

THE SCHOOLHOUSE AND THE BUS

Mobility, Pedagogy, and Engagement



PABLO HELGUERA

Image Credits

Pablo Helguera Cover. Pablo Helguera near Tok, Alaska, May 2006. Photo by Sean Arden.

The School of Panamerican Unrest title page, top left. Pablo Helguera with Paraguayan sculptor Hermann Guggiari at the Plaza del Cabildo, Asunción, Paraguay, September 2006. Photo courtesy of the artist.

The School of Panamerican Unrest title page, top right. Panamerican banner hanging at the old palace of Congress, Asunción, Paraguay, September 2006.

The School of Panamerican Unrest title page, bottom left. Panamerican ceremony in Puebla, Mexico, July 2006.

The School of Panamerican Unrest title page, bottom right. Panamerican schoolhouse in Casa del Lago, Mexico City, July 2006.

1. Setting up the school house at the School of the Arts, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, July 2006.

2. *School of Panamerican Unrest* workshop, Calgary, Alberta, May 2006.

3. Carrying the schoolhouse in Asunción, Paraguay, September 2006.

4. Photo of the bell, Mexico City, June 2006.

5. Director of Casa del Lago cultural center José Luis Paredes (Pacho) at the Panamerican Ceremony, Casa del Lago, Mexico City, July 2006.

6. Panamerican Ceremony, Mérida, Yucatán, July 2006.

7. Schoolhouse at Plaza de la Merced, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, July 2006.

8. *The School of Panamerican Unrest* discussion at Helen Pitt Gallery, Vancouver, British Columbia, May 2006.

9. *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, 2017. Installation view, AD&A Museum, UC Santa Barbara, fall 2017. Photo by Tony Mastres.

10. *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, 2017. Installation view, AD&A Museum, UC Santa Barbara, fall 2017. Photo by Tony Mastres.

11. Pablo Helguera, *The School of Panamerican Unrest Banner*, 2006. Installation view, AD&A Museum, UC Santa Barbara, fall 2017. Photo by Tony Mastres.

Endnotes

¹ Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: the dematerialization of the art object from 1966 to 1972*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), 1997 (original printing 1973), p. xxii.

² Interview between Suzanne Lacy and Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, September 18, 2006.

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THE SCHOOL OF PANAMERICAN UNREST

OBJECT LESSONS

Sara Reisman

The Schoolhouse and the Bus: Mobility, Pedagogy, and Engagement is an exhibition that presents two artistic projects that encapsulate a process of translation between the unruliness of lived experience and the formulas of exhibition practice. In organizing such an exhibition, in dialogue with the artists, we as curators were forced to question how socially engaged artwork can be translated—physically, spatially, and spiritually—into the often stagnant, neutral space of a gallery. How do objects that are byproducts of an artistic process figure into the presentation of an ephemeral, relational project? To what degree does the archive of an artwork become the work itself? Featured in the exhibition are maps of Medellín and of a journey across the Americas, collages, on-the-road documentary footage punctuated by collective declarations made by community members of twenty-nine cities, video interviews with residents of Medellín, souvenirs, ephemera, and records including news articles, letters, and blog posts. These materials, some conceived as artworks, others selected to recreate an out-of-reach context, point to two projects that differ in scale, duration, and atmosphere. Larger structures have been restaged—the yellow fabric tent of a schoolhouse and an illuminated shelf displaying personal affects—to reflect the elastic characteristics of time and place, as a partial manifestation of the lived experiences that continue to comprise two socially engaged projects. Suzanne Lacy and Pilar Riaño-Alcalá's *Skin of Memory* and Pablo Helguera's *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, originally realized in 1999 and 2006 respectively, intersect conceptually within the exhibition *The Schoolhouse and the Bus: Mobility, Pedagogy, and Engagement*, having been informed by and produced within the broader geographic frame of the Americas, and specifically Medellín, Colombia.

From the beginning, both Helguera, Lacy, and Lacy's collaborator Riaño-Alcalá, questioned the efficacy of relying heavily on the display of objects to adequately capture and represent their respective works. Questions surrounding the limitations of conventional exhibition making are acutely raised in the context of socially engaged artistic practice, where the desire to show the work, and the experiential and relational nature of the artwork, are often in conflict with the means of translating the experience into a display. Indebted to the legacy of conceptual art, artists and curators are continuously compelled to attempt this process, whether it is for visibility, legacy, art world legitimacy, or a more engaged notion of pedagogy. As Lucy Lippard has noted, "Conceptualists indicated that the most exciting 'art' might still be buried in social energies not yet recognized as art."¹ Integral to any true avant-garde artistic gesture, these energies can contribute to an object being unrecognizable as art. The unknown

artwork—its unknowability—can sometimes signal its potential for radicality, still raising the age-old question, "but is it art?" Even if we feel certain that it is art (because we say so), it is always worth questioning the impulse driving us to display works of art, since these social energies can never be fully re-presented as they were originally realized. As challenging as it may be to grasp and resolve these endeavors as art, the opportunity to learn from ephemeral practices, particularly human exchange, has become increasingly urgent in times of political and social instability.

Leading up to *Skin of Memory* (1999), artist Suzanne Lacy was approached by Colombian anthropologist Pilar Riaño-Alcalá to collaborate with a team that included architect Vicky Rameriz, designer Raul Cabra, and local artisans, contributing to a process conceived to "find alternatives to violence and strengthen civil society," in Medellín's Barrio Antioquia, an area ravaged by increasing violence related to the drug trade. Riaño-Alcalá invited Lacy to work within the community based on the sustained engagement and success of her decade-long *The Oakland Projects* (1991–2001). Staged in eight parts, *The Oakland Projects* included *The Roof is On Fire* (1993–1994), which explored the tensions between youth and the police in Oakland, California, and *Expectations Summer Project* (1997), that examined the personal and political impacts of teen pregnancy. Lacy's multilayered approach to engaging local youth on issues concerning their wellbeing—health, education, safety, and public policy—interested Riaño-Alcalá, who, at the time, was organizing on the community level in Medellín in response to the needs of neighborhood youth, whose experiences were fraught with the trauma associated with localized violence. The parallels between youth cultures in Medellín and Oakland are based in what Lacy and Riaño describe as "unprocessed personal losses" and "consequent paralysis and violence."²

In 2003, artist Pablo Helguera began planning a four-month journey titled *The School of Panamerican Unrest* (2006), which would result in a road trip across the Americas. Beginning in Anchorage, Alaska, he concluded in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, having made twenty-nine stops across two continents. At each stop—in places like Mexico City, Bogotá, Vancouver, Calgary, Mérida, and San Salvador—Helguera set up a mobile schoolhouse, where he collaborated with local organizations and individuals in participatory workshops, that were a hybrid of performance art and experiential education. Featuring readings, performances, and lectures, they were shaped by the people involved at each location. Motivated by what he has described as a lack of communication between different countries within the Americas, Helguera's project offered an opportunity to draw connections between the vast diversity of cultural communities that make up the continent. In order to reveal the



1. Helguera, *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, Mérida, Yucatán, Mexico, 2006.
 potential relationships between these varied geographic locations. Helguera worked with local participants at each site on a community-specific basis to articulate the role and possibilities of art and culture to address the social, political, and economic issues of that moment in 2006.

The installation of Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá's *Skin of Memory* is anchored by the display of a collection of personal objects, that collectively function as a community memorial. Originally presented in a bus in Medellín, the "museo arqueológico del Barrio Antioquia" was a mobile commemorative exhibition that travelled to different parts of the Barrio, crossing contested boundaries rather than having residents risk the trip, in order to safely share the project with different communities. It displayed 500 items selected and offered by participants, including currency, figurines, identification cards, stuffed animals, toys, jewelry, household items, and the clothes of those killed in shootouts. Within *The Schoolhouse* and the *Bus*, the objects featured in the mobile museum have been reduced to a partial installation of ephemera retrieved from individuals in Medellín who contributed objects in 1999, flanked by video documentation of the project. Adding to the viewer's experience, Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá present maps, news articles, and a timeline in order to enrich our understanding of this conflicted period in Barrio Antioquia.

At the center of Helguera's installation of *The School of Panamerican Unrest* is a yellow schoolhouse. Inside, an hour-long documentary of Helguera's odyssey begins with him reflecting on then-recent events leading up to his project: September 11, the Iraq War. In the video, he posits, "I wanted to understand how the American ideals of peace, brotherhood, and unity had evolved to a project of global hegemony, and I felt, that we needed to look back at history at the time when the America described in the poetry of Walt Whitman and Jose Martí?" Like the personal affects that comprise Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá's project, Helguera's archival material is, at times, absorbed into his restorative, therapeutic effort. They are comprised of the 25,000 mile trip, which left him physically and emotionally drained. They are comprised of maps, scientific and mathematical diagrams, with captions excised from book pages.

It seems almost the same way with countries as with people.
We will be heroes together.
It involves a sense of inner time, an inward perspective.

These statements read like a postscript, musings and reflections on Helguera's rigorous itinerary. If we recognize that objects are limited in their capacity to re-present or capture

The effects of Helguera's *The School of Panamerican Unrest* are more difficult to trace, largely because of Helguera's *The School of Panamerican Unrest* are more difficult to trace, communities (and other localities where he stopped). Taking Helguera's 2008 presentation of documentation of the project's vast geographic scope, with twenty-nine official participating Lago in Mexico City, one of the project's most significant moments was not acknowledged in promotional materials, which aimed to connect artists from different countries in Latin America. Published in 2013, Claire Fox's book *Making Art Panamerican* was not acknowledged during the Cold War. Helguera was extensively interviewed by Fox, whose work illuminates the institutional dynamics that helped shape aesthetic movements following World War II. Another example of an outcome of Helguera's project was triggered by his stop in Mérida in the Yucatán, where he worked with La Escuela Superior de Artes. In writing about her experience with *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, then-director Mónica Castillo witnessed the realization amongst students of how rarely art criticism was practiced. This prompted one student, Debora Carneval, to organize critiques of art criticism in Mérida. In its Panamerican address, the city of Mérida, to organize critiques of art criticism in Mérida. In its Panamerican fit in order to reflect that the end is not to necessarily transgress, but rather to make art as we see

A shared ethos of both Helguera's *The School of Panamerican Unrest* and Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá's *Skin of Memory* is that each was conceived to engage participants in ways that maintain their agency, whether by making declarations that reflect on local conditions, or selecting objects for display that represent collective loss. From the distance of time and maps, documents clear that the relational nature of each artwork is supported by objects, production or presentation, as prompts for sustained engagement—whether it be in the form of art, the viewer must actively reflect upon the communication. As with any temporal artwork, simultaneously expanding its meaning, recognizing the impossibility of a time-based the crux of exhibiting being singularly understood as socially engaged art when the dialogical point of entry, but the installation is only fulfilled as socially engaged art when the dialogical point of entry, but relationally. The lesson learned might be a teachable moment in which objects are activated to be essential, yet they never tell the whole story.

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a project, to create an atmosphere, or impart the experience of being there, are there other ways of understanding the transformative potentials of a socially engaged artwork? One approach might be to reconstruct a scene and invite the public to experience a simulation. Another might be to restage a similar project in a new place, with information about the original artwork. Additionally, we can attempt to capture some of the ripple effects of said project, to assess what, if any, connections can be made in terms of the its subsequent impact and legacy. The problem with determining impact is that social practice as an art form is continually in flux, both materially and procedurally, and does not necessarily follow a scientific method of research and evaluation assessable by standardized criteria. As an art form, our understanding of the best practices in re-presenting any socially engaged artwork is contingent on its particular components, characteristics, and relationship to context. While it is important to make a distinction between the archival components and the artwork within the exhibition, art and the archives it produces (or the archives that produce the artwork) are always inextricably linked. To reframe the question in relation to context, does all of the content of the exhibition become artwork—albeit archive-based—by virtue of being shown in an art museum or gallery? There is a tension generated by the idea that an artwork's value—in terms of people, places, and even money—changes when it leaves the site of its production and enactment, and is brought into the gallery. Are the work's participants relegated to artistic material, or does a gallery setting elevate the status for all involved? Is its status as art retained beyond the gallery?

The answers to these questions are subjective, and will depend on whom you ask. Ultimately, it is the aftereffects, or legacies, of Helguera's and Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá's projects that reflect their value in the world as art or otherwise. Both projects clearly resonate with those who experienced them directly, as well as others who learned about them after the fact. In 2011, when the Medellín Biennial MDE11 invited Lacy and Riaño-Alcalá to show *Skin of Memory Revisited*, it became an opportunity to extend the project, reflecting on the decade that had passed since its initiation in 1999, and to understand where it had succeeded and failed. In the years that followed the first iteration of *Skin of Memory*, the Victims of Armed Conflict Care Program began laying the groundwork for Medellín's Museo Casa de la Memoria, which opened its doors to the public in 2012. Founded with support and input from many of the same collaborators involved in *Skin of Memory*, the Museum's mission is closely linked to the promotion of civil society and democratic engagement, with interactive educational installations that facilitate dialogue about Medellín's history of violence.



7. Helguera, The School of Panamerican Unrest, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, 2006.



8. Helguera, The School of Panamerican Unrest, Vancouver, 2006.



6. Helguera, The School of Panamerican Unrest, Mérida, Yucatán, 2006.



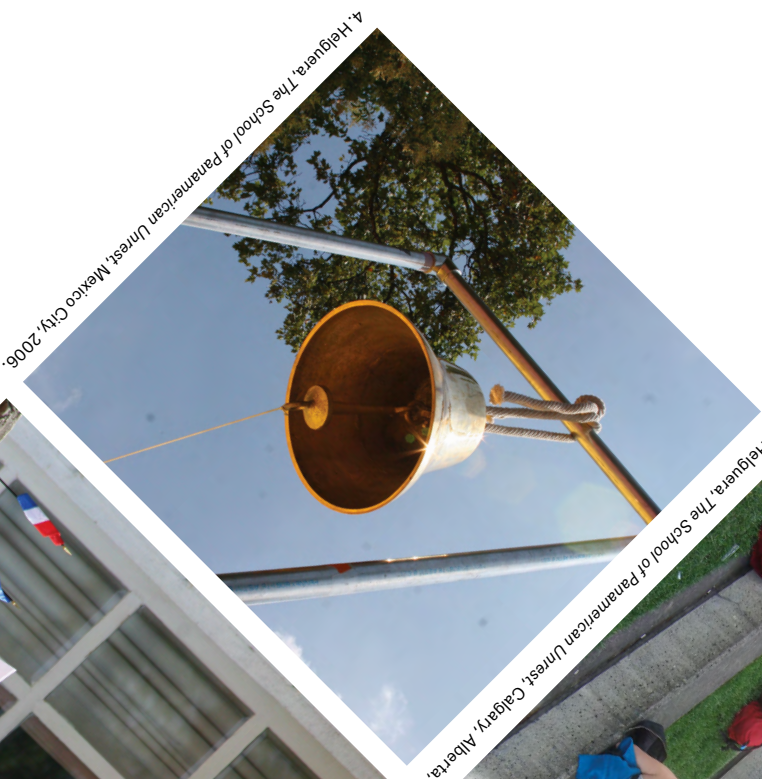
2. Helguera, The School of Panamerican Unrest, Calgary, Alberta, 2006.



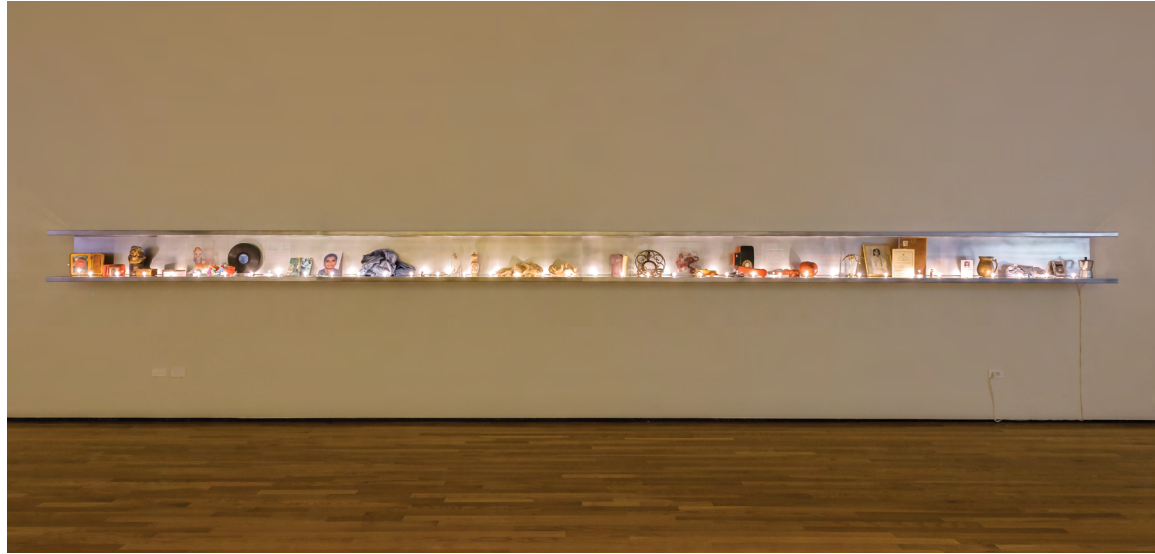
3. Helguera, The School of Panamerican Unrest, Asunción, Paraguay, 2006.



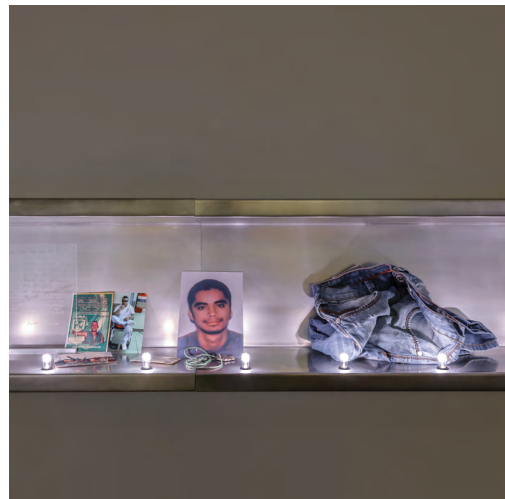
5. Helguera, The School of Panamerican Unrest, Mexico City, 2006.



4. Helguera, The School of Panamerican Unrest, Mexico City, 2006.



12. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, *Skin of Memory*, UC Santa Barbara, 2017.



14. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, *Skin of Memory*, UC Santa Barbara, 2017.



13. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, *Skin of Memory*, UC Santa Barbara, 2017.

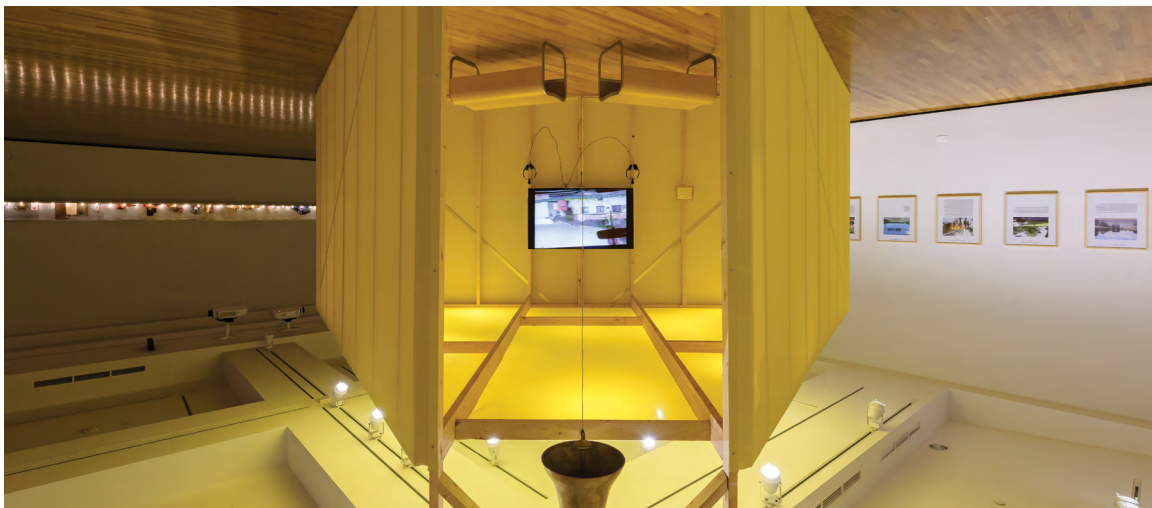


10. Helguera, *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, UC Santa Barbara, 2017.



11. Helguera, *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, UC Santa Barbara, 2017.

9. Helguera, *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, UC Santa Barbara, 2017.





15. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, Skin of Memory, 1999.



16. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, Skin of Memory, 1999.



17. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, Skin of Memory, 1999.



18. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, Skin of Memory, 1999.



19. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, Skin of Memory, 1999.



20. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, Skin of Memory, 1999.



21. Lacy/Riaño-Alcalá, Skin of Memory, 1999.

to “recreate”: I do completely relate to your comments about when you present it, when you go through the motions of recreating something you did 20 years ago: it feels more like theatre. Given this, I concluded that you can only create approximations of the experience. One of my attempts at addressing this was to create an anthology of *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, in which I invited people who were a part of it to give a firsthand account of what they saw. I was very disciplined in not wanting to influence the views of the contributors. Some were critical of the project and that was okay. Some of them had very different views than how I saw the experience, and that was okay. I imagine this is like the process of reconstructing a historical event, and no single interpretation becomes the final version, but we all know that the truth lies somewhere amidst the summation of these different perspectives.

Suzanne: Yes, I can't show everything about a multi-year project involving so many actors but our representation of the political issues inherent in our project doesn't yet feel complete. There's a responsibility to communicate clearly here, one that might be a bit different from other project translations. For instance, as we are presenting actual objects representing residents' memories of loss, if we then prominently posted photos of the owners talking about their memories of, for instance, trafficking, it would reinforce U.S. audiences' simplistic point to locations where our project employed its strategies, the objects would read differently. The second area I am concerned with representing is the relationality inherent over almost twenty years. This set of relationalities occurred within a timeframe within which many political events and personal experiences occurred among people who are still living and working there. I don't know how to talk about the intimacy of common cause that we have with each other, the 75 or 80 people and beyond, who came together as a result of a variety of efforts by NGOs, social scientists, activists and educators, some of whom later entered government. This project was a symbolic manifestation of a national effort to recuperate memory as a political force in the life of the country. The experience of operating within that context was so powerful for me and I feel the responsibility of communicating it without playing into U.S. prejudices.

Pablo: I think everything has deficiencies, and the best I can do is to see them together: photographs, documents, witness accounts, and video. That is closest I can get to narrating what happened. I think we just need to accept that these are ephemeral things and difficult to frame in a clean or final narrative.

least, I think of ways in which this sensorial/intellectual type of engagement might manage to slow down the viewer to make the experience more meaningful.

Suzanne: That goes to that issue of being adept at communicating ideas to different audiences. Art does provide something other than the visual and, particularly in social practice, we engage with ideas of coherence, political analysis, and the “shape” of engagement. What I like about *The School of Panamerican Unrest* is not how beautiful the display will be, though I know it will be, but the coherency of the idea. How does the body of an artist move from one tip of a continent to the next, organizing, formulating conversation, gathering people around it...there's an aesthetic in the idea and in the action itself.

Pablo: When I talk about enticing the public or engaging them, I don't necessarily mean that it has to be in an aesthetic way. I think it can also be a utilitarian type of engagement where you offer them something that is useful, that is interesting, that can play a familiar function. With the SPU project I proposed a set of types of interactions that were familiar. Participants would come to talks, workshops, and civic ceremonies where we'd read speeches. At times it took the form of the political ceremony, where we would sing anthems and then read speeches. The workshops were more literary and were something that people connected with in a very basic manner.

Suzanne: Pilar and I are struggling to capture the Medellín projects for a U.S. audience. The complexity of the interacting forces and themes of that project read very differently when displayed in Colombia. In the U.S. we often think of Colombia through the lens of narco-trafficking. Our project engaged with a political trajectory, anthropological research, community development, and a national process of memory recuperation and policy formation. How do we show the complexities of violences and U.S. interventions, the nuances of relationships that we formed and that still operate over time, and the way in which social scientists are deeply engaged with constructing a civil society, all of which has led to the current peace process?

I'd be curious, Pablo, what has the process of preparing this exhibition brought up for you, as an artist? 'Cause that's part of the reason you and I were interested in this exhibition, to crystallize these projects in forms of display.

Pablo: One challenge that this project has always presented for me is precisely how to fit it into an exhibition. I almost gave up the idea that I could authentically transmit, or communicate what this project was. I think it's an intractable problem, because I cannot bring people to the places and times of where this project happened. Perhaps I have a very idealistic idea of what it means

interest in context-based social issues for young artists, the real rewards of the art world are still via a system of visual art display linked to the market.

4

Today, communication with the art profession is largely through some form of exhibition, where we eagerly adopted portapak and photography, the technology of presentation has developed exponentially. Where we used to use high 8 film, you can now use 70 mm cameras. Presentation is much more important, which can be a dilemma for an art practice that comes out of ephemeral ideas.

As our exhibition has been framed by the curators as involving "mobility, pedagogy, and engagement," the idea of translation is critical; there is the art in communities, over news outlets of CalArts and entering a developing performance art scene. Since I was first in school, I wasn't true in the 70s or maybe I should say it wasn't true in my experience coming out of CalArts and entering a developing performance art scene. Since I was first in school

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Pablo: When teaching social practice, I have noticed that many students come to the field without an art background. They come from anthropology or psychology, etc. but they have no knowledge of art history nor have they made art objects. For them, all the art historical references from Duchamp to anyone else were very remote and unclear. They struggle with the visual manifestation of the things they do.

This made me value the type of traditional studio education I received, learning the basics of painting, printmaking, photography, etc. It is this proximity to making things that can be helpful

in creating sensorial experiences. In addition, because I have worked in museums for 25 years, I do think a lot about how things are presented to a public and how they might interact with them, sensorially and intellectually.

I am grateful for having been exposed to traditional ways of making and exhibiting art because they offer us a tool kit for shaping experience in other ways. And I see education as part of that tool kit of course, particularly in how one considers the type of audience that one may engage with and the ways in which an experience could be meaningful to them. Last but not least

a very delicate question that right now has become very important. Today we are witnesses of the "biennialist" syndrome—the tendency of parachuting artists into random cities and countries to make an artwork about that place, often with little engagement with the local condition of outsiders, and second, that this condition can be a strength when we are honest about it—meaning, when we don't pretend to be insiders.

3

It's the degree to which you can listen, learn, co-create an analysis, and make an empathic connection through the work that positions you as a student of others. In each project I begin with strong politics are at play, whether it's a man working with women, or a free person where government has been destructive. One has to be agile to work cross-culturally in circumstances

in the politics and violences in Colombia. I can nuance this a bit with my involvement as a white woman in racial conflicts and, in other countries, as a U.S. citizen in places where our government has been destructive. One has to be agile to work cross-culturally in circumstances in the politics and violences in Colombia.

Suzanne: I think you're right, but I can nuance this a bit with my involvement as a white woman in racial conflicts and, in other countries, as a U.S. citizen in places where our government has been destructive. One has to be agile to work cross-culturally in circumstances in the politics and violences in Colombia.

For the "we" that typifies all my work—in a rising neo-liberalism, brought me to Medellín, Colombia, an expanded classroom that results in a project.

It was really like a horizontal platform for collective learning, but I never imagined for youth as political signifiers in a rising neo-liberalism, brought me to Medellín, Colombia.

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Suzanne: That process we are describing is often missing in colleges. The only way you get to be a good social practice artist is if you're willing to put yourself in risky and powerless positions. Universities have a hard time producing risky experiences, but they are good at teaching representation skills suitable for museums and galleries. While there is a genuine

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PABLO HELGUERA & SUZANNE LACY ON SOCIAL PRACTICE: A CONVERSATION

The Schoolhouse and the Bus: Mobility, Pedagogy, and Engagement is the result of curatorial conversations about the role of art in society. The exhibition was co-organized by the Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation in New York City and the Art Design & Architecture Museum in Santa Barbara, two institutions focused on the belief that art and artists can transform individuals and communities. While these transformations are not always immediately visible, we believe artists have the potential to be catalysts for change, especially through dialogue that fosters mutual understanding. From our different vantage points on the east and west coasts, this exhibition reflects our desire to tease out the means and methods of utilizing art to affect change in unstable and challenging times.

Focusing on the work of two social practice artists was a natural result of our discourse, considering the field's emphasis on community engagement, with a goal of positive outcomes in relation to social and political concerns. The more we talked and listened, the more we understood *The Schoolhouse and the Bus* as an opportunity for broader audiences to experience the work of important artists in this genre. Suzanne Lacy and Pablo Helguera represent two generations of socially engaged artists who have also built their careers and work on pedagogical engagement. Excepted here, their transcribed exchange "Pablo Helguera and Suzanne Lacy on Social Practice: A Conversation," serves as a record of the artists' overlapping concerns and guiding principles. Over the phone, on June 30, 2017, they discussed how they approached their projects, the politics of making artwork as an outsider for a particular community, what it means to teach (and learn from) social practice, and the challenge of translating lived experience into an exhibition.

—Elyse A. Gonzales and Sara Reisman, co-curators

Suzanne: I think there is an incredibly varied set of practices that social practice artists draw upon, from community organizing to conflict resolution. As I tell my students, the ability to negotiate is a definer of success in this work.

I was invited by Pilar Riaño-Alcalá and several NGOs to support their ongoing work on building a civil society in Medellín. Pilar's book, *Dwellers of Memory*, discussed local applications of "memory work" in Barrio Antioquia where youth deaths were astronomically high. I was

invited to join the team because of the work I'd done in the 90s with Oakland teenagers. In Medellín were exploring how "the city educates." Now, many years later, Antioquia Province is "The State That Educates";

Pablo: When I made *The School of Panamerican Unrest*, I did not have a pre-established strategy. In fact, when I conceived it originally it was not meant to be a road trip: I thought it would be a series of encounters in different cities around the Americas. A lot of the project unfolded in real time. And a lot of the circumstances would have been impossible to predict until they actually happened. I had to use everything that I knew, at that point, about performance and education. At times I was an educator, an activist, therapist, journalist, and I was the screen onto which people projected their frustrations, interests or ideas. I had to contend with performing all these different roles and learning how to perform them successfully. I also learned the importance of improvisation, of thinking on your feet as new circumstances arose and evolved.

My role as artist played in a rather predictable manner until I crossed into Guatemala. After that point, the question of whether this project was art or not became gradually less important. This was really about coming to address and engage with local issues. And to be a successful listener and activator of conversations and debates that mattered in those places at the time. When we ask about what kind of expertise or practices we incorporate into our work, I see the artist rather as a composer—someone who does not play every single instrument but knows what those instruments can do, and how they can incorporate them successfully into the art discourse.

Suzanne: What's interesting is that you traced—with your body—a learning trajectory for or to supplant an actual expert, but to create gestures that help bring other disciplines into the social practice. When your project first came across my radar, I thought "this guy is positioning himself as a performer as well as a student and producer of other's learning experiences." You created an expanded classroom to trans-continually explore political, pedagogic and interpersonal experiences. You also put yourself through an educational process as an artist.

Pablo: This connects to another question about the artist as outsider, specifically what kind of license do you have to enter into a cultural community that is not your own? I think this is interesting because of the work I'd done in the 90s with Oakland teenagers. In Medellín were exploring how "the city educates." Now, many years later, Antioquia Province is "The State That Educates";

SKIN OF MEMORY



Image Credits

- Suzanne Lacy Cover.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Photo by Carlos Sanchez.
- Skin of Memory* title page, top left.** *Skin of Memory*, detail, 1999. Maps marking where the bus will appear. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- Skin of Memory* title page, top right.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Personal objects line the shelves of the bus. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- Skin of Memory* title page, bottom left.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Collaborators and residents meet about the project. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- Skin of Memory* title page, bottom right.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Children waiting to enter the bus. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- 12.** *Skin of Memory*, 2017. Fabricated shell holding objects from Medellín, Colombia, AD&A Museum, UC Santa Barbara. Photo by Tony Mastres.
- 13.** *Skin of Memory*, 2017. Installation view, AD&A Museum, UC Santa Barbara. Photo by Tony Mastres.
- 14.** *Skin of Memory*, 2017. Detail, AD&A Museum, UC Santa Barbara. Photo by Tony Mastres.

- 15.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Suzanne Lacy and Pilar Riaño-Alcalá, Photo courtesy Suzanne Lacy.
- 16.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Pilar Riaño-Alcalá walking down a street in Medellín. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- 17.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Maps mark where the bus will appear. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- 18.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Visitors on the bus. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- 19.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Residents celebrating after closing performance organized by Pilar Riaño-Alcalá in the center of Medellín. Photo by Pilar Riaño-Alcalá.
- 20.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Barrio Antioquia residents lining up to see the bus. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.
- 21.** *Skin of Memory*, 1999. Photos of youth who died in the conflicts. Photo by Suzanne Lacy.



The Schoolhouse and the Bus has been curated by Sara Reisman, Executive and Artistic Director, The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, and Elyse A. Gonzales, Assistant Director/Curator of Exhibition, AD&A Museum, UC Santa Barbara.

SUZANNE LACY & PILAR RIAÑO-ALCALÁ



Mobility, Pedagogy, and Engagement

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