

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 10th
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 17th 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

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Articles on Guatemalan Theatre

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Hugo Carrillo, "El teatro de los ochenta en Guatemala," *Latin American Theatre Review*, Spring 1992, 93–106. (Spanish) 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

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.

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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

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