

## **The Artist as Aedo: memory, absence and materiality**

El Artista como Aedo: memoria, ausencia y materialidad

**Marián López Fdz. Cao**

Tzvetan Todorov (2000) distinguishes two ways of memory, a literal and an exemplary one. As opposed to a way of interpreting the past as unique and unrepeatable - literal memory - Todorov proposes an exemplary memory, which recovers that past and turns it into a principle of action for the present. Memory, the present of the past, sets the debate on the future in tension. This paper aims to address how art and its processes activate exemplary memory, activating the void on one hand, and matter, the materiality redoubt of the world, as a metaphor for transformation.

The artist recovers the function of the Greek aedo. The aedos (from the Greek ἀοιδός, aoidós, 'singer') were, in Ancient Greece, artists who sang epics collected from the population and shaped into lyrics. These artists, whose process we present and analyse in this paper, aedos of the memory of the vanquished, collect the strands of the memory of pain, recompose them, giving them materiality and exhibiting them, to be shared. They are thus necessary vehicles of social mourning.

We have chosen three artists: Gustavo Germano or showing absence; Art al Quadrat, or hair as a vestige of the body and stigma; Doris Salcedo, or Steel as a symbol of transformation and water as dis/appearance.

Through the absence or material transformation, the three artists bring together the action of the community, uniting the intimate and the common, facilitating a social elaboration and grief, which, as a form of community art therapy, demands social recognition and contributes to the construction of an exemplary memory that affects the present.

## **El Artista como Aedo: memoria, ausencia y materialidad**

Tzvetan Todorov (2000) distingue dos maneras de hacer memoria, un modo literal y otro ejemplar. Frente a una forma de interpretar el pasado como único e irreplicable –la memoria literal- de estilo intransitivo, Todorov propone una memoria ejemplar, que recupera ese pasado y lo convierte en un principio de acción para el presente. La memoria, así, es el presente del pasado, es una intervención sobre el presente y pone en tensión el debate sobre el futuro. Apropiarse significativamente del pasado marcado por la experiencia de la violencia implica asumir el desafío del conflicto por el que hoy está atravesada su memoria. Esta ponencia pretende abordar cómo el arte y sus procesos activan la memoria ejemplar, activando el vacío, la huella por un lado y la materia, el reducto de materialidad del mundo, como metáfora de transformación.

El artista recupera la función del aedo griego. Los aedos (del griego ἀοιδός, aoidós, «cantor», que a su vez proviene del verbo αἰείδω, aeideo, «cantar») eran, en la Antigua Grecia, artistas que cantaban epopeyas que recogían del pueblo y les daban forma lírica. Estos artistas que presentamos y analizamos su proceso en este paper, aedos de la memoria de los vencidos, recogen las hebras de la memoria del dolor, las recompone, les dan materia y las exponen, para ser compartidas. Son así vehículos necesarios del duelo social.

Hemos elegido a tres artistas:

Gustavo Germano o la ausencia; Art al Quadrat. El pelo como vestigio del cuerpo y stigma; Doris Salcedo: El acero como símbolo de transformación y el agua como des/aparición. Los tres artistas recogen a través de la ausencia o la transformación de la materia la acción de la comunidad, uniendo lo íntimo y lo común, facilitando una elaboración y duelo social, que a modo de arteterapia comunitaria, exige el reconocimiento social y contribuye a la construcción de una memoria ejemplar que interroga el presente.

## **Biography**

**Prof. Dr. Marián Cao** is art therapist, Chair of Art Education and Art Therapy at the University Complutense of Madrid, Spain. She teaches and lectures in Spain and internationally. Founder director of the AT master's programme at University Complutense of Madrid, and former director of the Ph. D. programme on Art, Art Therapy and Social Inclusion, she has coordinated several Latinoamerican University programmes. Marián Cao has published several books on Women and Art, Art Therapy and Trauma, and Social functions of Art. She is the director of the Research Group 941035 'Social Applications of Art: art therapy and education' and main researcher of ALETHEIA, 'Arts, art therapy, trauma and emotional memory'. She has directed several national and European Researches as DiverCity, 'diving into diversity in museums and in the city', ARIADNE, Art and Intercultural integration; MUSYGEN, on Gender and Museums, among others.

## **Recent publications and conference presentations**

López Fdz. Cao, M. (ed.) (2020). *Art, memory and trauma: Aletheia, giving shape to pain. Volume II: Interventions from the therapy. Images of the wound.* Madrid, Fundamentos.

López Fdz. Cao, M. (2020). Recognition as a category of analysis for historical reconstruction. The artist Sonia Terk Delaunay as a case study. *Revista Arenal* (in press)

López Fdz Cao, M. (2019). The museum as a potential space. An approach to trauma and emotional memory in the museum. In: Pazos, A. et al *Socializing Art Museums. Rethinking the public's experience.* De Gruyter.

López Fdz. Cao, M. (ed.) (2018). *Art, memory and trauma: Aletheia, giving shape to pain. Volume I: On processes, art and memory.* Madrid, Fundamentos.

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