

# Urban photography as counter-monument in Urruzola's *Miradas ausentes (en la calle)*

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## Abstract

In 2008, photographer Juan Ángel Urruzola pasted sixty gigantic black-and-white photo-murals of Uruguay's *detenidos-desaparecidos* on the walls around the centre of Montevideo. If the inauguration of the *Memorial en Recordación de los Detenidos Desaparecidos* in 2001 had symbolized an end to the politics of silence characterizing Uruguay's post-dictatorship 'transition' to neoliberal consumerism, Urruzola's street art reflected the now flourishing national culture of memory which gradually emerged over the decade of the 2000s. Yet, while Urruzola's alternative cartography of remembrance complemented the precedent set by such official sites of memory, the public's often hostile response to the photo-murals suggested a memorial experience more reminiscent of that associated with the German 'counter-monument'. Indeed, just as the reaction to Urruzola's images demonstrated the continued polarization of Uruguayan society with regard to how the authoritarian past should be addressed, it also demonstrated how such memory art could provoke a wider public engagement with today's memory politics and could thereby extend the postmemorial community beyond the limited constitution of visitors to official monuments.

**Keywords:** counter-monument; disappeared; memory art; photography; Uruguay

But isn't every square inch of our cities a crime scene? Every passer-by a culprit?  
Isn't it the task of the photographer – descendent of the augurs and haruspices  
– to reveal guilt and to point out the guilty in his pictures?  
Walter Benjamin, 'Little History of Photography' (1931)

*No hay que tener ojos en la nuca* ['You shouldn't look back'] was the slogan that came to characterize Julio María Sanguinetti's first administration as Uruguayan President (1985–1990) with regard to the question of how the memory of the previous twelve years of civil-military dictatorship (1973–1985) should be addressed.<sup>1</sup> In particular, Sanguinetti's slogan served to justify the implementation of a statute of limitations (the 1986 'Law of Expiry') on prosecutions of the Uruguayan military for crimes committed before 1985 and thus, ostensibly a legal means for forging national reconciliation and democratic transition.<sup>2</sup> A referendum held in 1989 gave a narrow victory to those Uruguayans who supported the continued implementation of this controversial law and the concomitant 'politics of silence' that would ensue. The result exposed the starkly polarized character of Uruguayan society and yet, more importantly, as Lessa (2011) has signalled, it enabled the government to enforce 'the most successful' policy of 'forgetfulness' of all Latin American post-dictatorships: in

the decade following the referendum all recognition and discussion of state terrorism would be limited to affected families and human rights organizations (2011: 179).

Nevertheless, the late 1990s and early 2000s would witness the gradual emergence of a national postmemorial community constituted by a broader range of social actors and supported by both state and private initiatives. During the Jorge Batlle (2000–2005) and Tabaré Vázquez (2005–2010) administrations respectively, the forced disappearance of Uruguayan citizens was officially recognized and documented, while legislative reform would eventually allow the prosecution of former members of the state security forces and even the imprisonment of the first civil president sponsored by the military, Julio María Bordaberry. The increasingly effective popular mobilization to overturn the Law of Expiry culminated in the 2009 plebiscite which, although it resulted in another ‘no’ vote, nevertheless reflected the fact that a flourishing culture of memory was exerting greater pressure for more dramatic legislative reform (Levey 2010, 2012; Lessa 2011; Fried 2011).<sup>3</sup>

This shift from post-dictatorship Uruguay’s politics of silence of the 1980s and early 1990s to the memory politics of the 2000s cannot be better symbolized than in the contrast between two major ‘monumental’ urban projects in post-dictatorship Montevideo: the exclusive Punta Carretas shopping mall that opened in 1994 and the inauguration of the *Memorial en Recordación de los Detenidos Desaparecidos* [‘Monument in Memory of the Detained and Disappeared’] in 2001. The former has attracted much critical attention, quite justifiably, given that the transformation of a notorious prison for political dissidents into a space of consumption represents a striking illustration of how the prevailing culture of amnesia was consolidated in the aftermath of the 1989 referendum.<sup>4</sup> This architectonic embodiment of the apparent opposition between memory of dictatorship and market ‘progress’ has hence been described as a ‘monument to a city of impunity’ (Draper 2011: 143). Meanwhile, the inauguration of the official monument to Uruguay’s disappeared in the Parque Vaz Ferreira on the Cerro de Montevideo has been heralded as ‘a new physical marker of memory’ that defies ‘fifteen years of government politics of silence that had wished to condemn victims to oblivion’ (Lessa 2011: 195). Along with the *Centro Cultural Museo de la Memoria*, [‘Cultural Centre and Memory Museum’] inaugurated in 2007, the *Memorial* thus contributed to the transformation of Montevideo’s urban space in a decade in which the ‘consumerism-equals-amnesia’ paradigm symbolized by Punta Carretas was to be significantly undermined by the national culture of memory.

Much like contemporary Buenos Aires, then, the inauguration of the memorial and the museum in Montevideo has unsettled the neoliberal consumer city imagined and promoted by transitional governments since, on both sides of the River Plate, ‘the dead’ have been ‘re-introduced’ into urban spaces where they had previously been ‘made invisible at a time of progress negotiated through forgetting’ (Draper 2011: 145).<sup>5</sup> Similarly, in both cities ‘official’ memorial projects must be considered within the context of what Druliolle terms ‘micro-memorial projects’ or community-based initiatives and interventions occupying a wide range of conspicuous urban spaces (Druliolle 2011: 17). Performative activities, such as the emblematic 1983 *Siluetazo* in Buenos Aires, the ongoing public shaming of former torturers through *escraches* by the

human rights organization HIJOS in both Argentina and Uruguay, or the annual March of Silence in Montevideo (which has taken place every year since 1996), represent notable examples of micro-memorial projects that have facilitated the insertion of the past into daily life and thus have made national memory visible to a broader public. The 're-introduction of the dead' in these contemporary post-dictatorship cities is therefore effectuated within a citywide network of sites and activities related to a memorial culture in which collective involvement is encouraged from a variety of subject positions and for a variety of social actors. When official and micro-memorial projects are viewed as mutually affirming, the whole city can hence be conceived of as 'a participatory, visual, and discursive battleground' (Druliolle 2011: 35) since overlooked urban spaces are politicized and public debate and participation encouraged while the postmemorial community can both include and be extended beyond the limited constitution of visitors to official memorial institutions.

A recent example of a specifically Uruguayan micro-memorial visual project, which has served precisely to draw a wider public into the politics of memory debate, is *Miradas ausentes en la calle* ['Absent Gazes in the Street'] by photographer and former militant Juan Ángel Urruzola (Montevideo 1953–). During the campaign for a second referendum on the Law of Expiry between 2007 and 2009, Urruzola produced a series of black-and-white photo-montages enlarged to the size of advertising hoardings and pasted sixty of them in a variety of locations on the often crumbling and graffiti-emblazoned walls of downtown Montevideo's streets. Each of the *gigantografías* ['photo-murals'] confronted pedestrians and passing motorists with Urruzola's adaptation of a technique largely associated with North American conceptual photographer Kenneth Josephson (1932–): a single black-and-white ID photograph of one of Uruguay's *detenidos-desaparecidos* being clasped between the thumb and index finger of an outstretched hand and then held up against either desolate cityscapes or virtually deserted esplanades (*ramblas*) along the River Plate.

Each photograph within a photograph was accompanied by a caption indicating the name of the person in the image, and the place and date of their abduction, thus restoring 'biographical singularity' to a face originally targeted for archival anonymity and existential erasure (Richard quoted in Avelar 2006: 267). The somewhat crude superimposition of one image within another was thus to be read as a symbolic 're-insertion' of a figure within the environment from which they had previously been violently 'extracted' and hence, a rupture in the illusion that the memory of state violence in the past can simply be conveniently 'airbrushed' out of contemporary reality. Indeed, Urruzola had performed his own rudimentary version of *reversed* airbrushing so as to boldly proclaim the irruption of an erased figure into the national 'frame'.

Even though state terror in Uruguay is associated most readily with the mass imprisonment and torture of dissidents, not to mention with the vast numbers of the country's population driven into exile, the phenomenon of disappearance remained 'highly significant in its contribution to the nation's spread of an unprecedented culture of fear' between 1973 and 1985 (Fried 2011: 160).<sup>6</sup> As an allegory of social trauma, a symbol of protest and demands for justice, therefore, the ID photograph or black-and-white portrait of the disappeared became as indispensable to Uruguayan human rights



Figure 1: *Miradas ausentes en la calle* (Montevideo 2008) with kind permission from Juan Ángel Urruzola.

groups as in other post-conflict Latin American countries.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, the potency of archival portraits of individual disappeared citizens lies in their capacity to symbolize the rupture of the wider social fabric during periods of authoritarian rule: 'The photographs of the faces became a collective sign, each one of those traces of a singular life metonymically representing all of the disappeared' (Longoni 2010: 2). Since the end of the Uruguayan dictatorship, these images have thus also come to represent the current struggle against the official politics of silence and the Law of Expiry.

In adapting this symbolism to his own politicized aesthetic, Urruzola is continuing a tradition of Uruguayan art and photography devoted to the figure of the *detenido-desaparecido* which dates back at least to Antonio Frasconi's emblematic woodcuts *Los desaparecidos* from the 1980s (Larnaudie 2005).<sup>8</sup> Yet it is Urruzola who, perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, has been most concerned with exploring the struggle for national memory as expressed specifically in the form of the standardized *fotocarné* rather than any other kind of portrait. This preference for ID photographs

derives from Urruzola's concern with the gaze (*mirada*) as a metaphor for memory and the political transparency denied by the transitional governments. For instance, it is precisely because of the unwavering and penetrating stare of the subject in an ID photograph that Urruzola was able to convey an ironic allusion to Sanguinetti's *No hay que tener ojos en la nuca*, most overtly in the specific case of *Miradas ausentes en la calle*. Urruzola both invokes and ridicules the slogan by making an irresistible eye-to-eye contact (*mirarse a los ojos*) with images of the disappeared his symbolic conduit for witnessing and remembering the past. Hence, if Urruzola conceived of his urban intervention precisely as a means for 'advertising' the campaign in favour of the second referendum, he appeared to be doing so by suggesting the return of a phantasmagoric witness to events previously intended to be 'unseen' and beyond testimony. In this way, viewers of Urruzola's images were encouraged to reject the 'blindness' of the politics of silence and to remember ('see') Uruguay's previously repressed past by experiencing it literally 'staring' them in the face.

In this same respect it is worth noting that in the promotional brochures for his exhibitions and on his website entries, Urruzola has on several occasions alluded to the security forces' practice of blindfolding or placing a hood over the abductee's head, just as he himself had experienced before being forced into exile in Europe: 'En 1972, cuando los militares uruguayos me detuvieron, su primer gesto fue ponerme una capucha. A otros les vendaban los ojos. A todos los detenidos se les "amputaba" la mirada. Estaba prohibido "mirar", acaso "ver"' (Urruzola 2006, CCE Brochure) ['In 1972, when the Uruguayan army arrested me, the first thing they did was cover my head with a hood. Other prisoners were blindfolded. All detainees had their capacity to look "amputated". "Looking", even "seeing" was prohibited']. On encountering one of the re-framed images from *Miradas ausentes en la calle*, then, the viewer is exhorted to meet the gaze of the once blindfolded or hooded detainee and in doing so, to confront the uncomfortable history of [a] death[s] that until 2001 the Uruguayan state had refused to acknowledge.

Unavoidable eye-to-eye contact between viewer and Urruzola's subjects is, by extension, intended as a moral imperative. The hand holding the image at arm's length further underscores the invitation to the viewer to adopt the photographer's (technical and ethical) point of view and to 'remove' their own 'blindfolds'; that is, to reject the temptation to deny history and to enter into an inter-subjective exchange of looks with an apparition from a past generation making its own historical claim on the present. Urruzola's wider message would therefore appear to be that of an appeal for a 'redemptive' intergenerational memory whereby contemporary Uruguay recognizes its own historical 'legacy' as 'redeeming' a lost generation by, at the very least, acknowledging their prior existence and thus offering the possibility of mourning a past which, until recently, had itself been 'disappeared'.<sup>9</sup>

In that sense, Hirsch's original notion of a 'postmemorial' community interpellated specifically through photography, is especially useful for considering the reception of Urruzola's work and its implicit message by the general public (Hirsch 1997). Even though Hirsch has been concerned primarily with post-conflict family photography as the postmemorial medium *par excellence*, her overarching preoccupation with the

affiliative identification of the viewer with the narratives and subject positions offered by other people's photographs remains potentially instructive in accounting for public responses to Urruzola's images. For the imaginary and yet, always incomplete identification with those portrayed in photographs from an earlier generation allows the expansion of a wider community of viewers predicated upon a shared, ethical imperative to remember and to mourn human rights abuses of the past and present (Hirsch 1997: 267). Consequently, we can appreciate the critical role of the context in which images are exhibited and hence, the importance of the public exposure of Urruzola's photo-murals as 'street art' in creating the possibility of such a community.

The earliest version of *Miradas ausentes* had been exhibited in the vestibule of the *Intendencia Municipal de Montevideo* in 2000 for a visiting public largely limited to directly-affected relatives and survivors and those human rights groups, artists and intellectuals who were already committed to memory politics (Oroño 2008). It was therefore when Urruzola decided to transform this earlier project into an urban installation and to take the images literally out into the streets and onto the buildings of Montevideo that his 'spectral witnesses' were able to extend their viewing public: that is, beyond the anticipated politically-engaged gallery visitors to include a new generation of ordinary citizens not directly affected by state terror. While the images were certainly billboard-size, Urruzola rejected the idea of actually hiring elevated billboard space in the city to exhibit his works, claiming that elevated advertising space retains a protective but also alienating distance from the potential consumers down below. Instead, Urruzola preferred to go 'down' to street level to exhibit his pieces directly amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life so as to engage passers-by and hence, to have 'los ojos del transeúnte a la altura de los ojos del desaparecido' ['the pedestrian's eyes at the same level as those of the disappeared subject'], thus maximizing the possibility of an inter-subjective exchange of gazes (Urruzola 2009). In striving for this eye-to-eye contact between image and viewer, Urruzola thereby signalled his Barthesian faith in the photo-image as the magical restoration of the absent/dead referent and, by extension, as a spectre-like witness returning from the past to insert itself within the contemporary politics of memory (Barthes 1980).

Rather than dismissing this vitalistic conception of the photo-image as a superstitious regression to the popular mid-nineteenth-century reception of the medium or to an 'irrational' neo-primitivism, we might bear in mind contemporary anthropological theories of the artwork which posit that, far from being antithetical to industrialized societies, animistic conceptions of images (as much as fetishized social relations) remain the contemporary cultural norm (Gell 1998; Pinney 1998; Mitchell 2005). The plethora of images circulating in a hypermediated contemporary culture are ostensibly treated as substitutes for, or extensions of, absent beings and hence 'persons' (rather than inanimate objects) who exercise agency over the social relations of which they are an integral part: 'works of art, images, icons, and the like have to be treated, in the context of an anthropological theory, as person-like; that is, sources of, and targets for, social agency' (Gell 1998: 96). By extension, the notion that an inanimate object such as a photographic image might actually be received as an emanation of the dead who have returned to exercise social agency in the present

would seem appropriate for a generation inheriting a past haunted by silenced witnesses. In that respect, it is worth noting Bell's germane argument that the *detenido-desaparecido* captured in an ID photograph can be read as a version of Primo Levi's abject 'absolute witness' who now resists their mute confinement to the historical archive and becomes a 'desiring' subject. As such, these images make a claim on the viewer to recognize each one 'not for an individual story but [for] the story of the configurations of power and the machinations' that put the subject in the frame in the first place (Bell 2010: 83).

The public's response to the project provided further dramatic evidence of a contemporary faith in the magical conflation of referent and image in such photographs, and yet, at the same time, in some cases indicated little enthusiasm for the calls for justice invoked by these political revenants. On the contrary, the often violent reaction to the images exposed the continued polarization of Uruguayan society with respect to state terror even as, quite ironically, it revealed that Urruzola's project had certainly attracted a broader community of viewers beyond those already committed to memory politics. In fact, this expanded community now appeared to include a number of citizens opposed to memory politics altogether and who viewed the street art simply as an intolerable affront. Within hours of being displayed, many of the images had been vandalized, completely ripped down, daubed in graffiti or simply covered over with fresh advertising posters. Moreover, given the significance of the gaze in *Miradas ausentes*, it is worth noting that vandals often chose to scratch out the eyes of Urruzola's subjects (as if to allay any lingering doubts about the existence of contemporary animism) and thereby strove to once again 'blindfold' these 'image-beings' who sought eye-to-eye contact so insistently. Urruzola himself was initially left aghast at the speed with which such vandalism manifested itself.<sup>10</sup> However, any sense of disappointment soon gave way to indignant frustration with those Uruguayan citizens who continued to oppose any reform of the Law of Expiry: '¿lograremos en este país re-encontrarnos con nuestra historia? o ¿seguiremos borrando, arrancando, tapando, negando, hablando mucho para no decir nada?' (Urruzola 2009) ['Will we ever manage to reconcile ourselves with our history in this country? Or will we simply carry on wiping out, tearing down, covering over, denying and talking a lot without saying anything?'].

The use of vandalism as a metaphor for the denial and repression of the past in this blog entry already revealed Urruzola's realization that his urban intervention had been successful in inciting even the most entrenched opponents of legislative reform to at least engage in the debate over memory politics in some form. It is therefore more than tempting to view the social impact of the photo-murals as analogous to that of the German 'counter-monument' (Young 1992). For, in both cases, the destruction, defacement or (gradual) disappearance of such public art served to reflect the ongoing struggle for memory and became an active embodiment of memory as a social practice. Indeed, the primary intention of the counter-monument, which might be equally applicable to Urruzola's urban photography, had been to encourage citizens to exceed the role of passive spectatorship and to assume a more active engagement with national remembrance on a daily basis, however unsavoury or even violent the

form that 'engagement' might take (Young 1992: 274). Hence, if national memory is to have any social relevance to the present, the counter-monument, like Urruzola's installation, should:

*not* console but provoke; *not* remain fixed but change; *not* be everlasting but disappear; *not* be ignored by passers-by but demand interaction; *not* remain pristine but invite its own violation and desecration; *not* accept graciously the burden of memory but throw it back at the town's feet. (277)

The counter-monument had thereby been intended to expose and reverse the paradox of the traditional monument, that is, the fact that, ironically, permanent urban monuments 'absorb' the work of memory and end up alleviating the city dweller of the burden of remembrance (Young 1992: 276). Rather than embodying any illusion of memorial permanence, the counter-monument was instead designed to trigger internal 'living memory' in the viewer and, counter-intuitively, to convince her/him that 'once the monument moves its viewers to memory, it also becomes unnecessary and so may disappear' (Young 1992: 278). Similarly, while the Uruguayan vandals had made their symbolic rejection of an inter-subjective gaze with the figures in Urruzola's photo-murals evident for all to see, they also revealed that the issues at stake in the politics of memory had been 'seared' into a wider public consciousness (Young 1992: 272). For despite their efforts to 'disappear' the memory of state terror for a second time, the vandals had by default entered the debate over the politics of memory in Uruguay and hence demonstrated that the eventual disappearance of Urruzola's visual triggers for memory did not necessarily mean the erasure of memory *tout court*.

Nevertheless, in the days following the initial hanging and pasting of his pieces, as Urruzola embarked upon the laborious process of recovering and re-pasting those photo-murals that had been damaged, or of uncovering those already hidden beneath new advertising posters, he also decided to both photograph and film that very process of restoration. In this way, he could retain at least some record of and visual testimony to the process whereby his own 'disappearing' counter-monuments had become metaphors for an antagonistic process of repression and revelation and then counter-repression of the national past. Ultimately, an even wider national and international postmemorial community of internet viewers could now witness this restoration and could thereby appreciate how social memory in post-conflict cultures might constitute a series of 'collected' memories and counter-memories vying for ownership of the national past in an ongoing, unresolved process, rather than constituting a single 'collective' memory, or rather than simply being doomed to ineluctable erasure (Young 1993: xi).

In conceiving of Urruzola's photo-murals as visual counter-monuments, however, we might wonder to what extent the limitations of Montevideo's *Memorial* and museum of memory become exposed by comparison. After all, there is no denying that the relatively distant location of both of these official memory markers from Montevideo's busiest areas further supports the view that institutionalized remembrance is characterized primarily by the affective or intellectual pilgrimage of



an informed public, rather than by uncomfortable provocation for the general public on a daily basis (Druliolle 2011; Lessa 2011).<sup>11</sup> Similarly, we might reiterate the fact that the ethos of the counter-monument is to provoke the active participation of citizens in often overlooked urban spaces, whereas traditional institutions tend to restrict the memorial experience to their material confines and to the contemplative subject-position of the museum visitor. On the other hand, we should nevertheless be wary of dismissing official memorial markers as ‘institutional gravestone[s] for memory’ (Druliolle 2011: 17) or the temptation to simply place them in opposition to popular micro-memorial projects. Instead, while acknowledging their potential limitations, we should also recognize their role as official symbols of the increasingly successful erosion of the culture of amnesia and by extension, their symbolism in recovering ‘monumental’ urban space for the culture of memory in a city previously dominated by images of and ‘monuments’ to neoliberal consumerism. Indeed, it is precisely with this notion of a recuperation of urban space from the frenzied circulation of consumer images that *Miradas ausentes en la calle* complements and extends the precedent set by Montevideo’s official memory markers.

In the first place, Urruzola’s ‘nomadic’ and ‘portable’ visual counter-memorials were obviously able to occupy a greater expanse of urban space simply by constituting a cartography of phantasmagoric images at disparate points around the city, rather than being restricted to the confines of a single location. Furthermore, Urruzola made no distinction between sites of consumption and sites of memory when deciding where to hang his pieces: he simply ‘reintroduced the dead’ directly into the daily flow of mass-produced consumer images in downtown Montevideo. In contrast, we might bear in mind that just as the Punta Carretas mall and the *Memorial* may represent ‘monumentally’ polar opposites with regard to the remembrance of dictatorship, they also represent an allocation of separate urban spaces for consumption (oblivion) and for memory within the post-dictatorship city. By avoiding this urban spatial binary, Urruzola was able to acknowledge the postmodern penetration of the market into all cultural practices and at the same time, to draw a jarring contrast between his photo-murals and mass-produced images promoting spectacular and disposable products. Indeed, prior to their complete disappearance, the ripped and torn photo-murals revealed layers of earlier, mostly commercial hoardings pasted beneath them and thus, not only invoked the notion of memory as a temporal palimpsest of multiple inscriptions, but also stood as testimony to the ongoing tensions between a consumer culture identified with the politics of silence and a politics of memory identified with the struggle against impunity.<sup>12</sup>

Ultimately, the photo-murals drew public attention to the human cost of state terror in the past and yet, unlike official markers of memory, they also temporarily punctured the mystifying effects of image saturation in contemporary Montevideo. Even as they faded, were vandalized and eventually became submerged beneath layers of new publicity images, Urruzola’s spectral witnesses had succeeded in suggesting that time was ‘out of joint’ and had therefore fulfilled their wider purpose as counter-monuments: they had demonstrated that the post-dictatorship city of the *present* was predicated upon the socio-economic fulfilment of authoritarian rule in the *past*.

Whether viewers reacted with violent indignation or with approval to Urruzola's provocation, they had all nevertheless been interpellated as members of a wider postmemorial community. They had all been called upon to reflect on the continuities between past and present as – willingly or unwillingly – they remembered those who had opposed the transition from state to market.

## Notes

1. A literal translation of the slogan would be 'You shouldn't have eyes in the back of your head'.
2. I am referring here to Uruguay's *Ley de Caducidad de la Pretensión Punitiva del Estado*, essentially an amnesty law comparable to Spain's *Ley de Amnistía* (1977) and Argentina's *Punto Final* (1986).
3. In 2011, the Uruguayan senate voted to allow certain human rights abuses to be prosecuted as 'crimes against humanity' thus 'effectively overturning' the Expiry Law (Levey 2012: 211).
4. On the transformation of the Punta Carretas 'prison-mall', see Ruetalo (2008), Achugar (2009), Lessa (2011), Draper (2011, 2012), Levey (2012).
5. In particular, the opening of former clandestine detention centres as *espacios para la memoria* over the last decade in Buenos Aires offers a stark contrast to the inauguration of a number of exclusive urban malls during the previous decade dominated by Menemist neoliberalism (1989–1999). For instance, Buenos Aires malls such as Alto Palermo were inaugurated in 1990, while the pre-existing Galerías Pacífico and Patio Bullrich were renovated and re-opened as modern shopping centres in 1992 and 1995 respectively.
6. Almost 200 Uruguayans have been confirmed as 'detained and disappeared' during the dictatorship, but the predominant policy pursued by state security forces was one of incarceration and torture of political prisoners. By imprisoning the largest proportion of dissidents per capita in the world at the time, the Uruguayan military earned the country the unenviable reputation as the 'torture chamber of Latin America' (Fried 2011; Lessa 2011; Levey 2010, 2012).
7. Beginning in 1981, Uruguayans had appropriated the state's use of such images to inscribe an evidentiary index of subjectivity when searching for their own missing family members and by 1984, the organization *Madres y Familiares de Uruguayos Detenidos-Desaparecidos* was employing enlarged photographs on demonstrations to challenge the state's erasure of those same subjects from public space and discourse (Broquetas 2007: 182).
8. Uruguayan artists who have produced works based on photo-images of the disappeared include the late Antonio Frasconi (1919–2013), *Más de 120 Mil Desaparecidos en América Latina – García Márquez* (1983); Ana Tiscornia (1951–), *Retratos 1* (1996); photographer Annabella Balduvino (1948–), *Nomeolivides* (2001); Ernesto Vila (1938–), *Cual retazo de los cielos* (2012).
9. In proposing that the past's 'claim' on the present generation is to 'redeem' the loss and injustice suffered by earlier generations, I am of course indebted to Walter Benjamin's messianic conception of redemptive history (Benjamin 1985 [1940]: 254).
10. Personal interview with Urruzola in Montevideo, December 2011.
11. In fact, according to Lessa (2011) the difficult access, lack of publicity and of guided tours have only exacerbated the limited constitution of visitors to the *Memorial* over the last decade (192).
12. In this sense, *Miradas ausentes en la calle* can be viewed as comparable to Chilean artist, Carlos Altamirano's *Retratos* from 1996 in which single black-and-white ID photographs of *desaparecidos* accompanied by the caption *¿Dónde están?* were each inserted into a series of collages of colour images associated with entertainment and consumerism. See Richard (2000).

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