

Maria José Arjona, Silvia Giambrone, Regina José Galindo, Maria Evelia Marmolejo,  
Mary Zygouri

### ***You owe me one***

Being at fault, in debt.

The impression is that every form of life is configured as a response to such a condition.

Are there choices, conscious ones, that can perhaps amend such a phenomenon that, from an individual as well as a collective point of view, invests everyone's existence? What robs individuals and communities of control over their own destiny is well rooted in the human, and its material origins must be traced on the cultural, that is, philosophical, *anthro-political* and religious levels.

Five different lectures, bearing the names of five of the most radical women artists of our time, are the methodology through which we wish to attempt to reconstruct the history of being in debt, recognizing the masks that its origins have worn throughout Western history. This history, it must be premised, cannot disregard what is seductive about power in the face of which Bertolt Brecht's appeal is vain: «Do not be seduced / there is no return / (...) / Do not be deluded / that it is little, life / (...)». Frightening and evident is how man allows himself to be seduced, by giving himself over to it, by the power which, in an insane freedom offered by enjoyment, affirms his own self and freedom in the social as well as in the innermost individuality.

The adherence to power, voluntary, unconscious, the more absolute the more confused with trust or belief, defines the rapid transition from self-assertion to subjugation, from conduct of life to coercion. Theology, history, political philosophy, economics: every discipline seems to endorse all those dynamics that in our society and time have made the indebtedness of individual lives the condition of their own domination. At the expense are bodies, the privileged instrument of Maria José Arjona, Silvia Giambrone, Regina José Galindo, Maria Evelia Marmolejo and Mary Zygouri to unveil the disturbing logics by which power takes hold of human nature, denying the fundamental rights enshrined in the 1948 "Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

This code of ethics, result of a long-standing debate and whose principles while considered inalienable are trampled upon daily, was translated by Maria José Arjona into a visual text by recovering the ancient coding system - the Morse Code - and transcribing it into body language. "Agent/Encoding/Flow" (2014) metaphorically tells of two bodies that, interacting empathically and mutually, carefully arrange a suspension in time and space. It calls for close attention, as well as blind trust, so that the body can once again connect, rather than divide, and encourage social, political and cultural exchange. It also can solicit experience (setting a thousand suspended bottles in motion, generating the sound of water by evoking its force, recreating a primitive sensation - "Lifeline," 2016) to lead back to the sensible and the intimate relationship with life in a society characterized by a very provisional and personal construction of meaning. There is a definite intent to recover primitive origins, through which it seems that immersion in nature, ritual and the primitive rise to the objects of

a quest, conducted through the body, whose authenticity is to be claimed to be traced back to an ideal primitive society. Maria Evelia Marmolejo's action is significantly placed in this perspective. Against political oppression, particularly in 1980s Colombia, against social and economic conditions in Latin America, and against environmental and gender issues, Marmolejo advanced the ritual, charging it with a healing hope. Thus the use of menstrual blood is matched by a tampon, as in "11 de Marzo": "Using my menstrual fluid, something unique and exclusive to the female being, naked and with several tampons attached to my body, I perform a dance. With my pubis I draw spots and lines of blood on the wall and drop of menstrual blood on the ground." Marmolejo's words, and work, correspond to a refuge value, in the body a truth that society can no longer give. An ultimate refuge, bridging the void of being, caused by the conditions of current existence, by facilitating the rediscovery of positive connections to the primitive roots of the self. Mary Zygouri also recovers the ritual, the primitive. If with "Venus of Rags / In Transit / Elefsina" (2014) she critiques the density of physical, material and social space, which transforms Elefsina into a place not only mythologized and sacralized, but also violated, abused and outraged; with "Je reviens toujours," (2017) she juxtaposes two seaside resorts in the North and the South revealing their differences, natural but also cultural. The practice of embroidery, which lights up the darkness of our present time, stands in a completely synecdochic way, as part of a body that engages and shakes.

The body is a conceptual tool for the expression of identity and cultural politics, and of its adaptation endless are the nuances, wounds and traces. The body can be the only response that allows one to feel one's existence, making others recognize it as well. Against education as learning obedience, achieved through physical and psychological coercion, Silvia Giambrone ("Domestication," 2020) argues. Theorized by Johan Sulzer, this painful set of rules is responsible for the attitude of violence that characterizes human relationships. Giambrone's actors have introjected the paradigm of violence within their relationship; they move evocatively and poetically, as if one were the projection or memory of the other. Living together, in a violent domestic environment imposes a compromise, the violation of intimacy is permanent, no one is master of his own body anymore. Who is the victim? And who the perpetrator? The line is so blurred that it is difficult to define which of the two embodies those two roles. The imprisoned body is always under the gaze of others. As is the case of "Libertad condicional" (2009), a performance in which Regina José Galindo remains bound and immobilized with seven bows and seven locks. The audience can decide to free her or not. "For me, prison is when they strip you of all protective layers (...)," Breyten Breytenbach wrote in "Confession véridique d'un terroriste albino". Imprisonment is one of the conditions in which one's physical integrity is attacked more than outside. Prison looms over the prisoner as a long ritual of degradation and humiliation, of dispossession and loss of self-possession. Her body is both a manifestation of the loss of his human status and a last resort to cry out for help.

From a formal point of view, "You owe me one" shows what remains of a performance. Not only in terms of photographic, video and object documentation, but also and especially as a sacrificial path of vindication. The use of the body is the extreme attempt, of bodies, to be recognized as subjects and metaphorically express despair, especially when deprived of any means to make their voices heard.

May man free himself from moral allegiance to a discriminating social. Never forgetting, however, that he is at fault, he is in debt.