

1
 “Peronismo” is a political movement that grew in the early 1940s around the figure of Juan Domingo Perón, the leader of the Peronista Party and three times president of Argentina. Since its beginning, it has championed labor rights, social justice, and economic equality

2
 The term “desaparecido” describes those people who were illegally detained by the dictatorship and kept in clandestine detention, torture, and extermination centers. Many of them were killed and their bodies were never found

3
 Mothers of Plaza de Mayo is now a Human Rights NGO and a political organization that works to protect human rights across all human activities

Asia and Latin America have a common history of struggles defending democracy against internal and external threats. Threats that still linger today and that move us to gather to share our stories, experiences of trauma, strategies for resistance, and multiple forms of memory. As many other neighboring countries, Argentina experienced its most recent dictatorial regime during the 1970s and 1980s. The so-called Proceso de Reorganización Nacional (Process of National Reorganization) began with a military coup on March 24, 1976, which deposed the Peronist¹ democratic government, implemented martial law, and deployed the most violent systematic plan of state terrorism our country ever lived—leaving a void of 30,000 disappeared citizens.² Backed by the United States National Security doctrine, the dictatorship lasted more than seven years, ending in 1983 with the return to democracy.

Around the same time, J. G. Ballard wrote the short story “Myths of the Near Future.” In it the American Space Program—a residue of the Cold War and yet another United States National Security emblem of the 1960s and 1970s—finally fails and in doing so, it accidentally opens up a new time: one where past, present and future engulf one another and fuse into a supposedly fictional time. Yet fiction is not always a utopic or dystopic product of the imagination, sometimes it is simply the unveiling of something we can’t, or are not allowed to, see. In the non-Western world, many cultures do conceive of time just like Ballard did: as a spiral or succession of interrelated loops which also contain past, present and future all together. In these cultures, a myth includes both the fictional origin and the prophecies of events to come. Using fiction to preserve memory and envision a future can sometimes invoke a new political sensitivity, decolonize time, and imagine new ways of inhabiting the present. Certain events in history do just that: they reinvent time. This exhibition is about two such episodes that provoked two colossal human circles and transformed history and time.

On April 30, 1977, under the Fall rain, a group of women, who would soon be known as the Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Mothers of Plaza de Mayo),³ arrived at the gates of the presidential palace to claim the return of their disappeared sons and daughters. The police officers guarding the park that faces that palace, enforced the state of siege and demanded the women to “circulate,” to keep walking. So they walked in circles around the Pirámide de Mayo (May Pyramid), a republican foundational monument that symbolizes freedom

and independence. More than forty years have gone by and yet they have never stopped: they have held their position in order to move forward. Every Thursday at 3:30 p.m., the Madres de Plaza de Mayo walk together, restating this continuously eroding circle at the country's political core. They have created a centripetal energy that radiates through the entire region. A conversation between times that holds history and future together at once.

A few years after the Madres began their Thursdays' walks, on the other side of the planet another expansive circle changed history in South Korea. For ten long days during the May 18 uprising, students, activists, workers, citizens, men, women, and children gathered around the Provincial Hall fountain to oppose martial law and resist the advance of the military siege. Sitting one next to the other, they formed massive assemblies in the shape of concentric circles, expanding through the city, dispersing and reassembling over and over again. Like a pebble thrown into a fountain, the citizens of Gwangju managed to create an expansive wave that finally, in 1987, deposed the military government after a twenty-six-year long dictatorship. A wave consists of the propagation of a disturbance in a property of space, which implies mobilizing energy without the movement of matter. The furthest ripple—the biggest one and the first one to appear—is constantly moving forward; thus time can be understood as a never-ending circular projection. These circular stories of resistance in motion, both in Argentina and South Korea, can be read as conclaves of time, from which myths of origin may arise.

Myths of the Near Future brings together projects by Argentinian and Korean artists, whose works dive into the loops of time, using fiction and poetry to revisit its histories, examine its surfaces, and feel its textures. These are projects that build on the foundational narratives of resistance movements, the recovery of democracy, and the repetitive neoliberal tales, in order to envision new political imaginaries. The artists gathered here actively and poetically revisit militant films from the late 1960s, old Korean protest songs, degraded artisanal techniques, neglected archives, and shamanic rituals; they collaborate with others, human and non-human witnesses of tragedy and violence.

You Never Know How the Past Will Turn Out⁴

Embodiment could be thought of as a ground zero experience that protects the past while moving toward a future: like the bodies that lived through these histories—the Mothers of Plaza

4
Bob Dylan via Timothy
Morton

de Mayo and the May Mothers of Gwangju—and can physically transmit them to new bodies. *Myths of the Near Future* begins with the intangible but powerful act of embodying history; of finding tales of resistance and shared trauma in the clone of a witness tree or in the energy of a contemporary collective body. Adrián Villar Rojas' project builds a new mythology around the poetical and unintended act of a person who works as a mediator in Museo Sitio de la Memoria (Memory Site Museum). Together with her mother, she has been cloning the avocado trees surrounding the clandestine detention, torture, and extermination center at the ex-ESMA (Navy School of Mechanics) complex in Buenos Aires, now a site of memory. Much like the body of the mediator who was born in democracy and every day incarnates the past horror of her own country, the new trees that now grow in different sites hold and expand the memory of state terrorism. In Young In Hong's performance *5001:pentagon*, contemporary citizens of different parts of the world have embodied different physical manifestations of 1980's Gwangju citizens through a choreography of movements based on images found in the May 18 Democratic Archive. It is a way of commemorating and, at the same time, using historically charged gestures to keep acting out a certain resistance toward prevailing social norms. The mediator and the trees in Villar Rojas' project, Hong's performance, and her embroidery piece *Double Encounter* place the contemporary body in a more complex dimension of time. The body is a host that history uses to keep itself alive.

Education—as embodiment—also facilitates the transmission of an ideology. The following section in the exhibition centers on projects that focus on the act of communicating, of sharing knowledge about the struggles of the past. In a time when we seem to have a global encyclopedia at our reach that makes it more possible but considerably more confusing to learn about what went right and wrong in prior generations, many artists reflect on art's pedagogical potential. IM Heung-soon's film *Good Light, Good Air* gives voice to the mothers of the victims of May 18 in Gwangju and the mothers of Plaza de Mayo. Their two human rights organizations are keeping the memory of these tragic events alive and have yet a lot to teach us. In parallel to this historical weaving, IM carried out a series of workshops that connected young students that live both in Gwangju and Buenos Aires. The participants got to know each other's histories and reflect upon their own, using film, performance, and text as tools to reinterpret history from the perspective of their own

present struggles. Using different devices, IM connected different generations and places, so that learning was not only achieved through the experience of time, but of other territories as well. Agustina Triquell's project focuses on previous cultural strategies for the circulation of information. She reactivates the mobile screening device and alternative circuit—universities, unions, and factories—that the collective Grupo Cine Liberación (Liberation Cinema Group) deployed for their classic militant film *La hora de los hornos* (*The Hour of the Furnaces*; 1968). But she does so by staging a fifty-year-long ellipsis: she moves around screening the same film to an audience of young students that face a discussion on social injustice, colonization, and revolution that still echoes in our present day. Lucrecia Lionti's *School Skin* pushes education to become a site of memory and representation. She departs from the story of the Escuelita de Famaillá (Famaillá School) in her home province of Tucumán, the first detention and torture center of the country, created in 1975 in a kindergarten. She explores the image of the school's old blackboards, first as material evidence of torture as the blindfolded survivors remember bumping their heads with them, to then respond by filling the black empty surfaces with poetical and emotional—both personal and social—images, and softening its hard materiality.

The last three projects delve into archives and memories, inquiring whether art can be an exercise of political imagination that in turn results in new visions and rituals for democratic living. As in Ballard's story, sometimes fiction—whether in the form of otherworldly myths or sci-fi dystopias—is the only way to break through the obscured yet very resilient residues of those ideologies that plotted against the sustainability of democracy. The work *Viral Lingua*, by artist Yun Choi and composer Minwhae Lee, disguises itself using the mass consumption images of viral videos and pop karaoke aesthetics to emulate the virus-like dissemination of lingering Cold War ideology in contemporary South Korea. The altered images of reality presented by the video—ranging from surreal landscapes and double-eyed women to futuristic and wild visions of the world—act both as a contemporary embodiment of the violence at play in this kind of ideology, as well as a representation of the distortion of historical narratives created by them. Through the gaze of a fictional child that wanders the underground paths of Seoul, performs shamanic rituals, and walks around Itaewon on a Halloween night, the collective Part-Time Suite delves into the Minjung art archives. The film *People, the Next People* traces a thread that begins with

the persistent representation of the individual in the imagery of Minjung art as a means of resistance against the state terrorism that meant to efface those opposing the dictatorial regime. The thread ends in the exploitation of the image of the self-exposed individual as a means of control, which stems from the very same ideology that opposed the Democratization Movement. Eduardo Molinari's approach to archives of Argentinian history seeks to untangle the colonial roots of state terrorism and contemporary struggles. Through the use of collage and drawing, and the creation of a somewhat surreal universe of images, he traces the concealed links between republican myths of origin, dictatorial regimes, institutional violence, liberal economic policy, racism, ecocide, and structural social and economic inequality. By reimagining the present, the archive—in the likeness of I-ching—turns to predicting other possible futures, rather than recording static versions of the past.

These unlikely encounters seek to foster the invention of a common language between two distant countries. *Myths of the Near Future* features artists that believe in the power of fiction to uphold or revise an inherited ideology and its tales. In the territory of fiction, information can become myth and myths can shift into efficient tools to uphold ideologies in the public realm. Ultimately, the question these works ask is not so much what happened in the past, but how it will turn out.