

Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: Corazón  
del espantapájaros (Heart of the  
Scarecrow)

Poem, script excerpt and bibliography

JAN 17 - MAR 9, 2019

AUDAIN GALLERY

## Introduction

by Amy Kazymierchuk

The following texts contribute to the artworks in Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa's exhibition *Corazón del espantapájaros (Heart of the Scarecrow)*. The first text is an English translation of a poem by Guatemalan poet Wingston González titled *lugar de consuelo (place of comfort)* (2016). The poem was translated for this exhibition by Guatemalan writer and translator José García Escobar. González's poem is obliquely inspired by Hugo Carillo's theatrical script *El corazón del espantapájaros (The Heart of the Scarecrow)* (1969). Although this play is the namesake of Ramírez-Figueroa's serial project, the performance and installation presented at the Audain Gallery is more closely akin to González's contemporary interpretation. The poem is a searching and reflective inquiry into how individuals, families and societies are transfigured by violence, corruption and fear. Love, comfort and reverence are hollowed out by the endurance of these conditions, transforming people into the likeness of scarecrows cast amongst fallow fields.

The second text is a selection from Carillo's script, presented in English for the first time through translation by SFU theatre student María Escolán Nuila, with the support of assistant professor Nicole Lewis and José García Escobar. The selection was made by SFU theatre students who will be performing their own interpretation of *Heart of the Scarecrow* in the exhibition. The excerpt is of a song that is sung by circus artists who are performing in a city where corruption is rampant and an insurgency is brewing. The song expresses the exuberance and absurdity of the play, as well as the tension between melancholy and hope in citizens' lives.

Following these two texts are bibliographic references for articles and publications that elaborate upon Ramírez-Figueroa's contemporary artistic practice and the history of theatre in Guatemala.

*place of comfort* by wingston gonzález  
for a free stage performance  
translation by José García Escobar

*stage clothes or dramatis personae*

naked choir  
the grapes and the nance fruit  
the spotless factories  
the birds in the sky  
flat and empty dot

the soft weaving of a pyramid  
desolate stone  
smoldering path

a ranger named  
Revengeful Ancient Jaguar  
lookout and guarantor of  
the meekness of the forest

the scarecrow  
the visible government

a dress, a marble ornament

and a deer-diver  
jade on a heartless chest  
bedridden body  
an undead, a zombie  
swallowed by the ocean

*place*

the field, the maize field, and the monoculture  
have turned into a cemetery  
day and night, a vast slaughterhouse  
nobody screams, a pile of executed  
bodies. the doors of a house  
(marble foundations, radiant teeth made  
of stainless steel. the rifle, the window)  
open only to those who dare to walk in. the  
arrows of my enemy do not hurt  
until the end of the duel. it's like that.  
a place of comfort. there will never be  
sufficient death to appease and calm  
our immense hunger. god, the land,  
the laments and the illuminated cairn  
are evidence of what was said. there was a place.  
the early morning, awake, quiet like an  
iceberg. a trammel by the bay  
the day of the calling

if my land cry against me  
or that the furrows likewise thereof complain,  
if I have eaten the fruits thereof without money,  
or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life,  
let thistles grow of wheat,  
and cockle instead of barley

job 31:38-40

(the amulet. undead  
the tarried pulsation.  
the static image. the hor—  
horse. the dog walk—  
walker. the queen.  
the bleeding cords  
the bleeding gums.  
the bleeding smile.  
the viscera, the coal.  
the eyes, the coal again.  
the detergent, the coal.  
a place of the twentieth century, the  
coal  
a place for face and data,  
and the coal.

a distant sequence  
a shallow description.  
forced to imprecision  
magnetized on purpose.  
a breath of data, a  
rumor of corals, a  
sinkhole in the night,  
a distortion, a chirp.  
a galvanized  
figure.)

the heart disappears. the water, the branch disappears.  
the mark on my flesh disappears. first summit  
of the skies and the earth and the dream: it all disappears.  
after. a breath of smoke, a wide blin—  
blinking, liquid mornings, roller coasters,  
intestines, and the bugs. everything goes in through the mouth  
until it shuts. the room, the maze  
the heart disappears and the air and the birds. your bed  
the icons. the carved horror, the back of the  
tapirs. the familiar forces, the unfamiliar forces.

it's a turbulence. it's about a rearrange.  
there are raptures everywhere in cities and villages  
people like you gather the food, they graze,  
at night they go through the roads looking for the day  
it's an honest mistake. tomorrow I will come out into the light  
and another thing. tomorrow I'll be a grain of wheat  
in an illusion. the height disappears. the field dis—  
disappears. the edge of the maize field, the machines, the  
vehicles and the flames. a single breath.  
as if waking up screaming the name  
amazed at remembering it.

something clings from me, but it's not a god of death  
something clings from me, but it's not a god of death  
something clings from me, but it's not a god of death  
it's not a god of death, it's not a god of death,  
it's not a god, he's not even in this figure, nor in any word  
it's a trap from the image and the void  
it's a trap from the image and the void  
    in the void  
it's a trap and a hand walking itself at noon

there's a body made of mud, but it's not the knot that I am  
there's a body made of mud, but it's not the knot that I am  
there's a body made of mud, but it's not the knot that I am  
it's not my heart, it's not my heart, it's not my heart  
it's not my, nor his flesh, nor any of the grimaces  
it's the mask of my image when the rain  
it's the mask of my image when the rain  
    when the rain  
pours down suddenly like a premonition like a  
warning sign

"who's there?"

"it's me, a forest ranger."

what a relief. after so long in this hopelessness.  
are we dead or asleep. my servants?  
are you dead or asleep? either way. what a  
relief. from not feeling anything to this  
from not looking like we were only asleep. or dead.  
either we're dead or tired? or we have  
seen too many suns. or masks. maybe  
we're actually masks. like in a dream I had  
like a dream I had, a dream I had  
a dream I had. a disappearance, a dis—  
disembark. but it's a relief. this looks  
like you, the morning of October 10<sup>th</sup>  
1982. was it snowing? my servants? will it  
snow here, someday, over the spread out summer by  
the river, the naked indias, the naked sun,  
my publicized nakedness? were you singing or coming  
from the forest? were you laughing or raising your lip?  
illustrious catechist, mountain gunman  
military hero. what a relief. a major lie  
there are three names for a cattle thief.

after so long in this dark town. is it a town  
or a pillow? is it a town or a  
rock? she was tired but wide awake  
always awake and in full makeup and this  
doesn't look like being asleep. I hear a voice,  
can you hear it? are we at the edge? forest  
ranger, I'm cold. forest ranger these  
wrinkles don't disappear. despite this being my  
first time naked. despite this being my fir—  
first time naked. despite this being my fir—  
first time naked. a young servant! what mirror  
are you talking about? what place of comfort?  
what a relief to be talking to anyone,  
what a blessing, do you hear? talking to anyone  
to a forest ranger, to a voice, to fanfares  
to a plant.

three skaters singing boleros somewhere  
in neo-tokyo. three. I'm not going to be able to sleep. are  
we sleeping? the old songs of their  
older brothers? the old songs of their  
older brothers. the old songs. twins  
invisible to each other. three. and those  
are not songs. the sharpened edges. the coasts and  
the ends. my breath falls to the ground heavy as a rock  
and three boys singing boleros in some  
place in neo-tokyo. "be, keep quiet"

("and to remember  
how serious is to lie."  
because in this house  
starting now  
we'll only believe in the truth  
in the facts, not in words  
in the animal, or in the fate  
in the explanations.  
and the medicine  
will be us,  
cars on fire  
in the midst of pleadings  
the eyes' aperture  
mouth and will.  
and the medicine  
will be us. ah.  
here it is. this is the last thing  
"and to remember  
how serious is to believe"  
in something other  
than delirium  
to crawl among the maize fields  
unaware of the morning)

we have been occupied by animals, we have defeated  
all types of demons and serpents. we were shells  
of an empty universe we filled it  
with this modest unlit place  
for the eyes of a scarecrow like me,  
who barely sees when he's on fire. who barely escapes

have we switched bodies? do we appear  
in someone else's dreams?

ranger's statement  
to a band of thieves during the golden wedding  
of the lords of all this

"wake thy. town there's only one.  
February 17<sup>th</sup> of the current year,  
the forest that borders the factory  
goes through a terrible spiritual  
commotion, which deeply affects  
the public, reason why we can't  
ignore it.  
dead animals  
and human footprints have appeared  
around the area  
there was also the death of a foreman who  
aided the graduate with his businesses  
before such permanent losses  
(the graduate. killed a month  
ago. the foreman. found dead in the  
barnyard.) these unusual events  
force us to consider the hypothesis  
that there are foreigners among us  
or that he has returned to this event  
in time, a time that is mostly ours.  
right now. before noon."

“my children have committed an unforgivable sin,”  
because of their defiance their memory will come back to eat them  
their idolatry will turn against them and they will build houses  
over wealthy lands and gold mines.  
“my children live inside an immense madness,”  
they have turned themselves to madness, they have lost their mind  
the elder ones have started to talk about them  
about how they have turned to madness,  
they say that the sun on top of the maize field  
the sun on top of the maize field has taken their innards  
“my children have been deceived by the devil,”  
and by an immense madness. a pathless, non-commercialized,  
and naked madness. “my children await a  
terrible future,” they met  
a strange weed and devoured by it, and by the  
filthy spirit that lived in that same weed,  
they allowed an ocean into their heads.

“For as long as I live  
I’m the lawful owner of the rest of the horizon.”

it happened in a quiet neighborhood in managua  
a little after midday. the tide and the ship  
ascending towards the sky. tuesday. 1996.  
“that is the body of my husband,” the lady said,  
she added, “they shot him, juan de la cruz,  
aka el chokie, and joanna, nicknamed tutú, known  
killers, local dirty vagrants.  
they say that the woman worked at a club  
eating young men, she dissolved them into acid  
after using medieval tactics on them in shopping malls  
or out in the open. far.  
he performed a type of greek parkour oral sex. they  
say that he ruled the area. 100% involved tutú  
worked abroad with her husband, juan de la cruz  
aka el chokie. (see that all of them  
had servant’s names.) they killed him. my husband.  
during a blood atonement.”

“call to attention. listen to your question thoroughly  
and you’ll see that you already have the answer. what I have to  
say isn’t truer than what you have to say.  
but here there’s only one thing: the house, we have to save it from the fire.  
other people’s flags aren’t supposed to make us jealous,  
here we have our own flag, and on top of that here  
we have heart, courage. bravery. we respect our neighbors,  
we’re realists. we’re not more or less animals than men  
a soft and regrettable call for confusion.”

“and I’ll say something else. my husband got killed  
one monday morning on his way to work,  
he got killed for what he did with joanna’s sister.  
that’s how the killing of  
honest people begins. even so  
we praise the lord tirelessly  
a lord whose skin keeps us  
from meeting with the heathen.”

“there were no cats here. there were fragmentation grenades  
flint-tipped arrows, 15 ancient roads, several towns  
an endless plateau dressed with maize fields, coffee fields, african oil palm  
an endless plateau crossed by highways and other public services  
an outdoor church. the kidnappings happened more frequently  
but there weren't any cats in my farm. I don't know where you got that from.”

“I found a dead cat, ma'am, and the head of that old  
scarecrow is stored in a safe box at an office in miami.”

“have you seen it, ranger?”

"he came to the farm one good friday  
and said the he couldn't remember his name.  
he came undressed like a piece of meat  
the sun crawling from far west  
first came the hand (earth's hand)  
then, little by little, you came  
covered in dirt, not your dirt though.  
you didn't have any dirt  
or hammock to sleep on, or any fruit  
to put in. or natural food, nothing but the chant  
of the wild officials, neither tongue  
nor versed in the world, remember?  
versed in the world, remember?  
come on now: versed in the world, do you remember?"

the god expels the signs. if one gets lost the  
god draws another way. those who have their tool  
may listen. merchants of the sea and the sky  
monocultures of the world. slaves and freedmen. lonely  
fires inside a forest that doesn't know how to burn. how  
will they get the fire if not by stealing it? the god  
knows better than anyone what you're doing. careful!

"I walked through the forest when the dogs stopped  
out in the distance the tv tower on the lady's farm  
the ship came out on the other side of the sky, covered in clouds.  
we found ourselves blind and facing enemy fire."

“god and the economy will show their back to their enemies  
and leave them out on the streets. mark our words.”

the counselor used to leave us out on the streets  
out on the streets under the hot midday sun  
he used to leave us, boy, scarecrow and I. the three apostles.  
boy, scarecrow and I, we ran into the woods  
and we woke up the beasts and we stole  
his horse, we even got to sleep  
with his woman. we wailed at him, we asked questions  
using foul language. they were day of the eternal  
training in the force. that's how we lost  
our infancy, elasticity, tuning, and the heliport.

warriors. accountants. sing the imperial march  
all night long but always keep quiet since  
that's what's all about. of the deepest and most obedient  
silence. of inheriting old age and the circumstances.  
of having learned the script. of fulfilling  
the prophecy. that's how we like it. three. singing  
kid, who had a brother among the dead,  
scarecrow, who also had a brother among  
the dead  
and petro, his father, his mother and three brothers among the dead.  
cattle thieves on the banana fields  
miserable garments.

that whole melancolía was an outrage among beasts.  
three ladies almost lose their children at the fair  
when the martínez's wheel sent  
three boys into outer space.  
"they rushed back to earth  
from sixty feet up in the air at great speed  
after the ferris wheel seat they were on,  
having fun, broke in half.  
the three brothers, each from a different mother,  
are now in delicate condition."  
this is an extraordinary thing, as you can see.  
you could dive into the emptiness of the world  
throw yourself against the rocks. bark  
at all the saints. the saints of the forest.  
of the grass. of the mud. the saints  
that follow the prisoners. those who  
follow the fugitives or any other saint, and you  
wouldn't be as lucky as the three kids. scarecrow, boy  
and petro. somebody.

one of his voices. a clean choir  
"for those who have asked me about  
the terrible stain on my face, vitiligo,  
we call it melancolía. here in guatemala  
that's how we call it." to quote a man  
on tv. it's a message from the gods.  
hear it well. "I have done all there is to do  
but I have married the town  
surrounded by the cursed forest and the no-place  
and it has only gotten worse."

some dying voices a clean choir.  
that's how the melancholia became a legal status  
a growing tribe. state policy. in situ

a rain so strong and tense could face her  
and give back to the earth the fist that we have been  
the knot that we have been. the promise that we have  
been. but no. the medicine will be us.  
the sun mends the masks. sun sorrow  
sun, a rain as strong as the mooned night  
make a ship out of this house, for them and  
their errands. and go up with the tide  
on top of terrible and bent wings made for the heavens  
ruled by incomprehensible laws.

“dancing lessons for your health, to go to the fair,  
to fight obesity, or heart diseases.  
dance. even if there’s a hint of sadness left dancing  
will cure your ailments. dancing cures everything.  
and where are the buffoons? my servants?  
dance dance. dancing, a more general laughter  
will appear across the face, a marimba laughter  
shared with the stones, the murmurs of the puddles  
and the beating of the wound.”

(we don't dance anymore so we can let the civilization  
of the holy spirit go inside of us. this, today, is  
still called 'dance.' scarecrow, boy, and many  
others dance for a foreign power.  
a god of separation. something clings from me.  
but it's not a god of death, it's not a god  
seeking blood and revelation.  
that's why they hung them. three. for not dancing  
from the same tree in the same plaza  
where a hundred soldiers and one sergeant  
severed the heads of their parents.  
and people still want them to dance.)

“do not be frightened by his image on the earth.”

he was crazy, he killed some people, during the day he  
was the commander of the department of defense  
during the night  
he was the spokesman of the department of commerce. he went  
to guarded houses, fenced neighborhoods, secret buildings, the tv.  
he was neo-tokyo. or guantanamo bay. always with a  
stern look on his face  
for the awfully bad taste. “nation wide  
prayer  
for the martyrs of liberty.” and it’s true,  
it’s real.  
“do not be afraid of the chant or the dance, or the sound  
of the birds.” and he wasn’t afraid. he was stunned.  
so much silence piled up where once there was rite.  
a camouflage of proximity. the distanced organs  
a horrible dance sharpened on the stone.

“brrr.”

*The song of the fire crackers*

Excerpted from Hugo Carillo's *El Corazón del espantapájaros (The Scarecrow's Heart)*, translated by María Escolán Nuila

In the land of fire crackers  
Some dance at the festival  
And others light fire crackers  
Throughout the nation, in all its misery

Sad little town of ours  
Very quiet and very calm  
Almost always we elect  
The biggest thief as member of parliament...!

We bake cakes  
And in regard to what the press must publish  
They take bribes  
And everyone keeps their mouths closed...!

At the store they are selling  
Two plucked parrots  
That appear to be portraits  
Of frustrated politicians

Where fools abound  
Mr. Calixto used to tell me  
The priests will continue  
Stealing all your money

When elections come around  
Every man is his own party  
And that's why this town  
Always remained divided!

And that's why all of us clowns  
Don't worry about any of it  
And we dance with the whole town  
To the sound that you hear playing...!

In the land of fire crackers  
Some dance at the festival  
And others light fire crackers  
Throughout the nation, in all its misery

## Books and Articles on the Artist

Janine Armin, editor. *Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: Requiem for Mirrors and Tigers*. Amsterdam and Berlin: If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be A Part Of Your Revolution with BOM DIA BOA TARDE BOA NOITE, 2018.

Robert Barry, "Rainbow Actions: An Interview with Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa," *The Quietus*, November 29th, 2015, accessed January 9, 2019, <http://thequietus.com/articles/19328-naufus-ramirez-figueroa-interview-gasworks-gallery-tate-performance-rooms>

Katia Baudin and Dorothee Mosters, editors. *Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa*. Krefeld: Kunstmuseen Krefeld, 2017.

Natalie Bell, João Mourão, and Luís Silva, editors. *Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa*. New York and Lisbon: New Museum and Kunsthalle Lissabon, 2018.

Markéta Stará Condeixa, "Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa," *ArtForum*, January 2018. Print only.

Betty Marín, "Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa's Color and Tone Metaphors," *18th Street Art Review*, April 2015, accessed January 9, 2019, <https://18thstreet.org/naufus-ramirez-figueroas-color-and-tone-metaphors/>

Kiki Mazzucchelli, "Of the Survival of Images: Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa," *Terremoto*, Issue 8 February 20, 2017, accessed January 9, 2019, <http://terremoto.mx/article/of-the-survival-of-images-naufus-ramirez-figueroa/>

Matthew Mclean, "Don't Go Seeking Answers in the Earth," *Frieze*, no.182 October 2016, accessed January 9, 2019, <https://frieze.com/article/dont-go-seeking-answers-earth>

Anna Schneider, editor. *Blind Faith: Between the Visceral and the Cognitive in Contemporary Art*. Munich: Stiftung Haus der Kunst München, 2018.

Linda Taylor, "Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa," *Art Review*, December 2017, accessed January 9, 2019, [https://artreview.com/features/ar\\_december\\_2017\\_feature\\_naufus\\_ramirez\\_figueroa/](https://artreview.com/features/ar_december_2017_feature_naufus_ramirez_figueroa/)

Karen Wright, "Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa: 'At the end, all of the sculptures are destroyed. That is kind of satisfying'," *The Independent*, December 3, 2015, accessed January 9, 2019, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/features/naufus-ram-rez-figueroa-at-the-end-all-of-the-sculptures-are-destroyed-that-is-kind-of-satisfying-a6759116.html>

## Articles on Guatemalan Theatre

Anabella Acevedo, "Art and the Postwar Generation," in *The Guatemala Reader: History, Culture, Politics*, eds., Greg Grandin, Deborah Levenson, and Elizabeth Oglesby (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011) 490–498.

Hugo Carrillo, "El teatro de los ochenta en Guatemala," *Latin American Theatre Review*, Spring 1992, 93–106. (Spanish) [www.journals.ku.edu](http://www.journals.ku.edu)

Hugo Carrillo, "Orígenes y desarrollo del teatro guatemalteco," *Latin American Theatre Review*, Fall 1971, 39–48. (Spanish) [www.journals.ku.edu](http://www.journals.ku.edu)

Odile Cisneros and Richard Young, "Hugo Carrillo," in *Historical Dictionary of Latin American Literature and Theatre* (Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2011) 121–22.

Kevin Dryer, "Hugo Carrillo: 1928–1994," *Latin American Theatre Review*, Fall 1994, 185–186.

Mercedes F. Durán, "Hugo Carrillo: la obra dramático como diálogo sobre el poder" (Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University, 1993). (Spanish)

Roberto González Echevarría and Enrique Pupo-Walker, eds., *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Don Rubin, ed., "Guatemala," in *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre: Vol 2. The Americas* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994).

John Wesley Shillington, *Grappling with Atrocity: Guatemalan Theater in the 1990s* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London, Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2002).

## Public Programs

Panel Conversation: Glenn Alteen, Dana Claxton, Naufus Ramirez-Figueroa, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Skeena Reece and Olivia Michiko Gagnon

SAT, JAN 12 / 3PM

Room 4East, Vancouver Art Gallery, 750 Hornby St.

In relation to Dana Claxton's solo exhibition *Fringing the Cube* at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Free for Vancouver Art Gallery members or with general admission.

Opening Reception

WED, JAN 16 / 6 - 9PM

Audain Gallery

Performance: Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa

WED, JAN 16 / 7 - 8PM

THU, JAN 17 / 7 - 8PM

FRI, JAN 18 / 7 - 8PM

SAT, JAN 19 / 2 - 3PM

Audain Gallery

Performance: SCA Theatre Students

THU, JAN 24 / 7PM

FRI, JAN 25 / 7PM

Audain Gallery

Featuring SCA students Sena Cagla, Arthi Chandra, Howard Dai, Logan Hallwas, María Escolán, Hilary Leung, Hannah Meyers, Avery Taylor, Montserrat Videla, and Ryer Wang.

Tour: Curator Amy Kazymierchyk and Translator María Escolán Nuila

SAT, MAR 2 / 2PM

Audain Gallery



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