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**WE WOULD STRIKE: DOCUMENTARY BEYOND REPRESENTATION
IN A POST-INDUSTRIAL SPANISH TOWN**

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ABSTRACT

WE WOULD STRIKE: DOCUMENTARY BEYOND REPRESENTATION IN A POST-INDUSTRIAL SPANISH TOWN

By
Arturo Delgado Pereira

Before a documentary film becomes representation -something *about reality*- it is an event that happens *in reality*. It is a creative and social process that intervenes in the place and historical time where it takes place. This dissertation builds from the artistic research I developed for the film project *Encierro*, a documentary reenactment of a mining strike in my hometown of Almadén (Ciudad Real) in 1984. Engaging reenactment practices and a speculative scenario as a mode of intervening in reality, *Encierro* proposes *what if* 11 people would lock underground for 11 days now when the mine of Almadén is closed for production, and we suffer the ruinous effects of the lack of restructuring plans? Apart from engaging our collective mining past -performing the form and duration of a previous workers' strike- *Encierro* proposes the underground as a living and symbolic space to foster a series of conversations, encounters, and social and political propositions to reimagine Almadén.

This dissertation explores the capacity of fieldwork, artistic methodologies, and documentary shooting to intervene in reality. It presents documentary fieldwork and shooting as spaces of *in-betweenness*, anchored in the field's reality and removed from it, as it happens with ritual, play, and carnival. Building from this liminality, and foregrounding process over representation, this artistic research aims to present documentary shooting as potential spaces for personal, social, and political

experimentation beyond documentation, representation, and signification. Ultimately, *Encierro* raises the question of whether the recreation of a strike can also be considered an iteration of a strike, even though in post-industrial Almadén there is no more mining, no more production to close, and this "strike" does not come from a labor action, but from artistic practice.

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In memoriam Prof. Jonathan Kahana (1966-2019), and Pablo Marjalizo (1940-2018)

INTRODUCTION.

THE *IN-BETWEENNESS* OF DOCUMENTARY SPACES

Introduction

After shooting *El Invierno de Pablo* -the first documentary feature I made in my hometown, Almadén (Southern Spain)- I felt so fulfilled with the meaningful relationships developed with the participants over the seven weeks process that making a good documentary film did not feel so important. Was I giving up as a filmmaker? Rather than the material filmed, what felt most meaningful were the relations established between us, the filmmakers, and the local participants during the filming process. The material in the hard drives was the evidence of those relationships: the memory album of a time lived together. Passing from hardly knowing the film participants to the intense moments shared through filmmaking did not seem to follow the usual course of “knowing somebody.” Filmmaking provided a time of intense sociability and creativity in which the participants’ lives mixed with the filmmakers’ sensibilities and the real world with documentary conventions. It was a time characterized by sociability, creativity, conviviality, imagination, fantasies, and reality.

My experience as a documentary filmmaker, which depends on the nature of the films that I make, makes me see the reality of documentary shooting as not being totally real and not totally fiction. My documentary films usually entail a dramaturgical

intervention in reality – a fictional intervention that remains close to the world of the characters - who will then play this slightly varied version of their lives. In the case of *El Invierno de Pablo*, this device consisted of a clear proposition to Pablo, the protagonist, a 70-year-old retired local miner: *what if* you try and stop smoking during the making of this film? *As if* it was the rule for a game, Pablo agreed with this proposition, and an exploration of his everyday life began.¹ In my experience as a filmmaker, the participants get used to these narrative fabrications and incorporate them as elements of their everyday lives. Rather than constraining, these directorial interventions can produce genuine, expressive, and truthful moments, especially when the narrative is close enough to the participants and there is an effort to meet “halfway” between the filmmakers’ ideas and the participants’ lives.

This dissertation builds from two fundamental axioms. The first axiom is that before a documentary film becomes a representation -something *about the world*- it is an event -something that happens *in the world*. In other words, before a documentary film becomes a product that can travel around the screens, it is a creative and social process rooted in the place and time where it happens. Foregrounding process over representation, my research aims to present documentary shooting as a potential place

¹ I have used this approach in other films. *Donkeyote* (Chico Pereira, 2017) is a documentary film made with my uncle Manolo, an eager wanderer, and his best friend, a donkey called “Gorrión.” It builds from the following scenario: Uncle, *what if* you and Gorrión would try to travel to the USA together to do a long walking route there? By trying to actualize that conditional question, *Donkeyote* explores the close relationship between Manolo and Gorrión and the difficulties of roaming freely in a world full of physical, social, and psychological borders. Moreover, *Donkeyote* becomes a way for me to resume the relationship with my uncle after many years of distance.

and time for personal, social, and political experimentation that go beyond documentation, representation, and signification.² The second axiom assumes that there is a reality at the base of a documentary, and there is a reality created as the documentary film processes develop in the field. This “reality within reality” is produced in and through the interactions between filmmakers, documentary subjects, film ideas and conventions, methods and approaches, technologies, affects, etc. It is a reality created during the documentary shooting, not prior to it. The “reality within reality” can be presented as the potential “alterations” that documentary shooting can provoke. It is related to the feelings and affects provoked by the performers due to the shooting process, including the interpersonal dynamics that filmmaking practices can establish in the field. It also relates to the particular access to places, people, memories, desires, etc., that documentary filmmaking practices often allow and the processes of personal, social, and political imagination that documentary shooting can embody. In short, as Rouch puts it, it is all the stuff that happens around the camera.³

The *in-betweenness* of documentary spaces

Performance theorist and theatre director Richard Schechner has theorized the notion of *in-betweenness* in performance situations, which can also apply to performers in a documentary film. Schechner argues that during a performance, a performer is

² Numerous examples of documentary films foreground processes and interventions in the real over representation, some of which I will discuss in this dissertation.

³ Jean Rouch in *La Pyramide Humaine* (Jean Rouch, 1961)

“‘not himself’ and yet ‘not not himself.’”⁴ In the theatre, a performer becomes the character as well as being the actor. Even when the character and the actor overlap significantly, as often in documentary filmmaking, the filming situation (camera, sound, action) introduces a mediation that separates, or shifts, the everyday life of the participants from the performing situation. Participants-performers in a documentary film might experience their life slightly differently, *as if* they saw themselves from the outside. There might be a degree of introspection, self-discovery, or emotional journey, fostered by this gap between life and performance. Performing in a film can be a place for potential transformation, which can be positive, negative, unexpected...

This transformation has been happening for centuries in other performative situations, such as theatre and ritual. And it also happens in documentary filmmaking. In *El Invierno de Pablo*, we met Pablo from the beginning as a grumpy old mercury miner. As we continued filming with him and revisited the important places of his life, it became apparent that Pablo had a deep wound related to the end of mining and the decay of the village, a trauma that he shared with many members of his generation. Whereas Pablo's words about the past often showed his armor, taking Pablo to actual places brought to the surface unresolved aspects of his life. Pablo trusted this journey, and filming some scenes took him to unexpected emotional states. In these moments, when the transformative aspect of performance triggers documentary shooting, nobody

⁴ Richard Schechner, *Between Theater and Anthropology* (University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc, 2011), 4.

knows where they stand.⁵ As the character's wound opens, an ethical scratch burns the skin of the filmmaker. For restoration, the process of representation has to fold upon the human interrelationships that sustain it.

The *in-betweenness* of filmmaking has also been theorized from the filmmaker's point of view. The French filmmaker and anthropologist Jean Rouch considered the camera a catalyst of a particular state of mind in the filmmaker. This insight led him to define his filmmaking as "cine-trance."⁶ Rouch's concept is greatly inspired by the Russian filmmaker Dziga Vertov's famous dictum, "I am the cine-eye, I am the mechanical eye, I am the machine that shows you the world as only a machine can see it."⁷ Reminiscent of Vertov's notion of the kino-eye, Rouch writes that, when filming, the filmmaker "is no longer himself, but a mechanical eye accompanied by an electronic ear. It is this strange state of transformation that takes place in the filmmaker that I have called, analogously to possession phenomena, "cine-trance."⁸

Moreover, Rouch defended the camera, not as a passive instrument for recording but as an active agent in the encounter between the film ethnographer and the film subject. Rouch developed his cinema as a series of interpersonal interventions, a notion that he called "shared anthropology." Similarly, Ukrainian-born, American experimental filmmaker Maya Deren considered her film camera "a natural part of the

⁵ See for instance Richard Schechner, "Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed," *The Kenyon Review, New Series* 3, no. 4 (1981): 83–113, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4335238>.

⁶ Jean Rouch, *Ciné-Ethnography*, ed. Steven Feld, Visible Evidence; v. 13 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁷ Rouch, 38.

⁸ Rouch, 39.

behavioral space," creating "a virtually unprecedented relationship for camera and event."⁹ Deren believed in the necessary physical involvement of the filmmaker in the action. Deren and Rouch were interested in filming rituals, but more importantly for this research, they were, together with Vertov, interested in the ritual of filmmaking. Here, ritual refers to the filmmakers' altered consciousness that Rouch identifies in his "cine-trance," to the relationship established between camera and event in Deren's choreographic approach, and to Vertov's triumphant notion of film technology as a liberating instrument of perception, inquiry, and movement.

I aim to extrapolate the *in-betweenness* of documentary filmmaking perceived from the point of view of the performer (Schechner) and the filmmaker (Vertov, Deren, and Rouch) to the "filming situation." By the filming situation, I refer to how documentary filmmaking can bring people together in a way that is not necessarily present in everyday life, even though closely related to it. The documentary filmmakers I have in mind create a situation, orchestrate a set of encounters, outline some rules, and design a particular time and space for interaction. They do so to generate new modes of interrelationships between people and the formation of temporary social configurations. These new relationships are bound to the duration and "rules" of the filmmakers' designs and interventions. In short, the *in-betweenness* of the filming situation is a space between representation and event.

⁹ Moira Sullivan, "Maya Deren's Ethnographic Representation of Ritual and Myth in Haiti," in *Maya Deren and the American Avant-Garde*, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 221.

Liminality, a term related to ritual theory, is a key concept to explain the notion of *in-betweenness*. Liminality is a term that comes from *limen*, which means threshold. A threshold is a place that both connects and separates places, or times. In ritual theory, liminality is the phase in which the situation or status of the participants is ambiguous. It is a state that contains both elements of the pre-liminal state, that is, the world as it is before entering the ritual, and also features elements that are being generated during it, and that might be more difficult to describe. In Scottish anthropologist Victor Turner's words, the liminal is "a no-man's-land betwixt-and-between the structural past and the structural future."¹⁰ This research will also engage Turner's theorization of liminality as experimentation and play with the cultural elements of society, with its combinations and re-combinations, defamiliarizations, dis-membering and re-membering in a way "that invites possible and fantasized, rather than experienced, combinations."¹¹ For Turner, the essence of liminality is "the analysis of culture into factors and their free or "ludic" recombination in any and every possible pattern, however weird."¹² In these processes, novelty can emerge "from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements."¹³

I will engage this liminal *in-betweenness* as a potential condition to define the spaces and times of documentary shooting, considering it a generative and formative

¹⁰ Victor W. Turner and Edward M. Bruner, eds., *The Anthropology of Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 41.

¹¹ Victor W. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play*, Performance Studies Series 1 (New York City: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), 27.

¹² Turner, 28.

¹³ Turner, 27.

quality of documentary praxis. Promoting collectivity, proposing alternatives to social and political formations, offering historical revisions, dealing with personal and collective traumas, or experimenting - not with what “it is”- but with what “it could be”, I want to look at documentary shooting for its capacity to become embodied practices of socio-cultural and political resistance for “working out, in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half play-acted form, a new mode of interrelationship between individuals;”¹⁴ and becoming instants of “pure potentiality when everything, as it were, trembles in the balance.”¹⁵

Social practice

Mehran Tamadon's *Iranien* (Mehran Tamadon, 2014) is an excellent example of documentary filmmaking that aims to create encounters between people in a manner that might not be observable in everyday life. In *Iranien*, Tamadon convinces four members of the Iranian religious authority to spend a weekend with him in his family's countryside house as part of an artistic and social experiment. In this house and during this time, the four mullahs and the atheist Tamadon discuss Iran's religious and social norms. They debate these norms during the two days, and different viewpoints are exposed. The discussions are intersected with moments of conviviality, in which all the participants -occasionally including the mullahs' wives and children- cook, eat, laugh, and share life's trivialities. *Iranien* represents an artistic gesture towards a different

¹⁴ M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, First Midland book edition. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), 123.

¹⁵ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 44.

mode of conviviality and ways of publicly performing your life in Iran. In Tamadon's countryside house and for a weekend, the film process gestures at and embodies a more dialogical and inclusive relationship between the regime and its opponents.

Lola Arias' *Teatro de Guerra* (Lola Arias, 2018) brings together Argentinian and British veterans of the Malvinas/Falklands War for the making of a documentary film. The film is composed of reenactments of war episodes based on the participants' testimonies and performed by them. The film also includes reenactments of some of the participants' traumatic events after the war. Moments of conversation between veterans from each side create a sense of togetherness, but there are also tensions. Arias speaks about the therapeutic role of the film process, based on remembering together and articulating those memories and traumas in performance.¹⁶ During the film, one realizes that, as war veterans, they have more in common than what made them enemies during the 1982 war.

Teatro de Guerra and *Iranien* share essential characteristics with art as social practice. In *Relational Aesthetics*, curator and art critic Nicolas Bourriaud studied the genealogy and characteristics of the socially engaged art of the 1980s and 1990s. Under the paradigm of socially engaged art, forms of sociability, such as meetings, encounters and events become artistic forms. For Bourriaud, the relational aspect of art is itself political. It is a manifested critique of a society that increasingly reduces our opportunities for human contact. Whereas in 1960, socially engaged art was a response

¹⁶ “‘Teatro de guerra’ - Interview mit Lola Arias,” ARTE, accessed December 8, 2022, <https://www.arte.tv/de/videos/081088-006-A/teatro-de-guerra-interview-mit-lola-arias/>.

to the commodification of art and a critique of capitalism, the 1980s and 1990s saw socially engaged art more focused on creating spaces of encounter in a society that, according to those artists', did not give enough platforms for meaningful human encounters.¹⁷

Bourriaud speaks about the artistic value of the gesture: a gesture towards new possibilities that new relational artistic forms provide. He theorizes the artwork "as a social interstice within which experiments and new "life possibilities" appear to be possible."¹⁸ Philosopher Jacques Rancière argues that "contemporary art is definitely developing a political project when it endeavors to move into the relational realm by turning it into an issue."¹⁹ For Rancière, in the past, "art was intended to prepare and announce a future world: today it is modeling possible universes."²⁰ Similarly, some documentary filmmakers such as Arias and Tamadon put in motion social and artistic processes that, moving beyond the realm of representation, aim to intervene in reality, becoming agents for interpersonal interventions and instances of social and political work mediated by filmmaking practices.

¹⁷ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Collection Documents Sur l'art (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002).

¹⁸ Bourriaud, 45.

¹⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible* (London: Continuum, 2004), 17.

²⁰ Rancière, 13.

Less serious than life

The concept of play can also help explain the *in-betweenness* of the filming situation. Developing the notion of play, sociologist and philosopher Roger Caillois finds six essential qualities of play activity: not obligatory, circumscribed within limits of time and space, uncertain, materially unproductive, governed by rules, and “accompanied by a special awareness of a second reality or of a free unreality,” what Caillois calls make-believe.²¹ As with play, these activities happen within our ordinary life, but they are also different from it. Like in Schechner’s performer (‘not himself’ and yet ‘not not himself’), the filming situation can create alternative realities that are both real and fictional.

In *Frame Analysis*, sociologist Erving Goffman explains how within the frame of play, social events can “take on a different relationship to normal life and normal responsibilities than the same or similar events would have as ‘untransformed reality’ outside the confines of the frame.”²² In other words, “within the play frame, all messages and signals are recognized as in a certain sense not true.”²³ For instance, the four mullahs in *Iranien* accepted the game that Tamadon proposed because the political debates were going to happen within the context of filmmaking. However, it took Tamadon two years to find mullahs willing to be part of the film, which shows that the experiment was still bound to the real Iran and its social and political norms. There

²¹ Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962), 9–10.

²² Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience / Erving Goffman*. (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1974), 157. See also Marvin Carlson, *Performance: A Critical Introduction* (London; Routledge, 1996), 25.

²³ Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 157.

were some real stakes in the game. In *Iranien*, the playground combines the desire of the filmmaker to create a shared space for convivial performances with all the participants' efforts to defend their ideological positions. Similarly, in *Teatro de Guerra*, bringing people together does not mean eliminating tensions; in fact, we can hear some participants' reservations towards each other and Arias' film project. Even though play seems 'less serious than life,' my research works with the hypothesis that play can access important aspects of reality, critically approach them, and even rework them.²⁴ The clearest example of the seriousness of play is that Iranian authorities confiscated Tamadon's passport, prevented him from leaving the country, and forbade him from returning to the country once he was allowed out of Iran. Playing has a limit.

Overall, these films highlight how documentary fieldwork and filming can turn into engagements with an alternative life by imagining a different way of relationships between individuals as well as other social configurations. In other words, they explore the *in-betweenness* of the life that "it is" and the life that "it could be," which relates some of these projects to utopian thinking and practice. These works also show how contemporary documentary filmmakers increasingly move in the space between the representation of reality and the creation of it, a space where transformation and danger are prone to happen.

²⁴ See for instance Gregory Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," in *The Game Design Reader: A Rules of Play Anthology*, ed. Katie Salen Tekinbaş and Eric Zimmerman (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006), 314–28. Eugen Fink, "Oasis of Happiness: Thoughts toward an Ontology of Play {1957}," in *Play as Symbol of the World* (Indiana University Press, 2016). Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*.

Situating documentary representation

In simple terms, representation in documentary is the rendering of reality into film. Broadly, documentary representation concerns the conventions, logics, norms, politics, and ethics of producing representations of the real world in a documentary film. For documentary theorist Bill Nichols, “the idea of representation itself is central to documentary,” and it is from which documentary builds its mechanisms, practices, and powers.²⁵ There is a fundamental difference between representation and reality, but where one ends and the other starts during a documentary shooting is far more difficult to discern. In addition, essential aspects happen around documentary productions that are not in the text and, therefore, difficult to approach from within representational theory. Stella Bruzzi, one of the most critical theorists of Nichols’ views, argues against the excessive and artificial categorization of documentaries into modes of representation. Bruzzi puts forward the idea that documentary is performative, proposing a model to understand documentary representation based on “a productive, dialectical relationship between the text, the reality it represents, and the spectator.”²⁶ For her, documentary films arise from the encounter between the film apparatus (filmmakers, recording material, dramaturgical conventions, etc.), documentary subjects, and spectators. Thus, authenticity in documentary could not be “pure authenticity” that aims to eliminate all the mediating aspects of documentary

²⁵ Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2001), 3.

²⁶ Stella Bruzzi, *New Documentary: A Critical Introduction* (Taylor and Francis, 2002), 7, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203133873>.

representation. It has to be “one that eschews the traditional adherence to observation or [to] a Bazinian notion of the transparency of film and replaces this with a multi-layered, performative exchange between subjects, filmmakers/ apparatus and spectators.”²⁷ Rather than modes of representation, we are in the far messier and entangled processes of negotiations between numerous sensibilities and agencies-including technological mediations- at the core of documentary filmmaking.

While representation builds from the acceptance of an outside reality -visible, observable, and representable- non-representational theories propose that representational practices create, to a degree, the reality that aims to represent. As documentary theorist Ilona Hongisto argues, “the paradigm of representation maintains reality as matter upon which a form of signification is positioned. It is not expressive in itself, but knowable through modalities of representation and signification.”²⁸ For Hongisto, what is at stake between representational and non-representational approaches is the proper notion of the real. For Hongisto, Grierson’s dictum “the creative treatment of actuality” implies that there is actuality and then there is a creative treatment of it, “a pre-existing world has been established.”²⁹ Contrary to this, Hongisto proposes the “aesthetics of the frame” to foreground documentary participation in the real. Hongisto’s aesthetics of the frame “bypasses the gap in representation by insisting on the emergent consistency of matter and the ways in which the frame taps into reality

²⁷ Bruzzi, 10.

²⁸ Ilona Hongisto, *Soul of the Documentary. Framing, Expression, Ethics*. (Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 16.

²⁹ Hongisto, 14.

as occurrent.”³⁰ Hongisto’s non-representational theory aims at reorienting documentary “from explicating what already is to facilitating the vibrant becoming of the real in its myriad manifestations.”³¹ That is, the different elements that go into the production of the documentary image (i.e., filmmakers, subjects, film technology, objects, locations, moments, filmed actions, etc.) are active agents in creating reality. In Bruzzi and Hongisto, there is an emphasis on the “here and now” of the encounter between filmmakers, film apparatus, subjects, and reality. Whereas representation needs the Cartesian distance between the subject (representer) and the object (represented), a distance that is both spatial and temporal, both in Bruzzi and Hongisto, we are closer to Heidegger’s notion of the *Dasein*, a concept that situates us “right-there”, “always already in the middle of things.”³²

³⁰ Hongisto, 16.

³¹ Hongisto, 17.

³² Barbara Bolt, *Art beyond Representation: The Performative Power of the Image* (London ; I.B. Tauris, 2004), 48. The differentiation between the representational distance and the messier spaces of documentary fieldwork relates to sociologist Michel de Certeau’s differentiation between “strategies” and “tactics.” De Certeau writes, “I call a “strategy” the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an “environment. ” A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (propre) and thus serve as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it (competitors, adversaries, “clienteles,” “targets,” or “objects” of research). Political, economic, and scientific rationality has been constructed on this strategic model. I call a “tactic,” on the other hand, a calculus which cannot count on a “proper” (a spatial or institutional localization), nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality. The place of a tactic belongs to the other. A tactic insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.” Defining the strategies as the “proper”, de Certeau continues, “the “proper” is a victory of space over time. On the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time—it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized “on the wing.” Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into

Mediated utopias

The use of media technology to catalyze social change and nurture processes of participation and conviviality resonates with the artistic research herein presented.³³ While at times understood as oppositional and counter-hegemonic practices against standardized network systems, community media's emphasis on participation, processes over outcomes, access to the means of media-making production, and democratic practices mediated by media engagements become an important framework to this dissertation.³⁴ I engage what media theorist Clemencia Rodríguez defines, referring to citizen's/community media, "performative media."³⁵ Rodríguez writes about Colombian areas subjected to the control of war/guerillas, with the subsequent debilitation of the social fabric and sense of community at different levels. In the

"opportunities." (xix) Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xix.

³³ Relevant examples for my study are the *Challenge for Change* program in Canada, *Video in the Villages* in Brazil, *The Karrabing Film Collective Project* in Australia, *Pasolini en Medellín* (PeM) and *Escuela Audiovisual Infantil de Belén de los Andaquíes* (EAIBA) in Colombia to name a few.

³⁴ For different approaches on community media practice and theory see for instance: Olga G. Bailey, *Understanding Alternative Media*, Issues in Cultural and Media Studies (Maidenhead: McGraw Hill/Open University Press, 2008). John Downing, *Radical Media: Rebellious Communication and Social Movements* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publications, 2001). Clemencia Rodríguez, *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens' Media*, The Hampton Press Communication Series (Cresskill, N.J: Hampton Press, 2001). Chris Atton, *Alternative Media* (London: SAGE, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446220153>. Tanja E. Bosh, "Theorizing Citizens' Media: A Rhizomatic Approach," in *Making Our Media: Global Initiatives toward a Democratic Public Sphere*, ed. Clemencia Rodríguez, Dorothy Kidd, and Laura Stein, Euricom Monographs (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2009). Ernesto Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, Second edition. (London: Verso, 2014).

³⁵ Clemencia Rodríguez, *Citizens' Media against Armed Conflict Disrupting Violence in Colombia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

context of war, Rodríguez sees the enactment of public, peaceful encounters fostered by community/citizen's media -and centered on creative and cultural activities- as "performing peace" rather than conveying a message about the necessity of peace. This view builds from J.L. Austin's concept of language as performative. For Austin, language can be constative -statements about reality- or performative, in which "the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action," that is, not "just saying something," but rather "doing something."³⁶ Thus, rather than perceiving communication and media as tools for sending out messages of peace, Rodríguez views performative citizen's media as enacting peace itself.³⁷ For instance, a young local citizen's media collective organized a film screening in the square of a Colombian village hit by war: they put up a simple white sheet, a DVD player, and a projector. People came out to the square to see the film, enacting community in a time when fear and terror were the predominant feelings across the village. Rodríguez sees these instances as performances of peace mediated by citizen's/community media, allowing people to have a live experience of nonviolence and interact with each other.³⁸ As she puts it, "imagined peace, embodied peace, are needed before it is possible to start working toward sustainable peaceful communities."³⁹

³⁶ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words.*, The William James Lectures 1955 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), 6–7. One of the most famous examples that Austin uses to explain the performative aspects of language is the "I do" uttered in a marriage ceremony. By saying "I do" in that context the action of getting married is brought into being, performed. Bets are also an example of performative utterances.

³⁷ Rodríguez, *Citizens' Media against Armed Conflict Disrupting Violence in Colombia*, 254.

³⁸ Rodríguez, 254.

³⁹ Rodríguez, 257.

The potential connections between artistic practice and social life are a prominent artistic preoccupation, particularly through the XX century, and documentary filmmakers have also been an active part of it.⁴⁰ Artistic movements such as Futurism, Dadaism, Surrealism, Situationist International, Fluxus, Happenings, participatory cinema, and more recently, the social turn in contemporary art are examples of artists' desires to intervene in reality through artistic praxis. Sometimes, these artistic manifestations aim to use art to create ruptures in the social fabric, exposing the conventional nature of social norms and behaviors through performative interventions that embody other ways of being in and relating to the world.⁴¹

In 1962, Edgar Morin, reflecting on *Chronique d'un été* (Jean Rouch/Edgar Morin, 1961) and exploring the possibilities of cinema-vérité wrote, "can't cinema be one of the means of breaking the membrane that isolates each of us from others in the metro, on the street, or on the stairway of the apartment building?"⁴² Morin proposed a "cinema of brotherhood" that will make film participants and the viewer "be less alien to his fellow man, less icy an inhuman, less encrusted in a false life."⁴³ Contemporary participatory art often tries to produce moments of encounter and conviviality between

⁴⁰ See for instance Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London ; Verso Books, 2012).

⁴¹ For instance, Fluxus artists propose certain actions, namely scores, in which the logic of our everyday life aims to be subverted: random actions, "nonsenses", non-productive activities, alternative engagements with people, beings, and objects, etc. They are performances of other *possible* ways of being and relating to the world. See for instance Natilee Harren, *Fluxus Forms: Scores, Multiples, and the Eternal Network* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020).

⁴² Edgar Morin, "Chronicle of a Film," in *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 463.

⁴³ Morin, 463.

people by setting up projects between the artistic and the social, aiming at creating (temporary) social bonds in our contemporary lives, whose spaces, politics, and rhythms do not always favor. Relating the history of Western Europe with artistic movements that embody "a utopian rethinking of art's relationship to the social and of its political potential," art historian and critic Claire Bishop identifies three moments in which the "social turn" in art relates to "political upheaval and movement for social change": the avant-garde around the 1917 Russian revolution, the "neo" avant-garde leading to May 1968 and, the revival of participatory art in the 1990s, with the fall of communism in 1989, moments where there is a "collapse of a collectivist vision of society."⁴⁴

Utopian thinking and practice are also important features of the present, as "the speculative turn" in art and research demonstrates. Featuring strongly in the world of design, the "speculative turn" is a shift from "designing for how the world is now to designing for how things could be."⁴⁵ Authors in this field ask, "how can speculation become a productive mode of thinking, feeling and knowing, and not just a practice of conjecturing and managing uncertainties?"⁴⁶ The idea of futurity itself is really at stake in reclaiming speculation as a productive way of thinking and experimenting with other possible worlds.

⁴⁴ Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, 3.

⁴⁵Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction, and Social Dreaming* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; The MIT Press, 2013), 69.

⁴⁶ Dunne and Raby, 11.

As Bishop identifies with other instances of utopian thinking and political unrest, this "speculative turn" also relates to the deep societal crisis, for instance, the current climate emergence and the feeling that a "no-future" is a probable outcome of our present. The idea of "the end of the world" has moved from the collective imagination – for instance, as seen in dystopian literature – to science, which predicts the human population's devastating effects on the planet. Simultaneously, the very same pressing feeling of no-future motivates some of the strongest activist movements in our world.⁴⁷ As the quote attributed to Fredric Jameson says, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.⁴⁸ This relates to the notion of the "impasse of the present," which describes "the sense of an immutable present, whereby knowledge of what has been, and anticipation of what is yet to come, remain connected through a kind of temporality "in which nothing essentially new could occur."⁴⁹ Rather than partaking in the problem-space of the "normal," speculative possibilities emerge out of what, from the standpoint of the impasse of the present seems, in all likelihood, to be impossible.⁵⁰

A speculative design, both within the world of design and within the world of documentary film praxis, aims to “be translated into material expressions, embodied in

⁴⁷ See for instance Extinction Rebellion and Climate Action Network (CAN)

⁴⁸ Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (New York: Verso, 2005), 199. This quote is also attributed to Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek.

⁴⁹ Alex Wilkie, Martin Savransky, and Marsha Rosengarten, eds., *Speculative Research: The Lure of Possible Futures*, Culture, Economy and the Social (Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 1.

⁵⁰ Wilkie, Savransky, and Rosengarten, 7.

material culture, becoming little bits of another world that function as synecdoche.”⁵¹ Intervening speculatively in reality has “the aim of shifting the intensities” so that a future may be felt, albeit fleetingly, in the present.⁵² To embody a different world, a degree of removal from our reality might be necessary. This imaginative (and challenging to achieve) distance could help us consider and, more importantly, experience other ways of living and relate to each other. The “reality within reality” generated in the spaces and times of documentary shooting can be opportunities to experiment with this degree of effective removal and distance from our reality, where alternative personal, social, and political imaginations get temporarily embodied. Or as Simon O’Sullivan states, “when the political scene offers no new models, art steps up.”⁵³

⁵¹ Dunne and Raby, *Speculative Everything*, 70. Even though written sixty years after, these thoughts closely connect with Jean Rouch’s question *what would happen if*, that he insistently proposed through his cinema. For Rouch, these speculative *what if* scenarios were attempts at fostering participation, collaboration, and overall embody through film experiments other ways of being in the world and relate to each other.

⁵² Wilkie, Savransky, and Rosengarten, *Speculative Research*, 12.

⁵³ Simon O’Sullivan, “Myth-Science and the Fictioning of Reality,” *Paragrana* 25, no. 2 (2016), 82, <https://doi.org/10.1515/para-2016-0030>.

Artistic research: *Encierro*

The structure of this dissertation centers around the fieldwork and shooting process of my documentary, *Encierro* (working title; in post-production). *Encierro* is based on a mining strike in my hometown Almadén (Ciudad Real, southern Spain), in the summer of 1984. On 30 July 1984, 11 mercury miners locked-down in the local mercury mines to protest against their precarious economic and social conditions. Six hundred fifty meters deep inside the oldest and most prolific mercury mines in the world's history, the miners endured the dark and contaminated galleries for 11 days and nights until their claims were addressed. As an emigrated local filmmaker, I returned to post-industrial Almadén in 2017 to make a documentary film about the mining strike. After considering different methodologies, the eventual premise takes the form of a *what if* reenacted scenario: *what if* 11 young locals will live underground, inside the now-closed mines, for 11 whole days to pay homage to the old miners and recreate the experience of 1984, 35 years later? Apart from engaging our collective mining past, performing the form and duration of a previous workers' strike, *Encierro* aims to propose the underground as a living and symbolic space to foster a series of conversations, encounters, and social and political propositions to reimagine Almadén, which rose from a mine shaft more than 2000 years ago, as 'something else besides' a mining town.

Two main methodologies mix in *Encierro*. On the one hand, *Encierro* can be presented as a loose reenactment that reproduces the form and duration of a past strike: 11 people confined inside the mine for 11 whole days. On the other hand, its speculative

character (i.e., the *what if* scenario) opens these 11 days to the unexpected, to new actions and directions that might emerge from the implementation of that *what if* into the current historical reality of the village. The intrinsic relation of reenactment with the past, together with the future-oriented nature of *what if* scenarios as ways of engaging creatively with alternatives and possibilities, are, in fact, representative and metaphorical of the current situation of Almadén, which tries to construct a future from the remains of the mining past, while deeply struggling with the negative consequences of the lack of structural plans after the end of mining. The double signaling to the past and present-future in the methodology becomes my approach to deal with the difficult temporality of Almadén and a tactic to challenge what I will call the overwhelming representational paradigm felt particularly in post-industrial heritage sites like Almadén in which the past, for good and bad, becomes "inescapable".

Even if approached nostalgically, the past in *Encierro* ultimately allows for the creation of reality in the present. In *Encierro*, practices of remembering become modalities of re-membering, of re-articulating something, once again, from the remains of the past. The passionate engagement of the village during the 11 days of this artistic intervention, and the way it fostered and ignited people's desires for a better future, transformed the past into a series of present affects, hopes, frustrations, and desires, re-activated and re-circulated through documentary film praxis. If the embers are the remains of a fire not fully extinguished, more than an act of re-membering, *Encierro* can be seen as a process of rem-ember-ing.

Reenactment as event

The notion of performative media, the actualization of conditional scenarios into embodied experiences, the reenactment of a past strike, and the engagement of my research with ritual theory make performance practice and theory run through the artistic and research methodology of this dissertation. Reenactment is "the performative repetition or re-creation of historical situation and events."⁵⁴ Film scholar and critic Ivone Margulies explains how in reenactments, "various substitutes -actors, relatives, lookalikes, and members from a similar class, area, or expertise -may be enlisted to reconstruct unavailable aspects of reality."⁵⁵ Reenactment is a common approach in cultural practices, as the proliferation of "living history" events and "heritage villages" demonstrate.⁵⁶ Even though any attempt at creating typologies is necessarily artificial and incomplete, some of the clearest contemporary uses of reenactment in artistic practices include its use as a way of interrogating and challenging the past (*The Battle*

⁵⁴ Inke Arns and Gabriele Horn, *History will repeat itself: Strategien des Reenactment in der zeitgenössischen (Medien-)Kunst und Performance = strategies of re-enactment in contemporary (media) art and performance* (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2007), 7. For a thorough survey of the renewed interest in reenactment practices in film and contemporary art, see Jonathan Kahana, "Introduction: What Now? Presenting Reenactment," *Framework* 50, no. 1/2 (2009): 46–60, <https://doi.org/10.1353/frm.0.0030>.

⁵⁵ Ivone Margulies, *In Person: Reenactment in Postwar and Contemporary Cinema* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190496821.001.0001>.

⁵⁶ See for instance Vanessa Agnew, "History's Affective Turn: Historical Reenactment and Its Work in the Present," *Rethinking History* 11, no. 3 (2007): 299–312, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520701353108>. For the use of battle reenactment in early documentary film see Kristen Whissel, "Placing the Spectator on the Scene of History: Modern Warfare and the Battle Reenactment at the Turn of the Century," in *The Documentary Film Reader: History, Theory, Criticism*, ed. Jonathan Kahana (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

of *Orgreave* (Mike Figgis/Jeremy Deller, 2001), *Culloden* (Peter Watkins, 1964), *The Thin Blue Line* (Errol Morris, 1988), *The Milgram Re-enactment* (Rock Dickinson, 2002), *The Third Memory* (Pierre Huyghe, 2000), *Far From Poland* (Jill Godmilow, 1984)); to explore the connections and resonances between past and present (*Port Huron Project* (Mark Tribe, 2008), *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (Peter Watkins, 2000), *Tito Amongst the Serbs for the Second Time*, (Želimir Žilnik, 1993), *Bisbee '17* (Robert Greene, 2017)); re-performing previous art works (*What Farocki Taught* (Jill Godmilow, 1998), *Shulie*, (Elisabeth Subrin, 1997), *Hamlet* (Elizabeth LeCompte, 2013), *Moby Dick* (Guy Ben Ner, 2000)); to renew community bonds and practices (for instance *Pour la Suite du Monde* (Pierre Perrault and Michel Brault, 1963)), engage traumatic past experiences (*Teatro de Guerra* (Lola Arias, 2018), *S-21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (Rithy Panh, 2003), *The Missing Picture* (Rithy Panh, 2014), *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, 2012) *The Arbor* (Clio Barnard, 2010)); denounce past crimes and abuses (*El Coraje del Pueblo* (Jorge Sanjinés, 1971, *Two Laws* (Carolyn Strachan and Alessandro Cavadini, 1982)), etc.⁵⁷ On the one hand, there is tension in reenactment practices between the possibilities of embodied practice and experience for understanding culture, society, and history. On the other hand, the notion of performance and theatricality often carries a burden of artificiality, fakeness, and inauthenticity.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ For a more detailed, informed, and insightful survey on the renewed interest in reenactment practices, see Kahana, “Introduction.”

⁵⁸ Vanessa Agnew, “What Is Reenactment?,” *Criticism (Detroit)* 46, no. 3 (2004): 327–39, <https://doi.org/10.1353/crt.2005.0001>.

There are reenactment practices that try to reproduce, as closely as possible, the events that occurred in the past. This is what Sylvie Jasen calls "reenactment of an event", which aims to replicate the past through the actions and gestures of the performers.⁵⁹ Other approaches emphasize the process of adaptation and appropriation over the exact reproduction of the past. Instead of hiding and reducing, they highlight and seek after the anachronisms, jolts, and "errors" between the past and its reenactment.⁶⁰ In any case, "reenactment troubles linear temporality by offering at least the suggestion of recurrence, or return, even if the practice is peppered with its own ongoing incompleteness."⁶¹ The way this artistic research understands and practices reenactment resonates with Sylvie Jasen's notion of "reenactment as event." For Jasen, understanding reenactment as event is "to acknowledge the production process as a formative experience, "one underscored by the ethically and politically charged relations of filmmaking."⁶² Jasen argues that "reenactment as event is less interested in replicating or even representing the past than in evoking its current traces and ongoing impact."⁶³ The past "is not so much represented as it is conjured in its current affects and resonances."⁶⁴

⁵⁹ Sylvie Jasen, "Reenactment as Event in Contemporary Cinema" (2013), 22.

⁶⁰ Sven Lütticken, ed., *Life, Once More: Forms of Reenactment in Contemporary Art* (Rotterdam: Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, 2005), 5.

⁶¹ Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Abingdon, Oxon ; Routledge, 2011), 30.

⁶² Sylvie Jasen, "Reenactment as Event in Contemporary Cinema" (2013), 1.

⁶³ Jasen, ii.

⁶⁴ Jasen, 22.

Focus on field-work

The focus of my dissertation is on the process of documentary shooting. By the shooting process, I am not only referring to those moments in which filmmakers record audiovisual material; I am also including the preparations, negotiations, and shared experiences that support and sustain it. In this dissertation, I will often use the general term of field-work to refer to the activities carried out in the field during the research, development, and preproduction of a film project, as well as the proper shooting. Unavoidably, the term field-work directs us to the concept of fieldwork, which is especially close to ethnographic praxis. Fieldwork is a phase within the research process focused on gathering, compiling, and producing data through activities carried out in the field. These methods also exist in documentary filmmaking. By using the term field-work I want to emphasize the notion of place/territory (i.e., field) where these activities happen. The researchers influence the field with their activities, and the reality of the field influences the research, so the term "field" needs to be understood as an active element in the reality being produced during documentary shooting, what ethnographer Quetzil E. Castañeda calls "emergent phenomenon."⁶⁵ By the hyphenated term field-work, I also want to emphasize the notion of "work." It is not because these activities could be work for those carrying them out, but rather because they can do cultural, social, and political "work" in the field, that is, can become world-making activities. I aim to explore how documentary shooting does "work" by engaging with

⁶⁵ Quetzil E. Castaneda, "The Invisible Theatre of Ethnography: Performative Principles of Fieldwork," *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (2006): 91, <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2006.0004>.

different artistic methodologies that documentary filmmakers implement in the real. For ethnographer Quetzil E. Castañeda, the overriding logic of representation needs to be "displaced" to fully acknowledge and explore the values of fieldwork. For him, "there is a value (ethical, moral, political, human, scientific) of ethnography that is the "right here, right now" of fieldwork."⁶⁶ Castañeda explains that this is not an appeal to eliminate the project of representation but to recognize two substantively different forms of value in these two distinct modes by which anthropologists, and I would add documentary filmmakers, interact and engage.⁶⁷

Scrapbooks of strikes: structure of the thesis

The notion of "scrapbook" is important to navigate the structure and style of this dissertation. My first contact with the 1984 mining strike in Almadén was through one of the striking miners, Pablo Marjalizo (1940-2018), the elderly male protagonist of *El Invierno de Pablo*. During the strike, Pablo turned a celebrity magazine into a scrapbook documenting his 11 days at 650 meters underground. This scrapbook offers a chronological journey from the beginning of the miners' lockdown to the day of the exit. It contains official communications between the workers and the mining company (MAYASA), press clips, and telegrams of support from other mining areas of Spain. It also contains less "official" and more affective elements such as carefully handwritten messages from miners supporting the strike from the surface, notes accompanying gifts

⁶⁶ Castaneda, 87.

⁶⁷ Castaneda, 87.

such as fruit, cakes, chairs, or tobacco that locals sent down to the miners, caricature drawings mocking the managers of the mine, etc. Coexisting with all this documentation of the 11 days underground, the reader can still see sections of the original magazine, with headlines and photos that refer to how national and international celebrities were spending the summer of 1984.

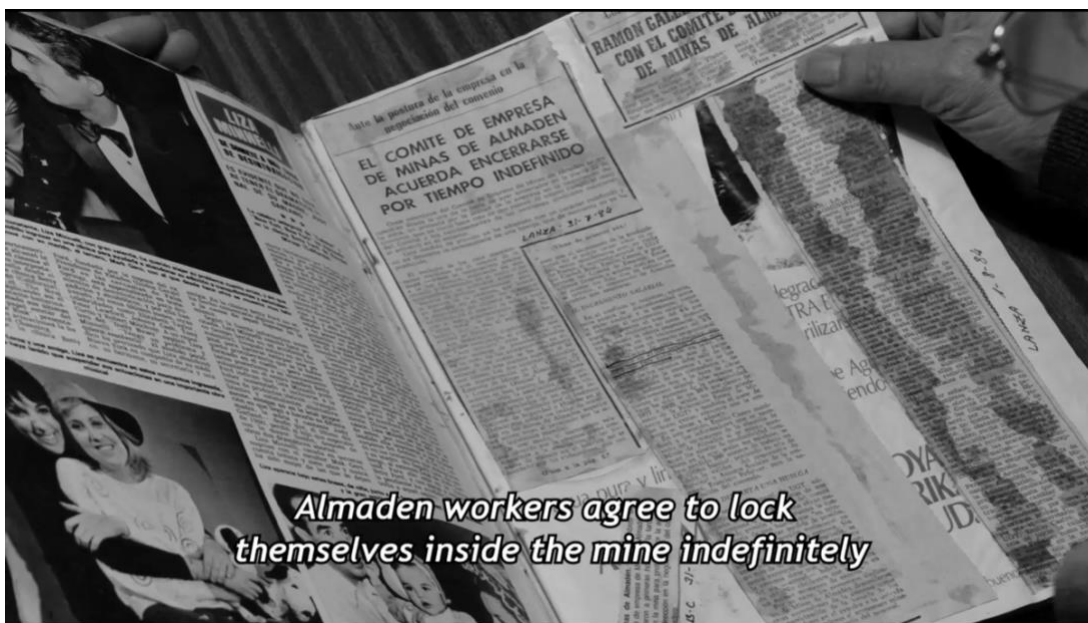


Fig 1. “Pablo Marjalizo’s scrapbook.” Press-clipping coexists with photos of Liza and Vicente Minnelli. From *El Invierno de Pablo* (Pereira, 2012) Photography: Julian Schwanitz.

The scrapbook is a personal archive that opens to a series of histories of collective struggle in the mining past. It is an archive of the disappearance of the mining world and its protagonists but also speaks loudly about unresolved social and political issues in the post-mining present. As a documentarian, I was filming in 2011 a miner’s own documentation of the strike of 1984. Years later, I returned to Pablo’s scrapbook

as an inspiration to devise a durational event that would recreate the 11 days underground on the same days that occurred, but 35 years later, in 2019. In other words, to reverse the archive that Pablo had created back into real action.

While Pablo's scrapbook documents the strike of 1984, this dissertation is a scrapbook of the artistic research project. This new "scrapbook of a reenacted strike" also contains diverse material in nature, form, and approach: description of different phases of the project, a combination of literary as well as academic writing, movie clips from the production *Encierro*, photos, messages, poems, etc. (video clips info) My engagement and understanding of the mining strike of 1984 also present some selections, assumptions, and even fantasies about what the strike might have been. Similar to the cut-outs from which Pablo constructed his scrapbook, my artistic project -and the resultant documentation in these pages- can also be seen as a continuous process of "cutting out" from the archive of the mining strike of 1984, and pasting into the post-mining reality of 2019 Almadén.

This artistic research embodies several movements that allow us to present it as a series of iterations from the 1984 strike. Firstly, *Encierro* takes the notion of the past strike as a symbol to reflect and act upon the present reality of Almadén. Like the strike of 1984, *Encierro* also embodies a movement from extraction to reclamation, from analysis to action. The structure of this whole dissertation is one of moving into deeper space over time. It moves from past to present, from the surface of Almadén to the depths of its mines, and from there, it starts irradiating back into the surface in wider

concentric circles: the village, local and national politicians, mass media, etc., as it happens in the mining strike that serves as the historical referent.

Chapter 1 explores the 1984 mining strike as the historical referent for Encierro. It covers the ideation of *Encierro*, firstly thought as a theatre play that would recreate the strike of 1984. This chapter engages with what I would call the overwhelming representational paradigm that turns everything into past. It gradually moves from what ethnographer Quetzil E. Castañeda describes as “thoughts at the back of the head” - those influenced by research questions and designs- to the reality “in front of your eyes” during fieldwork that call for methodological changes. (citation needed) The chapter engages nostalgia, representation, heritage culture, and extraction to describe the transformation of the artistic methodology from a reenactment of the past to present social action. Chapter 2 explores *what if* scenarios, using the conditional tense in documentary, play, duration, and embodiment to articulate how artistic methodologies become opportunities to tap into a realm of social, political, and convivial possibilities, embodying potential alternatives to reality “as it is.” This chapter proposes the notion of situated utopias to describe filmmakers’ attempts at engaging the world not only as it is but as it could be. Chapter 3 focuses on the shooting of Encierro, articulating how the reenactment of a past strike becomes an enactment and iteration of a new “strike.” Building from notions of mimesis, liminality, and the power of artistic practices to go beyond representation, the chapter presents different elements that this artistic research mobilizes as co-creators of the pro-filmic reality that it eventually documents. The conclusion of this dissertation ponders on further engagements with the liminal in-

betweenness of documentary spaces, considering play, ritual, and carnival as suitable cultural performances to extend our understanding of documentary fieldwork and shooting as activities both part of everyday life and removed from it.

CHAPTER 1.

PABLO'S SCRAPBOOK

Introduction

This chapter takes Pablo's scrapbook of the mining strike of 1984 as its central object of study. Through its pages and materiality, a story of strikes and decays, toxicity, nostalgia, ghosts, and a desire to overcome the representational paradigm of post-industrial heritage sites such as Almadén can be told. This chapter explores Pablo's scrapbook as an affective and historical object able to spark several temporalities ranging from the mining past, the precarious present, and the uncertain future. Firstly, I will provide a background to the times and motives prior to the strike of 1984. Secondly, I will engage with my representation of the strike via Pablo's scrapbook in *El Invierno de Pablo*. The nostalgic and ghostly approach to the past used in *El Invierno de Pablo*'s representation of the strike transforms into a contemporary haunting feeling, a feeling of "something must be done" when revisiting the scrapbook and the industrial ruins of the mine.⁶⁸ The engagement with Pablo's scrapbook is ultimately a way to articulate a passage from the archive of a strike to its re-performance in the present, which ultimately informs of my motivations in *Encierro*.

⁶⁸ For the notion of haunting as something-to-be-done, see Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, New University of Minnesota Press edition. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), xvi.



Los trabajadores decidieron ayer adoptar nuevas medidas de presión

DESDE HOY, PARO GENERAL DE UNA HORA AL DIA EN MINAS DE ALMADEN

Los trabajadores de Minas de Almadén adoptarán a partir de hoy nuevas medidas de presión a la empresa para que atienda sus reivindicaciones sobre el convenio, con la realización de un paro general de una hora al día. Mientras tanto, once miembros del Comité de Empresa siguen encerrados en la planta 23 de la mina y el resto de los representantes sindicales prosiguen el encierro en el exterior.

El secretario general de la Federación Estatal de Minero de UGT, José Antonio Saavedra, ofreció ayer en Ciudad Real una rueda de prensa en la que afirmó que los trabajadores de Minas de Almadén no descartan «ninguna acción sindical a cualquier nivel» —incluidas huelgas de hambre y marchas a Madrid— para lograr el reconocimiento de sus reivindicaciones, objetivo que, según dijo, se va a conseguir.

El Comité de Empresa y los integrantes de las secciones sindicales emitieron ayer por la tarde un comunicado dirigido a la dirección de Minas de Almadén en el que se (Pasa a la página 4)



Encierro en Minas de Almadén por el convenio colectivo

JULIO DE PABLOS, Ciudad Real
Once miembros del comité de empresa de las minas de Almadén han iniciado un encierro en la planta 23 de la mina, en protesta por la negociación del convenio colectivo, en el que la empresa pretende ampliar el número de jornadas de trabajo en el interior de ocho a 12, en la mina vieja, por considerar que el peligro de toxicidad ha disminuido.

El encierro tiene carácter indefinido. Al mismo tiempo se ha producido otro de apoyo al primero, en el exterior, que realizan el resto de los miembros del comité de empresa de Minas de Almadén y los representantes de las secciones sindicales presentes en la empresa. También se sumó el secretario general de la Federación de Minería de Unión General de Trabajadores, José Antonio Saavedra.

En una conferencia de prensa convocada por la Unión General de Trabajadores y Comisión Obreras, los trabajadores afirmaron que el aumento de las jornadas en la mina vieja puede ser el principio para implantar las 12 jornadas

en el resto de las explotaciones, lo que juzgan inviable, en vista del resultado de un reciente estudio realizado por el Instituto Nacional de Higiene y Seguridad en el Trabajo, en el que se afirma que el índice de toxicidad en las minas de Almadén es 20 veces superior al permitido por la legislación mundial.

Según la información dada en la conferencia de prensa, José Antonio Saavedra ha mantenido contactos con la dirección de la empresa Minas de Almadén. Ésta consideraría que la solución debería ser marcada por la Administración.

Las diferencias en la negociación del convenio colectivo, que se inició hace dos meses, incluyen también el aumento salarial.

Aunque los trabajadores no pretenden superar el 6,5% de subida, consideran que el 5,5% ofrecido por la empresa de las minas de Almadén no tiene en cuenta el aumento de productividad cifrado en 26,5% en el periodo 1977-83, según un estudio de la Unión General de Trabajadores.

DESDE HOY...

(Viene de primera pág.)

ofrecen un plazo de 24 horas para que se pronuncie sobre las peticiones de los trabajadores (anulación del incremento de las jornadas de trabajo en el interior de la mina de ocho a doce días al mes y aumento del 5,5 por ciento de subida salarial ofrecido por la empresa fundamentalmente) y anuncian la convocatoria de un paro general de una hora al día —de once a doce de la mañana—, entre otras medidas de presión.

El comunicado señala que "Transcurrido el plazo marcado por la representación laboral a la dirección de la empresa para una posible solución del conflicto planteado, este Comité acuerda, ante la actitud insonante de la empresa, que consideramos lesiona en este caso los derechos humanos, teniendo en cuenta que once compañeros se encuentran recluidos a 600 metros de profundidad y con contaminaciones ambientales veinte veces superiores a las permitidas, que...

1—Seguiremos con la reclusión de nuestros compañeros en el exterior e interior de la mina.

2—Conceder un plazo de 24 horas para que la dirección se pronuncie en un sentido u otro.

3—Comenzar con unas nuevas medidas de presión en apoyo de nuestras reivindicaciones, que básicamente son las siguientes:

a) paro general en todos los centros de trabajo de la cuenca de una hora al día, de once a doce de la mañana.

b) supresión total de horas extraordinarias y rendimientos, sujetándose el personal a los mínimos establecidos.

Este comunicado se acuerda en el interior de la mina, planta 23, el uno de agosto de 1984.

Las concentraciones de los trabajadores en las inmediaciones de los locales exteriores donde se encuentra encerrado el Comité de Empresa continuaron produciéndose durante todo el día de ayer, en el que, sobre las tres de la tarde,



En un precioso patio cubierto por una vidia, que terminó con la clásica comida que ven...



tuvo lugar también un contacto informal entre representantes sindicales y el jefe de Personal y Asuntos Sociales de Minas de Almadén, Francisco Peñalver. En ese encuentro se volvió a poner de manifiesto por parte de la empresa que la última oferta presentada (incremento voluntario de la jornada laboral en el interior y subida salarial del 5,5 por ciento con reparto proporcional a todos los salarios, aumentados éstos en 27.000 pesetas lineales) sigue manteniéndose, al igual que los trabajadores insisten en sus reivindicaciones.

JOSE ANTONIO SAAVEDRA "VAMOS A LOGRAR NUESTROS OBJETIVOS"

Estamos convencidos de que vamos a lograr los objetivos que nos hemos propuesto, es decir, la plataforma de los trabajadores", afirmó ayer ante los medios informativos el secretario general de la Federación estatal de Mineros de UGT, José Antonio Saavedra, que acusó a la dirección de la empresa de no tener voluntad negociadora, de "irresponsabilidad" y de "una falta total de seriedad" e, incluso, de "una falta de humanismo, porque cuando pedimos un incremento de los salarios no podemos olvidar que estamos hablando de salarios tercermundistas, de 36.000 y 40.000 pesetas."

Saavedra, que puso de relieve el apoyo de la Confederación de UGT a la postura de la Federación estatal de Mineros sobre el conflicto de Almadén, afirmó también que "no descartamos ninguna acción sindical a cualquier nivel: huelgas de hambre, marchas a Madrid", que se irán adoptando en función de si la empresa "sigue manteniendo su cerrazón", y subrayó que UGT continuará manteniendo contactos con la Administración central para que las reivindicaciones de los trabajadores sean atendidas por la empresa.

Crítico, por otra parte, el "pelotero" que se ha establecido entre la Administración y la dirección de Minas de Almadén en el sentido de que "la primera afirma que la empresa debe autonomía y ésta espera que resuelva la Administración. Nosotros no estamos dispuestos a entrar en ese juego", dijo Saavedra, que, en respuesta a una pregunta de este periódico sobre si podrían producirse dimisiones en el caso de que la Administración diera instrucciones a la dirección de Minas de Almadén en favor de las reivindicaciones de los trabajadores, declaró: "Los objetivos que hay encima de la mesa son estrictamente sindicales y, desde esa perspectiva, UGT ni pone ningún dictamen, ni les mandamos marchar. Yo creo que cuando una persona está convencida hasta la saciedad de que es un inútil, o de que son unos inútiles, unos ineficaces y que intentan de una manera sibilina, tapando incluso, datos de la propia Administración, jugar con la salud de los trabajadores, lo mejor que tienen que hacer es volver al puesto del que vinieron".

EL PAIS 2-8-84



• Almadén: Los once miembros del Comité de empresa de Minas de Almadén y Arrayanes comenzaron ayer su segundo día de encierro en la planta veintitrés de la mina y otros once miembros permanecen encerrados en la sede del Comité de empresa. Sus reivindicaciones son que la empresa negociara el convenio colectivo, actualmente en negociación, el aumento de jornadas de trabajo en el interior de la mina. Si la empresa persiste en su intento, posiblemente convoquen una huelga.



Los mineros consideran inaceptable el ampliar las jornadas de trabajo en el interior

Encierro de los trabajadores de Minas de Almadén

CIUDAD REAL Pedro Peral
Un conflicto laboral, de duración ilimitada por el momento, se ha iniciado en la sociedad estatal Minas de Almadén al encerrarse once miembros del comité de empresa en la planta 23 del pozo "San Teodoro", mientras el resto del comité y los representantes de los sindicatos se reúnen en el exterior pero recluidos en otras dependencias. El encierro en el interior de la mina, en condiciones precarias de habitabilidad, se considera como una medida de presión testimonial ante la postura de la empresa, que insiste en incluir en el convenio que se negocia la ampliación del número de jornadas de trabajo en el interior, de ocho a doce días al mes, argumentando que en la mina vieja ha bajado la ley del mercurio, por lo que el peligro de toxicidad se ha reducido. Los trabajadores consideran inaceptable esa ampliación, al considerar que es un pretexto para implantar el mismo número de horas laborales en el resto de las prospecciones, en algunas de las cuales se ha descubierto mineral con una riqueza superior al 33 por 100. En este caso concreto, las dos centrales sindicales, UGT y Comisiones Obreras, están de acuerdo sobre

El incremento laboral

Entre otros problemas, se apunta también como motivo de discrepancia el incremento salarial para los obreros. Sin querer rebasar el tope del 6,5 por 100, no están dispuestos, sin embargo, a asumir la oferta empresarial, que se concreta en un incremento del 5,51 con un reparto proporcional a los salarios de cada trabajador aumentados en 27.000 pesetas de un modo lineal. Los trabajadores entienden que el incremento de las retribuciones debe salir de los beneficios empresariales y no de las retribuciones de sus compañeros. Estiman que a la hora de cifrar el incremento salarial debe tenerse en cuenta el aumento de la productividad, que en 1983 ha sido superior en un 26,5 por 100 al año 1977. Por su parte, los portavoces sindicales de Minas de Almadén denunciaron otras pretensiones de la empresa, como la participación de la jornada de los trabajadores en el exterior y la retirada de las subvenciones al economato minero y para el Vestuario del personal.

Entrevista exclusiva MANUEL TERÁN

Director del colegio del príncipe Felipe, nos habla de sus estudios en Canadá

"Al príncipe le apetece cambiar, pero también le ha dado tristeza dejar este colegio"

"Sus compañeros le organizaron una comida y le regalaron una bandeja de plata con sus firmas y un álbum de fotos de los últimos años"

"Sus asignaturas más fuertes serán el francés y la lengua inglesa. Además, estudiará Física, Química y Matemáticas"

Ante, el álbum que le han regalado fotos de excursiones y fiestas de los Manuel Terán, director del colegio

¿Qué le apetece? El grado de selectividad. Los Reyes lo pensaron, y decidieron seguir adelante. —Entonces, ¿cuál va a ser el proceso? ¿Qué ocurrirá con la selectividad? —El grado trece que el príncipe va a cursar en el Canadá es un grado honorífico, que no tienen todos los colegios, y que tiene un gran valor para el ingreso en las Universidades americanas. El grado trece es automáticamente convalidable con el COU. Luego hará una prueba selectiva para Universidades americanas, el SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test). Y a la vez seguirá matriculado en el COU en este

colegio, para poderse presentar a la selectividad española.

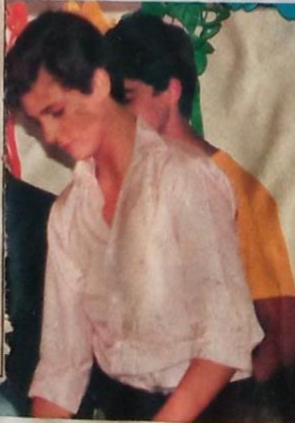
SU OPINION HA SIDO ESCUCHADA

—¿Cuál ha sido su participación en la elaboración de este proyecto, de este plan?

—Yo creo que ninguna. Como director del colegio, me comunicaron su programa, yo expuse mis razones, me escucharon, me explicaron que se iría porque el año próximo ya será mayor de edad y no podría hacerlo. Y una vez tomada la decisión, los Reyes me pidieron que fuera a Canadá a visitar el colegio, a estudiar los programas, a colaborar con el informe que se les ha presentado.

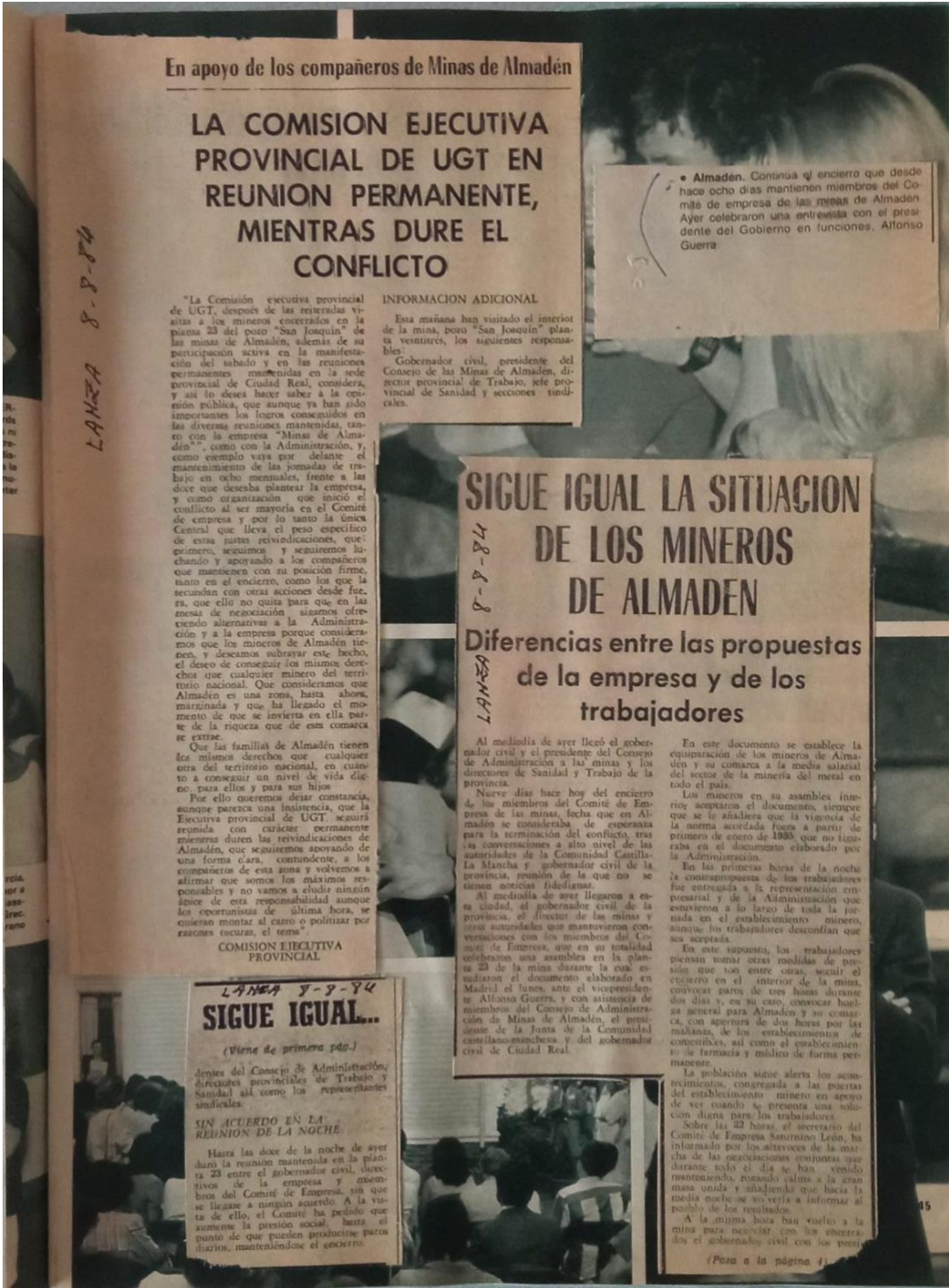
del colegio en que tuvo lugar el almuerzo de despedida de la foto aparece el señor Terán, director Santa María de los Rosales

El príncipe de Asturias, un alumno más, durante



-YA- 1-8-84

Fig 3. Pablo's scrapbook. Press cut outs (II)



En apoyo de los compañeros de Minas de Almadén

LA COMISION EJECUTIVA PROVINCIAL DE UGT EN REUNION PERMANENTE, MIENTRAS DURE EL CONFLICTO

LANZA 8-8-84

La Comisión ejecutiva provincial de UGT, después de las reiteradas visitas a los mineros encerrados en la planta 23 del puzo "San Joaquín" de las minas de Almadén, además de su participación activa en la manifestación del sábado y en las reuniones permanentes mantenidas en la sede provincial de Ciudad Real, considera, y así lo desea hacer saber a la opinión pública, que aunque ya han sido importantes los logros conseguidos en las diversas reuniones mantenidas, tanto con la empresa "Minas de Almadén", como con la Administración, y como ejemplo vaya por delante el mantenimiento de las jornadas de trabajo en ocho mensuales, frente a las doce que deseaba plantear la empresa, y como organización que inició el conflicto al ser mayoría en el Comité de empresa y por lo tanto la única Central que lleva el peso específico de estas justas reivindicaciones, queremos, seguros y seguros luchando y apoyando a los compañeros que mantienen con su posición firme, tanto en el encierro, como los que la secundan con otras acciones desde fuera, que ello no quita para que en las mesas de negociación, sigamos ofreciendo alternativas a la Administración y a la empresa porque consideramos que los mineros de Almadén tienen, y deseamos subrayar este hecho, el deseo de conseguir los mismos derechos que cualquier minero del territorio nacional. Que consideramos que Almadén es una zona, hasta ahora, marginada y que ha llegado el momento de que se invierta en ella parte de la riqueza que de esta comarca se extrae.

Que las familias de Almadén tienen los mismos derechos que cualquier otra del territorio nacional, en cuanto a conseguir un nivel de vida digno para ellos y para sus hijos. Por ello queremos dejar constancia, aunque parezca una insistencia, que la Ejecutiva provincial de UGT, seguirá reunida con carácter permanente mientras duren las reivindicaciones de Almadén, que seguiremos apoyando de una forma clara, contundente, a los compañeros de esta zona y volveremos a afirmar que somos los máximos responsables y no vamos a eludir ningún ápice de esta responsabilidad aunque los oportunistas de última hora, se quisieran montar al carro o politizar por razones oscuras, el tema.

COMISION EJECUTIVA PROVINCIAL

INFORMACION ADICIONAL

Esta mañana han visitado el interior de la mina, puzo "San Joaquín" planta veintitrés, los siguientes responsables: Gobernador civil, presidente del Consejo de las Minas de Almadén, director provincial de Trabajo, jefe provincial de Sanidad y secciones sindicales.

Almadén. Continúa el encierro que desde hace ocho días mantienen miembros del Comité de empresa de las minas de Almadén. Ayer celebraron una entrevista con el presidente del Gobierno en funciones, Alfonso Guerra.

SIGUE IGUAL LA SITUACION DE LOS MINEROS DE ALMADEN

Diferencias entre las propuestas de la empresa y de los trabajadores

Al mediodía de ayer llegó el gobernador civil y el presidente del Consejo de Administración a las minas y los directores de Sanidad y Trabajo de la provincia. Nueve días hace hoy del encierro de los miembros del Comité de Empresa de las minas, fecha que en Almadén se consideraba de esperanza para la terminación del conflicto tras su conversión a alto nivel de las autoridades de la Comunidad Castilla-La Mancha y gobernador civil de la provincia, reunión de la que no se tienen noticias fehacientes. Al mediodía de ayer llegaron a esta ciudad, el gobernador civil de la provincia, el director de las minas y otras autoridades que mantuvieron conversaciones con los miembros del Comité de Empresa, que en su totalidad celebraron una asamblea en la planta 23 de la mina durante la cual estudiaron el documento elaborado en Madrid el lunes ante el vicepresidente Alfonso Guerra, y con asistencia de miembros del Consejo de Administración de Minas de Almadén, el presidente de la Junta de la Comunidad castilla-lancharra y del gobernador civil de Ciudad Real.

En este documento se establece la equiparación de los mineros de Almadén y su comarca a la media salarial del sector de la minería del metal en todo el país. Los mineros en su asamblea interior aceptaron el documento, siempre que se le añadiera que la vigencia de la norma acordada fuera a partir de primero de enero de 1985 que no figuraba en el documento elaborado por la Administración. En las primeras horas de la noche la contrapropuesta de los trabajadores fue entregada a la representación empresarial y de la Administración que estuvieron a lo largo de toda la jornada en el establecimiento minero, aunque los trabajadores desconfían que sea aceptada. En este supuesto, los trabajadores piden tomar otras medidas de presión que son entre otras, seguir el encierro en el interior de la mina, convocar paros de tres horas durante dos días y, en su caso, convocar huelga general para Almadén y su comarca, con apertura de dos horas por las mañanas, de los establecimientos de comarcas, así como el establecimiento de farmacia y médico de forma permanente. La población sigue alerta los acontecimientos, congregada a las puertas del establecimiento minero en espera de ver cuando se presenta una solución digna para los trabajadores. Sobre las 22 horas, el secretario del Comité de Empresa Saturnino León, ha informado por los altavoces de la marcha de las negociaciones, cuentas que durante todo el día se han venido manteniendo, rogando calma a la gran masa unida y añadiendo que hacia la media noche se volvería a informar al pueblo de los resultados. A la misma hora han vuelto a la mina para negociar con los encerrados el gobernador civil con los puestos.

(Pasa a la página 4)

SIGUE IGUAL...

(Viene de primera página)

Jefes del Consejo de Administración, directores provinciales de Trabajo y Sanidad así como los representantes sindicales.

SIN ACUERDO EN LA REUNION DE LA NOCHE

Hasta las doce de la noche de ayer duró la reunión mantenida en la planta 23 entre el gobernador civil, directivos de la empresa y miembros del Comité de Empresa, sin que se llegase a ningún acuerdo. A la vista de ello, el Comité ha pedido que aumente la presión social, hasta el punto de que puedan producirse paros diarios, manteniéndose el encierro.

Fig 4. Pablo's scrapbook. Press cut-outs (III)

Strikes and decays

By the summer of 1984, the mercury miners of Almadén had long been fighting to be equated with other miners from the Spanish metal sector. Not being part of that collective bargain affected their salaries, which were lower than those of other mining basins, and their retirement conditions. Discontent around the most profitable mercury mines in history had been growing. Within one of the mining unions, the idea of carrying out a lockdown in the mine began to hatch. This idea would not be new. In 1979, Almadén miners organized a lockdown protest in which a whole relay, about 70 workers, decided to stay underground.⁶⁹ Locals massively supported the strike, but there was a lack of organization, misinformation, and even accusations of treason from the workers toward their representatives. Keeping more than 70 people in the mine was extremely difficult regarding food, hygiene, and spirit. Some had to give up. To this day, it is difficult to know with certainty the improvements achieved in the 1979 strike.

In 1984, the experience of 1979 served as an example for trade union members planning a new strike. They thought the lockdown would have to be organized differently this time. After the logistical disaster of 1979, they considered a different option. As part of their duties, 11 members of the committee for occupational health and safety had to regularly go down to the galleries to do various work inspections. On the 30th of July of 1984, these 11 miners, also trade union members, went down the

⁶⁹ The lockdown strike of 1979 happened between 4th-11th July 1979. For more information Redacción EFEverde, “Conflictos laborales en las minas de Almadén,” EFEverde, September 4, 2017, <https://efeverde.com/conflictos-laborales-minas-almaden/>. (Last accessed Dec 2022)

galleries to carry out one of those routine checks, or so it seemed. Once inside the galleries, they went straight to the workshops of the 23rd floor, 650 meters underground, a spacious tiled room that the miners knew as the driest place inside the mine. From there, they hand-wrote and signed a document directed to the company in which they communicated their firm decision to remain locked down indefinitely until the company agreed on a salary rise that equated the miners of Almadén with the collective bargain for the Spanish metal sector.⁷⁰ From that moment until the company and the State finally addressed the miners' claims, these 11 men spent 11 full days underground, which equals 11 interminable nights inside the hole.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Almaden miners worked eight shifts/month inside the mine, fewer shifts per month than in other metallic mine basins. It was due to the high toxicity of mercury. The smaller number of shifts was one of the reasons why the miners of Almadén were not included in the collective bargain for the Spanish metal sector. During the negotiations of 1984, the company offered a pay rise if the miners agreed to do 12 shifts a month instead of 8, which the miners firmly opposed. In one of the sentences transcending from those days, a miner responded: if we agree to 12 shifts, Almadén will have to enlarge its cemetery to bury us all.

⁷¹ Mining strikes and miners' mobilizations have been a recurrent theme in documentary filmmaking. See for instance *Misère au Borinage* (Joris Ivens, Henri Storck, 1933), *El Coraje del Pueblo* (Jorge Sanjinés, 1971), *Harlan County, USA* (Barbara Kopple, 1976), *The Battle of Orgreave* (Mike Figgis/Jeremy Deller, 2001), *An Injury to One* (Travis Wilkerson, 2002), *Dal Proffondo* (Valentina Pedicini, 2013) *Remine: El Último Movimiento Obrero* (Marcos M. Merino, 2014), *Putá Mina* (Colectivo Puta Mina, 2018), *El Trabajo o a Quien le Pertenece el Mundo* (Elisa Cepedal, 2019) to name a few.



Fig 5. Miners go out of the shaft to conclude the lockdown of 1979. In the center, the local priest Isidoro Castellanos greets one of the striking miners.



Fig 6. Striking miners on the 23rd floor of Minas de Almadén during the 1984 lockdown. From left to right: Rafael Campos, Pablo Marjalizo and Emilio G. Bonilla. Source: UGT newspaper (1984)

During the 1990s, the industrial Almadén languished without notable social or workers' mobilizations. The workers' struggles, represented by the miners' strikes of 1979 and 1984, gave way to a gradual loss of jobs and population, which seemed to be accepted with resignation, and even [carnavalesque humor](#). After a gradual decay, the mining exploitation in Almadén was closed in 2003. A re-industrialization of the area was promised: several new industries and activities were triumphally presented, even started, but soon abandoned.⁷² Instead of tangible alternatives to the loss of more than 1000 jobs in the area, the mining company offered a system of early retirements that, as another carnival lyric sign, allowed the miners "to buy a new Renault 21 car and a flat in the city", but that with the hindsight of history, greatly limited the possibilities of a future in the area.⁷³ In 2012, the EU banned the commerce of mercury due to its high toxicity. Almost coinciding, UNESCO recognized the joint candidacy of Almadén and Idrija (Slovenia) and Almadén Mines to become inscribed as a World Heritage Site, turning Almadén mines into a Mining Park for tourism. By then, Almadén had hosted for over 2000 years the most fertile mercury mines in the world's history. As happens with many industrial towns that mostly rely on a single main source of economy, the closure of the mines brought about the loss of over 1000 jobs, high migration rates, and an important economic, social, cultural, and identity crisis.

⁷² For instance, MAYASA attempted to reconvert the miners into farmers, trying to change its industrial activity to agriculture with little conviction, perseverance, and success.

⁷³ In 1984, the mine employed over 1.100 workers in Almadén. Source: Radio Televisión Española (RTVE): "Minas de almadén," RTVE.es, July 27, 2019, <https://www.rtve.es/play/audios/no-es-un-dia-cualquiera/no-dia-cualquiera-minas-almaden/5356958/>. (Last accessed Dec 2022)

Almadén region has passed from around 31.500 habitants in 1960 to 10.800 in 2021, losing more than two-thirds of its population and becoming an aging and hard-hit community. Post-industrial societies like Almadén have passed from a livelihood based on industrial activity to one that manages and exploits industrial heritage and ruins left after the end of the industry.

The end of the world

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/557581840> PW: ENC1

Pablo's scrapbook is a cardboard-covered book called "*Recuerdos*" (*Memories*). It was a 1984 issue of a "Semana" magazine -a popular celebrity magazine -which Pablo transformed into an archive documenting his 11 days of lockdown 650 meters underground. Pablo's scrapbook contains the correspondence between the striking workers and Almadén Mining Company (MAYASA), press clippings, messages of support from the community as well as notes accompanying the gifts that came from the surface to make the life of the striking miners more bearable: folding chairs, newspapers, magazines, tobacco, cakes, fruit, etc.⁷⁴ There was something in that book that affected Pablo. He seemed uneasy, at times restless, especially compared to his usual assertive (and grumpy) composure. The scrapbook rested in a drawer beneath the television in front of which Pablo now spent most of his days, never missing his

⁷⁴ Representation is also at work in Pablo's scrapbook documenting the strike of 1984, and my subsequent documentation of Pablo as representative of the last generation of Almadén miners.

afternoon appointments with western films. Rather than "a skeleton in the closet," Pablo hid a "corpse" in the drawer: the corpse of a world he did not want to engage in anymore.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Time later, I found out that Pablo kept this personal archive of the mining strike rather secret from his family. The synopsis of *El Invierno de Pablo* reads: Pablo needs to stop smoking. Why? Because his wife, family and doctor say he should. But Pablo is a stubborn man. He has worked in the mercury mines of Almadén, Spain, risking his life daily. He has had five severe heart attacks and smoked 20 Winston cigarettes a day since he was 12. Now in his seventies, Pablo spends most of his day in front of the TV, surrounded by a cloud of smoke, with his back turned firmly towards a village that has lived through better times. Pablo represents the last generation of Almadén mercury miners, an age-old profession with over 2,000 years of history. Through a straightforward depiction of life's everyday moments, *El Invierno de Pablo* explores the decay of the local mining culture but, above all, pays homage to its real protagonists: the miners and their families.

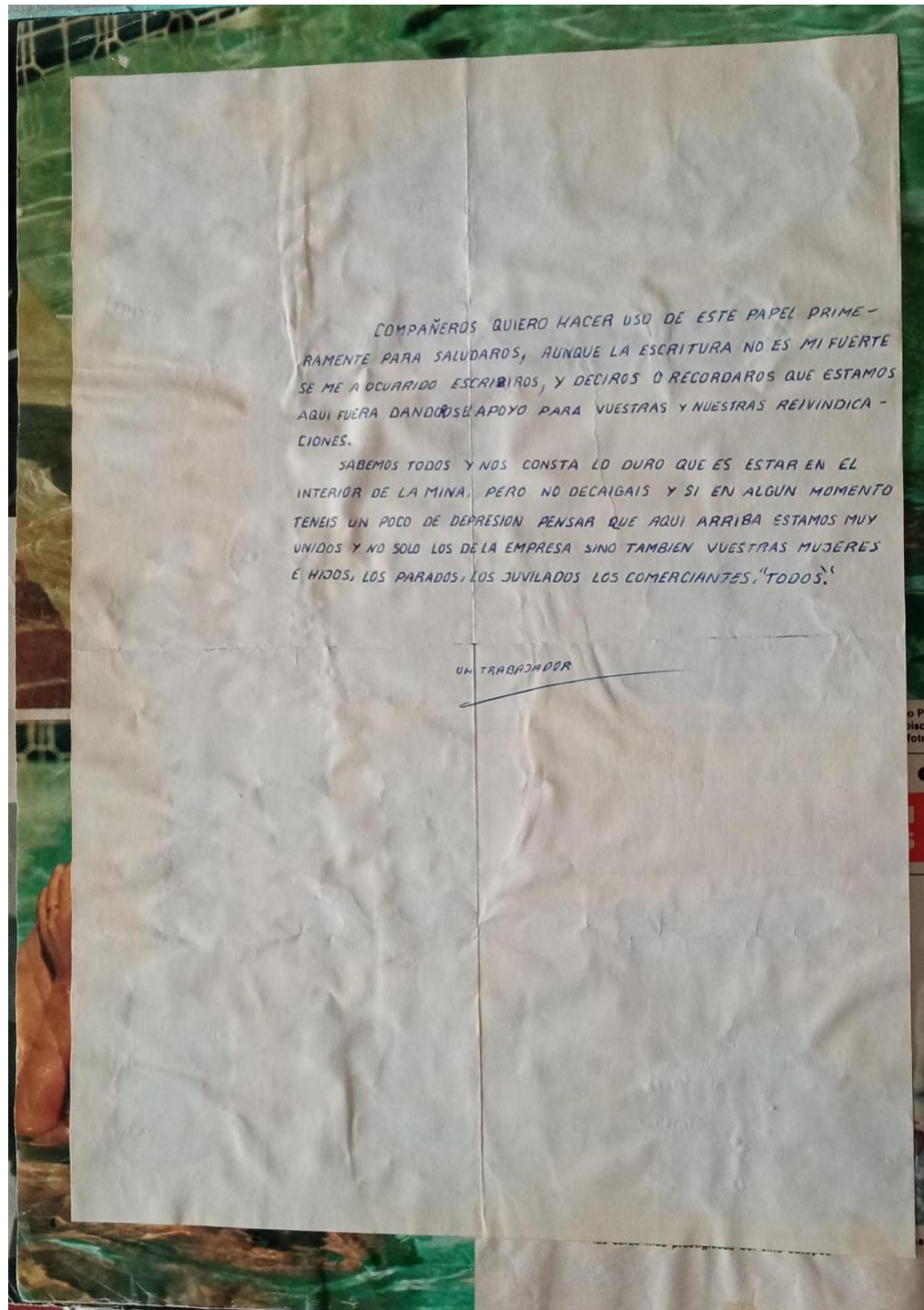


Fig 7. An anonymous worker's message sent to the strikers of 1984.

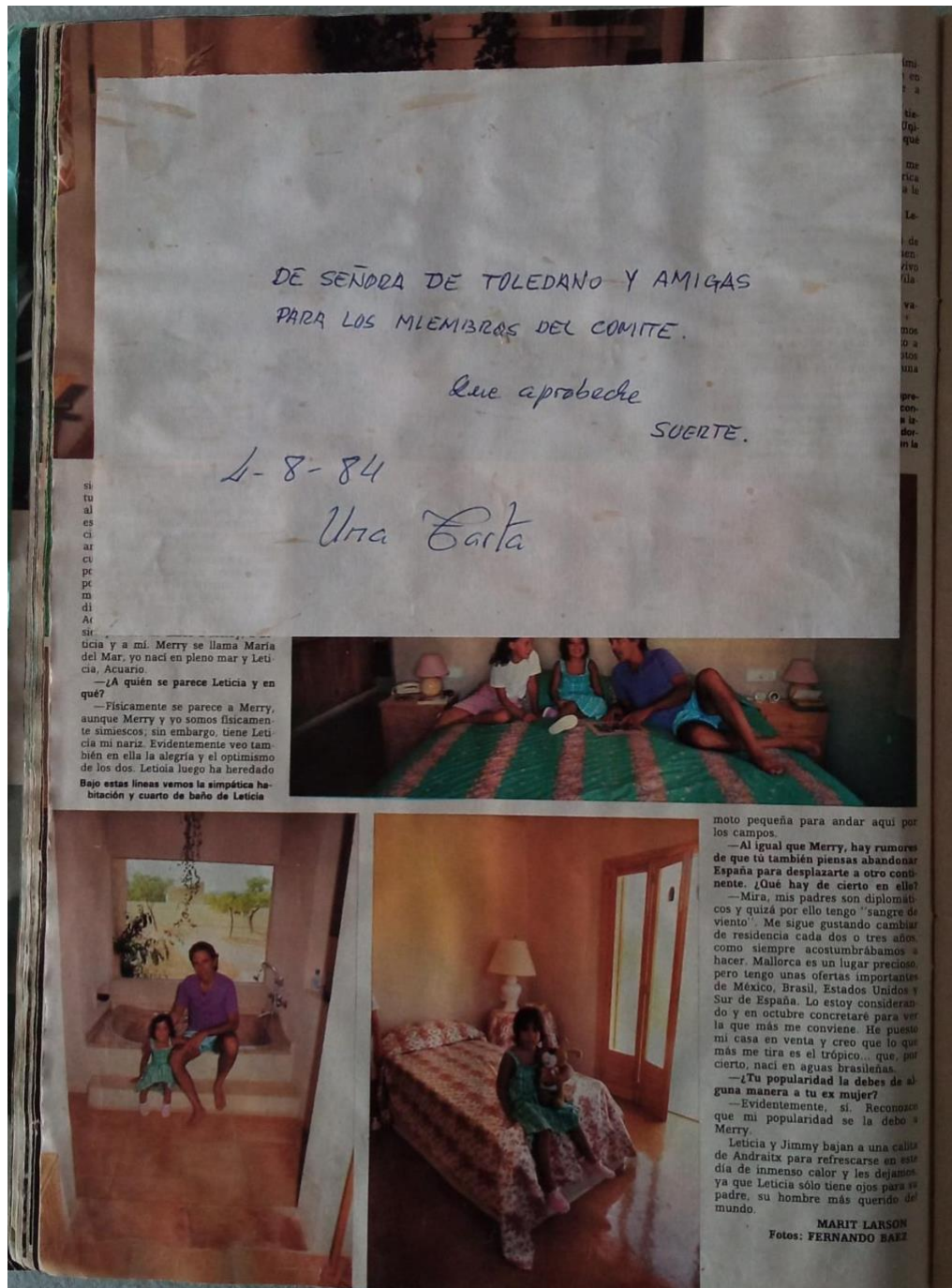


Fig 8. A message coming with a cake sent by one the strikers' wives and her friends.

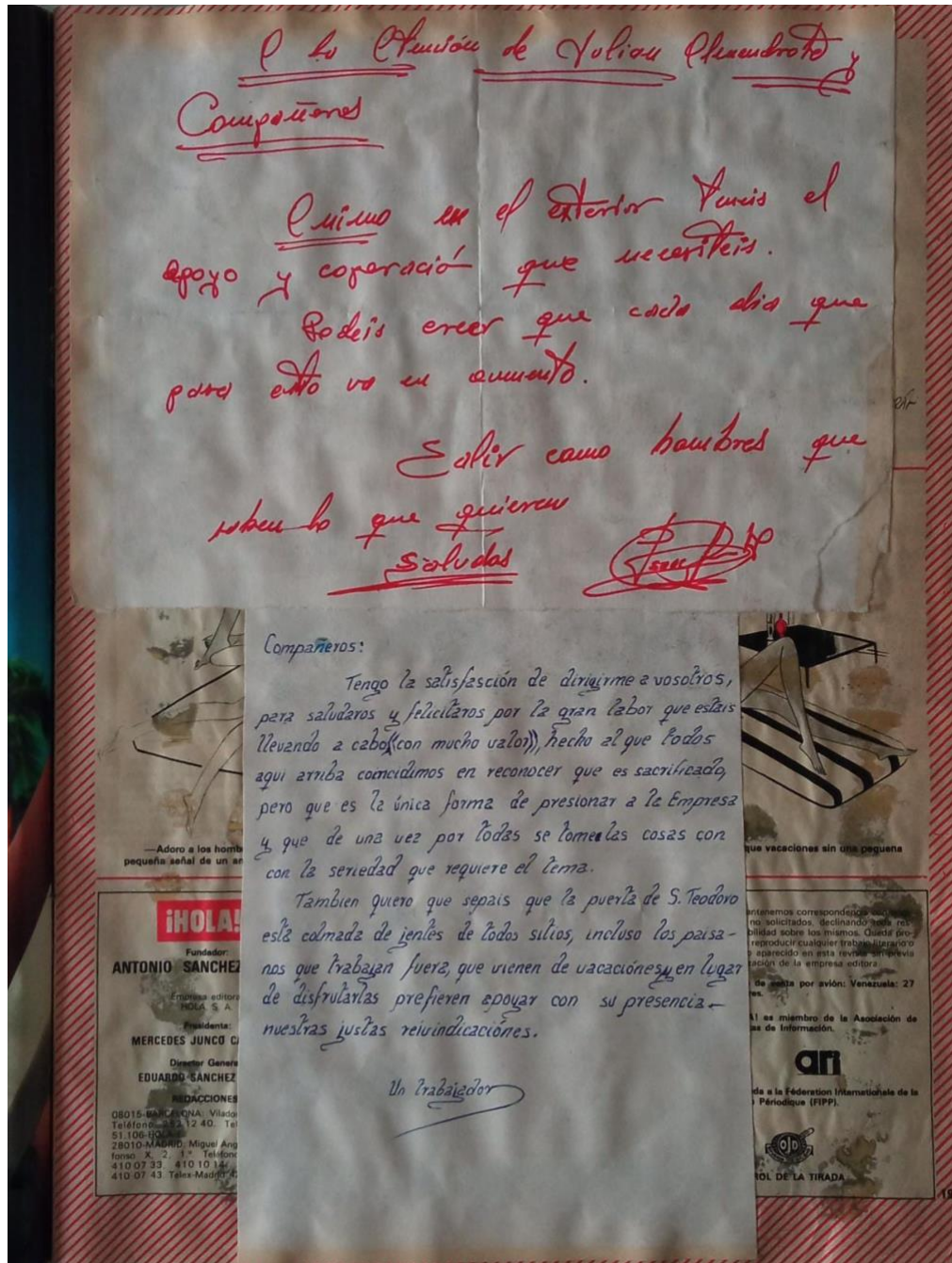


Fig 9. Messages of support sent from the workers' representatives. The top message reads: "Be sure that the support here grows every day. Come out like men that know what they want."



Fig 10. Caricature of MAYASA director of human resources holding a scythe behind his back. Made by the workers' representatives committee.

My first connection with the strike becomes an affective encounter with the end of a world. “Qué pena que se estén borrando ya las letras”, says Pablo looking at the old telegrams of support the miners received from all over Spain.⁷⁶ The English translation of the Spanish word “letras” is “character.” Characters as written signs; characters as people. In Pablo’s melancholic comment about the characters fading away, I recognized part of my motivation to make *El Invierno de Pablo*, i.e., to capture in a film some of those other characters and stories that, like the telegrams in Pablo’s scrapbook, were sadly vanishing. Traveling outside Pablo’s living room, we see the deserted mine esplanade and the ghostly industrial ruins, the world's end. The juxtaposition created in the scene between the sense of community, social action, struggle, etc., coming from the pages of Pablo’s scrapbook, with the black and white images of the empty and derelict industrial mine facilities has a prominent nostalgic feeling. I had a sense of nostalgia for something I had not even lived.⁷⁷

Overall, the end of mining represents for Almadén what TJ Demos has defined as the end of a world: a world being based on certain lifeways established over generations, manners of knowing and being, cosmologies, modes of habitation, modes of belonging, practices, and representations that the inhabitants of a particular community share.⁷⁸ The end of the mining industry in Almadén shook those

⁷⁶ This translates as “what a pity that the characters are now fading away.”

⁷⁷ The characteristic gray color of mercury also influenced our choice for the black and white image in *El Invierno de Pablo*. Even though the film tried to resist an excessive focus on the mine in the film’s dramaturgy, the gray-scale images tried to suggest that mercury has influenced/affected everything in Almadén.

⁷⁸ T. J. Demos, *Beyond the World’s End: Arts of Living at the Crossing* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020), 4.

foundations in a traumatic manner, producing what Demos calls “a radical rupture of transgenerational cultural traditions, the termination of secure relations to the land,” and leaving behind a series of social, political, industrial and environmental ruins, some of them still visible in the landscape as memorial signifiers of the wreckage.⁷⁹ If we move to the present, what are our modes of habitation in a place full of houses for sale? What are our modes of belonging in a place whose community is disintegrating from the bleeding depopulation? What manners of knowing and being, which cosmologies, and which practices could define us now after losing two millennia of mining livelihood? And what kind of world is established when most of our representations within our heritage culture focus on the past, and we stop believing in the politicians that represent us? The end of mining feels nostalgic if we understand nostalgia as the absence of the feeling of belonging to a historical continuum.⁸⁰

Representation: A post-industrial paradigm

Almadén, whose Arab etymology means "the mine," is now a mine without a mine; or at least, without a mine functioning as such. Almadén Mining Park is a big representational space in which the visitor enters real underground galleries that *stand for* the mine but, as the old miners frequently state, are not their mine. In the mine visit,

⁷⁹ Demos, 10.

⁸⁰ Jonathan D.S. Schroeder, “Nostalgia,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field*, ed. Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann, 1st ed. (Milton: Routledge, 2020), 158, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429445637>.

instead of real miners, there are mannequins in working postures and gestures; instead of the noise of working duties such as perforation, transport of minerals, pumping, etc., there are pre-recorded sounds that stand for those absent working clatters. And instead of industrial works, there are stories about them. In short, our mining past is gone and can only be accessed through representations.

Representation is the paradigm of post-industrial societies such as Almadén, where everything seems to have already passed. A simple way of understanding representation is by having something *stand for* something else. For instance, a flag stands for a country; a biography stands for a person's life; the mine models stand for the mine; politicians represent, or stand for, the people of a country, etc. And also, a film about a mining strike could stand for the actual strike. Artist and theorist Barbara Bolt explains, "the representation stands in the place of the absent object. Representation is a model."⁸¹ This idea of representation taking the place of the absent object is the reality of post-industrial areas like Almadén. This representational paradigm supposes a predominant focus on the past, the time of the *grand history* of the mine. Looking at the present becomes far more painful due to the precariousness of the current life in the area. Considering the future is equated with extreme uncertainty, as people often talk of a "dying village."

⁸¹ Bolt, *Art beyond Representation*, 16.



Fig 11. A mannequin of a miner working in the Almadén Mining Park visit. From Almadén Mining Park website.

Too often, heritage culture is a culture of depoliticization. We live a representational and phantasmagoric present in which we live off the grand stories of the mining past. Some of these stories relate to the work of slaves or half-told stories about how Almadén, known in the past as “The Crown Jewel,” was a key element in Spanish Imperialist history. Stories of physical, social, political, and metaphorical darkness are entangled with the brightness of Almadén’s history. As in the mining metallurgical process in which mercury is separated from the cinnabar rock that contains it, the stories we tell ourselves and others about Almadén get rid of the uncomfortable imperialist and colonial aspects, sickness, toxicity, and misery, to mainly focus on the decisive importance and grandeur of our mines and history.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768290462> PW: ENC1

Reflecting upon the conjunction between art and politics, writer and art historian TJ Demos writes:

extractivism identifies both historical and current modes of wealth accumulation based upon the withdrawal of raw materials and life forms from the planet's surface, depths, and biosphere in the production of financial value, which run in coordination with expansive politico-economic and socio-technological systems pledged to its operations. Fundamentally, extractivism comprises a calculus of accumulation by dispossession, to use the terms of David Harvey, an accumulation without corresponding deposit (except in the form of waste, disease, and death)⁸²

As in the metallurgical process, “the object in question will undergo a change in state, separating into at least two substances: an extract and a residue.”⁸³ For media theorist Jussi Parikka, the residue is “that which never finds its way into the manifest narrative of how something (an object, a person, a state, or a state of being) is produced

⁸² T J Demos, “Blackout: The Necropolitics of Extraction,” *Dispatches*, no. 001 (2018): 5. See also Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, “On the Multiple Frontiers of Extraction: Excavating Contemporary Capitalism,” *Cultural Studies (London, England)* 31, no. 2–3 (2017): 185–204, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2017.1303425>.

⁸³ Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, Electronic Mediations (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 101, <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctt13x1mnj>.

or it comes into existence.”⁸⁴ The residue is “left behind when value is extracted...The are no histories of residue, no atlases of abandonment, no memoirs of what a person was but could not be.”⁸⁵ The histories of toxicity, exploitation, sickness and abandonments are also the “residue” of the *grand* history of Almadén as articulated in heritage discourses.

Walking with ghosts

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/761442207> PW: ENC1

This is a place where hundreds of miners worked and passed through every day. A place full of noise, activity, and pollution in the past. "Now the air feels clean, and the birds sing, but there is a silence that oppresses," says one of the miners of 1984. Walking through the ruins of the impressive Pacific metallurgical furnaces in the mine facilities is like strolling through a ghostly landscape. At times, the wind rustles throughout the ghostly structure, beating rusty pieces of metal against each other. In the mayhem of rust, impossible to locate, the flapping noises resonate in the space like a cry from else when. As the reasons for being of those structures become less and less obvious, their presence and materiality become increasingly prominent. The ruins have a powerful sensorial effect. There is a magnetic power coming from them, but once you get close, one might feel uneasy.

⁸⁴ Parikka, 101.

⁸⁵ Parikka, 101–2. See also Charles R. Acland, ed., *Residual Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

There is a tension inherent in the apparent calmness of ruins. It is a feeling of being in a "borrowed" place that does not belong to the visitor or to the present. Tim Edensor observes, "industrial ruins are an intersection of the visible and the invisible, for the people who managed them, worked in them, and inhabited them are not there. And yet their absence manifests itself as a presence through the shreds and silent things that remain, in the objects we half recognize or surround with imaginings."⁸⁶ As my mother says about the ocean with the same name, the term Pacific is the only "peaceful" aspect about these furnaces. The ghosts haunt the ruins.⁸⁷

Whereas the facilities of the Mining Park shown to tourists speak of the order that heritage culture tries to impose on the mining past, the ghostly industrial remains of the Pacific furnaces embody the unruly character of ruins, the one that the order of heritage culture has not been able to control and resignify. They represent, as Edensor argues, "the modern logic of use and abandonment" becoming indexes of the traumatic passage between the mining and the post-industrial in Almadén.⁸⁸ Or borrowing sociologist Erving Goffman's terms to theorize performance situations, the Mining Park represents the "frontstage" of the heritage culture. In contrast, the Pacific represents the "backstage," the aspects that are not meant to be seen.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Tim Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins: Ordering and Disordering Memory in Excessive Space," *Environment and Planning. D, Society & Space* 23, no. 6 (2005): 842, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d58j>.

⁸⁷ Edensor, 829.

⁸⁸ Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins Spaces, Aesthetics, and Materiality* (Oxford [U.K.: Berg, 2005), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474214940>.

⁸⁹ The notion of "frontstage" and "backstage" appears in Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Anchor books edition., Doubleday Anchor Books; A174 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1959).

Moving up the mine facilities, we encounter the former mine workshops. In there, the feeling is slightly different, yet again, spectral. In the former workshops, everything seems to have frozen in time, as if the workers left only yesterday and nobody returned to work. The old machinery hangs on in a decent state; the tools are on the table as if a set designer had placed them to suggest that works are in progress. There are written messages, drawings, and nude calendar photos in one of the lockers. The place is reasonably clean, and the smell of grease also brings back the "original" scene: people working there. And yet, where are the people? It feels like an operative working place in which everybody has suddenly disappeared. I walk through the empty echoey space, sensing the presence of those that went. Here, "ghosts are sought to recall that which has been forgotten" and the "deliberate political strategies" that provoked the oblivion.⁹⁰ Or as performance studies theorist Diana Taylor puts it, "a ghost is about loss, loss made manifest, the vision of that which is no longer there."⁹¹

While the Pacific furnaces cry decay and politics of use and abandonment, the workshop spaces speak of a sudden and traumatic removal of people. Yet, in all these ruins, "the rejected has not yet been efficiently effaced but is in a state of `unfinished disposal" [...] and comes back to haunt us in this liminal state between rejection and obliteration."⁹² The furnaces and the workshops appear as an spectral indexicality: "the attempted erasure of the past is incomplete, and the ghosts have not been consigned to

⁹⁰ Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins," 835.

⁹¹ Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 152.

⁹² Edensor, "The Ghosts of Industrial Ruins," 836.

dark corners, attics, and drawers, or been swept away, reinterpreted, and recontextualised."⁹³ That is the indeterminate and ghostly character of the ruins and of Almadén, a ghost town that hangs *in-between* states.

Nostalgia: The lost and absent home

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/761411094> PW: ENC1

Nostalgia originated as a medical term in the XVII century to name "a special type of deadly melancholy triggered by displacement from home."⁹⁴ The victims of nostalgia became "so absorbed in spiraling fixations on cherished images of the absent home that they grew insensible to other objects, refuse to leave bed, and finally, immobilized, starve to death," with their last words usually being "I want to go home! I want to go home!"⁹⁵ Around the mid-twentieth century, the term nostalgia abandoned the realm of medicine to describe "an increasingly popular historical emotion: a

⁹³ Edensor, 836.

⁹⁴ Schroeder, "Nostalgia," 157.

⁹⁵ Jonathan D. S. Schroeder. Schroeder foregrounds the relation of nostalgia with racialization. As he explains, "in the 18th and 19th centuries, nostalgia was primarily diagnosed in European ethnics who were displaced from home by compulsory service, and who were said to sadden and die due to a natal weakness to forced mobility" (Schroeder, 157) Despite many of those who died "were almost always migrants coerced into building empires -as soldiers, sailors, servants, and slaves- their deaths were ascribed to their ethnic flaw." (Schroeder, 157) As Schroeder continues, in the Americas nostalgia "was supposed to cause recently enslaved Africans to drown themselves in rivers and wells, go on hunger strikes, and jump overboard to their deaths, all so their souls could fly back to Africa" (Schroeder, 157)

bittersweet, sentimental retrospect for lost times and places."⁹⁶ As a term, nostalgia usually carries negative connotations, characterized by "the twin desires of home-yearning and escapism."⁹⁷

The relation of nostalgia with being expelled from home resonates strongly with the sense of loss and absent homes in Almadén. Besides affective or metaphorical, the loss of homes in Almadén is brutally literal. The industry is gone; over 1000 jobs disappeared, and most people left. It has a clear effect on the town. People have left their homes to go elsewhere; houses have been emptied and dismantled; they are for sale, but nobody buys them.⁹⁸ Extractive practices work that way. They emptied the mines first; then, the village: "the for-sale signs extend throughout the village like gangrene," says one of the participants in *Encierro*. Being "expelled from home" through extractive practices and the longing for that gone past "when Almadén was Almadén" becomes a predominant "structure of feeling" in the area.⁹⁹

Visual artist, novelist, and theorist Svetlana Boym writes, "nostalgia (from *nostos*-return home, and *algia*-longing) is a longing for a home that no longer

⁹⁶ Schroeder, "Nostalgia," 157.

⁹⁷ Schroeder, 156.

⁹⁸ In a recent study about the price of houses in Spain, Almadén appears as one of the cheapest places in Spain to buy a house. This is due to the extreme devaluation of the value of houses after the closure of the mine. More concretely, Almadén is the cheapest place to buy a house in the Ciudad Real province, formed out of 102 villages. And in case that the reader is wondering: nobody is buying those houses. Source: V. Bustos, "Los Pueblos Con La Vivienda Más Barata de España: Cuáles Son y Dónde Están," accessed December 8, 2022, https://www.elespanol.com/invertia/observatorios/vivienda/20220325/pueblos-vivienda-barata-espana/659934056_0.html.

⁹⁹ See also Kathleen Stewart, "Nostalgia-A Polemic," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 3 (1988): 227–41, <https://doi.org/10.1525/can.1988.3.3.02a00010>.

exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy."¹⁰⁰ Nostalgia "is not only a longing for a lost time and a lost home but also for friends who once inhabited it and who now are dispersed all over the world."¹⁰¹ In the summer, many families return to Almadén to spend some days and "darle una vuelta a la casa" (meaning doing some checks and repairs on the houses). This has a somber correlation with the end of October, when local and emigrated families come back to the local cemetery to clean the tombs of their ancestors. The post-industrial is not only a phantasmagoric representational space of ruins, fragments, and half-told stories. It is also an exodus and a collection of empty, derelict, and devaluating houses left behind that feel like a spreading disease. The post-industrial also feels nostalgic.

When considered pathological, nostalgia has been defined as "an anti-social, solipsistic, narcissistic, delusional, and naïve form of behavior."¹⁰² Contrary to this, social geographer Alastair Bonnett aims to "reorient discussion of nostalgia away from a concern with its negative, disease-ridden connotations and towards an appreciation of its importance in change-making."¹⁰³ Considering "the active nature of nostalgia" and how it can be "used to retain power for one group," Bonnett argues that nostalgic ideas and practices "are not just reactive responses to change but can also be forms of

¹⁰⁰ Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii.

¹⁰¹ Boym, ix.

¹⁰² Schroeder, "Nostalgia," 158.

¹⁰³ Alastair Bonnett, *The Geography of Nostalgia: Global and Local Perspectives on Modernity and Loss*, Routledge Advances in Sociology 156 (London; Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 7.

action and activism."¹⁰⁴ The sense of loss and nostalgia is present in *El Invierno de Pablo* and in the desire to reenact a strike from the gone mining world in *Encierro*. But what would be a non-nostalgic approach to the past in Almadén? Maybe something like "the mine is gone; accept it. Look somewhere else; look at the future, away from the mine." While some of that attitude could help to build a new Almadén, we cannot forget the mine because, amongst other things, there are still issues and actual debts to be settled.¹⁰⁵ Reclamation, compensation, and reparation are hanging aspects from the past, but not necessarily nostalgic ones; these are still battles to be fought; harms to be repaired. They belong to now as well as then. As Boym reminds us, "nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective."¹⁰⁶ *Encierro* aims to use nostalgia as a catalyst, a potential tool for social and political action in the present, not as a mechanism of escapism or retreat into the past. I am hoping like Boym writes, that the "fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future."¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, *Encierro* aims to explore the generative and political power of nostalgia, not for longing endlessly into the past, but as "a refusal to accept loss."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Bonnett, 7.

¹⁰⁵ For instance, the mining company (MAYASA) and the Spanish national government signed an agreement to implement different measures for reindustrialization with an estimated investment of 6M €. As of today, that agreement remains breached.

¹⁰⁶ Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, xviii.

¹⁰⁷ Boym, xviii.

¹⁰⁸ Schroeder, "Nostalgia," 156.

***Encierro*: A film project about the strike**

My basic premise for *Encierro* could be presented in the following terms: If documentary processes could generate interpersonal encounters with the potential of affecting the everyday dynamics of the participants (*El Invierno de Pablo*), reconnecting with once-closed family members (*Donkeyote*, Chico Pereira, 2017) - and overall generating moments of sociability, conviviality, and encounter - how could the processes of documentary shooting also generate something new into a society in which the negative views, and the pessimism about the social situation reign after the closure of the mine? In *Encierro*, documenting the post-industrial reality in Almadén mixes with the desire to “start something,” to put things in motion. In other words, to turn the creation of reality that first came as a documentary “excess” in *El Invierno de Pablo* into my praxis raison d’être.

Theorist of ethnographic and fieldwork methods Queztil E. Castañeda reminds us that ethnographers, researchers, and, I would add, documentary filmmakers, enter their research locations with things “at the back of their head” that highlight, favor, choose, and emphasize some aspects from the field to work with, while discarding, abandoning or forsaking others.¹⁰⁹ Even the alleged objectivity of my depiction of the current situation in Almadén could be countered with other “objective” accounts that give far more positive views of a village that fights for survival amid a huge crisis.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ Castaneda, “The Invisible Theatre of Ethnography,” 82.

¹¹⁰ Even though my films have overall been very well received in Almadén, some people, especially politicians, thought that the B/W of *El Invierno de Pablo*, as well as some of the ruined locations showed in the film, gave a sad impression of the village

Writing about ethnographic fieldwork, Castañeda's "things in the back of the head" refer to research questions to explore, hypotheses to test, behaviors and customs to understand, etc.¹¹¹ Using a theatrical analogy, for Castañeda these elements become a "script" with which the fieldworker navigates the real world.

As a local to Almadén born in 1979, the year of the first mining lockdown, I have no personal recollections of the mining strikes, nor even of the one in 1984 when I was five years old. Locals describe it as moments when "the entire village was there day and night." But that is not the only viewpoint. Another generalized view is that these strikes did not achieve anything remarkable regarding social betterment. Some views go as far as to claim that the striking miners were just eating and drinking underground as if they were doing a "trasmoché", a term that locals use to refer to going partying overnight in the countryside with friends and/or family. In my engagements with the strike, in particular the one in 1984, I have encountered ample proof of community support, as well as detailed accounts of the negotiations and agreements, which demonstrates that the miners of 1984 achieved their goal of being part of the same collective bargaining agreement that applied to the rest of the Spanish miners

that was not accurate. Sad or not, for others what *El Invierno de Pablo* showed corresponded with their current views and experiences of living in the village.

¹¹¹ Castañeda, "The Invisible Theatre of Ethnography," 82. Surely, we all have some thoughts "in the back of our head" that to a degree influence our actions: values, principles, worldviews, socio-historical conditions, etc. Here, Castañeda is referring to those "thoughts in the back of the head" that comes from a research (or artistic) agenda, from research/artistic methodologies, representational conventions, and often from the need of disciplinary legibility, that necessarily transforms the everyday elements that fieldworkers and filmmakers engage with.

from the metal sector, which ultimately had a positive effect on their salaries and their future pensions.¹¹²

Howard Zinn uses the term “fugitive moments” to refer to “those hidden episodes of the past when, even if in brief flashes, people showed their ability to resist, to join together, and occasionally to win.”¹¹³ I understand the mining strike of 1984 as one of those brief fugitive moments in which locals came together as a community to fight for a better future. By going to the dark depths of the mine, the miners of 1984 created an ‘excess’ of visibility for their social problems. By restraining their movements inside the mine, they created social action on the surface. This excess of visibility by going into darkness and generating social movement through underground confinement became guiding principles for the further development of *Encierro*. Amongst many possible interpretations, I selected and isolated those from the complexities of the events and situations related to the strike.

Reminiscent of Pablo and his scrapbook documentation, I was also doing some “cuts-out” to develop an artistic project based on the strike. Moreover, I was using those aspects to look at the lack of present social, political, and community action in the area, which again might be perceivable in many aspects -and expressed by many locals- but can be considered another isolation from the complex reality of the post-industrial

¹¹² See for instance, the publications of LANZA newspaper between 30th July and 10th of August 1984. Source: “Hemeroteca - Lanza Digital - Lanza Digital,” April 3, 2017, <https://www.lanzadigital.com/hemeroteca/>. (last accessed December 2022)

¹¹³ Howard Zinn, *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress* (Monroe, OR: City Lights Publishers, 2006), 11–12.

situation of Almadén. In other words, whereas “visibility,” “community,” and “social action” were my cut-outs, the current reality of Almadén 35 years later was the substratum in which I planned to insert those cut-outs. This process of “cutting out” and “insertion” relates to what sociologist, philosopher, and historian Michel de Certeau calls “cut out and turn over” in his philosophy of the theory of practice. For him, cuts out are processes of isolating certain practices “in such a way as to treat them as a separate population, forming a coherent whole but foreign to the place in which the theory is produced.”¹¹⁴ The cut-outs are “a metonymic figure of the whole [...] a part (which is observable because it is circumscribed) is supposed to represent the totally (itself undefinable) of practices.”¹¹⁵ By turning over, de Certeau refers to how those cut-out units “become the element that illuminates theory and sustains discourse,” transforming practices isolated into the keystones of theory.¹¹⁶

My starting point was to develop a documentary theatre piece based on the testimonies of the 1984 lockdown. Out of the 11 miners who were the main protagonists of that lockdown, six were still alive when this project started in 2017. I planned to look for young people from the area -inhabitants of the post-mining Almadén- and collectively gather testimonies from these miners, their wives, families, and other trade union members who organized, negotiated, and lived the lockdown from above. The incompleteness of the archive and personal narratives due to the passage of time and the loss of many protagonists suggested a possibility so that, through conversations,

¹¹⁴ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 62.

¹¹⁵ Certeau, 62.

¹¹⁶ Certeau, 63.

rehearsals, speculations, and even poetic licenses, we could add to the memories of 1984, creating an inter-generational approach to the event. All this process, especially the months leading to the representation of the theatre play, would be filmed, and I planned to turn this material into a documentary film.

Writing about the role of the ethnographer in fieldwork, anthropologist Johannes Fabian argues in *Power and Performance* that the role of ethnographers “is no longer that of a questioner; he or she is but a provider of occasions, a catalyst in the weakest sense, and a producer (in analogy to a theatrical producer) in the strongest.”¹¹⁷ For Fabian, ethnographers and informants engage in an interpersonal performance. This performance is an ongoing and constantly changing process, which Fabian defines as “performative anthropology” to differentiate it from the “informative anthropology” at work in scientific and documentation approaches.¹¹⁸ In documentary representation, fieldwork cannot be only understood according to the research methods employed to generate data. It has to consider the intersubjective and social relations that determine the possibilities of gathering data in the first place. This is important to understand the nature of the fieldwork encounter and to consider the nature of the data produced. This data needs to be understood as mediated by the nature and articulation of those encounters and not separated or independent from them. In Fabian, the idea of the ethnographer catalyzing and even producing the situations *as if* a theatrical producer

¹¹⁷ Johannes Fabian, *Power and Performance: Ethnographic Explorations through Proverbial Wisdom and Theater in Shaba, Zaire*, New Directions in Anthropological Writing (Madison, Wis: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990), 6.

¹¹⁸ Fabian, 18.

does not only acknowledge the “disruptive” effect that ethnographers might have in the field. Moreover, it aims to creatively build the project of ethnographic representation from that disruptive capacity to summon performances.

Ethnographer and performance studies theorist Dwight Conquergood describes the increasing engagement of anthropology with performance from 1980s as a shift from performance as an act of culture (as seen in rituals, theatre, dance, etc.) to performance as an agency of culture, a creator of it.¹¹⁹ This “performative turn” also implies a “progression from focusing on performance as a context-specific event to performance as a lens and method for conducting research.”¹²⁰ Conquergood offers four keywords that become paramount for my artistic research: Poetics, Play, Process, and Power (the 4P’s) to understand the axioms and focus of this performative turn. First, cultures are made, constructed, not given (poetics/poiesis), as we see in rituals, celebrations, dramas, games, etc. Play is associated with “improvisation, innovation, experimentation, frame, reflection, agitation, irony, parody, jest, clowning, and carnival.”¹²¹ Conquergood highlights how play “temporarily releases, but does not disconnect, us from workaday realities and responsibilities”, with the possibility of opening “a privileged space for sheer deconstruction and reconstruction.”¹²² Process directs us to the open-ended aspect of culture, “culture becomes an active verb, not a

¹¹⁹ Dwight Conquergood, “Poetics, Play, Process, and Power: The Performative Turn in Anthropology,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (1989): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462938909365914>.

¹²⁰ Conquergood, 83.

¹²¹ Conquergood, 83.

¹²² Conquergood, 83.

noun”¹²³ This is a shift from *mimesis* as imitation to *kinesis* as movement in the understanding of culture. The fourth keyword is the important aspect of power. Firstly, the “who is observing whom” and with which potential consequences directs us to question authority in ethnographic representation.¹²⁴ In addition, the public character of cultural performances makes them “a site of struggle where competing interests intersect.”¹²⁵ Besides aspects of authority in ethnographic representation, the question of power implies asking, “how are performances situated between forces of accommodation and resistance” and “how do they simultaneously reproduce and struggle against hegemony?”¹²⁶

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768218600> PW: ENC1

As we see in the clip above, the frame is a representational space for conveying memory and a social space for its transmission. Within the frame, conveying the testimonies is as important as the processes of listening and witnessing that occur within it when other members of the community listen to the memory of others. This process is seen in films like *Two Laws* (Carolyn Strachan and Alessandro Cavadini, 1982), in which the film frame embodies a social space for the transmission of memory

¹²³ Conquergood, 83.

¹²⁴ Conquergood, 84.

¹²⁵ Conquergood, 84.

¹²⁶ Conquergood, 84.

intergenerationally.¹²⁷ In *Two Laws*, the frame includes several community members, often de-centering the person speaking to give equal, if not more, presence to those listening to the memories expressed. If, as social anthropologist Paul Connerton says, all memories are social memories, the film frames in films such as *Two Laws* and the clip above from *Encierro* embody those social spaces and situate the function of the frame beyond its representational capacities.¹²⁸

Social and collective memory are conveyed in *Two Laws* via the testimonies of the community elder. These testimonies are the base for reenactments representing the community's struggles against the Australian white administration's abuses in Borroloola. Besides a piece on collective memory, *Two Laws* is a historical and political reenactment that become "a community activist event," a "political commitment."¹²⁹ As Strachan and Cavadini argue, the community "wanted to make a film for the ritual enactment of their history for the community, to act as a legal argument to counter the decision of the judge over the dismissal of tribal claims to land, to warn other Aboriginal communities who were about to go to land claim court, and also to confront a white Australia on their terms."¹³⁰ We see how the past as history, the present as a land reclamation, and the future embodied in warning other

¹²⁷ I thank Prof. Irene Lusztig for bringing my attention to the witnessing aspect of *Two Laws* and *Encierro*.

¹²⁸ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, Themes in the Social Sciences (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628061>.

¹²⁹ Jonathan Kahana, Alessandro Cavadini, and Carolyn Strachan, "Re-Staging 'Two Laws': An Interview with Alessandro Cavadini and Carolyn Strachan," *Framework* 50, no. 1/2 (2009): 68, <https://doi.org/10.1353/frm.0.0052>.

¹³⁰ Kahana, Cavadini, and Strachan, 75.

communities that would go through similar reclamation processes coexist in *Two Laws*.



Fig 12. Younger participants of the project with striking miners from 1984 in *Encierro*. Photo: Julian Schwanitz.

In *Encierro*, there would be a theatre play as a result of the inter-generational research process. The stage would represent the workshops on the 23rd floor of the mine where the lockdown of 1984 took place. This theatrical space would gradually transform with mattresses, tables, chairs, personal stories, heated discussions, tensions, phone calls, snoring miners, Pablo converting his "Semana" magazine into a scrapbook documenting the strike, etc.: all the events related to the people and stories of 1984. In an imagined surface off-stage, there would be the village people, spending day and night in the mining esplanade supporting the strikers with their presence, basic supplies,

messages, etc., and witnessing anxiously for news about the negotiations with the mining company. The idea of this documentary theatre piece about the 1984 mining strike interested me at the level of the creative, social, and inter-generational processes of remembering, investigating, creatively exploring the past, questioning the present, and honoring the fight of our miner ancestors. In addition, engaging the younger generations of Almadén in the collective memory of the social struggles of the past felt like a timely reminder of the need to fight, demonstrated most clearly in the period 1979-1984 of intense workers' mobilization in Almadén and mostly disappeared since then, except some occasional protests.¹³¹

However, when I imagined the potential spectators entering a theatrical space, sitting down, and watching the representation of the 1984 strike pass by in about two hours, the thought was painful. I compared the people of 1984 crowding the mine esplanade in support of the strikers with the fewer people left in the village sitting down to see a representation of a past social mobilization. From the gaze of the potential spectator to the stage, I perceived an immense distance, a gap that, instead of connecting the two worlds, showed me the insurmountable distance between them. My own bias made me conceive the spectators sitting in the stalls as a metaphor for the passivity with which we were watching the decline of Almadén occur as silent witnesses and spectators. How could I shorten that distance? How could I escape the

¹³¹ For instance, the social mobilizations started in May 2012 to protest the plans of the University of Castilla La Mancha (UCLM) to close the university campus of Almadén (EIMIA) and move it to the city of Ciudad Real, relocating the oldest engineering mining school in Spain, which is also an important source of employment and wealth in the area.

(alleged) threat I perceived of a passive spectator, one that would eventually reinforce the already painful perception of our lack of social action? Or to bring the words of Brazilian dramaturg Augusto Boal, "why make a revolution in reality if we have already made it in the theatre?"¹³² In Boal's theatrical praxis, especially in his Forum Theatre, theatre can evocate in the spectator "a desire to practice in reality the act he has rehearsed in the theatre. The practice of these theatrical forms creates an uneasy sense of incompleteness that seeks fulfillment through real action."¹³³

From representation to event

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768237109> PW: ENC1

There was a growing activist side in the project from my deeper engagement with the harsh social situation in Almadén. It can be seen as the reverse of Castañeda's dictum. Instead of "the things at the back of the head," my praxis started changing due to "the things in front of my eyes." To be living again in Almadén, experiencing the challenging reality of the village (scarce working opportunities, poor infrastructures and services, geographical isolation, lack of public transport, rampant depopulation, a landscape full of "For Sale" houses, etc.), and feeling the generally negative views and attitudes towards the present and the future in the area started creating cracks in my approach to mostly represent the past through an homage to the mining strike of 1984.

¹³² Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, New edition, Get Political 6 (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 120.

¹³³ Boal, 120.

I perceived it as if hollow in the middle, like mining towns. The problem was closely related to my artistic praxis and the representation issue. Here, I also perceived two worlds in conflict: the world of representation and documentation on the one hand; and the world of intervening in reality on the other. I identified a desire to bring all those worlds together, to bridge some of the distance perceived, and even, somehow naively, to reconcile them. The miners' striking actions and their protests move from being an inspiring past event -one of Zinn's "fugitive moments"- to be felt as a hopeful option for "doing something" in the present to unsettle how things currently are. Even though it is past, the strike has an affective and political force that starts embodying a "why not now?" Or, as Zinn puts it, "I am supposing, or perhaps only hoping, that our future may be found in the past fugitive moments."¹³⁴

Our grandparents seemed to have lived in a "real" world, one in which "Almadén was Almadén"; surely another construction, a home that never existed in Boym's words. Now we live in the ruins of that world, and the devastating social and political landscape has an anesthetizing effect on our generation. With the closure of the mine and the definitive loss of most of the jobs, the unions weakened to practically disappearing in the area. The collective self is extremely damaged in post-industrial Almadén, and therefore the conditions of possibility for collective action, like the strike of 1984, hardly exist. We are faced with the precarity of the present, but we are not actively engaged in collective social action as our grandparents did. This is where this

¹³⁴ Zinn, *A Power Governments Cannot Suppress*, 12.

project sought to intervene, reconsidering through artistic practices our sense of collectivity and struggle.¹³⁵

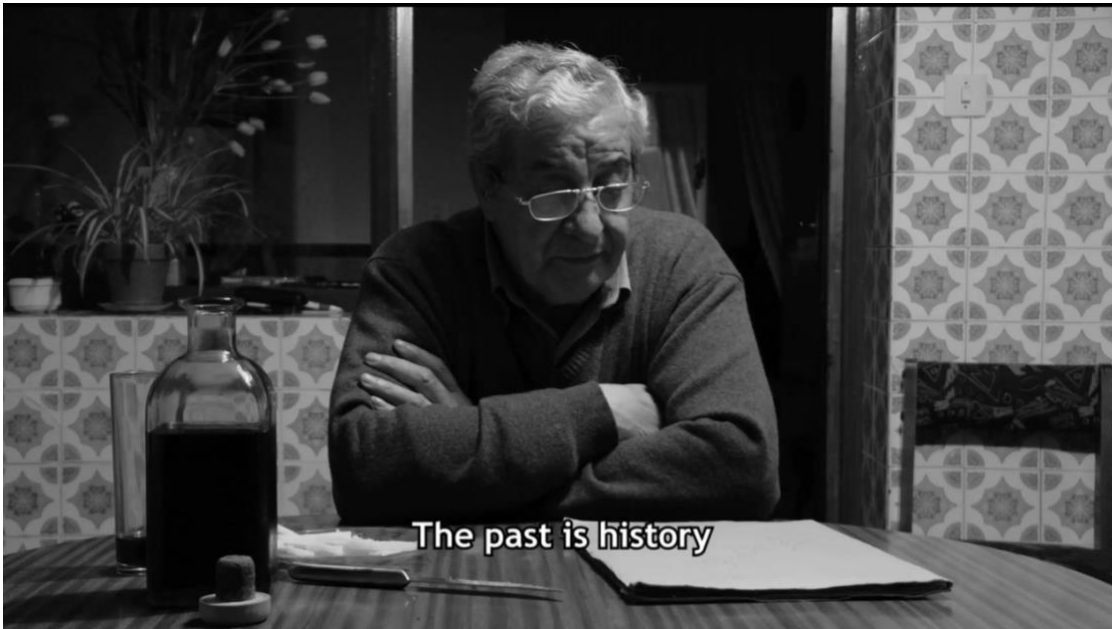


Fig 13. Pablo Marjalizo in *El Invierno de Pablo*. Photography: Julian Schwanitz.

¹³⁵ The paradox of shortening and creating distance also affects me as the main researcher of this project. On the one hand, I am local to Almadén and belong to the younger generation represented in *Encierro*. As I will explain later, I am also one of the 11 participants locked down in the mine during the reenactment. On the other hand, my working methods as researcher and documentary filmmaker often mean that I take a more observant position during the project. In my case, it is the negotiation between being an observer and a participant which becomes an issue of positionality. As the project transforms during its making, this dual position of participant and observant gets more entangled, even questioned. As the reader will notice, this closeness/distance is also reflected in my use of pronouns in this article. During my writing, I often switch, rather unconsciously, from using “they” to “we” when referring to the participants.

I come back once more to Pablo's house. Now Pablo is no longer around; the family sold the house; Pablo's wife, Jose, came back to live in the street where she grew up. Back to the beginning. And me, back to their living room. The scrapbook scene in *El Invierno de Pablo* presents the mining strike as a historical event anchored in the past, even though its emotional echoes still resonate in the present. The scene ends with Pablo closing the album and stating a solemn "la historia es la historia", ("the past is history"). It was precisely this notion of history as the past that I wanted to challenge. Whereas Pablo engaged in a documentation process, transforming his experience of the 1984 lockdown into an archive, as a local documentary filmmaker from Almadén, I increasingly desired to turn that archive back into real action.¹³⁶ The idea of the strike as a model was taking shape. It was not the notion of the model characteristic of the representational paradigm, that is, the representation of the strike standing for the past strike. Rather, to have the past strike as a model to intervene in the present: an example to follow, a referent and inspiration coming from the past in order to carry out social action in the present.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768240838> PW: ENC1

¹³⁶ For engagements between archives and performance see for instance Gunhild Borggreen and Rune Gade, eds., *Performing Archives/Archives of Performance*, In between States / PSi (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2013).

Conclusion

Eventually, I turned my artistic inquiry into the form of a question, expressed in conditional terms: *what if* 11 people would lockdown in the mine for 11 days now? I was attracted immediately to this *what if* premise, even though it seemed to belong to the realm of fantasy and unlikely to carry out for real. How will I find 11 people willing to do such a thing? How could the mining company accept such a "bizarre" proposition? In its "impossibility," this *what if* scenario had a liberating effect. It was as if the burden of the past lifted, and my focus could now move more freely to the present and future. In the entangled past-present temporality of Almadén, the conditional became a creative strategy to open the re-creation of the past towards the present, and to move beyond the overwhelming representational paradigm of heritage sites such as Almadén. The premise became to search for 11 people from the area willing to lockdown 50 meters underground for 11 days, on the same dates as our "grandparents" did (July 30-August 9), but precisely 35 years later, in 2019. Even if representation of what happened in 1984 could be a part, the participants could not be playing a "role" for 11 days. The experience could not be explained solely from the point of view of representation. The lockdown would also be a real experience, an event that would take place in Almadén for 11 days.

In this chapter, I engaged with Pablo's scrapbook as a media object able to contain different temporalities: the past of the strike and of Pablo's memory, the present of its affective and political echoes and resonances, and the possibility of creating something new. I have attempted to put in conversation the ideation and early

development of my project idea with the reality of the field in which it happens. I have covered the adaptations of the artistic methodology resulting from looking at the present reality of Almadén through the lens of the past mining strike and vice versa. This chapter is also a passage from a nostalgic and distant approach to the past in *El Invierno de Pablo* to engage with Boym's and Bonnett's notions of nostalgia as a generative force, as a "something has to be done."

I want to bring another aspect of the magazine-turned scrapbook into Pablo's hands. After some pages, Pablo's scrapbook ends, and the magazine continues with its colorful pages. The abrupt end of the mining strike archive within the magazine makes me think of all those pages yet to be written. Surely another speculation, but *what if* these dissertation pages are also a continuation (and an iteration) of that same story, with a gap of 35 years between them?

In the next chapter, I will unpack the artistic methodology chosen for *Encierro*, situating it as an iteration of a previous social movement (*as if* it was a strike), this time within the framework of artistic practice. I will present artistic methodologies as interventions in reality rather than as methodological frameworks to eventually contain an art piece. The chapter will offer several examples of *what if* scenarios in documentary films, emphasizing these approaches as interventions in reality. It will also engage the notion of "the past as a score" to explain the adaptation process of the mining strike to an 11-day durational performance.

CHAPTER 2.

SITUATED UTOPIAS

So, what else can we do? We ‘ve got an awful lot of equipment here.

Bill Greaves, director of *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* (1968)

Introduction

The methodology in *Encierro* sits between a *what if* and a loose reenactment. It strongly builds from a historical referent -the mining strike of 1984- that serves as a model, but it cannot be solely understood under the representational framework of reenactment. Whereas the past provides a model, *Encierro* aims to turn that model into present action and open it up to uncertain outcomes. Even though the methodology has abandoned a straightforward representation of 1984, the past is still a core element of *Encierro*. How to engage the historical referent of the mining strike becomes a question of how to relate to the past on a social and political level. As a local to the area, whose development as a person is influenced by the social reality of Almadén, how to relate to the past becomes an artistic, social and political question of how to understand my place and time in my hometown.

This chapter is about how a chosen artistic methodology can also become generative. Artistic methodologies are frameworks to “contain” an artwork. But they are also frameworks for elements beyond representation: relations, encounters, ways of

relating to, affect, the reality of the field, etc. In other words, artistic methodologies can provoke reality. In this chapter, I propose the notion of “situated utopias” to refer to filmmakers’ attempts at generating collaborative, participatory, and inclusive spaces through artistic methodologies.¹³⁷ They work as realities-within-reality to challenge discrimination, authority, and hegemonic views while proposing convivial, social, and political examples of how life could be. To articulate this notion of situated utopias, I will build from Jean Rouch’s *La Pyramide Humaine* (1961), William Greaves’ *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* (1968), and *Encierro*. The films analyzed also work as examples of what Rodriguez calls performative media: works that, rather than producing statements about a desired reality, embody that reality. In other words, this chapter addresses what artistic methodologies can perform in the world.

What if...scenarios

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768416136> PW:ENC1

What if scenarios are speculative propositions, or designs, that respond to the structure “what would happen if...” Even though the start is a “*what if*” / “*what would happen if...*” scenario, these speculative premises usually lose some of their conditional nature and end up engaging the same experiential world that conforms to our reality. But not quite. The fiction is always latent in the real generated through the process.

¹³⁷ Even though this dissertation does not fully engage with it, an important film regarding social utopias and participatory research is *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (Peter Watkins, 2000)

In *Tito Among the Serbs for the Second Time* (Želimir Žilnik, 1993), we perceive this entangled coexistence between fiction and reality. *Tito Among the Serbs for the Second Time* develops from the following scenario: *what if* Tito -dressed in Marshal uniform- would return to the Serbian streets in the present? Casting Dragoljub Ljubicic, a famous Tito's impersonator well-known in Serbia, the film entertains the possibility that Serbian people *would* accept this "new" Tito also as if were the real Tito. Nobody takes Ljubicic as the real Tito; however, there are numerous instances in the film when pedestrians behave *as if* the real Tito had come back and engaged in conversations, complaints, and confidences with Ljubicic as Tito. As stated in the film synopsis referring to the involvement of pedestrians, "almost all of them accept to play the game, complain about the old times in Yugoslavia and blame Tito for everything."¹³⁸ *What if* propositions are at the core of speculations, imaginations, stories, games, research, reality TV, and documentary films. Through these speculative approaches, filmmakers aim to provoke, spark, and catalyze something. Rather than recording what would have happened even in their absence here, without the filmmakers provoking the events, there would be no film.

In his essay "The Future of Documentary? "Conditional Tense" Documentary and the Historical Record," documentary theorist Paul Ward introduces the notion of the conditional in documentary to address films that present the viewers with historical events that have not happened, have not happened *yet* or did not happen the way those

¹³⁸ Source: "Tito Among the Serbs for the Second Time | Želimir Žilnik," accessed December 8, 2022, <https://www.zilnikzelimir.net/tito-among-serbs-second-time>.

films depict them.¹³⁹ This does not mean that we are fully in the domain of fiction. Instead, this speculative approach to what *could* have happened, or what *might* yet happen, aims to show the “provisional or conditional nature” of historical events and become cautionary tales about where we might be heading unless...¹⁴⁰ The mode of address in these films does not build from the question ““Is this real?” or did this really happen?” but “could this actually happen?””¹⁴¹

With films like *It Happened Here* (Kevin Bronlow and Andrew Mollo, 1964) and *The Day Britain Stopped* (Gabriel Range, 2003), a widely known “conditional documentary” is *The War Game* (Peter Watkins, 1965), which shows how Britain prepares and lives through a nuclear attack. The attack and the aftermath are shown in

¹³⁹ Paul Ward, “The Future of Documentary? ‘Conditional Tense’ Documentary and the Historical Record,” in *Docufictions: Essays on the Intersection of Documentary and Fictional Filmmaking* (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland & Co., 2006), 270.

¹⁴⁰ Ward, 272.

¹⁴¹ Ward, 275. Ward also discusses *It Happened Here*, (Kevin Bronlow and Andrew Mollo, 1964), which offers an alternative view of history in which the Nazi succeeded in invading Britain. Even though this never happened, Ward highlights how historical research have proved that Nazis were actually very close to win the Battle of Britain, which *could* have changed the outcome of history. The film takes that alternative event as starting point to build a historical documentary “to see *what would have happened if...*” Ward, 272.

Ward also discusses *The Day Britain Stopped* (Gabriel Range, 2003). This film builds as a historical documentary of disastrous day in which “a series of entirely plausible occurrences—a rail strike, a traffic jam, problems with a shift-change for air-traffic control staff—all coincided to cause disaster on a grand scale.” Ward, 274. The film is told from the future, looking back at that 9 December 2003, which is *The Day Britain Stopped*. As such, *The Day...* it is not fully in the conditional tense, since it addresses the audience as if the events depicted had actually happened (indicative). However, its speculative approach to historical events, and the fact that these events are not only possible, but perhaps even probable, which brings the film close to the conditional tense, as these events *could/might* still happen. Ward, 274.

extreme documentary detail (and cruelty), following the logic of similar events that already happened, such as the attacks in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as building from official documents and governmental protocols designed to prepare and respond to a potential nuclear in Britain. The film speculates how the plan will play out in practice: what is likely to happen if such attacks materialize and the government plans are put into practice. The proper narration of *The War Game* often constructs its sentences using the conditional tense: this *could* happen; this *might* happen, etc. In other instances, the film proposes the indicative to reinforce the idea that, even though the events depicted are speculative, nuclear war and its effects are not. At times, the film reminds us that “this *will* happen” or engages directly with the indicative of historical facts, as in one of its most chilling sentences: “This *is* nuclear war.” *The War Game* situates in a hybrid field in regards to mode (documentary and fiction), mood (indicative, subjunctive), and tense (past, future, and conditional). *The War Game* also works with a mode of address as “this is what will happen unless...”¹⁴² For Ward, this “unless” can become a call to social action. At its best, Ward argues, these films can “have a potentially innovative political edge.”¹⁴³

¹⁴² Ward, “The Future of Documentary? ‘Conditional Tense’ Documentary and the Historical Record,” 275.

¹⁴³ Ward, 275.

Speculative scenarios as interventions

- Mr. Rouch, is the scenario already written?
- No, we'll write it with your classmates.

Nadine and Rouch in *La Pyramide Humaine* (Jean Rouch, 1961)

Even though speculative scenarios can be experiments with the creative/aesthetic capacities of documentary film, it seems restrictive to understand them only at the level of representation. Speculative filmmaking practices such as *what if* scenarios can go beyond the documentation of a speculative reality (i.e., *The War Game*) to become experimentations with it. Moreover, whereas *It Happened Here*, *The Day Britain Stopped*, and *The War Game* use *what if* scenarios as representational strategies to show a dystopian reality that could happen, this chapter focuses on how *what if* scenarios can become instances of utopian thinking and practice within documentary film praxis.

The speculative methods discussed in this chapter usually aim at doing some “work” on reality. Often, these documentary interventions act “as a ‘catalyst for social dreaming’” as happens in Jean Rouch’s *La Pyramide Humaine* (Jean Rouch, 1961) and Mehran Tamadon’s *Iranien* (Mehran Tamadon, 2014.)¹⁴⁴ Others carry out social, pedagogical, or political work, as we see in *Strangers in Paradise* (Guido Hendriks, 2016), where an actor presents different political views, and potential asylum seeking

¹⁴⁴ Dunne and Raby, *Speculative Everything*, 189.

scenarios, to refugees who have arrived to the island of Lampedusa; and *Rules of War* (Guido Hendrikx, 2022), where a former soldier and diplomat arrives to South Sudan with the intention of teaching soldiers and superiors the rules of a “humane” war; other films can have therapeutical effects for the participants, such as Lola Arias’ theatrical and film intervention with veterans from the Maldives War in *Teatro de Guerra* (Lola Arias, 2018); some might resemble psychoanalysis work, such as the divan used in *Mutzenbacher* (Ruth Beckermann, 2022), that reveals the sexual obsessions and taboos of a society by a group of men revising an old pornographic novel in series of casting sessions for an alleged film about the novel *Josefine Mutzenbacher: The Life Story of a Viennese Whore* (Felix Salten, 1906)

In broad terms, a scenario is “a description of possible events, or a description of the story of a movie, play, or other performance.”¹⁴⁵ As a loose framework that allows room for different variations, this understanding of the scenario comes close to the notion of play. Loose scenarios like those used in improvisation acting, in games, and in *what if* approaches move between control and liberation, the expected and the unexpected, free play, and structure. There is a general understanding of play as “less serious than life,” which is key for the framework of this research. The notion of play can be perceived as “unfitting” to the world of documentary, but the world of play and

¹⁴⁵ “Scenario,” accessed December 8, 2022, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/scenario>.

the world of what French sociologist Émile Durkheim called “the serious life” can affect each other, which is one of the hypotheses of my research.¹⁴⁶

Jean Rouch is one of the clearest exponents of a playful and adventurous approach to documentary, often introducing his works as filmed experiments. Rouch often talked about his role as provoking reality through filmmaking and “continually posed the question what happens if?”, using “provocation to unravel deeper layers of ‘reality.’”¹⁴⁷ Several of his better-known films use *what if* scenarios as loose frameworks for action that allow for the improvisation of the participants. Rather than documentary films, a sense of play, chance, and adventure is central in Rouch’s oeuvre and often has connected Rouch’s cinema with the world of surrealism.¹⁴⁸ A film in which these elements are visible is *Petit à Petit* (Jean Rouch, 1971). *Petit à Petit* responds to *what if* Rouch’s Nigerian collaborators Damoure Zika and Lam Ibrahim would travel to Paris and employ with Parisian the same ethnographic methods Europeans have used in Africa? The adventurous, playful, at times almost dangerous premise -often building from chance encounters with strangers – uses accepted

¹⁴⁶ Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.*, Oxford World’s Classics (Dinslaken: Anboco, 2016).

¹⁴⁷ Joram ten Brink, ed., *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, Nonfictions (London; Wallflower Press, 2007), 1–2.

¹⁴⁸ See for instance Christopher Thompson, “Chance and Adventure in the Cinema and Ethnography of Jean Rouch,” in *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, ed. Joram ten Brink, Nonfictions (London; Wallflower Press, 2007). David Bate, “Everyday Madness: Surrealism, Ethnography and the Photographic Image,” in *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, ed. Joram ten Brink, Nonfictions (London; Wallflower Press, 2007). Elizabeth Cowie, “Ways of Seeing: Documentary Film and the Surreal of Reality.,” in *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, ed. Joram ten Brink, Nonfictions (London; Wallflower Press, 2007).

ethnographic methods in a reverse context, exposing through humor the colonial nature of many of those approaches. For Rouch, film is filmed adventure, and making a documentary is a shared activity with participants to explore the real through the possible and the serious through the playful. Rouch called his approach “shared anthropology” to refer to the continuous processes of feedback and participation he established with documentary subjects, which ultimately “allows the ethnographer-filmmaker to meditate openly and self-critically on his or her own role.”¹⁴⁹

La Pyramide Humaine (Jean Rouch, 1961) is a film Rouch made in Côte d’Ivoire with senior high school black and white student soon after the country’s independence from France. Even though these students have spent class time together before making the film, the black and white groups are mostly segregated (i.e., the reality of the field). The voice of Rouch introduces -as it often does- the world of the film and the experiment. Rouch wonders “what friendship could be with no racial complexes” and propose the following: what would happen if we bring together 10 black and white students and help nurturing a friendship amongst them? In his verbal introduction to the film, Rouch says, “instead of mirroring reality our film created a different reality. It’s not a true story. It was written as we shot it...Spontaneous improvisation was the only rule”. While the film actively creates the reality in the field, the notion of improvisation as the only rule becomes less clear in the pursuit of a well-defined, sought-after outcome: “to show that Europeans and Africans can get along and live side by side together,” exploring the pros and the cons. This combination of a

¹⁴⁹ Rouch, *Ciné-Ethnography*, 18–19.

speculative scenario with a sought-after outcome, plus the gradual move of *La Pyramide Humaine* towards fiction, makes Ivone Margulies remind us of the “suspended status of the real in cinema,” its “unstable resting point.”¹⁵⁰

Rouch’s methodology in *La Pyramide Humaine* intervenes in the real by accelerating the process of developing friendships among the participants. As Rouch says towards the end of the film, “what several years in class never accomplished an improvised film did.” The notion of example is important to highlight. “If they see us black and whites together all the time and getting along, we’ll be an example for them,” says one of the black students. The notion of the example is double. While black and white students getting along could serve as an example for society, the film methodology Rouch employs becomes the example itself. The making of the film, “the less serious than life” aspect of it, allows these “exemplary” relations to happen.¹⁵¹ In the following scene, the example of conviviality between the two groups seems to be implemented in the wider world of Abidjan. It is a street dancing scene in which black people dance to a black audience. Independently whether it is being arranged specifically for the film or not, the scene brings the world of the film to a wider spectrum of the black population of Abidjan. We are still in the film world since cameras are filming. However, the film apparatus is another element in a situation that exceeds its control and agency. In the second part of the scene, Nathalie (one of the

¹⁵⁰ Ivone Margulies, “The Real In-Balance in Jean Rouch’s *La Pyramide Humaine*,” in *Building Bridges: The Cinema of Jean Rouch*, ed. Joram ten Brink, Nonfictions (London; Wallflower Press, 2007), 131.

¹⁵¹ For the notion of the example and exemplarity, for instance in consciousness-raising and reenactment films, see for instance Margulies, *In Person*.

black students) invites Nadine (one of the white students) to dance, and the rest of the two groups join after them. Even though the live audience of this performance becomes invisible in this part of the scene, one can wonder what they might be feeling about the situation of white and black guys dancing together to black music in front of them. This scene hints at an intervention of the film's methodology, or provocation, to use a more Rouchian's term, into the social dynamics of Abidjan, with the possibility of steering different kinds of (real) reactions in those that encounter it as a live audience.¹⁵²

Rouch's final remarks on the film encapsulate well his filmmaking philosophy:

No matter whether the story is plausible, no matter the camera or the mic, or the director, or whether a film was born or never existed. More important is what happened around the camera. Something did occur in the decors and childish, poetic loves and fake catastrophes. Ten black and white boys and girls learned to love, get angry and know each other. What several years in class never accomplished and improvised film did. For these young Africans and

¹⁵² While the arguments about race and racism sounded at times forced and stereotyped, in the discussions/arguments about gender and how is the "right" way to perform it, Rouch's methodology reaches a paradox. Whereas the love stories in *La Pyramide Humaine* are the most fictionalized, they also seem to allow for the most genuine feelings amongst the participants regarding gender, race, sex, and the taboos of interracial marriage. The views expressed, even as stereotyped, appear more entrenched in the participants than in performances of "being racist" earlier in the film. In other words, besides the notion of "exemplarity" in racial relationships at a general level, *La Pyramide Humaine* presents other instances in which racism and misogyny - escalating to suicide- are also evident.

Europeans racism no longer makes any sense. The film ends but the story isn't over.

Rouch situates his filmmaking as a shared social practice in which what happens around the camera often prevails over the film itself. The frames of the film appear to dissolve to explore what the presence of the camera, and the artistic methodologies used, can provoke in their interaction with reality. At the same time, Rouch's words embody the utopian nature of claiming filmmaking as a creator of social change. The celebratory aspect of Rouch's "racism no longer makes any sense" for these young people is a clear example. But at least, for these students, "not being racist made sense" as non-racist relationships were tried, embodied, and "sensed." Margulies speaks of "the paradox proper of activist films," in which "the demand to represent both the fluidity of changeable living relations and to provide a quotable image for the film's accomplishment" creates an unstable resting point.¹⁵³ Denise, one of the black students, gives a more nuanced statement to Rouch's claim, embodying an instance of shared anthropology. The story is "so much simpler and more complicated, but it's up to all of us to write it."

¹⁵³ Margulies, "The Real In-Balance in Jean Rouch's *La Pyramide Humaine*," 131.

Oh, it's a movie!

So, who's moving whom?

Victor Witkowski. Homeless in Central Park. *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*.

The dissolving of the film frame into the real is literally experienced in *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* (William Greaves, 1968). This documentary uses three different approaches to the reality being filmed. A camera records a series of screen tests with two actors in Central Park, NYC. There is also a camera filming the crew as they film, and a third camera filming the overall situation, including life as it unfolds in the park. Greaves asks the camera crews to give the same importance to everything around the making of the film: the actors, the crew, and the park. Sometimes, the film screen is split into two or three subframes, each presenting a different viewpoint of the shooting. Which is the film image when the three layers of reality are given equal presence and weight on the screen? Or what is film representation, if not an eventual condensation of those different layers into a unified cinematic image? How to represent what a film is?

Greaves' *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* also builds from notions of play, adventure, and experimentation with the real, which situates his approach close to the cinema of Jean Rouch. The sense of play, adventure, and danger is also implied in the film's working title during the shooting, *Off the Cliff*. Referring to risk-taking during the making of the film, Greaves expresses that this is what they are doing, jumping off the cliff. The cinematic concept of *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* is to provide a couple of actors

with a loose scenario for a screen test improvisation. As Greaves explains, the concept is that these screen tests prove to be unsuccessful, provoking tensions between actors and the director and forcing the team to come up together with a better script for the screen tests. But soon, this discussion extends to the film crew members. Without Greaves' presence, and allegedly without him knowing, the film crew ponders about the nature of the film they are making. Does Greaves know what he is doing? This scene exposes and potentially challenges the question of authority in several ways. First, the crew discusses whether this meeting appropriates Greaves' film or it is treason to the authority of the filmmaker, referred to as "the artist with the film in his head" by one of the crew members. The scene also explores who has the authority to define what a film is and what is not, how it should be directed, and the authority to define what exactly the film process is or should be. Jonathan, one of the sound recordists, argues that Greaves' approach of letting things loose provides the framework for this meeting. In other words, even though Greaves has not provoked the meeting directly, his approach to *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* created the possibility for it. It is the nature of the film process, in particular Greaves' artistic methodology, that "invites" this "unruly" behavior, for which crew members feel they owe an explanation to the audience.

Whereas the crew might be challenging the hierarchy of the organizational structure of filmmaking, Greaves is also challenging the hierarchy of the "completed" film image, allowing other images of the process to take the same presence, expression, and representational importance. Why do so? Later in *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, the

conversation about this film becomes open to all, including Greaves.¹⁵⁴ Greaves states that this challenging of his authority was a desired outcome from the beginning, as some of the crew members pondered. For him, the crew members' dissatisfaction with the film's authority is not so different from the general dissatisfaction of people with the political establishment in the USA around 1968. By participatory opening the process to the crew and the actors, even with a degree of manipulation on his part, he sees an opportunity to embody and perform a different relation to power, an example, a synecdoche, of what they might be doing in a wider political context. Films like *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, *La Pyramide Humaine*, and *Iranien* become instances of situated utopias, in which NYC Central Park, the made-up classroom decors in Rouch, or a cottage in the outskirts of Teheran become film worlds within this world in which real people can perform other possible worlds.

¹⁵⁴ In this scene, we see the director and the participant crew sitting in a circle. Sitting down in a circle to discuss aspects of the film process can be identified as a trope of many of the films discussed in this dissertation, especially those with a strongly participatory approach. See for instance *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm*, *La Pyramide Humaine*, *Two Laws*, *Chronique d'un été*, *Iranien* to name a few. Feminist filmmaking has also used this trope, particularly in the 1970s.

Developing *Encierro*

a) Duration as politics

Watch <https://vimeo.com/761427691> PW: ENC1

One of my first thoughts after deciding on the durational event was: "what the hell would we do inside a mine for 11 days?" This sense of duration, of a time "set apart" for this intervention to exist and unfold, became both a source of possibility and anxiety. Whereas a 1-2 hour theatre play representing the past felt too distanced from the historical referent understood as social reclamation, 11 people going inside the mine for 11 days in the present felt risky for the opposite reason: the durational event came too close to the original one. And with what purpose?

Going inside the mine could present the participants an opportunity to feel part of something that has defined our identity but that we never experienced directly. One of the project's participants stated during fieldwork, "the mine was a constant conversation at home: the mine, the mine, and the mine." People from my generation have heard innumerable stories about it, yet the mine always had a mysterious halo for us. The prospect of 11 days underground could be an opportunity to feel in our bodies something that has always been transmitted to us through words and representations. It appears as a possibility to reach those memories, not from the testimonies of the original participants, but from the repetition of some of their actions, as if the memory of those days could be materialized in our bodies 35 years later by going through the

motions once again, allowing us to feel with our bodies something similar to what they might have felt.¹⁵⁵

Reenactment practices as historiographical tools entail a move from a history based on texts and writing to embodiment, experience, and performance as a way of gaining historical insights "from the inside."¹⁵⁶ Vanessa Agnew, one of the most prominent scholars of reenactment practices and a groundbreaking figure in the development of the field, argues that "reenactment's central epistemological claim that experience furthers historical understanding is clearly problematic: body-based testimony tells us more about the present self than the collective past."¹⁵⁷ At the same time, she affirms that "rather than eclipsing the past with its own theatricality,

¹⁵⁵ For the notion of "going through the motions" in reenactment practices see for instance Bill Nichols, "Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject," *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2008): 72–89, <https://doi.org/10.1086/595629>.

¹⁵⁶ Agnew, "What Is Reenactment?," 311. *Encierro* has a clear relation with reenactment practices since it engages with a prior historical referent and tries to reproduce it in the present. In a sense, *Encierro* might not be far from the controversies of the "living history" approach, "both a movement and a practice that seeks to simulate how lives were lived in the past by reenacting them in the present." David Dean, "Living History," in *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field*, ed. Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann, 1st ed. (Milton: Routledge, 2020), 120, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429445637>. For some, living history has become "an accepted tool of historical research", while for others these interventions contribute to a "saccharine heritage culture" and to "escape the turbulent present for a nostalgia-saturated past." Alice Correia, "Interpreting Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave*," *Visual Culture in Britain* 7, no. 2 (2006): 102. Reenactment events have been accused of being "nothing but mere titillation, meaningless amateur dramatics promoting the post-modern simulacrum, a hazy image of a manipulated and trivialized past." Correia, 104. In general, many living history initiatives have been blamed for lacking "historical specificity" and being no more than de-contextualized generalizations. Correia, 104.

¹⁵⁷ Agnew, "What Is Reenactment?," 335.

reenactment ought to make visible the ways in which events were imbued with meanings and investigate whose interests were served by those meanings."¹⁵⁸ As we will see, *Encierro* provokes a process of "plural reflexivity" and social action in the village as a result of its making. Referring to juridical and ritual processes or redress put in motion to deal with societal crises, anthropologist Victor Turner defines plural reflexivity as "the ways in which a group tries to scrutinize, portray, understand, and then act on itself."¹⁵⁹ These processes have the capacity of "showing ourselves to ourselves" and "arousing consciousness of ourselves as we see ourselves."¹⁶⁰

From its inception, *Encierro* does not strive for authenticity in its relation to the historical referent, nor has historiography as its main objective. Rather, it can be grouped under the notion of artistic reenactments, "best understood as a performative utterance that creates something new" and proposes the past as an alternative scenario to be performed in the present.¹⁶¹ Curator and author Inke Arns argues that the "desire for performative repetition seems to reside in the fact that experience of the world, whether historical or contemporary, is based less and less on direct observation and today operates almost exclusively via media."¹⁶² Writing about artistic reenactment

¹⁵⁸ Agnew, 335.

¹⁵⁹ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 75.

¹⁶⁰ Turner, 75.

¹⁶¹ Stéphanie Benzaquen-Gautier, "Art," in *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field*, ed. Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann, 1st ed. (Milton: Routledge, 2020), 17, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429445637>. See also Antonio Caronia, Janez Janša, and Domenico Quaranta, eds., *RE:Akt! Reconstruction, Re-Enactment, Re-Reporting* (Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, 2014).

¹⁶² Arns and Horn, *History will repeat itself*, 43.

practices, Arns identifies a paradox based on a desire of "erasing distance to the images," as well as, in a world highly mediated by images and representation, distancing oneself from them.¹⁶³ Thus, speculatively and perhaps naively, this project asks, would we be able to relate to our history differently if we lock ourselves down in the mine for 11 days? Could we close, albeit slightly, the gap between the mining and the post-mining worlds? Thus, the desire for embodiment is more related to shortening an affective distance from the previous generations. *Encierro's* relation with history should be seen as a gesture to challenge the notion of "history is past," which is challenging the historical referent as such.

As a "performative move to make the past present," Margulies reminds us of the central question of reenactment: why reenact now?¹⁶⁴ That is something the proper old miners ask us as we share with them the idea of reenacting their strike. "What is the point of doing such a thing now?" ask the miners. By taking the 11 days lockdown out of the context of the labor movement and placing it within a creative and social experiment unrelated to the workers' struggle, I fear that I might fall into a certain trivialization. Minas de Almadén is no longer the company that sustains the area, and none of us has a working relationship with the company. And in regards to fostering community encounters, it is not necessary to invoke the example of a workers' strike. When I started sharing the project idea, I heard several sentences like this: "In 1984, there was a real claim that these miners were fighting for. But now, what are the

¹⁶³ Arns and Horn, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Margulies, *In Person*, 5.

claims?" Indeed, at present, there are no concrete claims. Paradoxically, the situation in the area in 2019 is even more desperate than in 1984, and the feeling of frustration and negativity is even greater than back then. The fact that there were no clear claims was not related to the lack of problems, quite the contrary. Rather, it was a symptom of the unstructured social and political landscape that the closure of the mine and the loss of population had brought about.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768417908> PW: ENC1

The durational event appears as a precious time opportunity to generate encounters between different people. In a damaged community, the aspect of conviviality appears as political in its most basic level: to bring people together. We are people from the same area, being affected by the same problems, most likely all hoping that things could improve, and, I would argue, not finding enough opportunities to come together and discuss (something which is relatable to many other places and contexts, not only Almadén) But to the question *if* we locked ourselves in the mine now, in our post-industrial present, *would* we be able to inspire community action and give visibility to the current problems of the area, as they did in the past, I feared that the sense of community and the ability to fight together might have also disappeared together with the mining world. Perhaps it was an absent object, only accessible through memory and representations.

As a documentary filmmaker, I am open to the potential outcome of this *what if* scenario. *What if* putting 11 people inside the mine for 11 days in the mine provokes nothing? *What if* nobody comes to the mine esplanade, or supports the performers, or even notices that this is happening in the village? In that scenario, I feel those 11 days as the evidence of the distance between the two worlds; in the absence of people, I imagine the ghosts and spectrums of the mining world visible in the random forms of the decaying ruins, audible as a wind whistling through the rusty metal structures. A painful film to make, but perhaps a creative exorcism to get distance from the traumatic collective experience of the industrial wreckage. In this outcome, the fantasy of a point of contact between the past and present will be shattered. The past is a foreign country to which we cannot come back.¹⁶⁵

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/761447550> PW: ENC1

But *what if time* returns?¹⁶⁶ *What if* the gesture of locking ourselves for 11 days can reawaken some of the feelings, hopes, frustrations, and desires expressed already 35 years ago, even though in a different context? If those passionate feelings can be conjured, revived, rem-ember-ed once again, where are they now, and where have they been all this time? Perhaps the notion of the ghost is inescapable in *Encierro*. The fugitive forces of the past might still be wandering around as ghosts liberated from past

¹⁶⁵ See David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; Cambridge University Press, 1985).

¹⁶⁶ The notion of time return is prominent in Schneider, *Performing Remains*.

behaviors, waiting to be materialized, searching for new performances to which they can, once again, be attached to.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768112106> PW: ENC1

Overall, duration as a methodology entails a double modification from the theatre play methodology: temporal and spatial. On the one hand, it opens the project to the experience of some people who will have to eat, sleep, wash, and ultimately live during 11 uninterrupted days inside the mine. On the other hand, it abandons a theatrical stage to exist in the everyday, potentially intervening in it. Locals could pass from refusal to engage with the intervention to being a spectator of a performance whose performative elements- actor, spectator, audience, setting, etc.- are difficult to differentiate and locate, to potentially get engaged and entangled in proper action, becoming what Augusto Boal calls spect-actors.¹⁶⁷ From a potential spectator's point of view, this performative event is not "something to see" but rather "something to deal with." There is inherent "violence" implied in creating such an event. The insertion of this event in the village's everyday life also entails a rupture from such everydayness. Thus, the recreation of the strike shares some similarities with the original strike as a

¹⁶⁷ “‘Spect-actor’ is a Boal coinage to describe a member of the audience who takes part in the action in any way; the spect-actor is an active spectator, as opposed to the passivity normally associated with the role of audience member.” Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Taylor and Francis, 2005), xxvi, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203994818>.

similar event of rupture. Once again, Boal's words speak directly to the preoccupations of Encierro. Boal writes,

Maybe the theatre in itself is not revolutionary, but these theatrical forms are without a doubt a rehearsal of revolution. The truth of the matter is that the spectator-actor practises a real act even though he does it in a fictional manner. While he rehearses throwing a bomb on stage, he is concretely rehearsing the way a bomb is thrown; acting out his attempt to organise a strike, he is concretely organising a strike. Within its fictitious limits, the experience is a concrete one.¹⁶⁸



Fig 14. “Living in the mine.” Participant takes a shower in the galleries. Photo: J. Schwanitz.

¹⁶⁸ Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 119–20.

b) Reenactment as event

The notion of the event has an essential lineage in philosophy.¹⁶⁹ In his interpretation of Badiou's concept of the event, TJ Demos argues, "the event—in its expanded theoretical sense—identifies the rupturing of the appearance of normality, opening a space of rethinking reality, producing new truths, subjects, and social systems."¹⁷⁰ In his essay, "Struggle, Event, Media," Maurizio Lazzarato argues that "in the paradigm of the event, images, signs, and statements contribute to allowing the world to happen. Images, signs, and statements do not represent something, but rather create possible worlds."¹⁷¹ For Lazzarato, "their effect is that of the creation and realization of what is possible, not of representation."¹⁷² In this paradigm, the event is also a potentially transformative time and space that "contribute to the metamorphoses of subjectivity, not to their representation."¹⁷³ Lazzarato argues that new time-space arrangements must be invented for this transformation of subjectivity. In other words, the event can be considered a rupture with the "world as-it-is." Under the paradigm of the event, images, signs, and statements are "possibilities, possible worlds, which affect

¹⁶⁹ See for instance Alain Badiou, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, Theory out of Bounds 16 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event*, 2, 1 [edition] (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

¹⁷⁰ Demos, *Beyond the World's End*, 201.

¹⁷¹ Maurizio Lazzarato, "Struggle, Event, Media," in *Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art. #1, The Green Room*, ed. Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2008), 209.

¹⁷² Lazzarato, 218.

¹⁷³ Lazzarato, 218.

souls (brains) and must be realized in bodies.”¹⁷⁴ Under this notion of the event, this dissertation understands documentary potential to intervene in the real.

In her theorization of reenactment as event, Jasen emphasizes reenactment “as a material and experiential process that generates particular affects, effects, meanings, and consequences for the participants involved.”¹⁷⁵ Jasen’s reenactment as event builds from Fredric Jameson’s “production as an event”, a notion Jameson uses to characterize the workings of post-modern documentaries. For Jameson, these documentaries are “marked by the active intervention of the film-production-process in its object.”¹⁷⁶ The event in Jameson claims that “the very operation of recording and representing it intervenes to change the outcome before our very eyes.”¹⁷⁷ Jasen argues that reenactment “is not only a means of representing events in the historical world; it is also, and more significantly, an event that intervenes in the historical world.”¹⁷⁸ In consideration of reenactment as event, “the accuracy of the representation, the degree to which it approximates its referent, the original event, is less significant than the performance itself as an expression of a community and its collective memory.”¹⁷⁹ Or as Margulies puts it, “reenactment does not so much demand consistent verisimilitude or authentic recreation as it calls for a deeper process of reanimation or vivification.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ Lazzarato, 218.

¹⁷⁵ Jasen, “Reenactment as Event in Contemporary Cinema,” 2013, 1.

¹⁷⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Signatures of the Visible* (New York: Routledge Classics, 2007), 262.

¹⁷⁷ Jameson, 259.

¹⁷⁸ Jasen, “Reenactment as Event in Contemporary Cinema,” 2013, 26–27.

¹⁷⁹ Jasen, 44.

¹⁸⁰ Margulies, *In Person*, 28.

Joris Ivens' film *Misère au Borinage* (Joris Ivens, 1934) is a case in point to understand this generative capacity of reenactment through repetition and performance, even if this generative aspect came unexpectedly to Ivens.¹⁸¹ Having missed a protest of the miners of the Borinage, Ivens asked the miners to repeat it by marching together on the streets holding a framed portrait of Marx, as it happened the first time. What was supposed to make visible a past event through a “repeated and organized scene”, became a new event of collective struggle.

While they marched up the steep village street with some comrades behind them, the people came out of their homes and they, the miners of Wasmes, their women and children, without even noticing the camera, spontaneously took part in the demonstration a second time and followed behind the portrait of Marx leading the way...The scene which had been especially repeated just for the film, developed into a real scene, a real demonstration, because of the pre-existing tense political situation in Borinage.¹⁸²

Even though repetition is a clear factor in reenactment, the potentiality of creation is embedded in the repetition process. As Ivens argues, "life itself will 'catch'

¹⁸¹ Joris Ivens, “Repeated and Organized Scenes in Documentary Film,” *Ausbau* 10/8 (1954): 3.

¹⁸² Ivens, 2.

such scenes and fill them with new form and emotion."¹⁸³ Margulies also points out these generative capacities of reenactment that "recall the original event (through a second degree indexicality) but in so doing can also re-form it."¹⁸⁴ As in ritual, performance can renew "the values, the ideological convictions, and the sense of collective agency" of a prior protest.¹⁸⁵

c) The past as a score

Rather than a series of historical episodes to be faithfully reproduced, I take the strike of 1984 as a documentary "score," which I need to adapt and perform in the current post-industrial reality.¹⁸⁶ It is a process of adaptation, appropriation, and citation of a past event into a new context.¹⁸⁷ The adaptation process necessitates

¹⁸³ Ivens, 2.

¹⁸⁴ Ivone Margulies, *Rites of Realism Essays on Corporeal Cinema*, E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 220, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822384618>.

¹⁸⁵ Jasen, "Reenactment as Event in Contemporary Cinema," 2013, 26.

¹⁸⁶ My use of the term score is inspired by the work of Fluxus artists. See for instance, Anna Dezeuze, "Origins of the Fluxus Score: From Indeterminacy to the 'Do-It-Yourself' Artwork," *Performance Research* 7, no. 3 (2002): 78–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2002.10871876>. Harren, *Fluxus Forms*. The score can be understood as "a generic, flexible outline for an action defined by a set of loose coordinates pertaining to time, space, and materiality, which were to be fully fleshed out by the performer in the context of a specific performance situation." Harren, 3. Especially seen in the work of George Brecht, the "score involves the arrangement of objects and actions in spatial and temporal relationships. Above all, it is open and generative, embodying the potential for an immense range of actions to take place in its wake." Harren, 9.

¹⁸⁷ According to K. Konuk, reenactment establishes different kind of "figural relationships" between past and present. Konuk names: reproduction, imitation (creating a mirror image), assimilation (gradually becoming the other), mimicry (creating similarity with a difference), animation (revival of specific elements), masquerade (performing a character), simulacrum (simulating reality), simulation

maintaining, discarding, and transforming the historical reference, the model. A clear example is the selection of the 11 participants for the 2019 lockdown. Apart from their willingness and availability, I selected the participants for their degree of involvement in the current social problems of the area, not for any possible acting capacities, personality traits, etc. Looking for socially engaged people was a way of adapting the concept of trade union members to the post-union context of 2019.

In 1984, 11 male miners carried out the strike because only men worked in the galleries, and there was no female presence in the workers' unions. In 2019, it would not make sense to restrict the casting to only male participants, and the project moves away from looking nostalgically at the male-dominated mining world. Whereas in 1984 the strike was part of the workers' movement, in 2019, the reenactment needs to be understood as a broader social reclamation, not tied to workers' claims. Including women as participants also aim to highlight women's indispensable role in the past mining strikes.¹⁸⁸ As a method, the casting aims to embody inclusiveness regarding gender, age, race, and sexual orientation, hoping that the encounter between people

(creating imaginary realities). Kader Konuk, "Mimesis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field*, ed. Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann, 1st ed. (Milton: Routledge, 2020), 143, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429445637>.

¹⁸⁸ For the role of women in mining strikes and mobilizations see for instance, *The Salt of the Earth* (Herbert J. Biberman, 1954), *Harlan County, USA* (Barbara Kopple, 1976), *Dal Profondo* (Valentina Pedicini, 2013), *Remine: El Último Movimiento Obrero* (Marcos M. Merino, 2014), *Putá Mina* (Colectivo Putá Mina, 2018), *El Trabajo o a Quien le Pertenece el Mundo* (Elisa Cepedal, 2019) Check also Jesse French, "Working Class History: E13: Women in the Miners' Strike on Apple Podcasts," accessed December 9, 2022, <https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/e13-women-in-the-miners-strike/id1355066333?i=1000421703989>.

with different backgrounds -and the "example" this convivial model can provide- would point to the necessity of addressing discriminatory attitudes and behaviors still entrenched in the village.¹⁸⁹ In addition, the participants would not have to represent the old miners; if anything, they must be present as the area's current inhabitants.

The prospect of living inside the mine for 11 days is an extreme commitment for the prospective participants. How to balance the 11 days underground with work, family, and other responsibilities became an issue. Eventually, some interested participants cannot commit. The final group of 11 participants was made up of men, women, people from different towns in the area, racial and sexual minorities, and people who have had to emigrate, like me, as I am one of the participants locked down in 2019.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768117207> PW: ENC1

¹⁸⁹ For an insightful consideration of casting as intervention, see Irene Lusztig's *Yours in Sisterhood* (Irene Lusztig, 2018) and her concept of "critical casting" in Irene Lusztig, "The Sense of Feminism Then and Now: Yours in Sisterhood (2018) and Embodied Listening in the Cinema Praxis of Irene Lusztig – Senses of Cinema," accessed December 9, 2022, <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2018/feature-articles/the-sense-of-feminism-then-and-now-yours-in-sisterhood-2018-and-embodied-listening-in-the-cinema-praxis-of-irene-lusztig/>.

d) *As if a strike*

Like in many other mining communities, a strong sense of pride comes from the inherent harshness of the works in the mine. The everyday reality of going underground to a dangerous and toxic place to earn your bread; the anxious waiting of the families for the miners to come out of the pit; the accidents, the tragedies, etc., create a very strong sense of belonging to a particular class of people.¹⁹⁰ Old miners talk about the mine in terms of suffering and struggle; however, the mine is so intrinsically related to them that it appears as if they are also talking about "the love of their lives." This powerful emotional combination has always escaped me as a member of a non-mining generation: some things must be experienced to be fully understood.

Since mining stopped and many of its protagonists passed away, these feelings of pride have also entered the realm of history. When asked about their motivations for joining this project, one of the participants mentioned, "I owe it to the memory of my grandfather." Other participants reflect upon what their late grandfathers would have thought about them going into the mine now. While remembering their grandparents' actions and lives, one of the participants broke into tears, saying: "I wish I had listened more to him when he tried to tell me of those mining stories." Some participants' strong affective connection to their miners-grandparents infuses the research and field-work process with a feeling of homage, tribute, gratitude, and appreciation of the past for the harsh life our grandparents had.

¹⁹⁰ See for instance Noemí G. Sabugal, *Hijos del carbón*, Primera edición., Narrativa hispánica (Barcelona: Alfabeta, 2020).

The sense of pride in Almadén is not only affective, but also historical. The mines of Almadén are of great historical importance. These are the richest mercury mines in the world's history, and 1/3 of the total extracted mercury comes from Almadén. Almadén Mining Company (MAYASA) is a state-owned company. Almadén was named "The Crown Jewel" for its importance during different phases of Imperialist Spain. Historically, the state has rented the mine to foreign clans, such as the Fugger family (1525-1645) or the Rothschilds (1834-1921), to pay for the accumulated state public debt. Almadén also had a very important role in the national economy during the twentieth century. In some of the interviews carried out during this research, the old miners spoke about the shock it produced them to see the official numbers of the contribution of Almadén to the national treasure. Meanwhile, Almadén miners lived almost in misery. Locals closely identify with this history, and we often talk about the "historical debt" that Spain has with this area for how much it gave with so little return. There is a haunting sense of collective failure vis-a-vis the current situation. As one of the participants wondered, "how can we remain silent while everything is going down the drain."

Whereas the strong connection of most of the participants to their miners-grandparents creates a powerful affective relation to the past, the grand history of Almadén, with its narrative of "historical debt," has the potential of fostering political reclamations. Neither the sense of political and social justice related to the compensation for the continuous extractive practices nor a pacifying feeling that our grandparents' suffering translated into a better future can be perceived amongst the

industrial ruins of Almadén. The "why now" in *Encierro* has to do with entertaining the idea that performing political action and a sense of community could eventually help us to face our challenging social and political problems. *Encierro* aims at a double gesture of documenting extraction and embodying reclamation.

Encierro aims to temporarily transform the heritage mine gallery into a political space, as it has always been, especially during workers' protests such as the 1984 mining strike. The strike of 1984 was a time of intense meetings between workers, workers' representatives, Almadén Mining Company (MAYASA), and the state. A strike in the traditional context of labor is no longer possible in the present circumstances. Nonetheless, the sense of injustice, frustration, and the desire for improvements that fueled the mining strike is still present 35 years later. The constant presence of those feelings of injustice poses the question of whether this project is a reenactment or a continuation of an unresolved issue already expressed 35 years ago. This time, the frustration is not solely focused on Almadén Mining Company but on the general distress and historical injustice due to the continued extractive practices that this mining community, like so many others, has suffered.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/557589534> PW: ENC1

During research and fieldwork, the participants in this project collectively decided to discuss different challenges of the life of the village: re-industrialization, employment, education, access to health, tourism management, cooperation between

different villages, entrepreneurship, teenage life, etc. The aim was to invite local politicians and experts to the underground to better understand our challenges and possibilities. We aimed to openly discuss those issues, liberating ourselves from the constraints of the present and imagining how things could be improved. During the meetings held in *Encierro*, political frustrations and desires are equally prominent. The notion of a “wish list” (or “letter to Santa”) becomes a shortcut to define the working method. We propose that different visitors imagine the ideal situation regarding the different discussion topics. This “wish list” becomes the first step to creating a document, or road map, to expose all these different aspects that we have collectively imagined could improve the situation in the area. This often utopian “wish list” is gradually transformed during the 11 days into a document with different sections: industrialization, infrastructures, transport, education, health, tourism, etc. Under each of these sections, a series of claims are articulated. During the 11 days of lockdown, we gave form to this document, handed it to our regional political representatives, and requested from them a series of working meetings after our lockdown ended to continue working on the pursuit of some of these claims.¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹This approach resonates with anthropologist Robert B. Textor’s notion of “Ethnographic Futures Research”, a methodological approach for charting images of the future that individuals and communities hold. “Just as the cultural anthropologist conventionally uses ethnography to study an extant culture, so the cultural futures researcher uses EFR to elicit from members of an extant social group their images and preferences (cognitions and values) with respect to possible or probable future cultures for their social group.” Robert B. Textor, *A Handbook on Ethnographic Futures Research*, Cultural and Educational Futures Research Project (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1980), 10. Developing this notion, futurists and designers Stuart Candy and design researcher Kelly Kornet ask “what happens when we take the challenge of making particular futures ‘tangible’ seriously?” Stuart Candy and Kelly Kornet,

Conclusion

Diana Taylor's notion of scenario helps in revisiting this concept as it stands at the end of developing the artistic methodology of *Encierro*. Taylor's scenario moves from descriptions of actions to scenarios as performances with real effects in the world. For instance, the 1984 miners' lockdown fits Taylor's definition of scenarios as "culturally specific imaginaries -set of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution -activated with more or less theatricality."¹⁹² To lock in the mine to demand social betterment is a frame of action "basically fixed and, as such, repeatable and transferable," as its use in Almadén (1979/1984) and other Spanish mining basins demonstrate.¹⁹³ Scenarios provide "a paradigmatic setup that relies on supposedly live participants, structured around a schematic plot, with an intended (though adaptable) end."¹⁹⁴ But even though scenarios are constructed as a formulaic structure "that predispose certain outcomes," it still allows "for reversal parody, and change."¹⁹⁵ As

"Turning Foresight Inside Out: An Introduction to Ethnographic Experiential Futures," *Journal of Futures Studies* 23, no. 3 (March 2019): 5. They develop the notion of Experiential Futures (XF) "a family of approaches for making futures visible, tangible, interactive, and otherwise explorable in a range of modes." XF uses "material and performative registers to build on the field's traditional uses of theoretical, schematic and verbal exploration" of possible and desired futures. Candy and Kornet, 5–6.

¹⁹² Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 13.

¹⁹³ A few examples of miners' lockdown in Spain: Mina de Llamas, Ablaña (Asturias, 1967): 11 miners, 6 days. Mina Hijos de García Simón (Fabero, León, 1976): 82 miners, 7 days. Pozo Julia (Fabero, León, 1979): 90 miners, 6 days. La mina de Cala (Huelva, 1982): 28 miners, 32 days. Pozo Calderón (León, 1992): 8 miners, 51 days. Fabero (León 1993): 7 miners underground plus 40 women locked-in the local town hall. Pozo Maria (Caboalles de Abajo, León, 1999): 5 miners, 66 days (30 Sept-4 Dec 1999). Velilla del Río Carrión (Palencia, 2010): 52 miners, 28 days. Santiago de Aller (Asturias, 2012): 7 miners, 50 days. Aller (Asturias, 2019): 4 miners, 7 days.

¹⁹⁴ Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 13.

¹⁹⁵ Taylor, 31.

in Rouch and Greaves' scenarios, the methodological choices might predispose the action into certain directions, and, in *Encierro*, even though the project is open to the predictability as well as the unpredictability of using a past strike as a scenario, most participants have hopes that this scenario provokes certain reactions in the community. So, what could be the result of using a previous scenario of political protest transferred and inserted into the methodological frame of a socially engaged artistic practice in the present? That question is the scope of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3.

THE MINE STILL WORKS

Introduction

This chapter centers on the lockdown event, and further engages with the notion of the past as a score as a process of creative adaptation and iteration. This chapter is organized around some of the aspects that I identify as active agents into the creation of the reality that *Encierro* documents. These aspects are presented as potentialities, or powers, able to activate and reactivate collective memories and imagination, practices of care, performances of collectivity, social reflexivity and, above all, political action. Through these different potentialities, I aim to explain how the 11-day reenactment becomes a new iteration of a “strike,” that did not start from a labor movement, but from an artistic intervention. Even though there seem to be considerable differences in circumstances and stakes between the past and its reenactment, I will argue that the making of *Encierro* comes closer to Schneider’s concept of “touching time”, as well as Michael Taussig’s notions of the power of mimesis, which grants the represented the character and power of the original.

This chapter devotes special emphasis to the mine as a location, and in particular to the underground galleries. I will present the underground as a liminal time and place, partially removed from the time and space of everyday life and nonetheless with the capacity of transforming it. The combination of real and symbolic aspects of

these galleries allows me to present *Encierro* as a ritualistic gesture, and to demonstrate the capacities of ritual, and reenactment, to do socio-cultural work.

First and foremost, a ritual requires doing, “if it is not performed, there is no rite.”¹⁹⁶ It is not only performed but re-performed. As religious studies scholar Barry Stephenson writes, “ritual entails engaging in specific, formalized acts, and utterances not of one’s own making.”¹⁹⁷ An important aspect of ritual is the possibility of ritual to do socio-cultural work. Stephenson, following ethnographer and folklorist Arnold Van Gennep, argues “ritual is not mere re-enactment of beliefs, narratives, or values but enactment; a rite of passage does not simply mark a transition in the life cycle but affects it.”¹⁹⁸ *Encierro* works with the hypothesis that the 11-day lock-in does not only contains, or represent, political action, but indeed creates it. In this process, the mine as a location is fundamental, for this 11 days confinement would have worked very differently, should have been done in a different space in town. By locating ourselves in the mine, we are re-activating the forces that it contains and that have become inherent to the place itself. “The mine is everybody’s house,” says one of the participants. At least emotionally, there is a sense of shared ownership of the space. The mine is not only our house. It is us. Despite, or because of, everything happened in that underground, it comes closer to a “sacred” place to the community.

¹⁹⁶ Barry Stephenson, *Ritual: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions 421 (Oxford ; Oxford University Press, 2015), 100.

¹⁹⁷ Stephenson, 90.

¹⁹⁸ Stephenson, 68.

The title of the chapter “The mine still works” signals to the capacity of the mine -as a potent presence and symbol- to still create, foster and mediate a series of social relations. In other words, whereas the project actively put in motion a creative/social process in the area, the mine itself, and all the affects that is still able to provoke, become a clear agent in the creation of the pro-filmic reality. Borrowing philosopher Marshall McLuhan’s understanding of media, the mine is a medium as it “shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action.”¹⁹⁹ That was true in the mining Almadén, which organized their livelihood and social structure around the mine. I will argue that this is also true in this reenactment. Media theorist John Durham Peters argues that media “are vessels and environments, containers of possibility that anchor our existence and make what we are doing possible.”²⁰⁰ Resonating with this research’s attempt to situate the mine, and *Encierro*, beyond representation, Peters argues that “a medium must not mean but be.”²⁰¹ Media, including documentary filmmaking, can “cease to be only studios and stations, messages and channels, and become infrastructures and forms of life.”²⁰² In a statement that resonates with how this dissertation understands films such as *La Pyramide Humaine*, *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm* and *Encierro*, Peters suggestively moves the concept of media “beyond messages to habitats.”²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Corte Madera: Gingko Press, 2013), 10.

²⁰⁰ John Durham Peters, *The Marvelous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago ; The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 2.

²⁰¹ Peters, 14.

²⁰² Peters, 14.

²⁰³ Peters, 14.

The hole

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/751520381> PW: ENC1

Even though the mine is closed for production, the underground is a real space and, in fact, a potentially dangerous one. The intervention presents some risks to the participants, who have not any prior experience of spending extended time inside a mine.²⁰⁴ The 11 participants descend to the cave on 30th July of 2019 only with their blue or red overalls, their helmets and a light. From then on, they are depending on the people from the surface to send them all they will need to live underground for 11 days: mattresses, food, water, clothes, etc. This follows the way the strikers of 1984 entered the mine. Then, it was in order not arouse suspicion from the mining company towards their actions; in our case, it is part of the mimetic homage to the past.

Even though we are not representing the past, there is a strong sense of imitation, of mimesis, at the heart of this project. Walter Benjamin describes the mimetic faculty as "the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else."²⁰⁵ Developing Benjamin's thesis, anthropologist Michael Taussig argues in *Mimesis and Alterity* that "the wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may

²⁰⁴ All the participants in this project went through medical checks to ensure that there were no health issues that could be affected or worsened by living underground for 11 days. The mining company (MAYASA) also provided all participants with health and safety training and procedures prior to the lockdown.

²⁰⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, 1st ed (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1978), 333.

even assume that character and that power."²⁰⁶ Taussig proposes an important notion of the image as action. He insists on “breaking away from the tyranny of the visual notion of the image.”²⁰⁷ By image, we should not merely understand representation, but also include actions, design, and ritualistic practices that establish a relationship with the thing of which they are a copy. As an example, he explains how “the Navaho sand-painting is said to cure not by patients’ looking at the picture inscribed therein, but by their placing their body in the *design* itself.”²⁰⁸ The notion of design takes us closer to the artistic methodologies at the center of this dissertation: a situation, a design, an image in a broader sense, that the participants enter and both act and are acted upon. For Taussig, the ritual “gestus” has the capacity of effecting reality as “we move from image, to scene, and from scene to performative action.”²⁰⁹ In other words, this artistic research poses the question of *what if* a reenactment of a strike is also an iteration of a strike, even though in post-industrial Almadén there is no more mining, no production to be shut down, and this *would-be* strike is not originating from labor, but from artistic action. Mimesis in *Encierro* is a desire for “inter(in)animation of one time with another time.”²¹⁰

Out of the 27th floors that reached around 850 meters deep, this is the only gallery salvaged from flooding. The rest of the underground mine has now been

²⁰⁶ Michael T. Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 1993), xiii.

²⁰⁷ Taussig, 56.

²⁰⁸ Taussig, 57. *My emphasis.*

²⁰⁹ Taussig, 56.

²¹⁰ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 30–31.

reclaimed by the water from which it once emerged. Old miners often say “this is not the mine”. But it is, even though very different from the galleries of the twentieth century, wide enough for machinery to go through, comparable to the underground tunnels of our urban metro networks. The gallery in *Encierro* is from the fifteenth century, in which free men, prisoners and slaves worked and died. Now, it is a place through which tourists walk while listening to stories about it. While the mine has lost some of the features that made it a “real” mine, it has in turn increased its symbolic, and representative power since its closure.²¹¹

The combination of real and symbolic experience grants the 11 days spent inside the mine a ritualistic character. As a ritual, it is one of remembering and honoring the past, and of discontent, dissensus, and desire for change in the present.²¹² Van Gennep defines the three stages of ritual as *separation*, *transition* and *incorporation*.²¹³ In *Encierro*, participants are ‘removed’ from their everyday life and immersed into the cave’s liminal “out of time”/ “other space” until their reincorporation into society 11

²¹¹ As it happens with many industrial towns that mostly rely on a main source of economy, the closure of the mercury mines in Almadén also brought about an important cultural and identity crisis. For instance, the mining knowledge of the previous generations stopped having a practical utility for younger people, since they will not have to work in the mines anymore: what it could have had an important professional value became not more than old-men-stories about working in the mine. In other words, what belonged to the world of practice, it now entered the realm of representation, of stories that *stand for* concrete past practices.

²¹² The mechanisms of a strike also reflect very closely Turner’s concept of “social drama”, again in terms of ritual. See for instance, Victor Turner, “Are There Universals of Performance in Myth, Ritual, and Drama?,” in *By Means of Performance*, ed. Richard Schechner and Willa Appel, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 8–18, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511607806.003>.

²¹³ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 24–27. *Italics* on original.

days later. Ritual implies a change in the quality of time and a parallel passage in space that can be as small as opening a door or crossing a threshold (in this case, entering the lift that takes the participants underground the shaft) or as large as crossing several countries as in a pilgrimage.²¹⁴

From secrecy to media event

The 11-day lockdown event started on 30th July 2019, precisely on the 35th anniversary of the 1984 lockdown. By the date the 11 participants go inside the mine, it is well-known in the area that 11 people are going to lockdown in the mine for 11 days. There is a clear difference between what happened in 1984 and this day. In 1984, the miners kept their striking plans in secret; even from their own families. They understood that keeping it secret was the best way to avoid inference from the company. 35 years later, the reality, and the strategy, is very different. First of all, this intervention is part of an artistic project and is made with the total authorization and support from MAYASA. It is not a workers' action against the mine; but an artistic intervention in agreement with them. Moreover, we have decided to give the project as much visibility and publicity as possible before the lockdown. The production team and the group of participants work on writing and sending press releases, use their social networks to reach media workers, contact celebrities that come from our area to ask for support, etc. The lockdown needs to be also understood as a media event, a spectacle.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ Turner, 24–26.

²¹⁵ For a relation of reenactment practices and media events see for instance, *La Commune (Paris, 1871)* (Peter Watkins, 2000)

In the morning of the entrance, the mine esplanade is full of people from Almadén and other villages nearby. People hold banners with present as well as past claims. Some of them have been made by the participants, but other people have brought their own to the mine as a sign of support. TVE, the public national Spanish broadcaster is there to cover live the entrance of the participants in the mine, coming back once again 35 years later to document what is happening in this small town of the south. Their cameras mix with the cameras of our project. Originally presented to us as a 5-minute live broadcast, it eventually becomes around 18 minutes of nationwide live coverage of our entrance to the mine. The mixture of excitement, emotion and media presence turns it into an emotionally charged moment, in which remembering the past mixes with a strong sense of community effervescence in the present -best expressed in how the people spontaneously end up singing the anthem of Almadén as we descend into the galleries. The “spectacular” aspect of 11 people proposing to live 11 days underground was what first attracted media. On the one hand, I perceive the spectacular aspect of the intervention as problematic. I fear that it could transform the event on a media show, too stripped off its original function as reclamation.²¹⁶ On the other hand, and looking beyond our local history, the spectacularism of the action is a tool to bring the focus towards our area.

The significant media presence achieved prior to the lockdown can be also explained by the balance found between the two sides of the project: affective/nostalgic and social/political. In most of the interviews, I presented the project both as an homage

²¹⁶ Mining plus media-show irremediably relate to *Ace in the Hole* (Billy Wilder, 1951)

to our grandparents (affective aspect) and an opportunity to express our present difficulties (social aspect). I speak of how the 35th and 40th anniversaries of the mining strikes of 1984 and 1979 respectively become a timely opportunity to reflect upon where and how we are in the area after the closure of the mine. The affective and commemorative aspects, and the fact that this was “the making of a film”, not a real strike, made the project fit to different media strands, ranging from news, to society and cultural programs, and to an afternoon live TV show mostly known for helping elderly people finding romantic company. In short, the project sounded interesting and “harmless” enough to attract wide media attention without becoming politically uncomfortable. Rather than our claims, it was our action, our “gesture” of homage and reflection through locking down in the mine *again* after 35 years, that attracted media first, and politicians after.²¹⁷ As with happens with many activist actions, the sense of spectacle was mobilized tactically to try and enter an over saturated media landscape with (yet) another spectacle, no matter how genuine the affective, commemorative and reflective aspects of the project in fact were.

TVE’s extensive live coverage of the entrance creates the first inflection point in the shooting process. From then on, radio, newspapers and TV broadcasters become usual visitors in the mine. *The power of media* to generate reality is related to all these aspects that media allow, foster, and even provoke. Firstly, the presence of journalists,

²¹⁷ For instance, the week before we started our lockdown, a rally with more than 2.000 happened in the village to protest for the precarious access to health services in the area. To that rally, no TV stations, newspapers or radio stations (beside the local one), or relevant politicians attended the march.

cameras and microphones allow the participants to express their claims and hopes for the future. It also increases the feeling that something real is happening in the village beyond the making of a film, something to which national media is turning their attention to: media provokes a reassuring feeling that our problems interest others, that somebody is listening to us. As one of the participants say, “when they put the microphone in front of me, instead of feeling nervous, I feel relieved and able to finally say all that I have been keeping inside for too long.”²¹⁸ The increasing presence of mass media in the village produces a chain effect. It attracts local, regional and national politicians, including national parliament members and senators; the politicians come down to the galleries to have meetings and debates with the 11 participants. News broadcasters start registering this as social and political action in Almadén, which encourages the community to further engage in political action. In other words, media is not just representing what was happening in Almadén, but becoming a clear agent in the construction of the reality lived during those days. At the core of it, it is the “spectacular” action of locking down in the mine.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768392129> PW: ENC 1

²¹⁸ Similar engagements with media can be seen in *VTR St-Jacques* (Bonnie Sherr Klein, 1969)

During the 11 days lockdown, the underground participants also record a “radio diary”, which consists of some updates about the meetings held underground as well as reports of the everyday life in the mine. It is also an opportunity to thank the community for their continuous and invaluable support. The “radio diaries” are broadcast every day in the local radio station. And every evening, they are also played back in the mine explanade for the people that gather there. Both at a local and affective level through the “radio diaries”, as well as nationally through the mass media content that is being recorded and aired to the whole country, the sturdy metal structures of the mine shaft become, at least metaphorically, a big “antenna” from which the village is broadcasting to the rest of the country, while also asking for help.²¹⁹

Imagining the hole

The hole engages the imagination of the community, both before and during the event. The uncomfortable prospect of living inside a cave; the necessity to devise routines to endure the very slow passage of time; the presumed disorientation of living in a continuous night; the fear of darkness -and even spirits- that might wander after all the tragedies occurred in that hole, the exploitation of slaves, the nightmares related to family traumas related to the mine, etc., are aspects that, standing between reality and

²¹⁹ The engagements with media also follow a more “rhizomatic” pattern through social media. The content aired by mass media; the one produced locally via the project, as well as people’s photographs, videos, messages, etc., that circulate via social media, allow for affective and political engagements far beyond the confines of Almadén, especially amongst people from the area that had to emigrate from the town to other parts of Spain, and abroad. See for instance Bosh, “Theorizing Citizens’ Media: A Rhizomatic Approach.”

imagination, inform some of the conversations prior to the beginning of the event. For instance, one of the prospective participants had nightmares related to the mine and the project in the days before coming to the casting-interview. In his dreams, he starts feeling uncomfortable, trapped, physically restless. He sees himself falling into a deep and dark hole as he tried to enter the mine. He also dreams of the 11 days having a secret and dark agenda: once the participants were all underground, me as a director of the project started to mistreat them, exploit them, deprive them of food, water and sleep.

The grandfather of this participant had died in an accident in the mine of Almadén many years ago. When a miner died, the company used to offer the widow a job as a cleaner in the mine facilities. The participant's grandmother firmly rejected this offer. "How could she go to work every day to the place where her husband had died?" Instead, the woman opened and ran a hardware store in the village, which recently closed after three generations of continuous business. The participant added: "My grandmother never forgave the Virgin of the Mine for not protecting my grandfather the day he died. Each 8th September, while the village celebrated the Virgin celebrations, my grandmother, who wore black clothes for the rest of her life, closed all the windows and blinds and sat alone in the dark, while people paraded outside". To conclude this interview this participant remarked: "the idea of facing 11 days in that place that has taken so much from us it's so difficult. It's beyond me." Both the prospect of the unknown to come, as well as the personal, familiar and historical weight of the underground, engage the imagination of the participants before the event, and evidence some aspects of the complex relation between these communities and the mine.

The general view in Almadén now is that we are in a different kind of hole, a dark shaft, caused by the lack of restructuring plans after the closure of the mine. Our ‘Voyage to the Center of Earth’ is meant as an underground journey in search of connection with our origins and ancestors, but also as a trip to the darkness in search of a path that could make us see some bright light at the end of the tunnel. As the group of 11 participants gathered and discussed the situation of Almadén, a motto emerged: “Del Pozo Se Sale”. This could be roughly translated as “We’ll get out of the hole”. The motto could also be treated as “Hope in the Dark”, a concept that writer, historian and activist Rebecca Solnit coined. Rather than equating darkness with negative connotations, Solnit uses darkness to refer to the uncertainty about the future. For Solnit, “to hope is to give yourself to the future, and that commitment to the future makes the present inhabitable.”²²⁰ Hope necessitates action, and “action is impossible without hope.”²²¹ Solnit speaks about activist social transformations and reminds us that what “these transformations have in common is that they begin in the imagination, in hope.”²²²

During the 11 days, people from the surface also express the intervention in symbolic terms. Their messages speak of participants “being buried alive” or “bringing light into the darkness of the village”. Another message states, “we are a village that is hitting rock bottom; however, now you are the ones who are at the very bottom of the

²²⁰ Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, Third edition, (Chicago, Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2016), 4.

²²¹ Solnit, 4.

²²² Solnit, 4.

village, fighting for it". Many of the messages imagine how hard must be to be living underground, in constant darkness, for so many days. Even though the 2019 lockdown cannot be presented as hard, that hole is irremediably connected with harshness, suffering and death. Associations that most clearly belong to the mining past circulate again, now projected into the heritage site of the mine.

The bodies of the 1984 strikers were a central element of the protest. In fact, a weapon to be used against the company. In order to eventually protect their health, the miners' lock-in consisted of exposing their bodies to a high contamination of mercury for what was, in the beginning, an unlimited period of time.²²³ Their bodies at risk created an urgency that forced the Company and the State to react quickly.²²⁴ Miners refused to take any of the blood tests through which the company wanted to assess their contamination from mercury.²²⁵ Preventing the company from having this knowledge, they concluded, would increase their worry and sense of responsibility towards their

²²³ The strikers were feeling mistreated by the company and frustrated with the negotiations of their salary. In order to accept the pay rise, the company suggested increasing the miners' working shifts from 8 to 12 per month. Even though the company spoke that some of these shifts could be done on the surface rather than in the galleries, the miners feared that the work inside the galleries would end up increasing and having a negative effect in their health.

²²⁴ The miners' bodies are always at risk in their everyday job. Writer and filmmaker Georges Perec criticized the culture of headlines when affirming that "what is scandalous isn't the pit explosion, it's working in coalmines. 'Social problems' aren't a matter of concern' when there's a strike, they are intolerable twenty-four hours out of twenty-four, three hundred and sixty-five days a year." In Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces = Pigeon Reader*, IAM Twenty-First Century Classics (Acklam: Information As Material, 2012), 209.

²²⁵ All the striking miners I spoke to came out with very high levels of mercury in blood. Some of them ensured that the level of mercury inside those galleries was 300% over the limit set by the World Health Organization (WHO)

health.²²⁶ Not having the same stakes, our bodies also become a way to call attention. “This a good way to call attention, to put the focus once again in the problems of this area”, a radio interviewer says. “The cruel way in which you are calling our attention”, opens a senator her speech underground. The miners of 1984 have been denouncing their situations for long time. Nobody listened until they *did* something. Our bodies seem to have a similar power, despite the temporal differences. The “spectacular” and the “suffering” bodies re-emerge 35 years later through the re-activation of the mining lockdown as a scenario.

The performance of collectivity

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768408237> PW: ENC1

Even though this intervention is open to the unexpected, the community encounter is something it strived actively for from the beginning. Soon, the mine esplanade becomes an inter-generational meeting point for daily encounters. Being locked down inside the mine, I do not have first-contact experience with what is happening outside. Sometime later, I would gather some testimonies of how people experienced those days on the surface. One of the persons I talked to said, "those days looked like Christmas or New Year when people will greet even without knowing each

²²⁶ As it also happens in hunger's strikes, there is a self-infringed pain as a way of protest that it was also, to a certain degree, present in the miners' lockdowns happened in Almadén in 1979 and 1984.

other." Another person said people would spontaneously talk to each other in the mine esplanade about their lives and the village situation. "I don't know how to explain it; it felt like magical days," he remarked.

Each evening, the Mining Park workers open the mine esplanade gates for a few hours to the village's people. On the third day of the lock-in, locals organize a symbolic protest of banging pots. People come to the mine esplanade for around an hour and make as much noise as possible. There is a festive and playful aspect to it. The framework of play is at work in two main aspects. Coming to the esplanade to support the people underground is the widest collective memory of the strikes of 1979 and 1984. The sense of doing it again means that locals play a part in the reenactment, even though the banging pot was not an action in the previous strike. In addition, the opening/closing of the gates bound a time in which the community could symbolically express their discontent. Their actions are considered "less serious than life," like play often is, or similar to how carnival time allows social protest expression.

Nonetheless, as I would find out sometime later, the mine management was already growing uncomfortable with these collective symbolic protest actions. Beyond its consideration as play or carnival, the noise comes down through the shaft and reaches the mine galleries as an abstract thumping sound. Detached from the bodies and festive performances that produce them - and with its high frequencies filtered out by the materiality of the mine - the noise resembles a throbbing pounding heart, resonating emotionally with the underground participants. Whether this is play or

genuine expression of discontent seems less important than the feeling of collective action and the presence of the people out there.

The 11 days also provoke a process of “plural reflexivity” in the village, expressed as testimonies straight to the camera but often directed to the rest of the community. “Through the making of this film, we are taking the opportunity to expose the situation of the village,” one member of the community states. In those interviews, there is a sense of trying to seize the moment and act collectively. The sense of historical debt mixes with more positive hopes for the future. There is also a degree of self-critique about “how we are in here,” “what we need,” and brainstorming about what we should do to improve our situation. For instance, the Ecuadorian- Guinean community of university students take this opportunity to bring attention to the discrimination they still suffer in Almadén, a message that directly challenges one of the most-repeated mantras in Almadén, that “we are very welcoming people to everybody that comes.”

The liminal underground

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768408855> PW: ENC1

Almadén, “the mine,” rose as a town from these mining shafts, and the mines' decay has made it crumble. The mine in Almadén has provided work, livelihood, community, identity, pride, and progress. It has also brought about sickness, death, exploitation, slavery, struggle, and abandonment. The underground in Almadén is both

a place for life and death, and mines generally cannot be understood without that entanglement. These dynamics of life and death are used symbolically in *Encierro*.

In Turner's ritual theory, liminality is a state of in-betweenness and transformation. Turner describes liminality as "a fructile chaos, a fertile nothingness, a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms and structure, a gestation process, a fetation of modes appropriate to and anticipating postliminal existence."²²⁷ The liminal is also a time and space in which to scrutinize, reflect and potentially rework some aspects of society. Liminality represents society's "subjunctive mood, where suppositions, desires, hypotheses, possibilities, and so forth, all become legitimate."²²⁸ Compared to the apparent stability of social realities, the liminal can be seen as an ambiguous state of indeterminacy and anti-structure. Structure is for Turner "the working equilibrium."²²⁹ On the contrary, anti-structure is "the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty can arise."²³⁰

In *Encierro*, traveling to the depths of the mine becomes traveling back in time, both in real and symbolic terms. In the geological profile of the soil, the deeper we go, the oldest the sediments are, "depth becomes time," as new media theorist Jussi Parikka states, eventually reaching the "deep time" of earth formation.²³¹ The rocks that form

²²⁷ Turner and Bruner, *The Anthropology of Experience*, 42.

²²⁸ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, vii.

²²⁹ Victor W. Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, The Lewis Henry Morgan Lectures, 1966 (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969), 28.

²³⁰ Turner, 28.

²³¹ Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, 13.

the mine of Almadén were once under the ocean, from which they emerged.²³² Fifty meters underground, one can still see the ripple marks of the sea imprinted in the vertical walls of the gallery. The mine is an archive of our geological past, and also an archive of past lives and histories.²³³ The past is embodied in the shape of these galleries, resulting from the human actions, work power, technologies, and mining operations of the fifteenth century. As the only visitable gallery, this underground maze can transmit other temporalities, for instance, that of the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries mine slaves, and the twentieth century workers' struggle. In addition, our time in the mine is one of hope and desire, engaging a future temporality around the mine's oldest shaft. The mine galleries become a palimpsest of times, featuring a complexity of temporalities that eventually situate them "out of time."

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768410482> PW: ENC1

²³² These deposits of mercury were once under the ocean, from which they emerged. In the vertical walls of the first-floor underground gallery, there are still ripple marks, which show what once was the bottom of the ocean.

²³³ This relates to Donna Haraway's notion of naturecultures. See for instance Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, *Posthumanities* 37 (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2016).

Por los que nacisteis aquí y
quereis seguir viviendo por los
que venimos de fuera y nos
enamoramus del lugar y de su
gente, por todos, Gracias por
lo que estais haciendo, mucha

Hola Nacho, de te que seguimos
no solo a ti a los lo que estais
que siguais con fuerza que todo
es apoya. @kingcelos97

apoyando
esperamos
tanto que

Fig 15-16. These two messages were sent down with a rope and a little stone to reach underground. They stuck and only appeared in the underground gallery in 2021, with the time passed shown in them.

The ghosts of reenactment

The ruins are complex ghostly sites in which presence-absence, past-present, dead-alive, and signifier-signified cannot be properly disentangled. Reenactment is also a matter of ghosts. In reenactment practices, past and present can become "mutually disruptive energy," affecting and unsettling each other.²³⁴ This disruption comes from "moments that are not yet past and yet are not entirely present either."²³⁵ Reenactment plays with the ghosts and specters of the past, putting them in circulation again, complicating our notion of what is gone and done with.²³⁶

El Coraje del Pueblo (Jorge Sanjinés, 1971) can be used to exemplify the ghostly aspect of reenactment practices. Sanjinés' film describes the oppression and killings of mining communities in Bolivia between 1942 and 1967. It overtly denounces the mining company's owners, the army's high ranks, and the different Bolivia presidents as responsible for these thousands of crimes. The film is a chronicle of the days leading to the last massacre in the mining community of Siglo XX on the night of San Juan, the 24th of June of 1967. It is mainly composed of reenactments and testimonies, and its principal protagonists are the witnesses and survivors of the attack. Through the use of reenactments, Sanjinés sought to allow the participants "to transmit their experiences with the intensity they possessed."²³⁷ Possess is a suitable word here,

²³⁴ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 15.

²³⁵ Schneider, 15.

²³⁶ Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

²³⁷ Jorge Sanjinés, *Theory and Practice of a Cinema with People*, Art on the Line 6 (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1989), 42.

since it is a sort of possession what the filmmakers witnessed during the filming of some of the reenactments.

The film's first scene reenacts an attack on a mining community that happened in Catavi in December of 1942. A group of miners, composed of men, women, and children, protest against the mine owners, the army, the president of Bolivia, and U.S. imperialism. An older woman leading the rally waves a Bolivian flag, whose color contrasts with the pale tones of the rest of the scene. On the top of a hill, members of the Bolivian army await patiently behind their guns for the compact mass of miners to come closer and become an even easier target. Miners represent themselves in the scene; some army members involved in previous attacks on these communities also do so. Sanjinés' camera enters the group of miners for the first time, a visual strategy that will be repeated several instances throughout the film. Once the gunshots start, the sound of the army guns mixes with the desperate cries of men, women, and children amongst the unarmed group of miners. A remarkable aspect of this reenacted scene is how children cry in the scene. The numerous bodies lying on the ground pretending to be dead, the fake blood, and their mothers crying make the children confound the reenactment of the attack with an actual attack. The reenactment of the killing ends up with most of the miners' bodies lying inert on the ground, with the Bolivian flag covering one of them.

The crew filmed this reenactment using several cameras, with the scene unfolding from beginning to end without interruptions.²³⁸ Sanjinés recalls how the different cameramen felt caught in the middle of an intense experience, almost as if they were photographing a real massacre.²³⁹ There is a state of anxiety in the crowd that transcends the screen. For Sanjinés, "they were situations created on the spot by people who, amid the turbulence and explosions, were reliving their past. An incredible capacity for expression had developed among those who collectively reenacted the massacre."²⁴⁰ Close-ups of some soldiers after the shooting reflect the intense and complex feelings that, going through the motions of the attack -and witnessing its results- made them recall once again.

The reenactment also covers the killings' aftermath, where the participants' "dead" bodies are thrown into a mass grave together. Necessarily, this is a psychologically complex situation for the survivors and witnesses of these attacks. The physical perception of being thrown into a pretend mass grave and being filmed crumpled amongst other inert bodies in it carries an important psychological load. They belong to a community where those scenes are too often real, and what is a reenactment today, could be, once again, reality tomorrow. The opening reenactment of *El Coraje del Pueblo* features a double ritual for the participants. On the one hand, it is a ritual of

²³⁸ Jorge Silva and Marta Rodríguez, "Revolutionary Cinema: The Bolivian Experience / Jorge Sanjinés (Bolivia)," in *Cinema and Social Change in Latin America: Conversations with Filmmakers*, ed. Julianne Burton, 1st ed., Special Publication/ Institute of Latin American Studies, the University of Texas at Austin (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 42.

²³⁹ Silva and Rodríguez, 42.

²⁴⁰ Silva and Rodríguez, 42.

remembering the dead. On the other hand, it is also a ritual of identification with the dead. The extended exposure to the dead that the mass grave scene entails could foster a more profound psychological identification with being dead, or rather, killed by the army. Or, as Schneider puts it, this reenactment "implies that the bygone is not entirely gone by and the dead not completely disappeared nor lost, but also, and perhaps more complexly, the living are not entirely (or not only) live."²⁴¹ Reenactment of the past, and enactment of a potential future, thus coexist in this dramatic reconstruction.

The power of play

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/557589935> PW: ENC1

The notion of play is also important to understand the approach of *Encierro*. In his essay 'A Theory of Play and Fantasy,' Gregory Bateson speaks of metacommunicative messages that frame the exchanges of messages happening within. In other words, a metacommunicative frame establishes "the relationships between the speakers."²⁴² Using the example of animals playing at wrestling in the zoo, Bateson notices how the actions and signals exchanged were similar to those of combat. However, it was clear, both for the human observer and the animals playing, that this was no combat.²⁴³ Bateson identifies a degree of metacommunication in these actions

²⁴¹ Schneider, *Performing Remains*, 15.

²⁴² Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," 317.

²⁴³ Bateson, 316.

whose exchange conveys the message "This is play."²⁴⁴ Thus, the frame of play makes the messages happening inside understood as something different than they would if the frame of play was not at work. For instance, a labor strike is different from the action (or set of actions) similar to a strike but happening within a different frame, i.e., making a film about a strike. This new frame or metacommunicative situation (the making of a film) comes closer to being an evocation/recreation of a strike.²⁴⁵ As in the past, the group of 11 new 'strikers' are living underground for 11 uninterrupted days; we aim to give visibility to the problems of the area; we organize discussions and debates with political representatives, and we design a roadmap for the improvement of the socioeconomic conditions of the region. These actions are similar to those that occurred during the strike of 1984, but "this is play" means that "these actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions for which they stand would denote."²⁴⁶ Even though play seems 'less serious than life,' *Encierro* works with the hypothesis that play can access important aspects of reality, critically approach, and even rework them.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁴ Bateson, 316.

²⁴⁵ Reenactment films with and about miners' communities are present throughout film history. For instance, *Misère au Borinage* (Joris Ivens, 1934), *The Silent Village* (Humphrey Jennings, 1943), *The Brave Don't Cry* (Philip Leacock, 1952), *The Salt of the Earth* (Herbert J. Biberman, 1954), *Hope*, (Harold Schuster, 1960), *El Coraje del Pueblo* (Jorge Sanjinés, 1971), *Far From Poland* (Jill Godmilow, 1984), *The Battle of Orgreave* (Mike Figgis/Jeremey Deller, 2001), *Los 33* (Patricia Riggen, 2015), *Bisbee '17* (Robert Greene, 2018), to name a few.

²⁴⁶ Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," 317.

²⁴⁷ For an introduction of play and reenactment practices, see Robbert-Jan Adriaansen, "Play," in *The Routledge Handbook of Reenactment Studies: Key Terms in the Field*, ed. Vanessa Agnew, Jonathan Lamb, and Juliane Tomann, 1st ed. (Milton: Routledge, 2020), 178–82, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429445637>. For other theories of play, see

The entanglement of participants, community, media, and politics creates a metamorphosis in the project. The project starts attracting political attention to Almadén beyond the project's original scope. Senators and national parliament members travel to Almadén and, accompanied by local politicians and members of the mining company management, come underground to meet the new "strikers" and discuss with them the situation of Almadén. Both participants and the involved community members outside the galleries further realize that this is a good opportunity to express their discontent with the current situation and to try and push for political commitments that could materialize some of the widespread social claims. On the surface, a Citizen Platform called "Forzados" -the name given to the mine enslaved people in the fifteenth and sixteenth century- is re-established after being active between 2012-2013. Joining forces with the 11 people underground, the Citizen Platform "Forzados" takes the lead in organizing social mobilizations on the surface, representing the views of the 11 -and the area- in media interviews, as well as mediating between the underground participants and the government of the region.

Some participants feel that presenting their lockdown as a documentary film diminishes the realness of the social movement they have started in the area. They all agree that the film is the initial force of the lockdown, but now it has developed into something else. Several newspapers reflect this transformation in headlines that read as: "what started as a documentary film project turns into a social movement in

for instance Fink, "Oasis of Happiness." Cailliois, *Man, Play, and Games*. Katie Salen Tekinbaş and Eric Zimmerman, *Rules of Play: Game Design Fundamentals* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2003).

Almadén." ²⁴⁸ Or as one participant expresses, "it is not clear to me whether this is a film about a strike or a real strike." This coexistence between a film about a strike and what starts resembling a "proper" strike becomes increasingly entangled. As the days progress, the basic frame of "*as if it was a strike*" continues to be stretched.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768407075> PW: ENC 1

Whereas the documentary film project appropriated aspects of the mining past into the event's creation, the participants now 'appropriate' the filmmaking process to demand political commitment.²⁴⁹ The village's people organize a rally which around 4.000 people attend to claim betterment in the area. As one of the supporters from the surface states, "there is the documentary film; and there is the social movement. People are engaging in social action. We have said enough. We don't want to be silent anymore." The sense of social apathy, negativity, and "everybody sees the village dying, and nobody does anything" transforms into social action similar to 1984. While

²⁴⁸ See for instance Noemi Velasco, "El grito de la comarca de Almadén frente al olvido." Lanza Digital August 8, 2019, <https://www.lanzadigital.com/provincia/el-grito-de-la-comarca-de-almaden-frente-al-olvido/>. (Lat accessed Dec 2022)

"Alicia Avilés Pozo, "Del documental a la protesta: la recreación del encierro de mineros de Almadén en 1984 desencadena una nueva movilización social," elDiario.es, August 6, 2019, https://www.eldiario.es/castilla-la-mancha/documental-recreacion-almaden-desencadena-movilizacion_1_1403633.html. (Last Accessed Dec 2022)

²⁴⁹ The main demands focus on measures for the reindustrialization of the area and the creation of jobs, improvements in the access to health, transport and infrastructures, implementation of policies to make Almadén a more competitive tourist destination, and policies to ensure the survival and consolidation of Almadén University School of Mining and Industrial Engineering (EIMIA).

the real lockdown of the participants inside the mine engages the community in social action, the engagement on the surface further inspires and moves the participants underground. Moreover, they consider the possibility of staying in the mine beyond the agreed 11 days if political agreements do not come. In the beginning, they say it in passing, but gradually in more serious terms. Rather than representing the past, participants start identifying with it. As one of the participants says, “I’m starting to feel like a real syndicalist.”



Fig 17. Local people demonstrate during *Encierro*.

Watch: <https://vimeo.com/768411207> PW: ENC1

In this liminal state between homage to the past and present political action, the conditional premise at work -we *would* strike- turns gradually into we *are* striking. It shows the limits of play, or rather an instance in which play becomes serious. Tensions arise between the participants, the mine company management, and the film's creatives, who could get into serious legal troubles if participants decide to stay beyond the permission granted to stay in the mine. That is, if we break the rules of the game. The mine representatives try to convince the participants that all the mobilizations happening on the surface are only fiction. According to them, the people on the surface are merely reproducing what happened in 1984. As one of the mine representatives says, they have interiorized those roles and "are expressing them in a natural way, which is the best possible acting." Using terms such as "main and secondary actors" and defining other elements of the project as "attrezzo" (objects and props), the mine representatives try to resituate the project within the cinematographic and theatrical realms. Participants oppose this view. For them, the management is resisting the obvious, that the documentary project has channeled the real frustration and desire for social transformation of the people from this area. Whereas participants highlight how the documentary project has ignited the genuine desire for change in the area, the mine representatives allude to the collective memory of the past as responsible for the different performances of discontent being expressed during the 11 days of reenactment.

We entered the mine as participants in a film project. Now we are the avant-garde of a social movement. We feel empowered by the community support, but at the

same time start feeling the expectations put on us. How much should we push? Some participants believe we should stay underground indefinitely until we achieve political commitments. Others suggest starting a hunger strike to push even harder. In between, as a director of the project, I try to deal with my double responsibility and role: on the one hand, I am part and parcel of the social movement; on the other hand, I have agreed with the mine representatives to shoot a film about a strike inside the mine, to conduct different social and political meetings underground as part of it, but not to carry out a proper strike. During the reenactment, I pass from being the event's initiator to being entangled in a reality that exceeds its framework as a representation of the past. My position as local to the area and committed to the social action generated through the reenactment is complicated by my desire to salvage the cinematographic project, which crucially depends on not breaching the contract established between our production company and the mine. A question hovers over the people most closely involved in the project: is this a film or a protest disguised as a film? Following Bateson, we can claim that we are reaching the limit of play, in which "This is play" turns into a disconcerting "Is this play?"²⁵⁰

At this time, the project has taken a life of its own. Documentation, and reenactment as representation, fall short of fully grasping what the art project has generated. We might be close to what Simon O'Sullivan means by the function of art over its power of signification or representation when he writes:

²⁵⁰ Bateson, "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," 318.

art, then, might be understood as the name for a function: a magical, an aesthetic, function of transformation. Art is less involved in making sense of the world and more involved in exploring the possibilities of being, of becoming, in the world. Less involved in knowledge and more involved in experience, in pushing forward the boundaries of what can be experienced.²⁵¹ (O’Sullivan, 2001, p. 130)

On the 11th day, the village expects the participants to exit the mine, but the news that they might not come out circulates. On a day like today, in 1984, there was a similar sense of expectation in the mine esplanade. In 1984, the strikers managed a last-minute political agreement for a more hopeful future. Similarly, the 11 participants in the reenactment, backed up by overwhelming community support, obtained a last-minute political agreement to start a series of debates and negotiations outside the mine, which was one of the goals that developed during *Encierro*. Past and present look again uncannily similar. One of the differences is that the young people waiting for their parents to come out in 1984 have now become adults protesting and supporting their “striking” sisters, daughters, and sons. As the two worlds merge, it appears as if the evocation of the strike has revived old wounds and the desire to fight together for a better future.

²⁵¹Simon O’Sullivan, “The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking Art beyond Representation,” *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 6, no. 3 (2001): 130, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697250120087987>.

Conclusion

Beyond the social and political action that Encierro embodies, the shooting process most clearly produced a strong sense of community. Local people engaged with the project in a way that surpassed filmmakers' and participants' expectations. Families, social organizations, businesses, and anonymous neighbors generously provided all food and supplies necessary, showed up every day in the mine esplanade, sent participants extremely warm and caring messages of gratitude and appreciation, and carried out spontaneous and organized acts of support. Words like "united," "together," and mottos such as "you are not alone" and "we are the 12th person" were regularly repeated on the surface.

Coming back to Turner, we are close to what he defines as *communitas*, an intense collective experience of "something profoundly communal and shared."²⁵² For Turner, *communitas* means "the liberation of human capacities of cognition, affect, volition, creativity, etc., from the normative constraints."²⁵³ A trigger for this sense of *communitas* was the 11-day event. However, as I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, the manifestation of *communitas* exceeded the frame of the artistic intervention and expressed deeper feelings, hopes, and fears in the community.

For Turner, *communitas* is a modality of social relationships in which the bonds between individuals are renewed.²⁵⁴ This bonding happened amongst locals, but it extended to neighboring villages and Ciudad Real, the province's capital, where people

²⁵² Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 138.

²⁵³ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 44.

²⁵⁴ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 96.

from Almadén also organized gatherings and demonstrations in public spaces. People from Almadén residing all over Spain supported via social media, widening the project's reach and the edges of the community involved. *Communitas* has an aspect of potentiality, in which everything seems possible.²⁵⁵ As some of the members of the locals in Almadén described using the same words as Turner, it "has something "magical" about it."²⁵⁶

In the entangled temporality of this project, in which the past strike was a model for action toward a more hopeful future, Turner reminds us that "*communitas* is of the now."²⁵⁷ It is, borrowing Haraway's term, the experience of a "thick present," a time and a space where things could happen.²⁵⁸ Similar to liminality and closely related to liminal actions, *communitas* "is a phase, a moment, not a permanent condition."²⁵⁹ The final chapter will jump ahead from the present created in Encierro to reflect on this artistic and social intervention, ruminate about the completion of the final film, and draw future avenues for research.

²⁵⁵ Turner, 127.

²⁵⁶ Turner, 139.

²⁵⁷ Turner, 113.

²⁵⁸ See Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Experimental Futures, Technological Lives, Scientific Arts, Anthropological Voices (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822373780>.

²⁵⁹ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 140.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Shooting of *Encierro* became an intense social and political time in the area, a 'collective effervescence,' to borrow Émile Durkheim's term.²⁶⁰ This effervescence was closely related to the actual presence of 11 people living underground, the continuous support of the community above ground, and the engagement of mass media in the project, something that situates the project between artistic reenactment, social action, and a media event.

Making of *Encierro* was a gesture towards increasing participatory politics in the area. Around San Aquilino's shaft, 50 meters underground, the lockdown participants gathered with local politicians, educators, health experts, representatives of tourism and heritage, teenagers, entrepreneurs, etc., engaging in a collective dialogue to identify the main problems affecting us. At the center of *Encierro* is the paradox of engaging with the future via restaging the past. Descending vertically into the ground created a horizontal and transversal space for collective political imagination. During the lockdown, participants shaped these conversations' contents into social and political

²⁶⁰ Durkheim writes, "There are periods in history when, under the influence of some great collective shock, social interactions have become much more frequent and active. Men look for each other and assemble together more than ever. That general effervescence results which is characteristic of revolutionary or creative epochs. Now this greater activity results in a general stimulation of individual forces. Men see more and differently now than in normal times. Changes are not merely of shades and degrees; men become different." Émile Durkheim, in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology*. Trans. Joseph Ward Swain, London: Allen & Unwin; New York: Macmillan, 1915, 210-211.

claims, which arose from the depths of the mine and eventually reached the Regional Parliament.²⁶¹ Also, during the reenactment, a former Citizen Platform called 'Forzados' got re-activated in the area.²⁶² Currently, this citizen platform has around 2000 members, including most participants of the reenactment, and still engages in social action to which a considerable number of people from the area respond with their presence and support.²⁶³ After the reenactment, a group of young people formed an association called 'El Fuerte de la Mina' ('The Fortress of the Mine'); some members were active in the meetings and activities held during *Encierro*.

²⁶¹ The main demands that emerged from the reenactment were voted on in the Regional Parliament of Castilla La Mancha on 24 September 2020, becoming the first instance when a series of claims written directly by a citizen platform were voted on in that parliament. The propositions were eventually rejected, with a parliament member from Almadén voting against them.

²⁶² Forzados (Forced) is the name given to the slave workers in the Almadén mine between the XVI and the end of XVIII centuries. Even though Forzados Citizen Platform was legally established on 24 January 2020, Forzados was first formed on 15 May 2012 to protest against the plans of the University of Castilla La Mancha to close Almadén Engineering University (EIMIA) campus and take the studies to the capital of the province. Almadén Engineering University (EIMIA) is the first Mining Engineering University in Spain (founded in 1777), and the third oldest in Europe. Currently, the EIMIA campus still operates in Almadén. Forzados stopped its activities in 2012 and got re-activated during the making of *Encierro*.

²⁶³ In the summer of 2020 Forzados carried out a protest in which we camped for 11 consecutive days in front of the main train station of the area, which is not situated in any of the villages (curiously, it is 11 kilometers from Almadén) and without public transport to reach any of them. The number of trains have been gradually cut, and the train tracks are some of the oldest in Spain, causing frequent delays and making the commuting time to the nearest town long. This station symbolizes the geographical isolation and the lack of infrastructure that characterizes many rural areas in Spain. Despite the COVID pandemic, this protest could also count on the support of the community, media engagement and political action.

For many participants, the reenactment was a decisive moment to engage more fully in social and political action. With its material and symbolic characteristics, the mine became a liminal time and space for this transformation. However, this transformation is not permanent, and it can easily dissipate. For instance, the opportunities for participatory politics in the area are still as scarce as before making *Encierro*, and keeping social engagement and collective action alive and achieving concrete socio-economic improvements is proving to be more difficult than it promised to be while inside the mine.

One can highlight the idealistic and usually short span of artistic interventions such as *Encierro*. However, I prefer to focus on the capacity that artistic interventions of this kind have to penetrate reality and transform, albeit briefly, the interpersonal, social, and political dynamics of the areas in which they happen. Artistic interventions like *Encierro* propose activities “where conventional structure is no longer honored, but [are] more playful, more open to chance”, and “more likely to be subversive, consciously or by accident introducing or exploring different structures that may develop into real alternatives to the status quo.”²⁶⁴ Under the framework of artistic interventions, it is possible to propose and enact new practices (or reenact old ones like in this instance) that become possibilities for alternative social engagements and political configurations, a process that is not free from tensions, paradoxes, and even contradictions. Reflecting upon this transformative power from the point of view of artistic practice itself helps define the roles of (engaged) art and artists in society.

²⁶⁴ Carlson, *Performance*, 24.

Crucially, it is necessary to keep deepening our understanding of these interventions' social, political, and historical implications to help us navigate the paradoxes they bring up. For instance, are not the spaces for social and political imagination created by these artistic practices both exciting opportunities for social and political engagement and potent warnings of the lack of these spaces in our everyday lives, institutions, and politics? Moving 'beyond representation' necessitates being alert to both the power and the limits of documentary practices in the field of civil society, as well as their potential to (re)connect and complicate past, present, and future narratives.

This dissertation has also engaged with the speculative mode in documentary field-work and shooting. Speculation deals with possibilities, not necessarily with actualities: it concerns itself with things that *could* happen, *might* happen, and even *should* happen, as well as the notion of the *yet-to-come*. John Grierson's most-quoted dictum defines documentary as "the creative treatment of actualities," but in speculative approaches to documentation the focus is not on the world of actualities, at least if we understand them as the existing reality that precedes the documentation processes. Instead, speculative approaches to documentary come closer to being "creative treatment of possibilities." The idea of possible worlds, alternative realities, and a world *yet-to-come* also relates to utopian (or dystopian) thinking. Understood by these utopian capacities, documentary "is not an inert reflection of the world-as-it-is", but rather "a kind of subjective technology – a fictioning – involved in the production of a different mode of being in the world."²⁶⁵ Or as sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt

²⁶⁵ O'Sullivan, "Myth-Science and the Fictioning of Reality," 90.

Bauman describes the function of utopian thinking: “To measure the life “as it is” by a life as it should be.”²⁶⁶

Regarding *Encierro*, Bauman’s concept of retrotopia seems even more suitable. Moving the concept of utopia from its future-oriented character to utopian thinking based on revisions of the past, Bauman argues that in retrotopia “it is the genuine or putative aspects of the past, believed to be successfully tested and unduly abandoned or recklessly allowed to erode, that serve as main orientation/reference points in drawing the roadmap” to the future.²⁶⁷ He clarifies that retrotopia does not entail a straightforward return to the past. Rather, retrotopia is based on “conscious attempts at iteration, rather than reiteration,” of the past, with “its image having been by now significantly recycled and modified anyway, in the process of selective memorizing, intertwined with selective forgetting,” a process that resonates with *Encierro*.²⁶⁸

Even though speculation is a practice in the present, its focus is predominantly on a *might be/ could be*. To document then becomes closer to a worldmaking activity. Following Donna Haraway’s use of the world as a verb: “to world,” documentary shooting can be not just about the world but about to worlding.²⁶⁹ This connects with how TJ Demos theorizes art as “worldmaking activities, which implies the ambitious opening up of what art or—more broadly conceived and beyond the legitimating

²⁶⁶ Dunne and Raby, *Speculative Everything*, 73.

²⁶⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Retrotopia* (Cambridge, UK; Polity Press, 2017), 9.

²⁶⁸ Bauman, 9.

²⁶⁹ Henriette Gunkel, Ayesha Hameed, and Simon O’Sullivan, eds., *Futures and Fictions*, Repeater Books paperback original (London: Repeater Books, an imprint of Watkins Media Ltd., 2017), 14. See also Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.

functions of dominant cultural institutions— aesthetic practice can be.”²⁷⁰ Using the term creative ecologies, Demos highlights the potential of art as creative instances and laboratories of worldmaking where, following Rancière in his articulation of the intersections of aesthetics and politics, “forms of collective life are produced and can be transformed.”²⁷¹

I have used the concept of liminality, a term related to ritual theory, to articulate the notion of *in-betweenness* in documentary spaces. To engage liminality in documentary shooting is to regard it as spaces for personal, social, and political experimentation beyond representational capacities. It implies to foreground the transformative potential of documentary shooting to become temporal (and often transient) opportunities to ludically play with cultural elements, combining, recombining, and acting upon them, with the potential of effecting some changes in the real. The first step has been to use liminality to theorize particular situations in fieldwork and shooting. A second step is to further engage liminality as an artistic and critical concept in documentary practice and theory. There is also a relation between carnival and liminality, carnival and play, and carnival and the challenge to authority that my research aims to engage. Literary critic and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin emphasizes carnival as “people’s second life, their temporary renaissance and renewal.”²⁷² The carnival spirit “offers the chance to have a new outlook on the world,

²⁷⁰ Demos, *Beyond the World’s End*, 5.

²⁷¹ Demos, 5–8.

²⁷² M. M. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, First Midland book edition. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984), 33.

to realize the relative nature of all that exists, and to enter a completely new order of things.”²⁷³ My research will continue engaging with this sense of liberation in Bakhtin’s carnival (more than the other darker, somber and violent iterations of it): carnival as the uncensored, the playful, the irreverent, the comic, and at times the grotesque, that documentary fieldwork and shooting can exercise in its times and spaces.

Nonetheless, we need to be aware of the ethical implications of practicing documentary as spaces for the liminal, the playful, and the carnivalesque. These cultural performances are often open to the unexpected, uncontrollable, and powerful. Their transformative and, at times, destabilizing capacities demand a reconsideration of ethics of participation and representation. Conquergood and Fabian caution us of the power inherent in summoning up performances in fieldwork praxis and representation. The sense of removal from everyday life, the invitation to participants to play, to practice life differently, and even to undo or disrupt certain acquired norms that are characteristic of liminal, playful, and carnivalesque approaches cannot be taken lightly. As Turner reminds us, ritual can be earnest, serious, and playful.²⁷⁴ The engagement of documentary praxis with liminality is an attempt to foreground the capacity of documentary praxis to affect reality. However, it is important to be ethically aware that the reality created, and the effects on the participants and the field might not necessarily be positive.

²⁷³ Bakhtin, 34.

²⁷⁴ Turner, *The Ritual Process*, 35.

As this dissertation has focused on the fieldwork process, an open question remains regarding how the film *Encierro*, as produced media object, will contain, express and embody the preoccupations of the production process. For instance, will *Encierro* mostly document the process put in motion during fieldwork or also gesture at something beyond representation? How much will it be about the creation of a social movement? How much an act of, and a tool for, reclamation? How much about our relationship to the mine and all that it implies? How much will be an exorcism, and partial liberation, from the collective trauma and social wreckage upon the closure of the mine? How much about creating an archive by reenacting the social movements that happened in 1979 and 1984 in 2019? Or, put differently, what will the temporality of the film be? The distant past of the geological time of the mine; the closer past of the social movements of 1979 and 1984; the thick present of the reenactment as an activist tactic within the film; and the debates about social changes and political commitments that drive the film towards the future are different temporalities that coexist in the material and could make their way into the final film.

At the same time, *Encierro* is about duration and experience. In the current demography of Almadén, there are still people who have experienced the mine directly as workers. Others, like this project's participants, have acquired a secondary experience of the mine via this durational performance underground. As time goes by, there will be fewer and fewer people in Almadén who have a direct experience of the mine. One of the project's motivations is reclaiming the mine as still producing strong affects and actions in the community, as still "ours": the house of the entire village, as

one of the participants says. How can *Encierro* as a film bring the experience of the mine still as this powerful entity, a generative force, a god and monster in the future, once those feelings will not circulate in the community as they still do now? How can it conjure those invisible elements, take the audience in this hole, envelop them into the darkness and dampness of the cave, enshrouding, attracting, repulse them? How can we, as filmmakers, allow the mine to escape the realm of representation to be presence once again? How can we conjure up the mine?

During the shooting process, some of the film participants felt that presenting the experience as the shooting of a documentary film diminished its existence as an emerging social movement. In this context, how could my engagements with aesthetics, rhythms, affects, and more poetic and experimental approaches to the cinematic image during editing could end up dissolving some of its activist capacities? How can that be interpreted in the community? Will I go through an iteration of my entangled feelings during the last shooting days when discussing staying in or leaving the mine on the 11th day? Regardless of how that process develops, my community's expectations are also "in the back of my head" during the post-production process and the completion of *Encierro*. All this shows the entangled spaces between social processes and aesthetic expressions, complicated by my double role of filmmaker and community member, who aim to deepen my engagements with the world of film aesthetics and advance the social reclamation at the core of this project.

And if something I learned, it's that We *Would* Strike.

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