Not My Choice: Feeling as a "Productive Paradox" in Lola Arias's *Doble de riesgo*

Gail A. Bulman

> "In a milieu where the political arena seems increasingly compromised, it would appear that aesthetics (specifically the interdisciplinarity of contemporary art practices) is being ever more called upon to provide both insight into politics itself and the stimuli for social change."
> —Anthony Downey

> "[. . .] It remains as true as ever that most people will not question the rationalizations offered by their government for starting or continuing a war."
> —Susan Sontag

Introduction

Embedded within Buenos Aires's Parque de la Memoria, *Doble de riesgo* riveted the Argentine community during its three-month exhibition from August 10 to November 13, 2016.[1] As in other productions by Lola Arias, the innovative and brutally honest interlacing of different versions of the real in this multi-faceted installation resonated with spectators.[2] The exhibit's scenes are rooted in some of the most decisive moments in Argentina's history. Although harshly honest and highly visual, these images of atrocities and their aftermath are neither graphic nor horrible. Indeed, borrowing the words of Susan Sontag, they do not "arrest attention, startle, or surprise" the viewer (23). Instead, the installation interweaves actors and ordinary citizens who play their real, present-day selves alongside the country's absent but

potent political actors, a combination that opens paths for reflection on both the political and the personal. [3]

Any Argentine would recognize the national significance of the events marked in the installation. However, the way in which the objects and videos are framed calls spectators to reflect upon and respond to the weight of history not only on their nation but also on themselves as individuals. *Doble de riesgo* thus forms a crucial bridge between the social and the personal.[4] Individually, each of the items and images that peer into the minds of soldiers and everyday citizens alike opens spaces for reflection or serves as a call to action. The composite exhibit focuses on how and why we act, shifting attention to the powerful emotions that choices inspire and, conversely, to the emotions that inspire choices. Choice is emotion-based; whether or not we choose to act, what and how we choose to do is driven by how and what we feel at the time of decision. Emotions also help us evaluate our choices. As Jacques Rancière argues, the emancipated spectator "will be led to hone his own sense of the evaluation of reasons, of their discussion and of the choice that arrives at a decision" (4).[5] In this way, Arias obliges the spectator to re-envision both artistic creation and psychosocial and political empowerment by focusing in on the affective power that leads to and follows choice.

Throughout the series of installations, visitors must face questions and make choices: Should I sit at this desk and speak into the camera? Should I enter this guard booth? Which video(s) shall I watch and in which order? How do I feel about or react to this person's emotions?[6] *Doble de riesgo*'s opening placard, written by Florencia Battiti, curator of the Parque de la Memoria, reminds visitors that Arias's "*modus operandi* apunta a disparar preguntas incómodas e impertinentes más que a pronunciar discursos enfáticos e integradores." This installation depends on and fosters heightened individual emotions and thereby instigates what Ben Anderson calls a "productive paradox," a situation "in which affect is a paradigmatic object of forms of vital or life power in the political formation named as 'control' but is, simultaneously and without contradiction, the best if not only hope against it" (166). *Doble de riesgo* siezes on the diverse but potent affective aftermath of multiple political and historical events, with the result that "affect act(s) as 'point of view'":

> it discloses life as expressive and differential: expressive because affect is in perpetual formation rather than existing as a secondary instantiation of an a priori discursive or ideological order; differential, because this process of formation generates unforeseeable newness in the ways that affects are actualized. Affect has, in short, come to

> name the aleatory, open nature of a social that is always in the midst of being undone. (Anderson 166)

One could argue that the undoing of the social fabric in Argentina occurred long before the political events evoked in this exhibit.[7] But one message of *Doble de riesgo* is that history, like affect, is a rolling continuum that will continue to impact individuals and the body politic in significant ways. Can we control the course of history and shape our future? By pointing to the parallels between history and affect, Arias demonstrates how emotions, although elusive and difficult to dominate, contribute greatly to the continual unraveling of the social or, conversely, to its reconstruction or reevaluation. Capitalizing on the concrete, emotional impact of the specific events featured in her exhibition, Arias highlights the latent power within communities to come together around the emotional and, in this way, to eschew domination, to participate in a productive paradox. While *Doble de riesgo*'s focus on individual feelings might initially appear to "simply" inspire catharsis, a deeper look at the installation's many doubles and the overall exhibit posits a move from individual emotions to collective, affective bonding. The work also raises questions about choice—how, what, and when to choose—and what choices lead to control, freedom, fear, or security for individuals and communities.

Montage Through Installation(s)

Considered by some to be Arias's debut as a visual artist (Civale), *Doble de riesgo*'s genre is not easily defined.[8] A relatively new art form, installations straddle artistic genres and are largely defined as site-specific and multi-dimensional, rather than two-dimensional. The exhibit houses four installations, each of which, although related, could form an exhibit of its own. The space in which the installation is framed becomes part of the exhibit, as it allows viewers to immerse themselves by literally walking through "the environment the artist has created specifically for them" and becoming part of it (Krysa 9). In installation art, "space [is] in active dialogue with the things and people it contains, in all its ramifications" (De Oliveira 8). But although space is important and plays "an active role" (De Oliveira 11-12), installation art is not just about the space or the collection of objects contained therein. It is rather what Nicolas Bourriaud terms "relational art," which deals "with the interhuman sphere: relationships between people, communities, individuals, groups, social networks, interactivity, and so on" (1). Accordingly, installa-

tions highlight, build on, and re-envision the interconnectivity among artist, objects, space, viewer, individual, community, society, and world.

Incorporating some theatricality, although "not to the domain of drama proper, but to a consciousness of the processes of life and of one's part in them" (De Oliveira 14), installations do not fit exclusively within performance, visual plastic art, or cinema but rather contain elements of all of these genres. According to Andrea Guinta, an installation is "indefinible por definición (parte del presupuesto de que por su misma estructura desafía todas las categorías del arte), ha sido una forma de producir arte y también un comentario sobre el arte y sobre sus límites— una crítica antinormativa y anticanónica que pretende poner en jaque todos los presupuestos del arte y el sistema social que hace posible tal estatuto artístico" (274). One of the most flexible and creative art forms, the installation is also one of the most anti-authoritarian. By equalizing stories and allowing the prioritization of one person's story over another more official story, installations can level the playing field or even posit rebellion against official discourses. As Guinta confirms, "la instalación vendría a ser la forma más propicia y adecuada de dar cuenta de la crisis de la modernidad contenida en la crítica posmoderna" (274).

Installations span boundaries and form interstices between artistic genres and between art and the world. Because of this, "the meaning of the work of art is not contained entirely within its frame or form" (De Oliveira 13). Installations require interpretation, and *Doble de riesgo* is no exception. By repurposing and combining objects and inviting viewers to use the objects in their own way, the artist turns passive spectators (consumers of culture and politics) into actors (active producers of culture and politics). In this way, the artist highlights the idea that "to use an object is necessarily to interpret it" and "scrambles the boundaries between consumption and production" to convey a more balanced relationship between artist and spectator, politician and citizen, producer and consumer (Bourriaud 22, 19). Viewers can use the objects presented to build and "organize their own story in response to what they have just seen, with their own references" (Gonzalez-Foerster, qtd. in Bourriaud 19).

As a montage composed of multiple installations, *Doble de riesgo* organizes and repurposes specific objects, incorporates several premade videos, and offers opportunities for live acting. Viewers can participate by simply watching the films or by sitting at a desk, speaking into a camera, entering a guard booth, or stepping up to a microphone to perform karaoke. Arias juxtaposes production and reproduction in her montage and confirms Rancière's

idea that one is always both actor and spectator: "Every spectator is already an actor in her story; every actor, every man of action, is the spectator of the same story" (17). Thus, in the blurred boundaries that occur between watching and listening (to others' stories in the videos) and the acting they choose to do (or not to do), the spectators of *Doble de riesgo* learn that their choices form a story of their own. Sitting behind the desk, one can improvise any role or one can choose to become one of the presidents on the screen and repeat his or her words. Choosing not to sit at the desk may convert viewers into a type of therapist, listening to others' feelings, or it may inspire them to simply respond as themselves.

The rich juxtapositions in Arias's installation add artistic depth and breadth as well as historical and fictional layering. The Parque de la Memoria,[9] as an external frame, provides a powerful setting in which to view this installation. Its simple "Monument to the Victims of State Terrorism" consists of a four-part wall that contains the names and ages of those killed during the Dirty War.[10] Against the seemingly tranquil and beautiful backdrop of the Rio de la Plata, the hard, lined surfaces of the gray walls gain their texture from the engraved names of the 30,000 dead, listed alphabetically under the years in which they disappeared.[11] Thus, even before they see the actual installation, spectators witness an austere visual and verbal reminder of Argentina's brutal history.[12]

The wall and the Parque de la Memoria as a whole serve as both external and internal focalizers. Maaike Bleeker defines focalization as "the precise relationship between the subject viewing and the object viewed as it is given within the particular construction of the visual, verbal or multimedia texts" (28). In every artwork, he continues, "apart from one or more internal focalizers, there is always an external focalizer," which may or may not be visible (31). As external focalizers, the park and the wall render visible the initially invisible history of the Dirty War as well as the atrocities of politics and war in general. As these focalizers become part of the *Doble de riesgo* exhibit, it is difficult to separate them from the installation. In this way, the permanent objects of the park also serve as internal focalizers, helping spectators to evaluate and interpret the exhibit as they re-evaluate their complex and sordid history.

Arias's installation, described by Battiti as "[f]icciones para revisitar nuestra historia," was free to the public and was housed inside the park's exhibition building in the Sala PAyS, which also contains the public database and archives on the disappeared.[13] The exhibit contained four installations, spread

across four rooms. "Veteranos," "Cadena nacional," "Ejércitos paralelos," and "El sonido de la multitud" all incorporated multiple self-contained shows that often included video, photography, biographies, testimonies, objects, and archival documents. To fully comprehend and appreciate each of the performances within the exhibit, viewers would have to spend significant time in front of each screen. "Veteranos," for example, consists of five enormous video screens, each of which features one soldier. Combined, the screens project different perspectives on the Malvinas/Falklands War[14] through the flashbacks of the soldiers, who reflect upon their experiences as well as their present lives. The introduction to "Veteranos" poses the following question: "Treinta y cuatro años más tarde ¿qué queda de la guerra en la cabeza de los que combatieron?" Each video's actor has a name—Guillermo Dellepiane, Daniel Terzano, Marcelo Vallejo, Dario Volonte, and Fabián Volonte—and plays a double role: that of his present, adult self and that of his past, younger self. But the double is also both soldier and ordinary citizen. Thus, he is both actor in the here and now and spectator/interpreter of his past.

Flowing out of the "Veteranos" room is a long, narrow central exhibit hall that contains the "Cadena nacional" installation, a show of the last forty years of Argentine history.[15] Other than nine television screens and a backdrop of elegant, pale beige drapes, the only objects in this grand, simple, and stylish room are a desk, a chair, and the Argentine flag, all facing a television camera. By itself at the end of the room and illuminated by a spotlight, this dignified set stands out for its tranquility and sophistication. Each of the nine television screens, five on one side, four on the other, displays a video that focuses on a different key moment in Argentine history. Each historical event is in turn presented by one actor who plays the double role of the president who chose to initiate the event and a real person whose life was impacted by his decision.[16] Each film is a show unto itself and, as such, difficult to unpack. First, one needs to listen carefully to the president's words, which are then repeated by an individual whose life was severely altered by that same historic pronouncement. One must also untangle the president's performance on that day from subsequent events to understand how those political decisions affected not only individual lives, but also the broader (hi)story that unfolded.

Opening out of the president's office is the exhibit called "Ejércitos paralelos," a room that displays one of the many guard booths that "protected" the country's wealthier communities. As the placard explains, "Ejércitos paralelos investiga el mundo de la seguridad a través de fotografías y testimonios de guardias de garitas de la Capital y el conurbano bonaerense: un recorrido

"Cadena nacional." Photo: Lola Arias.

por el exterior y el interior de esos panópticos en miniatura que dan cuenta de nuevas formas de vivir y vigilar." The booth is surrounded by photos of different guard booths from inside and out. The exhibit at the same time highlights these fixtures of the Argentine urban landscape and problematizes them as both watchtowers for subversion and homes for the guards who were contracted by the state, corporations, or private citizens.

The final room of the installation, "El sonido de la multitud," consists of a lone karaoke microphone, into which spectator-participants are asked to sing or chant what is projected on a screen or to tell stories based on their own participation in any of the forty years of marches in the Plaza de Mayo. The placard description by Graciela Speranza reads:

> El sonido de la multitud amplifica las respuestas populares a las voces del poder en el escenario privilegiado de la participación política de las masas, en el que la memoria histórica se activa por defecto. La línea de tiempo de la historia argentina moderna podría reconstruirse por entero con el inventario de consignas y cánticos que quedaron grabados en los registros sonoros de la Plaza de Mayo, ahora entreverados para que el espectador coree en un karaoke y los recomponga con su propia línea de tiempo.[17]

Each room of the exhibit and each piece within each room tells a story—multiple stories—in its own right. However, what holds the entire exhibit together is the illusion of the double.

Stunt Doubles

As its title indicates, "stunt doubles" are the focus of the installation. A person who takes the place of another and performs dangerous actions in his or her stead, a stunt double pretends s/he is an exact copy of the person whose behavior s/he simulates; however, the stunt double's role is to trick the viewer into believing not only that s/he is acting like the original but that s/he IS the original. Arias's installation works in a similar manner. Each image is itself and its double—i.e. a real person becomes an actor playing him/herself and simultaneously playing another person, a president or soldier, for example. However, both the person s/he is playing and the self s/he is portraying split even beyond the double, into more than two, and become illusions of what they actually project: *trompe-l'oeil*. For example, in addition to the real person/actor, the only image projected on each screen, the person is both his/her present self and his/her past self and another (president, psychiatrist, swimmer, etc.), as we will see below. Thus, Arias's doubles split in multiple ways, largely through the affects they communicate to spectators.

Although centered on the concept of the double, Arias's *Doble de riesgo* both plays with the notion of doubling and simultaneously dismantles binarism. According to Deborah Ascher Barnstone:

> The *Doppelgänger* or double, is an ancient and universal theme that can be traced at least as far back as Greek and Roman mythology. [. . .] Literally the 'double walker' or 'double goer,' the *Doppelgänger* is an exact duplicate of the living person, indistinguishable from the original. It can be a true double, twin, mirror image, portrait, split personality, alter ego, mechanical doll, or ghostly shadow. The double historically represented evil, misfortune, and death, presaged them, or forecast supernatural phenomena but also represented the dual nature of human beings and human society as well as the split between reality and fantasy contained in every artwork. Since the advent of modern psychology, artists, writers and filmmakers increasingly use the double to symbolize mental and spiritual trauma and struggles with identity and the ego. (1)

Arias's doubles embody much of what Ascher-Barnstone posits. In one sense they are as close to exact copies as they can be; the person in each

screen, on one level, is playing him/herself and in "Ejércitos paralelos" and "El sonido de la multitud" spectators as actors are asked to play themselves as well. Also, the other doubles each figure plays – president, soldier, watch guard, activist—perhaps could be viewed as representing "evil, misfortune and death." Thus, one could say that Arias's doubles, because they are also the real people they are portraying, are exact copies. However, there are various elements that call the copies into question here. They are themselves, but now not only themselves, they are also actors and they are playing multiple roles (themselves in the present and the past, their former selves, as well as a president or, in "Veteranos," simultaneously as professionals, as veterans, and as young soldiers). Thus, these simulations are also set up like *trompe-l'oeil*, whose purpose is literally to trick or deceive the eye.

In *La simulación* (1982), Severo Sarduy underscores three different facets of simulation:

> Me pareció que un acercamiento a la simulación podía contener los tres momentos que he consignado: copia, anamorfosis y trompe-l'oeil. Al concluir, constato que esos tres momentos corresponden con lo Imaginario —pulsión de simulación en virtud de la cual para ser, hay que hacerse figura y la figura es siempre otra—, lo Simbólico —la anamorfosis no puede concebirse más que en el marco de un código de la representación, en particular de la perspectiva, y en el sitio en donde viene a incluirse en ella el sujeto— y lo Real —ya que el trompe-l'oeil, más allá del paso del ojo a la mano, da testimonio de lo que hay de *surplus* a la presentación de toda presencia. (53)

As Sarduy suggests, although they pretend to be exact copies of the original, doubles fall short of this. There is always more than meets the eye. Because "la figura es siempre otra," for Sarduy as well as for Walter Benjamin, the representation of an image—its other—is often more real than its original. (Think of *La Gioconda*, for example.) Thus, the "double" becomes anamorphosis, a version of a real image, only existing through its representation. The real people Arias has selected for her screens double but also distort (anamorphosis) themselves (act as themselves) and double another (a president in "Cadena nacional;" a soldier/professional self in "Veteranos"). In all cases though, as with Sarduy's theory of *trompe-l'oeil*, there is a surplus in each image. In "Cadena nacional," for example, this president is and is not the president; is and is not a real person impacted by the words being expressed now in the present on this screen but articulated originally in the past; is and

is not an actor (because s/he IS the real person who was impacted); is and is not also playing his/her past self.

The "Veteranos" installation shows most clearly how the copy slips into anamorphosis—a distorted image that changes according to the perspective from which one views it—and then into *trompe-l'oeil*. Staged in a completely dark room, five huge video screens overpower the space. In the middle, there are benches where spectators can sit to watch one or more of the films. All five soldiers are talking at once, thus, to distinguish what any one of them is saying, spectators must choose to pick up a headset near one or more of the screens and listen. They can also read a transcript of four of the monologues as those words scroll across the bottom of the screen; the fifth screen shows a handwritten diary so no additional written transcript is necessary. Each veteran becomes a movie actor playing himself on the big screen. He is playing the role of a stable, "normal," current-day citizen. Yet, the spectator is tricked; all s/he sees and hears is the current-day veteran; however, as each real veteran/actor looks back at his former self on the front lines of the Malvinas War, his youthful double—the soldier he was—emerges and takes over. Thus, his present self becomes psychologically distorted and the *surplus*—another person, although invisible to the eye—emerges. His youthful self does not physically appear on screen, yet through the emotions evoked, the young soldier IS the story. As the veteran begins to see and reveal thoughts and feelings buried in his subconscious, spectators learn that they cannot interpret the image on the screen at face value. The calm, seemingly passive veteran/actor overflows with the inner turmoil that marks his past and present life. The affects he shares raise questions for him personally; however, in the cracks between what he says, does, and feels, questions emerge that also portray an unsettled, psychologically damaged nation.

The visual image is seamless. There is but one body on each screen, that of the veteran in his professional clothes. But that one person is multiple; he is simultaneously an actor, himself (a professional adult man and a real veteran), his former self (a young man and a soldier), his own therapist, enacting and interpreting his actions, words, and feelings through a type of talk therapy, the national story and the latent national impact of that story. He wonders why he/they did what he/they did (i.e. fight in the Malvinas War, kill people, watch friends die) and whether he/they could or should have made other choices. Why did he have to become a soldier for that war? What was that war really about? What agency does a person or a nation ever have to change his/her/its own destiny? Each veteran's words, available on nearby headsets

The ex-combatant Daniel Terzano, from the "Veteranos" portion of the installation. Photo: Lola Arias.

and printed on the screen, expose his outer actions and inner turmoil. They also come across as fragmented, both because each individual memory and the collective memories are inherently fragmented and because spectators, trying to take it all in at once, are challenged to see and hear all the massive images presented and to internalize and interpret the many contradictory emotions, not only the individual emotions but also the national regret and humilliation. The Malvinas/Falkland Islands War (April 1982) was a moment of national embarrassment and despair for Argentina but, in many ways, it was the impetus to end the Dirty War. Abandoned by the United States under President Ronald Reagan and then defeated by the British on their own soil,

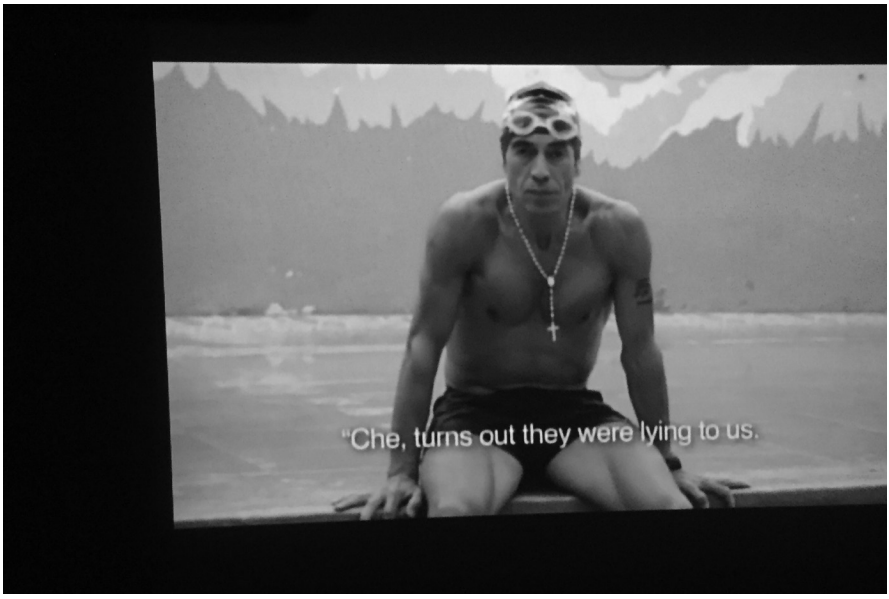
> At first, patriotic Argentines were stunned by the news, then angered. They suddenly realized that the armed forces had been efficient in disappearing citizens, covering up their own corruption and human rights abuses, keeping the Peronists from power, intimidating the intelligentsia, taking the largest share of the national budget, and wasting the proceeds of sizable international loans, but could not accomplish their constitutional mission of defending the nation. (Brown 252)

Each story unfolds through this double, distorted through his emotional representation and transformed into multiple characters and personalities

through affect. The video of one veteran—now an established, measured psychiatrist, shown in his clinic—presents some of the emotional turmoil behind the representation and the real events: "11 June 1982 is a calm day, a beautiful day," he states. Later, that same psychiatrist remembers a fellow soldier and friend: "I had survived, he was dead." While reenacting his own flight from the danger zone, the psychiatrist recalls: "I run a few meters, and when I hear the explosions, I throw myself to the ground." Speaking in the present tense, he has become the young soldier he was or never stopped being because of the emotional impact of that time period. The contradictions between his memory of the "calm day, a beautiful day" and his recollections of a friend's death and his own desperate actions, coupled with his regret, his reenacted terror, and the passive expression on his face during the retelling, highlight the illusional nature of what the spectator is seeing. What is more real here, the strong, contradictory emotions or the balanced, professional adult face on the screen?

Another veteran shows his diary and reads the blue, handwritten notes that he had meticulously and obsessively written as a young soldier in the Malvinas: "It still doesn't feel real that I've set foot on Malvinas soil. Faturos and I pair up in the tent. 00.15 We finished and we settle in for the night. I pray to God that I will get out of this hell alive." Which hell do the words refer to? The Malvinas hell the young soldier battled in or the current hell this veteran is living in because of it? In another reenactment, a different veteran turned actor sits at the edge of the pool where he now trains as a professional swimmer, wearing swim trunks, goggles, and a cross around his neck. As he calmly unloads some of his emotional baggage, he looks directly at the spectator and remarks: "Che, turns out they were lying to us."[18] The Malvinas/Falklands War lasted for only 74 days, yet the "Veteranos" installation and Arias's play *Campo minado*[19] both prove the devastating, enduring individual and national toll wrought by one bad, political choice.

The spectator, too, will be forced to focus on the emotional impact of choice. Whether the spectator chooses to view fragments of all five screens or to focus on the full story of one or more individual veteran(s), s/he will be struck by the overwhelming feelings provoked by the choices made and, at the same time, by the inevitability of making choices. Through the emotional renditions, one face on each screen splits into many characters, which underscores the multiplicity of emotions. The double is based on repetition and imitation, yet the copy is never the same as the original. It is always subject to distortion—through memory, through revisionist history, through an



Another ex-combatant reflects in "Veteranos." Photo: Lola Arias.

affective lens, through its representation. But Arias's installations go further. In them, the doubles move beyond distortion, beyond anamorphosis; they are *trompe l'oeil*, tricking viewers and deceiving the very self. These veterans are not just distortions of their former selves (anamorphosis). Because their emotions are prioritized—indeed, here affect takes on a life of its own—their very real feelings become the *raison-d'*ê*tre* of both their fictional beings (i.e., are expressed by actors on a screen) and their real selves. Thus, these doubles become optical illusions. They exist because they feel and what they feel is unstable, powerful, and in perpetual transformation.

The *trompe l'oeil* in *Doble de riesgo* is both aesthetic and thematic. Aesthetically, the installation both absorbs and deceives viewers. The tension between where to look (screens, objects, documents, people) and what to look at (which screen? which object? which person? which room?) tugs at viewers and demands that they make a choice, even if they choose not to actively sit at the president's desk, enter the guard booth, or chant into the microphone. Visually engaging at every turn, words and images compete for the viewer's attention. However, no matter where one looks, the double splits into optical illusion, because the feelings, not the characters, hold the viewer's focus. While this is most obvious in the "Veteranos" and "Cadena

nacional" sections, it also holds true in "Ejércitos paralelos" and "El sonido de la multitud;" however, in those installations it works a little differently, because the actors/real people whose emotions are placed on display are the spectators themselves, in addition to the invisible guards and activists whose words we hear and whose objects we handle.

In "Cadena nacional," for example, the different face on each of the nine screens is and is not the president, is and is not an actor, is and is not looking at viewers, does and does not live in the present. As Mariano Speratti reenacts President Jorge Videla's 1976 pronouncement of the beginning of the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional, spectators learn that Mariano was three and a half years old at the time, yet he is still sorting through the emotions that mark that decisive moment. Likewise, Fernando de la Rúa's 2001 mandate for a State of Siege "to assure law and order" in the nation is accompanied by text that notes that "Martín Galli vio la cadena nacional de De la Rúa del 19 de diciembre y se enfureció." As Galli protested with a large crowd in front of the Obelisco in Buenos Aires, he was shot by police: "[U]na bala le entró en la nuca . . . . Cuando salió del hospital habían pasado doce días y cinco presidentes." The disjuncture between his calm, seemingly healthy face on the screen, De la Rúa's passionless words that Galli expresses, and Galli's latent (past and present) anger, foreground massive, traumatic individual and national scars.

In "Ejércitos paralelos," photos and real objects, instead of videos and TV screens, form the backbone of the simulation(s), although here as well the *trompe l'oeil* is paramount. On the one hand, the guard booth is in the center of the room so that viewers can enter it and attempt to live another's life—the guard's whose words they hear and whose objects they touch—and see the world from its safety and through the guard's eyes. They are at once themselves and the guard whose role they take on. Making the simulation as "real" as possible, Arias even reinvents the foul odor and filth that characterized such booths.[20] However, through their glimpse from within the guard booth, viewers recognize that the tiny, fragile structure and the guard who inhabits it only provide an illusion of security. Moreover, do these structures foster safety or surveillance? Who is being "protected" by this flimsy edifice and from whom or what? As they enter the guard booth, spectators play both themselves and the guard, watching others as they, too, are watched by viewers outside the booth. However, through their actions, they also become aware of the illusions created for them and now by them: Safety? Security? Vigilance? Surveillance? Containment?

"Ejércitos paralelos." Photo: Lola Arias.

In "El sonido de la multitud" as well, it is spectators who play themselves at the same time as they double as activists in their own story and in the national story. As they approach the karaoke microphone, they can choose to be silent or to repeat one of the many chants or slogans they can read from the screen, or to invent something from within their own experiences. These "new" words are further doubled; Arias made mp3 recordings of them. These new, recorded sounds become illusions, because they are both part of the *Doble de riesgo* installation and, in addition, they can stand alone as a record of new emotions and/or activism, by being shared publicly through Facebook, on YouTube or as audio files.

Thus, straddling the lines between live performance, cinema, and visual plastic arts, Arias's doubles metamorphose into *trompe-l'oeil* and also fully participate in what Christian Metz and others have called a "game of presence and absence."[21] *Doble de riesgo* combines and alternates the presence/absence dichotomy. The face on each screen, the conflicting emotions each face presents, and the spectator are all present. Yet the actors themselves, as well as the presidents, soldiers, guards, and street activists (behind the words of "El sonido de la multitud") that they depict are absent, not physically present in these rooms. By foregrounding affect, the exhibit splits its doubles into optical illusions. Everyone IS present—even when they are not—only because

affect becomes the point of view in the stories. Each piece of the installation stands out for its apparent simplicity, and this austerity in the image brings affect to the foreground, even when the actor's passive pronouncement pretends to hide the emotions it provoked. The actors' voices are monotonous, superficially detached discourses. In "Cadena nacional," for example, each of the nine screens projects a different face, but all of the speakers are sitting, immobile, in the same position—in front of the president's desk, which stands illuminated but vacant at the end of the salon. The focus on each talking head's blank stare highlights the empty meaning behind each president's words. However, the actors' feelings and resultant broken life—expressed through scrolling text at the bottom of each screen—direct attention to the emotions evoked as a result of the presidents' words. The doubling of actors and presidents, past and present, the visual and the auditory, presents choices to the spectators. They can "just look" and not act, keeping their distance from the desk and camera and bearing witness to the emptiness of the space. Or they can sit at the desk, speak into the camera, and tell their own version of any (hi)story. They can choose to listen to any one or more of the speeches in full, or choose to hear nothing and simply read the actors' words as they scroll across the screen. But, because of the energy created through the totality of this performance, i.e. the number of screens and objects, the way these are displayed, and the depth of the illusions each contains by embodying doubles, representations of doubles, and *trompe-l'oeil*, spectators cannot capture everything. Thus, whether or not spectators choose to act in the moment, they become emancipated—forced to evaluate and interpret, forced to make choices themselves—at the same time that they become the installation's only live actors.

Conclusions

Arias calls on viewers to be present, physically and emotionally. She gives spectators no choice but to engage, although they must choose how they wish to do so. Confronted with numerous seemingly simple images of individuals who are present only because of the intensity of their emotions, the spectator is bombarded by the many characters and real lives each double on the screens conjures up. Through the (re)presentations of conflicting feelings and memories, each image opens up and transforms. However, because there are so many screens and, within each, illusions of multiple doubles, the viewer would find it difficult to feel compassion or to empathize with any one situation. As Sontag argues, "Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to

be translated into action, or it withers. [. . .] If one feels that there is nothing 'we' can do—but who is that 'we'?—and nothing 'they' can do either—and who are 'they?'—then one starts to get bored, cynical, apathetic. [. . .] It is passivity that dulls feeling" (101-2). Through its multimedia emotional frenzy, *Doble de riesgo* lessens the likelihood that viewers would become too attached to one story or too lulled into empathizing with any one victim. The competing emotions conjured up arouse different passions, but the impossibility of actually helping any victim here turns the gaze back onto oneself. The exhibit does not direct spectators to feel or act in any particular or prescribed way; the installation only highlights the need to feel and act in *some* way. *Doble de riesgo* urges viewers to bring feelings to the surface and to bond around feelings—not necessarily sympathy or empathy or pity, but raw passion and anger and outrage and fear.

Doble de riesgo urges spectators to "emancipate" themselves, not by sharing the same feelings, but by sharing the drive for sens(e)ation that bonds us as humans. This relates to Rancière's notion of community as "being together apart," which is based on the concept of dissensus in its double roots: sense (meaning) and sensation. We are bonded through our emotion and in our search for meaning. He writes: "What is common is 'sensation.' Human beings are tied together by a certain sensory fabric, a certain distribution of the sensible, which defines their way of being together; and politics is about the transformation of the sensory fabric of 'being together'" (56). Rancière's theory relies on the idea that people are not the same and do not feel the same. However, there is a certain equality that ties individuals together because of human beings' capacity and necessity to think and feel.

Individual feelings become the focus and are recorded through the installation in multiple, innovative ways. Thus, affect becomes the point of view in *Doble de riesgo*. The feelings and the spectators are present; all others are absent. This being the case, who is the stunt double evoked in the installation's title and what is the danger s/he faces? Arias creates venues for spectators to act within the installation. If the stunt double is defined through his/her presence and actions, then, through his/her embodiment, the spectator becomes the stunt double, filling in for actors in their multiple roles. But what is the danger these stunt doubles face? Inaction is not possible within this context; even viewing a screen, hearing a story, touching a microphone or the guard booth, or simply entering the Parque de la Memoria constitutes action. But, as the exhibit shows, no action is devoid of affective consequences. Both History and *Doble de riesgo* expose the affective aftermath of political ac-

tions. By propelling affect to center stage and giving it a presence equal to and alongside that of the spectator, *Doble de riesgo* reveals the dangers that lurk when one ignores the emotional impact of action or inaction.

Alongside its call to action, *Doble de riesgo* compels spectators to gather up their feelings, get in touch with them, let them flow and fester and then bond with others around them by "being together apart." Recognizing that we all have feelings and that our feelings are central to our lives, and remembering those feelings, might help us act and resist harmful acts that are imposed upon us. *Doble de riesgo* suggests that "[a]ffect is the limit to power because it is limitless" (Anderson 166). By putting affect as process and affect in process front and center for all to see and by showing the multiple forms affect takes through its plethora of illusionary doubles, Arias's work suggests that perhaps we, the people, can harness some of the limitless power of affect for our own political and emotional well-being.

Syracuse University

Notes

[1] Reviews in *Clarín*, *La Nación*, *La Agenda Revista*, *Página 12*, *Télam*, and *Revista Transas* describe *Doble de riesgo*'s impact on spectators, its many tensions—between art and history, fiction and the real—and its "aspecto lúdico y participativo." In "Las provocaciones poéticas de Lola Arias," Ana Wajszczuk observes that school children were obsessed with taking selfies while sitting at the desk of the "Cadena nacional." Ivanna Soto notes that the exhibit also impacted adults strongly, but differently. (See Note 6 below). Natalia Blanc calls "Cadena nacional" "tal vez la videoinstalación más inquietante." Natalia Laube remarks: "Es difícil no sentirse atravesado por su estilo narrativo, liviano […] pero no por eso irrespetuoso de la Historia y las historias de sus personajes." Cristina Civale remarks that "un poderoso sonido lo invade todo" and determines that "Arias realiza un procedimiento tan efectivo como conmovedor." Lara Segade writes that "arte y vida parecen aquí aproximarse al punto de habilitarse una zona de pasaje. Y el efecto es potente. […] hay algo profundamente familiar en las elecciones que, sin embargo, se extraña en su exhibición. Algo se desacomoda y perturba desde la pantalla cuando la voz de Macri sale de la boca de una nena." Evoking Freud, Segade affirms that that is what is "lo verdaderamente siniestro [. . .] la falta de distancia entre nuestros cuerpos y eso que pasó, que pasa; nuestra implicación, nuestra participación y el peligro que entrañan: la posibilidad de cambiar lugares."

[2] Singer, songwriter, playwright, director, performer, and visual artist, Lola Arias is among the most innovative and productive Argentine artists today. Founder of the Argentine theatre group *Compañía Postnuclear*, she has written and produced numerous interdisciplinary plays and performance pieces in various South American and European countries and in the United States, among them: *La escuálida familia* (2001), *Striptease* (2007), *El amor es un francotirador* (2007), *Mi vida después* (2009), *Melancolía y manifestaciones* (2012), *El año en que nací* (2012), *Atlas of Communism* (2016), *Minefield* (staged in London, 2016), *Campo minado* (staged in Buenos Aires, 2016), and *Ciudades paralelas* (2010). The last, a collaborative project with Stefan Kaegi, took place in multiple cities: Berlin, Buenos Aires, Warsaw, Zurich, and Singapore. Arias's works have been performed in English, French, German, and Portuguese

and presented at various international festivals, including: the Festival d'Avignon, Avignon; Theater Spektakel, Zurich; We Are Here, Dublin; Spielart Festival, Munich; Alkantara Festival, Lisbon; Radicals Festival, Barcelona; Under the Radar and Buenos Aires in Translation, both in New York. *La escuálida familia* was translated into English by Jean Graham-Jones and two plays have been published in German translation (Arias, "Publications.")

[3] In her interview with Lola Arias and her review of *Doble de riesgo* and *Campo minado* for *La Agenda Revista*, Natalia Laube remarks: "Lola logra que las cosas difíciles de contar parezcan menos complicadas; así cobran forma de relato personal, íntimo y, por eso, más cercano y vibrante."

[4] In their opening chapter to *Emotion: New Psychosocial Perspectives*, Shelley Day Sclater, Candida Yates, Heather Price, and David W. Jones argue that "[e]motions exist partly in the body, but they are also in our minds, in our language and in the cultures that surround us. They can be understood as a crucial bridge between the individual and the social, and are quintessentially psychosocial phenomena. They have a mercurial status, not existing without an individual to experience the emotion, but often having little significance without a socio-cultural framework that imbues feelings with meaning" (1).

[5] In his seminal work, *The Emancipated Spectator*, Jacques Rancière postulates a definition of theatre in which spectators are "revived, reactivated through the performance of actors, in the intelligence which constructs the performance, in the energy it generates" (3). For him, the totality of a performance and the energy it generates liberate spectators from their ignorance and passivity.

[6] Ivanna Soto describes the exuberance of children as they watched themselves on television from behind the president's desk or invented their own chant at the microphone of the "El sonido de la multitud" portion of the installation. She also recounts how adults, perhaps feeling trepidation and the weight of their history, approached this exhibit more timidly: "En el centro de la sala, una garita, rodeada de fotografías de garitas reales en las paredes. Una mujer le saca una foto al marido que sonríe para la cámara adentro del cubículo. La garita casi siempre está ocupada —esta vez— por adultos. ¿Será más fácil tomar un lugar privado, anónimo, cercado?"

[7] In his introduction to *A Brief History of Argentina*, Jonathan C. Brown argues that, in spite of the high education and skill level of its people and the country's wealth of natural resources, cultural richness, and international political influence, "In many ways, this South American nation has never overcome its colonial heritage of racism, social discrimination, and political arrogance. Those who assumed governance of the newly independent nation in the 19th century continued to use violence to maintain social order and to divide up wealth. […] These conditions persisted into the 21st century" (xii-xiii).

[8] Many critics, including me, recognize that this multitalented artist has worked across media, including the visual arts, throughout her entire career. In her review, Natalia Laube writes, "En la década transcurrida entre 2006 y 2016, es decir, entre sus primeros treinta años y sus casi cuarenta, Lola Arias pasó de ser una directora de teatro prometedora, interesante e instalada en el circuito indie porteño a una artista multifacética y reconocida en muchas ciudades del mundo. […] Pocos lenguajes artísticos le son ajenos: su caja de herramientas está compuesta por el teatro, el videoarte, la instalación y hasta la música."

[9] Established in 1998 and set against the scenic Río de la Plata, "Este lugar de memoria no pretende cerrar heridas ni suplantar la verdad y la justicia, sino constituirse en un lugar de recuerdo, homenaje, testimonio y reflexión. Su objetivo es que las generaciones actuales y futuras que lo visiten tomen conciencia del horror cometido por el Estado y de la necesidad de velar porque NUNCA MÁS se repitan hechos semejantes" (*Parque de la Memoria*).

[10] Stela A contains the names of those who disappeared between 1969-1976, whose names began with BEL through GUI; Stela B lists those who went missing in 1976 whose names began with GUR through ZUR; Stela C documents the missing from 1977 whose names began with ALBA through OLI; and Stela D names those who disappeared from 1977-1983 and includes names that began with OLI through YAG.

[11] The first wall contains this inscription to orient its viewers: "La nómina de este monumento comprende a las víctimas del terrorismo de estado, detenidos, desaparecidos y asesinados, y a los que murieron combatiendo por los mismos ideales de justicia y equidad."

[12] Marguerite Feitlowitz writes that in the aftermath of Juan Domingo Perón's death (July 1, 1974) and the military coup that ended the fragile presidency of his wife, Isabel Perón (March 1976), "[t]he generals who seized power in 1976 instituted a far-reaching draconian program that they called the Process of National Reorganization, or El Proceso for short […] General Jorge Videla, head of the army, assumed the presidency of a junta that consisted also of the heads of the navy and the air force. 'The aim of the Process,' Videla declared, 'is the profound transformation of consciousness'" (qtd. in Brown 240-41: 19). This initiated some of the most violent actions in Argentine history, called the Dirty War, which took place between 1976 and 1983 and led to the disappearance and death of some 30,000 Argentines.

[13] The archives, including an interactive database of information on each of the disappeared people listed on the monument, are part of the permanent collection housed in the Sala PAyS in the Parque de la Memoria and can be accessed electronically from anywhere. During the *Doble de riesgo* installation, the room that contains the "Centro de documentación y archivo digital del Parque de la Memoria: Base de datos del Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado" was adjacent to the large, long room that housed the "Cadena nacional" set. Although not part of Arias's creation, the documents and images, both tangible and digital, fit extremely well and could be mistaken for another section of *Doble de riesgo*. The archives piece together the dense history and over-reaching politics of those complex years of dictatorship (1976-83) and meshed seamlessly with Arias's multimedia representations. The archive extends from 1969, when the first hints of dictatorial abuses can be documented, to the present day. Framed by the words "40 AÑOS ¡PRESENTES!", the archives add another layer of focalization, both external and internal, to Arias's exhibition.

[14] Jonathan C. Brown acknowledges that young Argentine soldiers were sent to the Malvinas unprepared and ill-equipped: "[T]he replacement forces sent to the Malvinas were all poorly trained and equipped conscripts. Many were not issued sufficient clothing to withstand frostbite as they waited in wet foxholes for British troops" (250).

[15] Beginning with Jorge Rafael Videla's "Primer discurso como presidente de facto" (March 30, 1976) and ending with Mauricio Macri's inaugural address (December 10, 2015), "Cadena nacional" leaves open the possibility to add more political and historical events to the collection in the future. The exhibit documents inflection points in Argentina's history during the past forty years. In addition to Videla and Macri, the presidents that are re-enacted include: Leopoldo Fortunato Galtieri announcing the end of the Malvinas War (June 15, 1982); Reynaldo Benito Antonio Bignone on the eve of democratic elections (October 29, 1983); Raúl Alfonsín on the Crisis of governability (May 29, 1989); Carlos Saúl Menem's Deregulation Decree (November 1, 1991); Fernando de la Rúa's "decreto de estado de sitio" (December 19, 2001); Néstor Kirchner explaining the disappearance of Luis Gérez (December 29, 2006); and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner following the death of her husband (November 1, 2010).

[16] The actors in the videos were: Martin Galli, Helena Goldstein, Denise Groesman, Rubén López, Elvira Onetto, Gabriel Sagastume, Sebastián Soler, Mariano Speratti, and Javier Swedzky.

[17] Translator, scholar, literary and film critic, Graciela Speranza received her degree from the University of Buenos Aires and is professor of Argentine literature in the Arts Programme of the Universidad Torcuato Di Tella. In 2002, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship for her work on Argentine literature, visual arts, and cinema. She is also co-editor of the arts and letters magazine *Otra parte*. Speranza collaborated on the curatorial texts for the *Doble de riesgo* exhibit.

[18] Because Lola Arias originally created "Veterans" as a video installation for a 2014 London exhibit called "After the War," the subtitles of the "Veteranos" portion of *Doble de riesgo* are written in English. See Jordana Blejmar for more details on this and for an excellent analysis of Arias's *Campo minado*.

[19] First staged in London in 2016, *Campo minado* is "una obra bilingüe que reúne a veteranos argentinos e ingleses de la Guerra de Malvinas para explorar lo que quedó en sus cabezas, 30 o 40 años más tarde" (Laube). The play, as well as the "Veteranos" installation, is proof that even a "minor" war has devastating consequences and a long-term impact.

[20] Ivanna Soto notes about the exhibit: "Ni bien se abre la puerta, el olor ácido a mezcla de humedad y cigarrillo se pega en la nariz. La silla rota, la pala y la escoba, la caja de puchos vacía, el libro, el mate,

los santitos, la radio, reconstruyen el mundo, mientras escuchamos los testimonios de tres guardias de seguridad que pasan sus días detrás de ventanas como esas, sin saber muy bien a qué empresa responden ni cuál debería ser su función, sin armas ni entrenamiento."

[21] Christian Metz writes: "In the theatre, actors and spectators are present at the same time and in the same location, hence present to one another, as the two protagonists of an authentic perverse couple. But in the cinema, the actor was present when the spectator not (= shooting), and the spectator is present when the actor is no longer (= projection): a failure to meet of the voyeur and the exhibitionist whose approaches no longer coincide (they have 'missed' one another)" (63).

Works Cited

Anderson, Ben. "Modulating the Excess of Affect: Morale in a State of 'Total War.'" *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, Duke UP, 2010, pp. 161-85.

Arias, Lola. *Doble de riesgo*. 10 Aug.-13 Nov. 2016, Parque de la Memoria, Buenos Aires.

---. "Publications." *Lola Arias*, lolaarias.com/proyectos/#publicaciones. Accessed 24 Aug. 2017.

Ascher Barnstone, Deborah. *The Doppelgänger*. Peter Lang, 2016.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility." *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*, edited by Michael W. Jennings, et al., translated by Edmund Jephcott, et al., The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2008, pp. 19-55.

Blanc, Natalia. "La intimidad de la historia, convertida en experiencia colectiva de memoria." *La Nación*. 12 Aug. 2016, www.lanacion.com.ar/1927289-la-intimidad-de-la-historia-convertida-en-experiencia-colectiva-de-memoria. Accessed 11 Aug. 2017.

Bleeker, Maaike. *Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Blejmar, Jordana. "Autofictions of Postwar: Fostering Empathy in Lola Arias' *Minefield/Campo minado*." *Latin American Theatre Review*, vol. 50, no. 2, 2017, pp. 103-23.

Bourriaud, Nicolas. *Post-production: Culture as Screenplay; How Art Reprograms the World.* Lukas and Sternberg, 2002.

Brown, Jonathan C. *A Brief History of Argentina*. Lexington Associates, 2010.

Civale, Cristina. "Esta boca es suya." *Página 12*, 19 Aug. 2016, www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/las12/13-10803-2016-08-19.html. Accessed 11 Aug. 2017.

Day Sclater, Shelley, et al., editors. *Emotion: New Psychosocial Perspectives.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

De Oliveira, Nicolas, et al. *Installation Art*. Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1994.

Downey, Anthony. "Towards a Politics of (Relational) Aesthetics." *Third Text*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2007, pp. 267-75.

Graham-Jones, Jean, editor and translator. *BAiT: Buenos Aires in Translation: Four Plays from Argentina*. Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, 2008.

Guinta, Andrea. *Escribir las imágenes: ensayos sobre arte argentino y latinoamericano.* Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2011.

Krysa, Danielle. *Art Installations: A Visual Guide*. Roads Publishing, 2016.

Laube, Natalia. "Auscultar la tensión: Lola Arias habla sobre *Doble de riesgo* y *Campo minado*, su trabajo con excombatientes de Malvinas enstrenado hace poco en Londres." *La agenda*, 5 Aug. 2016, laagenda.buenosaires.gob.ar/post/148499160070/auscultar-la-tensión. Accessed 11 Aug. 2017.

Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Translated by Celia Britoon, et al., Indiana UP, 1977.

Parque de la Memoria. Ciudad Buenos Aires, http://parquedelamemoria.org.ar. Accessed 11 Aug. 2017.

Rancière, Jacques. *The Emancipated Spectator*, translated by Gregory Elliott, Verso, 2009.

Sarduy, Severo. *La simulación*. Monte Avila Editores, 1982.

Segade, Lara. "Los peligros de la proximación. Sobre *Doble de riesgo*, de Lola Arias." *Revista Transas*, www.revistatransas.com/2016/09/01/los-peligros-de-la-proximidad-sobre-doble-de-riesgo-de-lola-arias/. Accessed 24 Aug. 2017.

Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Picador, 2003.

Soto, Ivanna. "Una muestra que invita ponerle el cuerpo a la Historia." *Clarín*, 19 Aug. 2016, www.clarin.com/cultura/muestra-invita-ponerle-cuerpo-Historia_0_By-7rufSc.html. Accessed 11 Aug. 2017.

Wajszczuk, Ana. "Las provocaciones poéticas de Lola Arias." *La Nación Revista*, 11 Sept. 2016, www.lanacion.com.ar/1935550-las-provocaciones-poeticas-de-lola-arias. Accessed 11 Aug. 2017.