



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Dark matters: recasting darkness with contemporary Latin American Art

Noach, S.

Citation

Noach, S. (2023, October 5). *Dark matters: recasting darkness with contemporary Latin American Art*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3643161>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3643161>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Dark Matters. Recasting Darkness with Contemporary Latin American Art.

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van
de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit Leiden,
op gezag van rector magnificus Prof.dr.ir. H. Bijl,
volgens besluit van het college voor promoties
ter verdedigen op donderdag 5 oktober 2023
klokke 15:00 uur

door

Stéphanie Noach
geboren te Amsterdam
in 1986

Promotor

Prof. dr. Kitty Zijlmans

Copromotor

Dr. Nanne Timmer

Promotiecommissie

Prof. dr. Maria Boletsi

Dr. Adriana Churampi

Prof. dr. Guillermina De Ferrari, University of Wisconsin, Madison, VS

Prof. dr. Wayne Modest, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam/Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Preface	6
INTRODUCTION	7
<i>Tidalectics</i>	30
HIGH WAVE 1: CILDO MEIRELES'S <i>VÓLATIL</i> INTERRUPTING AND DISRUPTING LUMINUOUS REGIMES	37
<i>low wave 1~2: carlos martiel's penumbra and the becoming of space</i>	59
HIGH WAVE 2: THE BLACK SKIN IN RENÉ PEÑA'S PHOTOGRAPHS: FROM MARKER TO MATTER	72
<i>low wave 2~3: maya watanabe's liminal: from zooming in on liminality to undermining ungrievability</i>	106
HIGH WAVE 3: DARKNESS SAFEGUARDING KNOWLEDGES IN THE COLLAGRPAHS BY BELKIS AYÓN	12
<i>low wave 3~sedimentation: maría isabel rueda's horror vacui: darkness in the tropics</i>	147
The Accumulation of Sediments	159
Bibliography	164
Summary	171
Samenvatting	175
Curriculum Vitae	179

Acknowledgements

While this dissertation carries only my name, it feels like many others have completed it with me. My friends, family, colleagues, students, and teachers are present in all sorts of ways and they are so in every single page of what this study has become.

Kitty Zijlmans and Nanne Timmer, I thank you with deep admiration, respect, and affection. I have felt privileged throughout the entire five years it took me to finish this dissertation for having you as supervisors. Kitty, after all this time I'm still marveling at how you've always found the perfect balance between trusting in my work yet being as critical as one can be. Thank you for your infinite generosity and gentleness as a person and a scholar. Nanne, your mind has brought me to places I had not known before. Poetry is in all you do, and I'm grateful for your kindness in sharing it with me too. You're a role model in many ways, but maybe mostly in your ability to cross all established boundaries.

I have had the good fortune to count on the support, collegiality, and intellectual stimulation of my colleagues and friends at the Leiden University Centre of Arts in Society (LUCAS). Thank you Sybille Lammes, Marion Boers, Isabel Hoving, Antje Wessels, Helen Westgeest, Stijn Bussels, Laura Bertens, Nena Borba and Paula Harvey. You've made me feel welcome from my first day with you and I've learned a lot from and with you. Tingting Hui, the little virtues of doing research intensified as I was able to share them with you. And when I was not sure about how to proceed, it was oftentimes something you said that got me back on track.

The months I spent at the Afro-Latin American Research Institute (ALARI) at Harvard University have been of immeasurable value for my research. I am forever grateful to Alejandro de la Fuente for giving me the opportunity to spend so many months at his unique institute. You're an example to all of us who care about contributing to the knowledge about Afro-Latin American artists. I am grateful to Doris Sommer. Many of the conversations we've had, I play and replay in my head. They have been fundamental to my research and they continue to inspire me. I am indebted to Giuliana Bruno. Participating in your seminar and listening to you moved me in more ways than I could have imagined. José Falconi, meeting you was like meeting a lifelong friend and an intellectual anchor. My time in Boston wouldn't have been nearly as joyful, encouraging, and beneficial without you. Cary Aileen and Carla Francisco, this research wouldn't have been the same without your comments and encouragements.

None of my work would have existed were it not for artists. You are my main source of inspiration and the axis around which everything revolves. Thank you Carlos Martiel, Cildo Meireles, René Peña, María Isabel Rueda and Maya Watanabe for your brilliant work and unwavering support for my research about it. If my words could provoke in the reader only half of what your works provoked in me, I consider my research worthwhile.

I am indebted, beyond everything, to those who have always been and those who have become my family. So thank you to my sisters and brother in law, Nathalie, Jacqueline and Tim. To Linsey Rijkaard. I am grateful to Betty Gago, you're my intellectual and moral polar star. The seed of this

project, and of so many others, was planted with you. Isabel Cadenas Cañón, I could fill a page to mention all the things I want to thank you for, to describe all the things I learned from you. Ally, confidant, friend, companion, you are so many in one. Ghassan Dahhan, your beautiful, smart, funny, sharp, kind, and authentic presence means everything to me. Thanking you feels as if my left leg thanked my right one for walking: you're a part of me. Thank you Margaretha Bekkers, for stimulating me, also when that meant, or especially when that meant, telling me to take step back. Dahlía Zahara Noach, I wrote the vast part of this dissertation while you were growing in pitch darkness. Thank you for making me feel your kicks, movements, and hiccups. The thought of being with you made me finish this dissertation as fast as I possibly could. Yasser Galán Noa, thank you for your sweet and gentle soul, your love and companionship, your infinite support. You are essential to all I am and all I do, including this project's realization. Thank you Ineke Vrachtdoender, I am grateful to all the love and care you bring to the family. Hans Noach, to you, I owe it all. Thank you for giving me all the things you never had the opportunity of receiving. This thesis is dedicated to you, papalief.

Preface

Everything bursts open, everything sounds and blows in the wind. Everything loses its way and goes down, only to rise again to this wind. It is nothing but assault, vertigo and drifting, this time. (...)

Everything to me is a wave, narrated!

Édouard Glissant

How could I not start with Édouard Glissant? The insights and cadences of the Martinican poet and literary critic flow through all the pages constituting this dissertation, *Dark Matters. Recasting Darkness with Contemporary Latin American Art*, even though they mostly do so tangentially, or better still, opaquely. Opacity, the possibility to not be understood or grasped, is at the heart of Glissant's studies, and it is at the heart of mine. As I dive deeper into the primordial matter of the dissertation, which is just another way to refer to the darkness constituting the six artworks from Latin America, I will, paradoxically, drift further away from conventional (and as I will argue, colonial) modes of comprehension. Apart from the actions that are commonly performed in an academic study, such as observing, analyzing, and examining, in the pages to come, I will indeed be flowing, diving, and drifting. For, as for Glissant too, "everything to me is a wave, narrated!". At least, everything to me in this study, which will be structured in a tidal manner, according to a continuous rising and falling of waves. To prepare the readers for the waves that will sooner or later encircle them, I will first introduce them to the conceptual, political, and material particularities of the darkness accentuated in the artworks to be examined, in the introduction, and then familiarize them with the tidal structure of the dissertation, in the second chapter that goes under the name of *Tidalectics*.