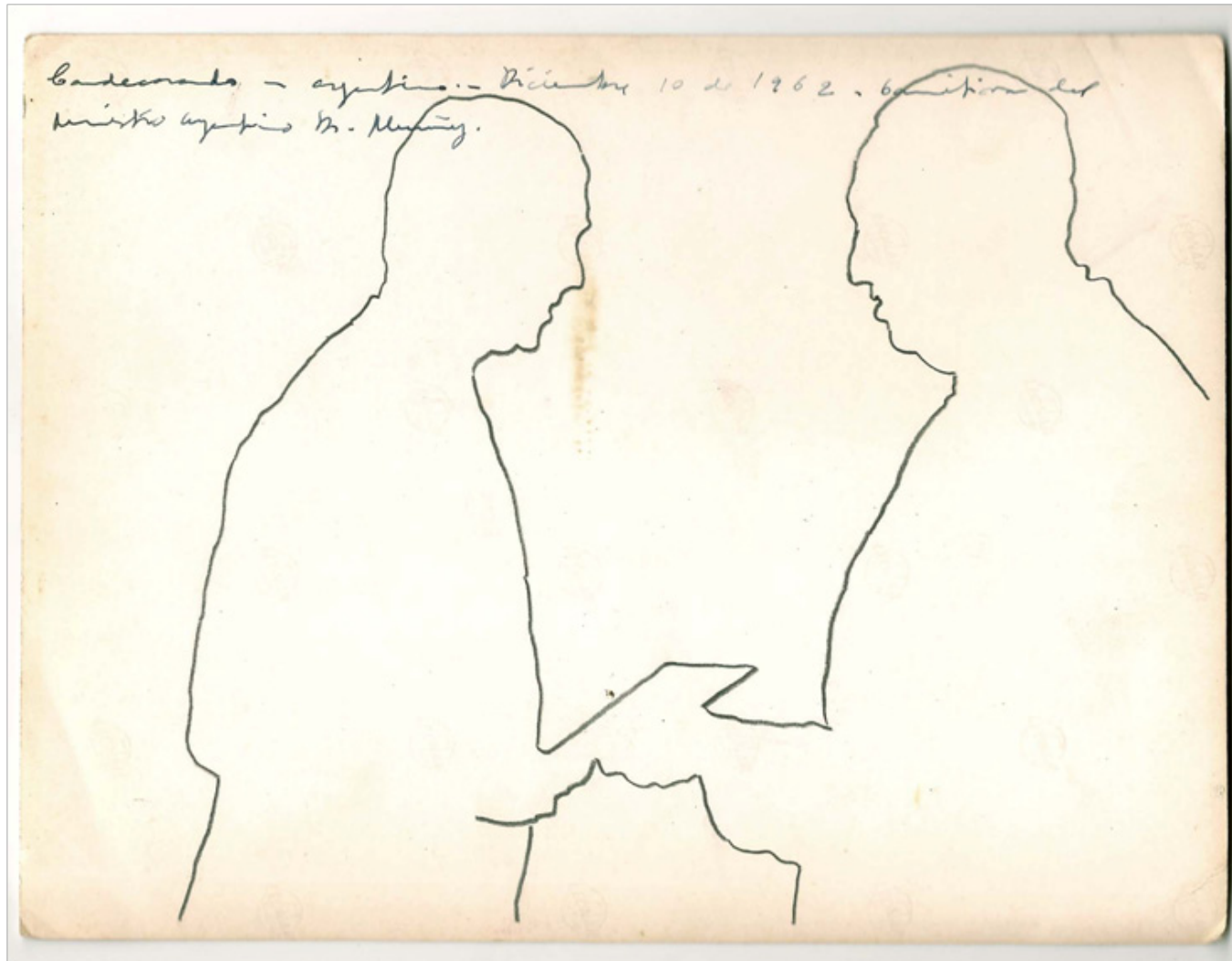
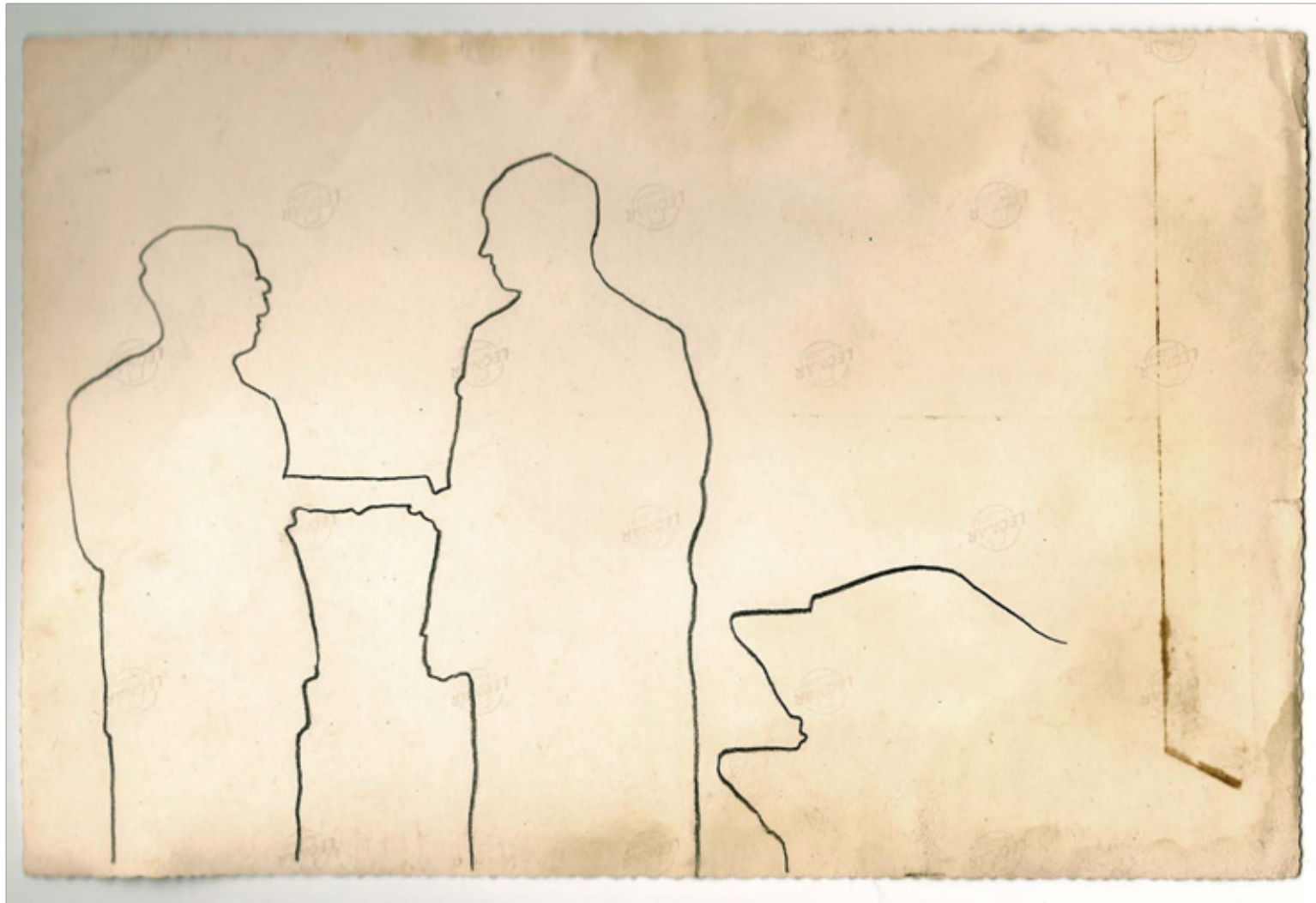


PHOTO ZOMBIE/ 2012

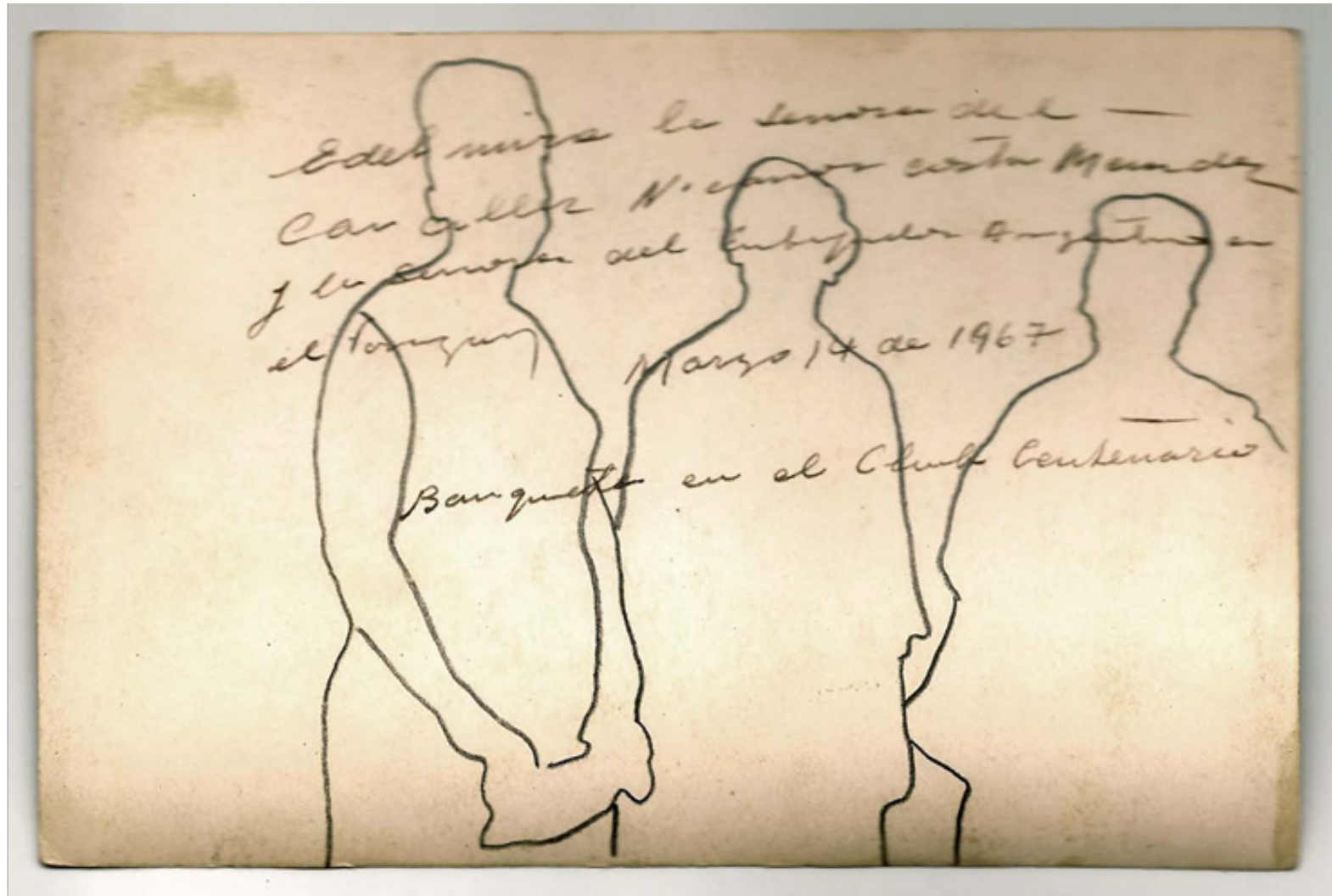
Pencil on photographic paper

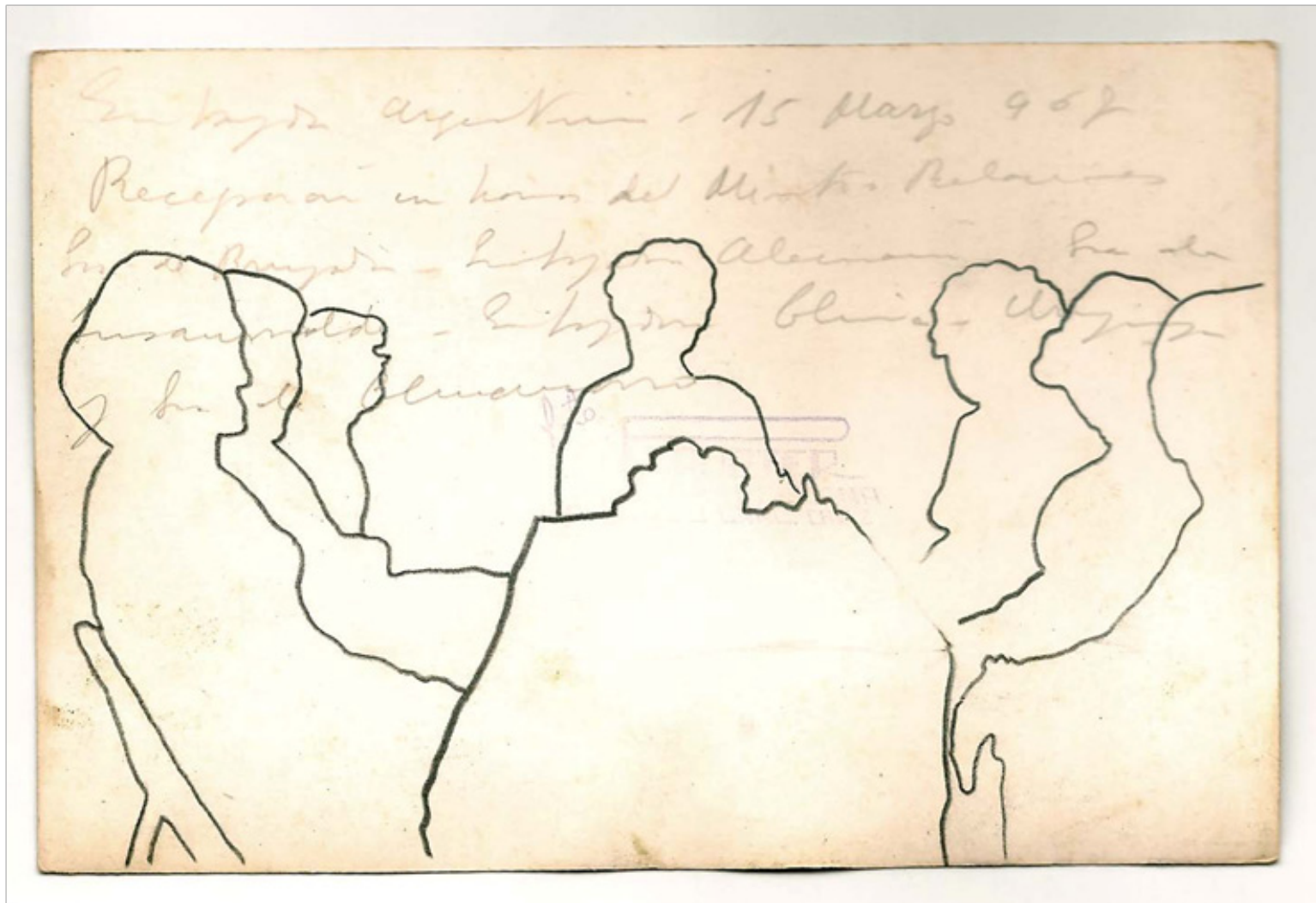


Works























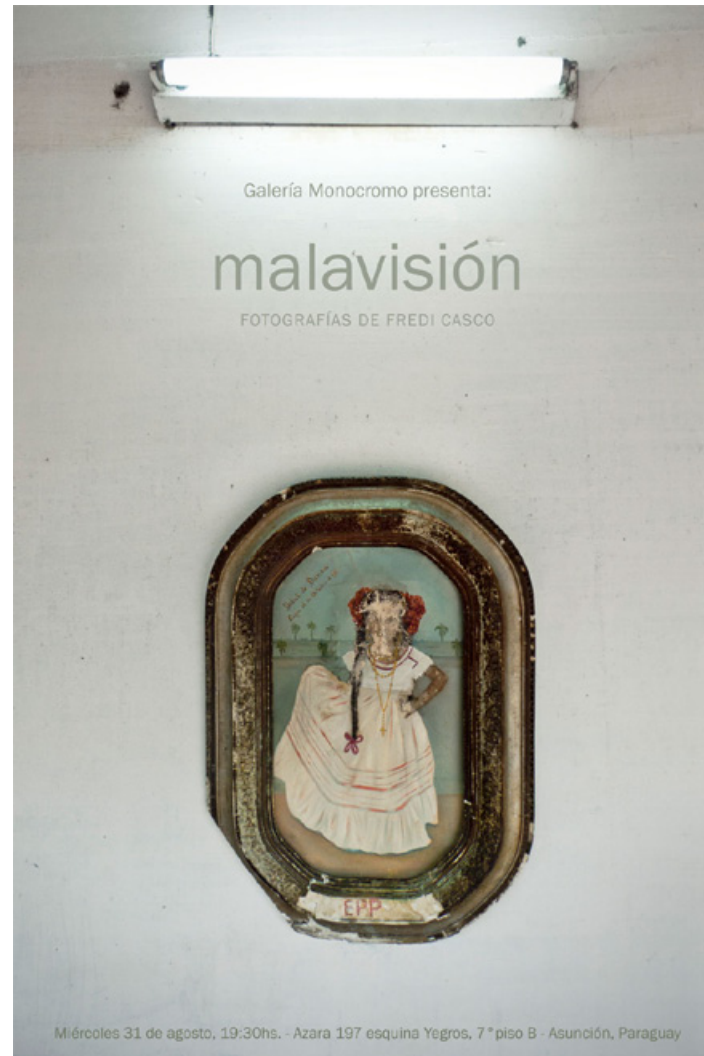






































NYCTALOPS/ 2012

Infrared Photography

Works





KILLING



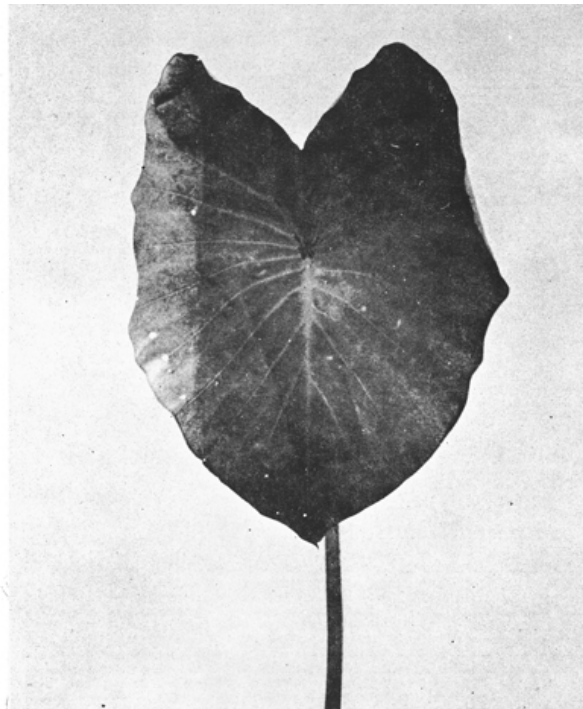
el movimiento de grandes cantidades de tropas sobre distancias bastante largas. Este tipo de movimiento cuando no se descubre puede resultar en desastre para las tropas defensivas si ellas no pueden guarecer apropiadamente las posiciones defensivas antes del ataque. Por otro lado, las fuerzas atacantes también pueden usar la cubierta y encubrimiento de la selva para llegar hasta posiciones no descubiertas por los defensores y desconocidas por ellos. En estas áreas de observación limitada y de condiciones frontales, inestables el control del combate se vuelve doblemente difícil. Los flancos pueden ser evueltos, los frentes pueden cambiar y puede que los jefes de la operación nunca sepan que estos acontecimientos han ocurrido.

3. **Campes de Fuego.** En las áreas selváticas no es perfecto el empleo tradicional de las armas autóctonas. Normalmente no es aconsejable el

despejar campos de fuego en forma de abanico para que proporcionen arcos máximos de tiro en los sectores de las armas. El hacer esto le indicará claramente al enemigo los campos de fuego amigos. En vez de esto se deberán abrir en la vegetación "áreales de fuego" para definir los sectores de fuego. La abstracción en su mayor parte se limitará al control de las trochas y de otras rutas de movimiento y el fuego estará confinado a las áreas poco profundas. Los alcances de los franco tiradores aún serán muy cortos. Las armas más útiles son las de alcance corto, ráfaga rápida y recarga rápida.

19. Encubrimiento

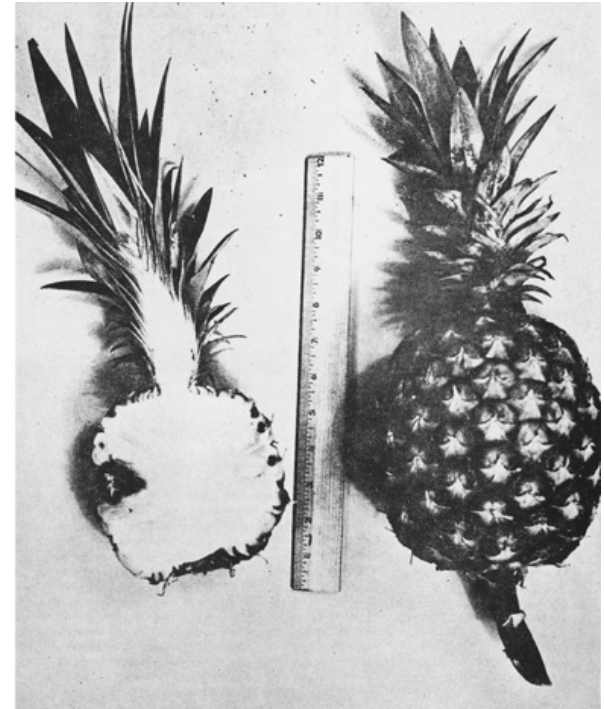
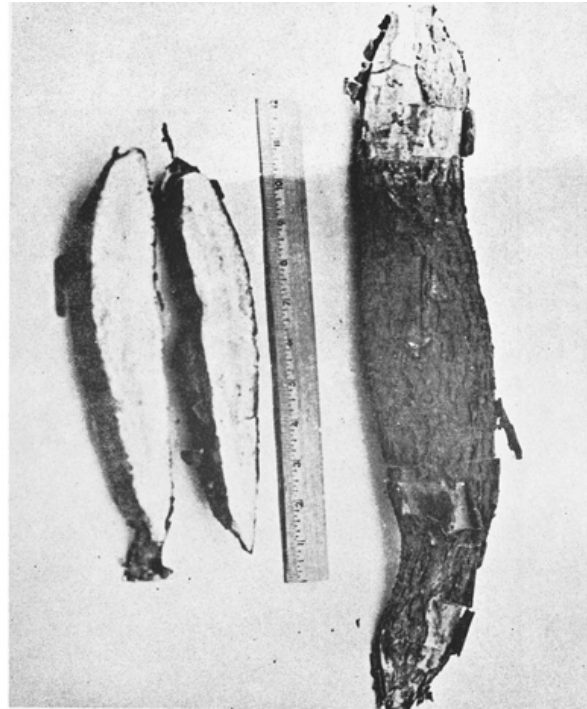
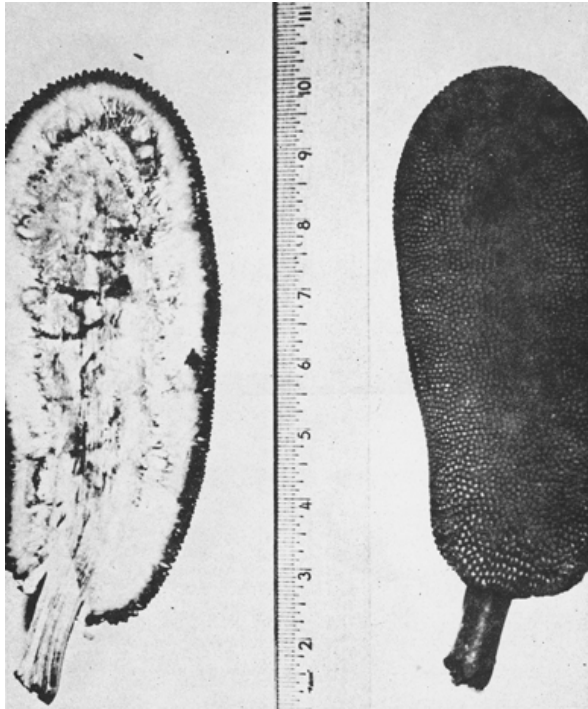
En casi todos los tipos de vegetación en las áreas selváticas el potencial de encubrimiento es tremendo. En todos los tipos de vegetación, a excepción de las plantas secundarias jóvenes, hay



alguna razón para que presten su ayuda. Antes de entrar en un área es necesario aprender algo acerca de las costumbres, hábitos y prohibiciones de los nativos o a lo menos familiarizarse con estos hábitos. Cuando se viola una prohibición sagrada, es posible que se antagonice a todo el elemento nativo en un área y de este modo se interrumpe una fuente de inteligencia y el suministro de trabajadores potencialmente dispuestos que podrían emplearse como exploradores, guías, cargadores, trabajadores de construcción y camilleros. Cuando se trata con la población nativa, puede ser más perjudicial que beneficioso el emplear intérpretes locales. Debido a la posibilidad de que sea mejor presentar la información deseada por medio de la nativa, esta es más ventajosa usarla directamente con el hombre principal de una aldea o jefe de una tribu. A los intérpretes locales con sus deseos de prestar ayuda

y al mismo tiempo mantener sus posiciones privilegiadas en la comunidad o tribu no les conviene indicar que ellos no entienden y por lo tanto proporcionarían las respuestas que ellos piensan que se requieren. Se deben considerar los siguientes conceptos cuando se trata con poblaciones nativas:

1. Ser amigo pero cauteloso.
2. Ser cortés.
3. Respetar las costumbres, credos religiosos y la propiedad.
4. Ofrecer regalos con prudencia.
5. Evitar hacer gestos amenazadores.
6. No molestar a las mujeres.
7. Ofrecer toda la ayuda posible especialmente la ayuda médica.
8. No comisar alimentos, etc., pagar un precio justo por todo.







“In his work, he deals with the communications media, technical reproduc(t)ibility, popular and native culture, religiosity, and psychoanalysis. He holds a revisionist stance vis-á -vis the narrative of tradition and power present in different local, popular and religious, visual and iconographic, displays. Through subtle transgressions and a great deal of irony, he examines the apparent transparency and neutrality of different media such as television and photography. His work constantly explores the limits between the so-called high culture and popular culture, and the tensions between official history and its “minor” documents”.

<http://www.latinart.com>



Fredi Casco (b. Asunción, Paraguay 1967) lives and works in Asunción, Paraguay.

Exhibitions 2003-2012

2012

Identity: Latin American and Caribe Photography. Korea Foundation Cultural Center. Seoul, Korea.

2011

Vrai ou Faux? 8 V Salon. Hamburg, Germany.
Visuals Correspondences with Marcelo Brodsky. CEC Rosario. Argentina.

2010

Ghost Chaco. Migliorisi Foundation. Asunción, Paraguay.
Paraguay Esquivo. Festival de L'imaginaire. Paris, France.

2009

1st Chile Triennial. Santiago, Chile.
10th Havana Biennial. Havana, Cuba.
2nd Thessaloniki Biennial. Greece.

2007

Sutil Violento. Itaú Cultural. 1st Latin American Photography Forum of Sao Paulo. Brazil.
Positions in Context. Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation. Miami, USA.
Talking with friends. Y Gallery. New York, USA.

2006

El efecto Downey. Fundación Telefónica. Buenos Aires, Argentina.
Persona. Galería Animal. Santiago, Chile.
Another Product. Cornerhouse. Manchester, GB.

2004

I Biennial of Contemporary Art. Shumen, Bulgaria.

2003

Söders Internationella Konst Biennal (r). Stockholm, Sweden .

Grants

2009

Sejour Culture - Maison de Cultures du Monde. Paris, France.

2007

CIFO Grants Program for Emergin Artists. USA.