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# Counter-visuality and Affect in *Pulso: Nuevos registros culturales* (2020-present) by Muriel Hasbun<sup>1</sup>

Contravisualidad y afecto en *Pulso: Nuevos registros culturales* (2020-presente) de Muriel Hasbun

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**Resumen:** En la serie *Pulse: New Cultural Registers / Pulso: Nuevos registros culturales* (2020-), Muriel Hasbun (El Salvador/Estados Unidos, 1961). recupera imágenes de archivo de la galería El Laberinto (regentada por su madre, Janine Janowski, en El Salvador) y las imprime sobre fotografías del archivo del registro sismográfico del país. Propongo que el movimiento de recontextualizar estas imágenes de archivo contrarresta la visibilidad dominante sobre el arte y la diáspora centroamericana e inaugura un espacio para el legado cultural invisibilizado de sus comunidades. El encuentro entre esas imágenes insiste en la modificación del espacio geológico y en su vibración como constituyentes de la historia política y cultural de Centroamérica, transformando el registro del “terruño” en lugares de memoria, afecto e identidad.

**Palabras clave:** fotografía, contravisualidad, afectos, memoria cultural, archivo

**Abstract:** In the series *Pulse: New Cultural Registers / Pulso: Nuevos registros culturales* (2020-presente), Muriel Hasbun (El Salvador/United States, 1961) recovers images from the archive of the gallery El Laberinto (presided over by her mother, Janine Janowski, El Salvador) and she prints them on top of images from the archive of the seismographic register of the country. I assert that the act of recontextualizing these archived images counters the dominant visuality of art and the Central American diaspora and thus opens up a space for a cultural legacy previously made invisible. The encounter between these images calls for an alteration of geological space, and in its pulsation as constituent parts of the official political and cultural history of Central America, it transforms the register of the “homeland” into places of memory, affect and identity.

**Keywords:** Photography, Counter-visuality, Affects, Cultural Memory, Archive

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As an act of resistance, [*Pulso*] repairs the general misrepresentation and erasure of our own cultural expressions and identity. As an act of solidarity, it traces the sinuous and angular spikes of our homeland pulsing together with the images and bodies portrayed by Salvadoran artists who worked during the Civil War. And by actively remembering, it invigorates our journey forward on and through the land of our “*terruño*,” embodying a more connected, nuanced, dignified, and restorative future.

*Muriel Hasbun, Pulse: Corazón (Homage, Luis Lazo)*

Designed to be touched ... photographs touch  
back, casually grazing  
the pores of our skin with their textured surfaces.

*Geoffrey Batchen, Each Wild Idea*

The work of photographer Muriel Hasbun (El Salvador-United States, 1961) reflects extensively on the relationships between migration and mobility, homing and dwelling, self-fashioning and reinvention, intersections that, according to Tina Campt, constitute the cultural formation of diasporic communities (135). In this article I analyze Hasbun’s most recent series, *Pulse: New Cultural Registers / Pulso: Nuevos registros culturales* (2020-present).<sup>1</sup> I study how her experimental work delves transtemporally and affectively into the complexity of her identity as a daughter of migrants and as a Salvadoran artist living in the United States. In this series, Hasbun recovers archival images from galería el laberinto (lower case in the original; this gallery was run by her mother, Janine Janowski, in El Salvador during the Civil War) and prints those same images on top of photographs that she herself takes of the records from the seismographic archives of El Salvador. I argue that the gesture of recontextualizing this set of archival images through photography, firstly, counteracts the dominant visibility that has defined the history of art and of Central American diasporas and, secondly, proposes a new space for the invisibilized cultural legacy of the communities to which Hasbun belongs.

*Pulso* complicates the concept of “*terruño*” (homeland), used by Hasbun herself through the creation of layered images that, like terrestrial strata, are always superimposed and in constant movement. The encounter between the images recovered from galería el laberinto and those of the seismographic record demands that we view the modification of the geological space and its vibrations—its affective *pulse*—as constituting the course of political and cultural history in Central America and its diasporas. This endeavor begins in the realm of the personal but, necessarily, calls for collective reflection. Hasbun’s

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth referred to as *Pulso*. Most of Muriel Hasbun’s photographic series are titled in Spanish or French, and accompanied by an English translation. On first mention, I will use the language(s) she uses.

photographs, as triggers of affects, transform the telluric register—one which is both visual and sensible—into places of memory, affect, and belonging when encountering images from other times and in other latitudes in the present.

### Homage (El altar de la memoria)<sup>2</sup>



FIGURE 1. HOMAGE (EL ALTAR DE LA MEMORIA), 2014.03.25, 2016.

In this image we see two objects wrapped in cloth, like bundles tied with thread. They are enclosed by three walls (we cannot see beyond them) covered with what looks like a tapestry of flowers. At the same time, a series of (anonymous?) portraits in black ink have been printed on the walls: Whose faces are these? This photograph by Muriel Hasbun is titled “Homage (El altar de la memoria), 2014.03.25,” and the object photographed is a fragment, a close-up, of the installation “El altar de la memoria” by the postwar Guatemalan artist Moisés Barrios (1946). This installation was shown in 1992 as part of the exhibition “Piedra, tijera y papel: 500 años... y otros” at galería el laberinto in San Salvador.<sup>3</sup> Ran by Janine Janowski (1940-2012), galería el laberinto was an epicenter of cultural activity in El Salvador during the turbulent years of the Salvadoran Civil War (1980-1992).<sup>4</sup> Janowski was an important cultural agent

<sup>2</sup> All photographs are courtesy of the artist, Muriel Hasbun.

<sup>3</sup> In this exhibition, the invited artists reflected critically on the 500th anniversary of the conquest of America and the legacy of coloniality in the region in contemporary times. Moisés Barrios presented this altar that calls on us to think about violence and historical memory.

<sup>4</sup> During the 1970s, the aggravated sociopolitical crisis and violent conflicts between the fraudulent right-wing government of Carlos Humberto Romero—overthrown in a coup in 1979—and the leftist opposition party led to the explosion of a Civil War in the country, with a symbolic start date of March 24, 1980, the day of the assassination of Monsignor Óscar Romero. In this war,

during those years and, for decades, she undertook to maintain an active, open space for the work of numerous Central American artists who enjoyed little international visibility.<sup>5</sup>

“Homage (El altar de la memoria)” does not belong to the *Pulso* series. It is part of an earlier work: *si je meurs / if I die* (2015-2016). In *si je meurs*, Hasbun elaborates an extended homage to the figure and professional work of her mother, Janine Janowski.<sup>6</sup> Like much of her photographic work, this series reflects Hasbun’s desire to understand the complexity of the intergenerational, transnational, and cross-cultural history of exiles and migrations in her own family.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, she investigates her identity as a Central American migrant in the United States and reflects experimentally on the nature of the photographic medium. This search is grounded in the recovery of family photographs and objects from the past that, from the present time, negotiate with an affectivity associated with said familial memory. Hasbun wants to produce an *encounter* among items from her own archive to “bridge past and present” and to “restore bonds separated by time and distance” (Duganne, “Record” 303). Although most of the elements of her “dispersed family archive” that go into the images that constitute *si je meurs* are family photos and other objects (preserved fabric from clothing or furniture, for example), “Homage (El altar de la memoria)” is a close-up of Barrios’s installation. The caption reads: “Moisés Barrios’ ‘Altar de la Memoria’, exhibited in Janowski’s galería el laberinto

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the Armed Forces of El Salvador (FAES) faced the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) in a twelve-year confrontation that left hundreds of thousands dead and missing. The conflict ended after the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Accords on January 6, 1992. On the Salvadoran Civil War, see Montgomery; Byrne; Wood.

<sup>5</sup> It is interesting to note that galería el laberinto opened a couple of years before the start of the Civil War, in 1977. During the eighties, at the height of the conflict, paradoxically, the activity of art galleries in El Salvador increased considerably. Salvadoran artists who produced work during that time have pointed out that the critical context was a catalyst to create pieces that engaged politically and aesthetically with the crisis. Hasbun has interviewed several of these artists in the course of her research on Janowski’s advocacy and work. This is the case of artists such as Miguel Antonio Bonilla, Carlos Orellana, Beatriz Deleón, and Luis Lazo, who remember these times of destruction and pain in contrast to the vibrant activity of galería el laberinto. The exhibition to which “Homage (El altar de la memoria)” belongs was part of the active programming of el laberinto within this context. The memory of the gallery “remain[s] in the collective memory for their daring proposals as for their inclusion of diverse materials and strategies, and keen messages highlighting the artist as a protagonist in the debates of the time. Galería el laberinto flourished and became a haven for artists, writers and intellectuals during the most difficult years of the Civil War” (Hasbun, “Galería” 165). The gallery ceased its activities in 2001. For more on the galería el laberinto’s mission, see Hasbun, “Galería.”

<sup>6</sup> The mission of galería el laberinto has been reactivated by Muriel Hasbun as laberinto projects (lower case in the original), in Washington DC, United States, where she has resided since the 1980s. laberinto projects is a platform that, from the US, is socially committed to art, education, and the cultural legacy of Janine Janowski. See: <http://laberintoprojects.com/>.

<sup>7</sup> Hasbun notes that her family history is “multivalent, multilingual and multicultural” (Hasbun, “Five Questions” n.p.). Her father’s family are Palestinian-Christians who migrated to El Salvador after the First World War. Her father, Antonio Hasbun, was a dentist and amateur photographer. Her mother’s family are French and Polish-Jewish Holocaust survivors. Her mother, Janine Janowski, settled in El Salvador in 1958, where she worked as a teacher for the children of the French Consul.

in 1992, holds 500 years of Central American history, and now whispers the secrets and accomplishments of her life too.”<sup>8</sup> The photographed object directly links the memory of Hasbun’s mother with the archives preserved in her gallery, through the layers of time and memories that construct the image. At the same time, it recalls galería el laberinto’s work during the violence of the Civil War in El Salvador and invites the viewer into a necessary conversation about the legacy of that crisis, the invisibility of Central American art, and the history of the region in the contemporary global context.

In the context of the photographic series to which it belongs, “Homage (El altar de la memoria)” is a clear preamble to the work that I analyze in this essay. *Pulso*, for which Hasbun began archival work in 2019, is still in progress.<sup>9</sup> She returned once more to the preserved archive of galería el laberinto and recovered images made by Salvadoran artists during the Civil War. She also returned to her own archive of photographs from the period of the conflict. Because of the war, the eighties and nineties were a time of massive migration to the United States, including her own in 1979.<sup>10</sup> Hasbun has recovered images of paintings, sculptures, and other photographs that have been preserved, including documentary photos of refugee camps, family snapshots, street scenes, landscapes, and portraits of artists who worked in the gallery. In the *Pulso* series, her archival research becomes even more complex: she will print these found and recovered images over top of others from the seismographic records of El Salvador, creating a dense network of lattices and layers of textures and images. She went to the Archivo General de la Nación in San Salvador, selected some of the records held there, and photographed them backlit (against the light). She used the photographs of the records themselves to print on top of them the images that make up the series. The resulting photographs are digital prints (archival pigment prints) on photographic paper or aluminum (anodized aluminum plates) where the recontextualized archival images emerge out of the *pulses* and spikes of the lands’ movements. The “new cultural register” that *Pulso* proposes unites past and present “into a new meeting ground for the future” that is manifested through an affective *pulse* that also comes from the land, from the terruño (Hasbun, “Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 234).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> In the caption of the photograph “Super 8mm film, from the archive, c. 1960s, Washington, DC, archival pigment print” (2015), belonging to the abovementioned series—*si je meurs*—Hasbun notes that “with the gathering and close scrutiny of a dispersed family archive, I’ve assembled fragments into narratives and reconstructed a world lost to forced migration, assimilation and genocide.”

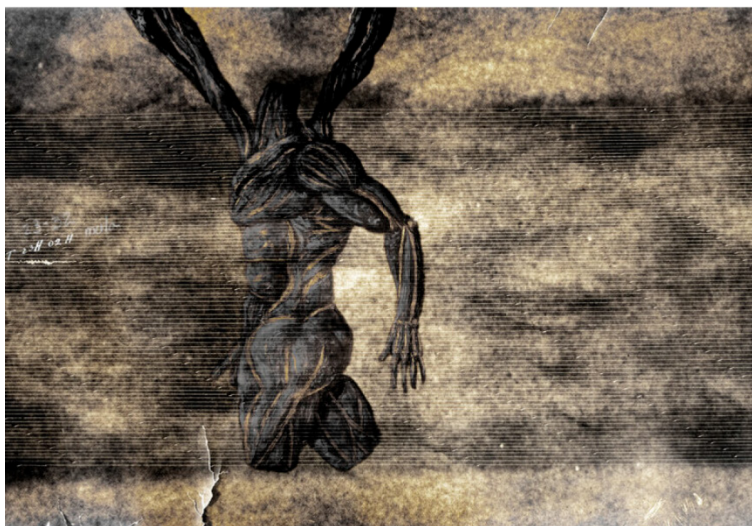
<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that the first time that Muriel Hasbun viewed the seismic log files was in 2017. However, the archival and photographic work on the files for *Pulso* does not begin until 2019 (see Hasbun, “Personal Interview”).

<sup>10</sup> Hasbun leaves from El Salvador in 1979 to France first and settles in the United States the following year.

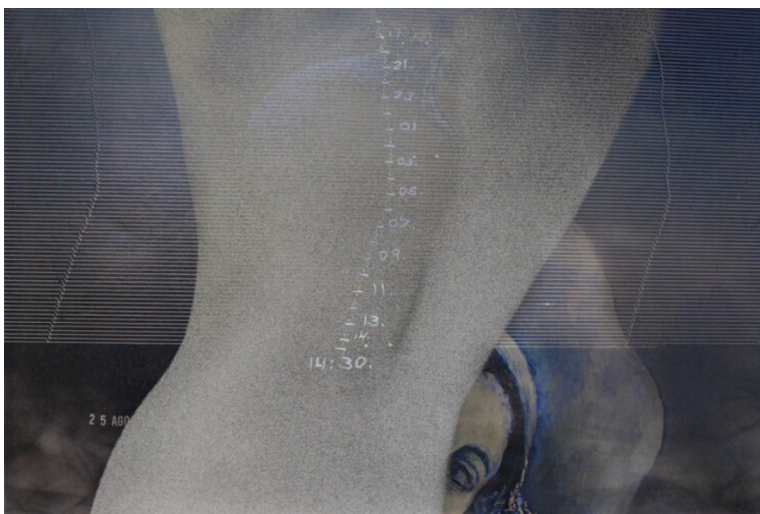
<sup>11</sup> This text is reproduced in the note that accompanies the first *Pulso* exhibit for the 2020 Sondheim Artscape Prize. Since then, the same text has been reproduced in other art catalogues, such as *Art for the Future*, edited by Erina Duganne and Abigail Satinsky.



## The Counter-visual Gesture in *Pulso*



**FIGURE 2. PULSE: PULSANTE DESEO (HOMAGE, CARLOS CAÑAS), 2020.**



**FIGURE 3. PULSE: LA DECLARACIÓN (HOMAGE, MIGUEL ANTONIO BONILLA), 2020.**

Like “Homage (El altar de la memoria),” many of the photographs in *Pulso* are homages or tributes to relevant Salvadoran and Central American artists who were active in the el laberinto community during its heyday. These artists, as I mentioned before, have received little recognition internationally, even today.



FIGURE 4. PULSE: LA NOVIA (HOMAGE, ROSA MENA VALENZUELA), 2019.

In the photographs titled “Pulse: Pulsante deseo (Homage, Carlos Cañas),” “Pulse: La declaración (Homage, Miguel Antonio Bonilla),” and “Pulse: La novia (Homage, Rosa Mena Valenzuela),” fragments of the work of these three Salvadoran visual artists—Carlos Cañas (1924-2013), Miguel Antonio Bonilla (1954), and Rosa Mena Valenzuela (1913-2004)—peak through, respectively, as indicated by the titles.<sup>12</sup> I will analyze the seismographic records on which the glimpses of these artists’ work is imprinted. First, I will concentrate on the counter-visual gesture entailed in 1) recovering the works of visual artists who have received little recognition and visibility and 2) recontextualizing those works in the photographs that form part of Hasbun’s series. To this end, it is important to understand how the dominant visual discourses around art, culture, and Central American communities and their diasporas have been established *in* and *from* the United States in recent decades.

Between the 1970s and 1990s, the US intervention that fueled the violent conflicts in Central America promoted a visibility of the region that was controlled by the United States.<sup>13</sup> This visual culture has been disseminated through what Kency Cornejo has called a “solidarity aesthetics” (“US Central” 3) that established a pattern of representation—or a “visual economy” (for a definition of this concept see Poole, *Vision* 8-10)—of the migrant/refugee Central American subject abroad.<sup>14</sup> The images that for decades represented the region

<sup>12</sup> In addition, the photograph “Pulse: La novia (Homage, Rosa Mena Valenzuela)” includes a photograph of a lace detail from her mother’s wedding dress, imprinted on Mena Valenzuela’s painting.

<sup>13</sup> On the US intervention in Central America, see Carothers and LeoGrande.

<sup>14</sup> A visual economy is made up of the production, circulation, consumption, and possession of images. Following Poole, this concept allows us to critically think about the global channels through which images (and discourses about images) have moved and produced meaning and knowledge.

were carefully framed, selected, and disseminated by the USA mass media, to produce empathy in viewers, and to invite action in supposed solidarity (see Cornejo, “US Central” 2-3). Likewise, the idea of solidarity aesthetics “entailed optical codes—imagery on poverty, violence, and tropical landscapes—that subsequently established a reductive visual trope about Central America *still used today*” (Cornejo, “US Central” 2; my emphasis, C.E.P.P.). Undoubtedly, this established visual culture is tied to the visual narratives of war, crime, and migratory illegality that dominate the international press and popular culture in the present day. It is worth asking then: Where are the other images of the isthmus? What do they tell us about those subjects’ history, culture, personal stories, and their communities? The dominant visual discourses have not only *displaced* and *made invisible* other images produced *in* and *about* the region but have also perpetuated the idea that the Central American community and its diasporas are simply the object of an external gaze, subjected to their representation controlled by the North, and not creators or bearers of their own visual imaginaries and narratives of identity.

Central American writers and artists have been historically confronted with oppressive ways of being seen by the eye of power and been imposed both condescending and exoticizing visual depictions onto their communities. Cornejo studies how this visibility “set a pattern for the ongoing visual objectification of Central Americans in media culture and one challenged by US Central American artists today with the creation of critical art and images” (“US Central” 3). Similarly, Karina Alvarado has pointed out that, in contesting the dominant visibility, US Central American contemporary creators have embarked on visual projects that politically “signify directly onto Central America through a lens of the imagined from within the United States” (477). The photographic artwork of Muriel Hasbun is certainly inscribed in this ongoing discussion about seeing and being seen, and in/visibility.<sup>15</sup>

In 2017, during an investigation in the Smithsonian Archive of American Art, Hasbun found two recordings that the art critic Lucy R. Lippard made in El Salvador in 1984 as part of the “Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America.”<sup>16</sup> She was surprised to see the title of these recordings: “Political

<sup>15</sup> Kency Cornejo has done important work on these issues. She has studied other Central American artists who, from the United States, like Hasbun, have been creating discourses and narratives that “counteract historical erasure” and contest the visibility based on “solidarity aesthetics” (“US Central” 1). Similarly relevant is Cary Cordova’s analysis of the activist art of the Salvadoran diaspora, and Karina Alvarado’s work on cultural memory and Central American artistic practices in relation to diasporic formation.

<sup>16</sup> The “Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America” was a national mobilization of writers, artists, activists, and solidarity groups that began in New York City in 1983 and involved other cities in the United States and Canada during 1984. Currently, Erina Duganne and Muriel Hasbun are working on the project “Art for the Future: Building Transnational Activism Through the Archive.” This project aims to contrast the Artists Call archive with that of galería el laberinto. Although Artists Call and galería el laberinto were contemporaries, their founders and participants never met. Duganne and Hasbun’s project seeks to bring to light forgotten archives and underrecognized and invisible artists. Moreover, it aims to foster necessary conversations about visual alliances and transnational solidarity between the two poles that respond to the dominant imaginaries that have been imposed from the United States. For more on this project see <https://>



Art Documentation / Distribution Discussion with *Unidentified* Salvadoran Artists” (my emphasis, C.E.P.P.). Hasbun then asks: “How did Salvadorans and Salvadoran Americans become unidentified? Are we unworthy of remembrance?” (Hasbun, “Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 234) and she returns to Lippard’s assertion that “in the United States, El Salvador is nothing but war” (16). Although the Artists Call organization openly opposed US intervention and sought to promote the agency of the Central American people and their cultural legacy, the statement by Lippard, founder of the movement, makes it even more evident that an external visual discourse had already been imposed on this community. This imaginary continues to be reproduced in the dominant media, imaginary to which has been added that of the current migratory crisis across the region. As Hasbun notes: “More than two million Salvadorans in the U.S. continue to be represented by reductive and dehumanizing narratives of war, violence, and migratory illegality, and their cultural heritage remains largely unknown or unidentified” (Hasbun, “Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 235). Muriel Hasbun narrates this anecdote in the note to the first exhibition where *Pulso* was presented, in 2020.<sup>17</sup>

This fact serves as context to understand the motivation behind the *Pulso* series. In addition, it explains the reason why Hasbun is interested in recuperating, selecting, and recontextualizing the work of under-recognized Central American artists. In *Pulso*, Hasbun sets out to build an *alternative visibility* that, on the one hand, responds critically to the imaginary imposed on Central America in recent decades and, on the other, allows the cultural legacy of her community to be recognized and felt in other regions. As Duganne has asserted, *Pulso* “speaks back” to those “hurtful and simplistic images” of war, poverty, and victimhood that have driven public perceptions of El Salvador since the 1980s and after twelve years of Civil War (“Registers” 2).

Based on this approach, I view *Pulso* as offering a counter-visual gesture that exercises the “right to look,” a concept by Nicholas Mirzoeff. This right does not imply simply *looking*. It begins at a personal level with *looking at* or *from* the eyes of another to express an affect of “friendship, solidarity, or love” (1). Following Mirzoeff, the right to look claims a *mutual gaze* that calls for a

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[www.colorado.edu/archivetransformed/2019-archive-transformed/2019-archive-transformed-cohort/art-future-building-transnational-activism](http://www.colorado.edu/archivetransformed/2019-archive-transformed/2019-archive-transformed-cohort/art-future-building-transnational-activism). The book *Art for the Future: Artist Call and Central American Solidarities* by Erina Duganne and Abigail Satinsky is an important source on these matters, with articles by Lucy R. Lippard, Kency Cornejo, and Yansi Pérez, among others, and interviews with scholars, curators, and artists. This book is a comprehensive catalogue of an exhibition with the same title, held in Tufts University Art Galleries (Boston, January-April 2022). For more on solidarity movements and peace processes in Central America see Bassano and Stuelke.

<sup>17</sup> As a finalist for the 2020 Sondheim Artscape Prize, Hasbun presented *Pulso y Memoria / Pulse and Memory*, made up of *Pulso* and two more series: *Scheherazade or (Per)forming the Archive* (2016)—which I will refer to later—and the series already mentioned, *si je meurs*. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all submissions from the Sondheim Prize finalists were displayed in an interactive digital format. Hasbun’s can be viewed at: <https://artspaces.kunstmatrix.com/en/exhibition/1181263/pulse-and-memory-pulso-y-memoria>.

political, collective, and solidary subjectivity while rejecting all individualism.<sup>18</sup> It is a gaze that confronts “the police who say to us ‘move on, there’s nothing to see here’” (Mirzoeff 2). Against the antiquated, authoritarian, and hegemonic concept of “visuality” (a concept that has historically been used to classify, organize, and aestheticize its subjects), Mirzoeff proposes counter-visibility, hand in hand with the right to look, which aims to make evident (or to make *visible*) what, in history, we have been told to see in a certain way or, directly, to not see.<sup>19</sup> What of others has been made invisible to our eyes? Those who contest by *looking back* when exercising this right are, then, capable of reorganizing the imposed relations of what is visible and sayable, and of responding with a gaze filled with political agency and affects. A counter-visual gesture demands, according to Mirzoeff, autonomy and independence, avoids/denies segregation, and invents new aesthetic and affective forms. The right to look is thus a “right to reality, to existence, to humanity” (Mirzoeff 4-5).<sup>20</sup>

*Pulso*’s counter-visual gesture undoubtedly portrays an exercise of this right. I understand counter-visibility not as a specific set of visual images put together, but as a political and affective encounter, a critical gesture when viewing the history of all images. What Hasbun proposes in her work, as a Salvadoran artist and migrant in the United States, responds to the hegemonic visual constructs that have been imposed on her own community. She makes *evident* and *visible* what the dominant visuality has made invisible:

<sup>18</sup> The gaze that emerges from *Pulso* calls out for this type of subjectivity. In contrast to the “solidarity aesthetics” (Cornejo, “US Central”) that unidirectionally (North-South) controlled the visuality of Central America during the decades of US intervention, the concept of “visual solidarity” (see Duganne, “In Defense” 103) becomes especially pertinent. Visual solidarity suggests that photography’s ability to move in time and space enables “affective, transnational connections to take place between photographers, spectators and subjects” (Duganne, “Record” 322). Duganne uses this concept when analyzing Hasbun’s *X post-facto* series (2009/2013), whereas this work, like the rest and like *Pulso*, aims to build a community “across national divides and linear temporalities” (“Record” 309). Although “solidarity aesthetics” is aligned with an idea of paternalistic visuality, imposed by another, the concept of “visual solidarity” is tied to with that plural and shared, transversal gaze, which I identify in the “right to look” and as a counter-visual gesture arising from *Pulso*.

<sup>19</sup> It is important to note that visuality and counter-visibility are not linearly opposed concepts. While visuality has established and continues to establish imperial and colonial parameters of representation, counter-visibility does not only intend to eliminate these parameters, but to think “with and against” visuality itself, to expose its mechanisms and, above all, make other imaginaries and realities visible in response to hegemonic regimes of vision (see Mirzoeff 2). This means that, while visuality approves some forms of seeing and restricts others, counter-visibility claims to recover the right to respond to that oppressive gaze.

<sup>20</sup> Ariella Azoulay points out that photography must constitute a complex event of vision that is social, political, and ethical since it always implies an exchange (of affect, gazes, experiences) between photographers, spectators, and other images: “The event of photography (not the photographed event) might take place as the encounter with a camera, with a photograph or with the mere knowledge that a photograph has been (or might have been) produced ... Photography is an event that always takes place among people.” (“What is” 12-13). In this sense, I relate exercising the right to look to the concept of “civil gaze” proposed by Azoulay, who points out that this type of gaze is based on a critical attitude toward what is visible in an image (see *The Civil* 96), where the gaze—the act of looking at a photograph—implies plurality and citizenship and calls the spectator to “take part.” Azoulay argues that *everyone* who engages with photographic images is a “citizen” in what she calls “the citizenry of photography” (*The Civil* 113).

she generates, through her photographic work, a plural space where artists, migrants, and the collective to which she belongs can be recognized through the recovery of a cultural legacy that has been ignored. The *Pulso* series constitute an act of resistance and visual integrity that calls for an extensive reflection, since “it repairs the general *misrepresentation* and *erasure* of our own cultural expressions and identity” (Hasbun, “Pulso y memoria” “Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 235; my emphasis, C.E.P.P.). The restorative gaze that emerges from the images, or that “new cultural register,” invites us to reflect politically on how, in history, our gaze has constantly been directed, and how we have been told to see the images *of* and *from* Central America—and elsewhere—in a certain way.

Although Muriel Hasbun uses a specific archive of images (the ones from galería el laberinto and her own personal archive), this work appeals to a wider audience. *Pulso*’s photographic event, in its complexity, challenges the nature of the photographic image by creating a multilayered register that interpellates viewers and makes them active participants in the work. Hasbun moves from a family history (of immigrants in Central America), a cultural legacy (Janowski’s work as a cultural agent, the archive recovered from galería el laberinto and its community of artists), and her personal experience (as an immigrant in the United States and witness-photographer of the crisis in El Salvador) to a broader collective experience where the same story is repeated over and over again. *Pulso* tries to inaugurate a space of solidarity for all these gazes, where no single oppressive visual discourse or reductive imaginary can be imposed. This movement from the personal to the collective allows her community, on the one hand, to see and be seen through its shared history and cultural expressions, and, on the other, to try to remedy a lack of representation that, over time, has perpetuated a dominant visibility based on prejudice and on absolute and restrictive categories such as border, nation, and history/art history.

Muriel Hasbun points out that “today, more than ever, we need to create spaces for Salvadorans (the third largest Latinx immigrant population in the United States) for *self-actualization* and *representation*” (Hasbun, “Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 235; my emphasis, C.E.P.P.). Without losing sight of the legacy of war and violence, the consequences of the US intervention, identity dislocation, migratory displacements, and her own place in the diaspora, she challenges the invisibility that Central American artists have faced in history and the underrepresentation of their cultural communities in the larger field of art. In this sense, it may be productive to relate Hasbun’s experimental proposal to the idea of “photography as a practice of self-forging” proposed by Kevin Coleman, who studies the capacity of photography and photographic archives—as a way of registering reality and that is used in varying contexts—to *visually* affirm the identities of its participants and practitioners, and to offer a sort of visual biography of a collective agent.

Coleman’s concept is informed by Mirzoeff’s work on counter-visibility. Photography as a practice of self-forging also implies a response to an

established and imposed visibility, as it insists on how a visual archive—depending on by *whom* and *how* it is used—can determine visual discourses *on* individuals, who are subjected to that imposed representation: “Some photographs ... capture a moment in which a newness was produced, thus indexing historical openings that were only subsequently foreclosed. Such photos enable us to recover something of the subjects who created those forgotten possibilities” (Coleman 23). This approach to photography would allow us to understand Hasbun’s practice as counter-visual, by “throwing into relief distinct ways of seeing oneself, one’s community, and one’s racial, cultural, and national others in a site of hierarchical encounter” (Coleman 11), such as the site of Central America-US relations.

Hasbun takes a series of archives and recontextualizes them in her experimental photographs in order to *forge* a counter-visibility that responds to imposed visual constructs and that recognizes a Salvadoran, Central American subject and migrant identity alongside their multiple histories and cultures. Through the creation of an alternative art history and archive of images that “identifies, recognizes, and represents Salvadorans and Salvadoran-Americans as producers of art and culture” (Hasbun, “The 2020 Sondheim” n.p.), this series implies thinking about a Central American subject that is no longer the mere object of the gaze of power, but rather, through a process of self-forging and exercising the right to look, is the creator of their own images.

*Pulso*’s counter-visual gesture, in short, *counteracts* an historically established and imposed visibility by recovering and recontextualizing different types of archival images. How is an archive from the past *felt* in the present time? Making visible something that has not yet been seen, Hasbun allows for a critical reflection on the history of all images as a productive space for agency, affectivity, and solidarity.

### A Map and Record of *Terruño*

Photography makes us remember; it takes us to different times, places, and moments of the past. The memories that a photograph evokes are always manifested in the form of emotions. While Hasbun was composing the layers of the image “Pulse: Réplicas, 1986 (Homage, Julio Sequeira)” (Fig. 5), she recalled, from her home in Washington DC, the earthquake in El Salvador in 1986 and the three days when she could not contact her parents, who were there.<sup>21</sup> The construction of the image not only triggered a memory, but an affect: “I remembered the desperation I *felt*” (Hasbun, “The 2020 Sondheim”

<sup>21</sup> The Central American region is subject to the movement of three tectonic plates: the Caribbean, the Cocos, and the North American. Likewise, El Salvador is located within the Pacific Ring of Fire, which forms the Central American volcanic chain. These characteristics make the region one of the most seismic volcanic areas in the Americas. The 1986 earthquake occurred at 11:49:26 on October 10 and had a magnitude of 5.7M. This earthquake caused thousands of deaths and destroyed most of the capital city of San Salvador, including El Salvador’s neighboring areas of Honduras and Guatemala. Much of the city that was reconstructed in the 1990s was destroyed by a 7.7M earthquake in January 2001.



n.p.; my emphasis, C.E.P.P.). In the act of photographing the records of this earthquake, Hasbun discovered a latent image—in the lines and blotches of that same record—that looked like a volcano. The appearance of these images led her to other two images: a photograph from her series *Santos y Sombras / Saints and Shadows* (1991-1997), where she makes a Greek Orthodox prayer in her great-grandfather’s handwriting emerge from the Izalco volcano, and a cosmic painting by Julio Sequeira (Nicaragua, 1950-1990). The latter is juxtaposed with the volcanic “appearance” in the seismic record that, in turn, meets the lines drawn by the seismograph during the 1986 earthquake.

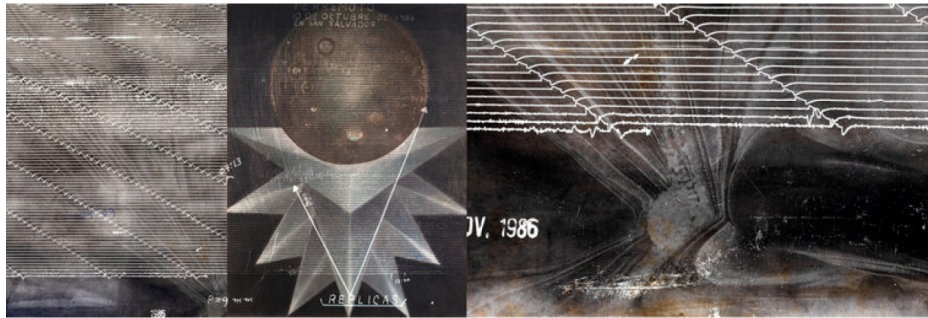


FIGURE 5. PULSE: RÉPLICAS, 1986 (HOMAGE, JULIO SEQUEIRA), 2020.

Hasbun points out that the text that appears on the seismograph, the word “replicas,” invites us to reflect on all the possibilities of reading images, “making us think about ‘the original’ and authorship, and about the reproducibility of photography and knowledge (Hasbun, “The 2020 Sondheim” n.p.). The multiple layers of *Pulso*’s photographs transform the telluric record of the “terruño” (homeland), of the area—El Salvador—into places of memory and affects when they encounter archives and images in other areas of the world. Using the ability of photography to be reproduced and at the same time to (re)produce knowledge in that act of reproduction, Hasbun wants to create a map that goes from personal history to collective history and that, in an act of resistance, looks to repair the cracks history has left in its wake.

Hasbun’s work has focused on understanding what the idea of “terruño” means from her place in the US diaspora.<sup>22</sup> The Salvadoran seismic records that appear in *Pulso* insist on the role of geographic space—and its constant

<sup>22</sup> In other series, such as the afore mentioned *Santos y Sombras*, *Protegida: Auvergne: Toi et Moi* (1998), or *Protegida* (2003), there are other telluric—more specifically, volcanic—elements. In the first, there is the Izalco volcano (witness to the massacre perpetrated in 1932, considered the beginning of contemporary history in El Salvador). In this massacre, more than twenty thousand indigenous peoples were killed in the surrounding area of the volcano by order of El Salvador’s dictator Maximiliano Hernández Martínez. In the second, there is the volcanic landscape of Auvergne, where her mother hid during the Second World War. The imaginary of *Pulso* was already latent in Hasbun’s earlier work. For more on the image of the volcano in her work, see Snow, “Volcano’s Eye.”

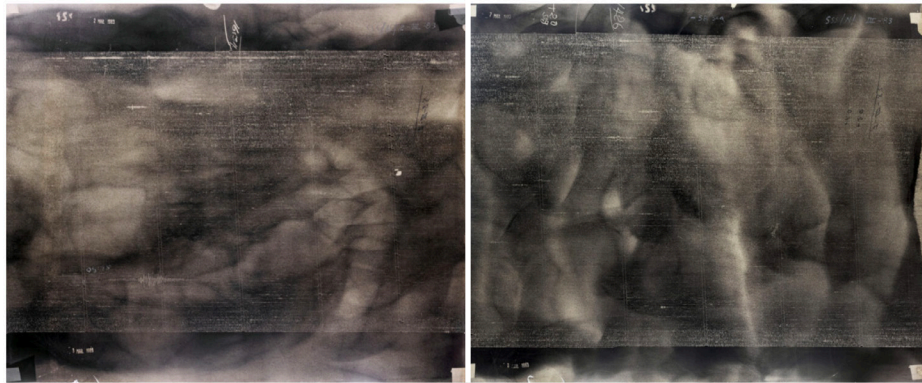
modification—in constituting the region’s political and cultural history, a place of extended memory and identity. In a metaphorical sense, she reflects on historicity as a sequence of earthquakes, eruptions, and wounds that must be reconstructed to be understood. As Duganne has pointed out, *Pulso*, by using historical archives, “disrupts the past’s certainty and thereby opens up other spaces and temporalities, or *terruños*, from which to envision El Salvador’s self-determination and future” (“Registers” 10). Raising awareness of historical events in this way involves, following Hasbun’s statement, “mapping personal and collective history into a new meeting ground for the future” (“Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 234). *Pulso* not only transforms records of the earth’s movements into these “new cultural registers” but also invites us to understand those same movements as cultural earthquakes. The multiple layers “project a new potential landscape or what Hasbun refers to as the lived *Thirdspace* of memory” (Duganne, “Registers” 7; italics in the original) or, in Hasbun’s words, the earth, as a “*terruño*,” is transformed “into a fully lived and witnessed thirdspace of memory and *vivencias*” (“Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 234).<sup>23</sup> The artists understand photography as a *vivencia*, an experience, living experience, continuous and in progress, as an experiential construction of layers of archives, images, stories, and affects that make up personal and shared history.

The inclusion of Sequeira’s painting in “Pulse: Réplicas, 1986 (Homage, Julio Sequeira)” is related to this understanding of the idea of “*terruño*” as a set of interconnected stories (both national and personal). In the late 1970s, Julio Sequeira asked Hasbun, then a teenager, to participate in a play he was directing. That event was the catalyst for her video-performance *Scheherazade or (Per)forming the Archive* (2016), where decades later she reflected on motherhood from a self-referential and biographical angle. In this piece, Hasbun unites the *pulse*, the sound of her son’s heartbeat in her womb, with her mother’s last breath. This encounter suggests the intergenerational and transnational transmission of memory and cultural history in the construction of hybrid identities. At the same time, Hasbun seeks to resist the orientalist and masculine gaze and the legacy of trauma, silence, and forgetting of her own complex family history of exiles and migrations. *Scheherazade* opens with a quote from *Fugitive Pieces* (1998) by writer Anne Michaels that reads, “If one no longer has land but has the memory of land, then one can make the map” (93). This idea or image of the map allows us to return to *Pulso*. Art can contain personal stories charged with affects and make them visible in an open space that allows for mutual interpellation: their shared features allow us

<sup>23</sup> Erina Duganne points out that the idea of thirdspace is based on Edward Soja’s thinking about the spatiality of human life, as well as the work of Henri Lefebvre (his concept of “lived space”) and Michel Foucault (his “heterotologies”). Soja’s concept points towards formulations on spatiality that imply the coexistence between both real and imagined spaces. Duganne indicates that thirdspace, in other words, “is a form of geographical imagining that resists totalizing ways of thinking and does not follow existing cartographic rules and so, as Soja continues, ‘can be mapped but never captured in conventional cartographies; it can be creatively imagined but obtains meaning only when practiced and fully *lived*’” (“Registers” 7; italics in the original). Hasbun’s photographs are an example of how this thirdspace could be visualized in art.

to imagine a route to be followed. The photographs in *Pulso* and the multiple ways the work registers “*terruño*,” as sources of knowledge and feeling, constitute that map. A map that, from the diaspora, is built in a continuous process of construction: the memory of the land makes it possible to trace the movements of the *terruño*.

In some images, we see the lines, drawn by the seismograph, of a single seismic record. This is the case, for example, of the photograph “Pulse: Seismic Register 2020.02.28.063, 2020.”<sup>24</sup> In other images we see a single detail of the record, a part or a section; in others, we see several records, joined, superimposed, or facing each other. As I mentioned earlier, all of Hasbun’s photographs of the printed records taken in the Archivo General de la Nación in El Salvador were backlit. Thus, all the marks and traces left on the records appear in her photographs, which prioritize their texture. In addition, Hasbun included the text that appeared in the archival files, data such as numbers and notes written by hand or typed by the seismograph. However, other latent images also appeared in the records. Hasbun calls these images “phantom appearances.” This is the case of the pieces “Pulse: Seismic Register 2020.02.28.006 (Aparición: Body, 1983)” or “Pulse: Seismic Register 2020.02.28.035 (Aparición: Mother and Child, 1983)” (Figs. 6 and 7), where the apparitions insinuate themselves as human figures taking the form of shadows or vapors that almost seem to be in motion.



**LEFT: FIGURE 6. PULSE: SEISMIC REGISTER 2020.02.28.006 (APARICIÓN: BODY, 1983), 2020 / RIGHT: FIGURE 7. PULSE: SEISMIC REGISTER 2020.02.28.035 (APARICIÓN:**

Some seismic records register historical events. Several photographs in the series refer to the 1986 earthquake in El Salvador, such as the one previously mentioned, in which Sequeira’s painting is printed over the record. In “Pulse: Seismic Register 2020.02.26.142 (Peace, January 1992), 2020” (Fig. 8), reference is made to the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Accords in 1992, which established the end of the Salvadoran Civil War.

<sup>24</sup> The numbers that appear in many of the titles of *Pulso*’s photographs refer to the day the records were photographed and the sequence number of the archival file (see Hasbun, “Interview”).

*Pulso*'s photographs also include, as I have mentioned, the printing of re-photographs (or a "snapshot" taken of another photograph) of other images and other personal photographs taken by Hasbun, such as the aforementioned "Pulse: Pulsante deseo (Homage, Carlos Cañas)" (Fig. 2), where a self-portrait of her—the silhouette of her back—is superimposed on the fragment of Cañas's painting and on the seismographic record. Another example can be found in "Pulse: Bowl (Bethania, 1984), 2020" (Fig. 9), where we see the image of an empty plate and a spoon over top of the record. The re-photographed photo was taken in 1984 in the "Bethania" refugee camp in the department of La Libertad, El Salvador. This last photograph also includes elements from other images, such as a green shadow, printed from a painting by Salvadoran artist Armando Campos (1964).



LEFT: FIGURE 8. PULSE: SEISMIC REGISTER 2020.02.26.142 (PEACE, JANUARY 1992), 2020 / RIGHT: FIGURE 9. PULSE: BOWL (BETHANIA, 1984), 2020.

The new cultural register that the series proposes is manifested through the affective pulse that comes from the land or, rather, from the *terruño*. The images and stories that make up the *Pulso* series, as they beat against us with their *pulse*—like the Barthesian *punctum* (see Barthes 27)—imply a multiple feeling of the idea of "terruño," homeland, as a map of both personal and collective belonging. The nostalgic image evoked by the word "terruño" implies a mode of feeling through the idea of seismic activity (a "vibration, more or less constant, although in different intensities, of the earth"). The earthquake, represented by the seismic records, is present in the visualization of the photos—it pulsates through us, it vibrates, it is felt—and it also evokes what is intrinsic to the seismographic archive.

### Feeling the Archive. Seeing, Touching, and Listening Across Time

Studies of visual and material culture have proposed that *meaning* in photography is produced through the different modes of contact that constitute the image as matter, modes that allow us to study photographic images through their social life or "affective economy" (Ahmed, "Affective" 121, 124).



Understanding the photographic image as matter implies studying it both as object and as a physical trace of what is/was represented/photographed. This “morphological character” (Batchen 57) of photography then calls on us to reflect on what kind of meanings images acquire when they move and reappear in different spaces and contexts. As for Hasbun’s work, it is worth asking: What meanings do images acquire when used in the photographic event and when they reappear in the space of art? I argue that photography is a visual event that is primarily haptic. It involves a visual encounter with the tactile quality of an image, in relation to the interactive value of the material, which provides meanings, and that not only is based on the rituality of touch (the manual archival work, for example) but that also evokes a feeling (see Batchen; Guerrero).

Recent work on affect theory in relation to visual theory (see Marks; Sedgwick) and photography (see Olin; Brown and Phu) have related this aspect, the haptic character of the photographic image, to the idea of touching, insofar as images are something that we can *feel*: not only through what has been touched in the past or that we touch in the present—its material form—but through what touches us—in the sense that it affects us emotionally—from the image.<sup>25</sup> This way of understanding photography has to do with what Tina Camp has called “embodied forms of perception” (32). The process of gazing does not simply imply *seeing* or *touching* the physical form of a photograph, it also requires other ways of feeling the content—also physical and real—of the image, and that always interpellates the body as a sensation: touching is a form of perception that “involves both contact with surfaces (exteriority) and with modes of feeling (interiority)” (Marks in Camp 32-33). The haptic quality of a photograph lies not only in what we can touch (the paper or material form of the photo), but in what goes beyond it to make us feel something—emotionally and physically—when observing that which is represented (the image itself) and which also touches us. Thus, photography works as an “affective trigger” (Van Alphen and Jirsa 2-5) or catalyst of affects.

The haptic and the affective are two intrinsic values in our photographs and archives of images, and in the stories inscribed in and “stuck” to them (see Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics*), which we observe, touch, and feel over time. In addition, touching, being touched, is not only associated with how we feel when we physically interact with the material form of a photograph, which we encounter or see in the present, but it is, first of all, associated with that subjective aspect that we bring to the physical event of observation and, secondly, with the emotions and sensations that are triggered in us by how that which is photographed (be it a subject, object, body, shape, or another affect) interpellates us, coming out of the frame to affect us, to *touch* us.

<sup>25</sup> The art theorist Jill Bennett has defined affect, or what an image transmits / makes us feel in the event of observation, as an “embodied sensation,” insofar as she understands affectivity as a process “of seeing feeling where feeling is both imagined and regenerated through an encounter,” which is also physical, with photography (41). For an overview of the studies of affect theory in photography, see Phu, Brown, and Noble.

Building on this theoretical framework, I propose that Hasbun's work with old photographs consists, above all, in making visible the material side of the archives she uses and in invoking the touch, the haptic quality of the image, as a feeling that is multiple.<sup>26</sup> More specifically, in *Pulso*, Hasbun has concentrated on photographing the physical trace of seismic records, and based on this, summoning the visual and affective economies of all the images that are superimposed on a new image. The resulting photograph allows a series of affects to be triggered in the viewer of these images. The multisensory activation of memory is made possible through this idea of touch: Hasbun touches images from the archive, she photographs them, prints them on top of others; her images, when we see them, *touch us*.

As viewers of *Pulso*'s images, we are challenged by the materiality of the land and by the affective density of the layers of images. Feeling the archive of the seismographic records based on their vibrational density is a way of imprinting a haptic and transtemporal affectivity between the elements that Hasbun selects to compose the pieces in this series. She looks to the past in her experimental photographic practice that consists of archival work; she evokes the material qualities not only of the photographs and the archive itself, but of the land as a place of identity, as a "terruño," and of the different formats and mediums of art. The past and the present make room for a renewed configuration of the sensible in this synthesis.

When contemporary photographic practices bring archival sources and images to the present, they challenge the viewer in a different way than other types of images would.<sup>27</sup> What affects and temporalities does this encounter between images and gazes summon? Photographic interventions that reflect from the internal dynamics of a past archive of images are of interest in that they address historical, political, social, and cultural issues that are relevant to a wide community, but also personal, intimate stories, questioning the viewer affectively, at the same time and in both senses. Based on our understanding of how Hasbun's work demands and produces an affective response, it is possible to rethink how contemporary photography relates to the archive by providing a new place of resistance and reflection regarding the history of all images. Hasbun's work with the seismographic archive and with the images recuperated from galería el laberinto, both challenges ways of looking that are conventional and assigns other values to that archive (counteracting the normative ones as

<sup>26</sup> Hasbun affirms that she is interested in "the tactile qualities of the image that evokes other sensations" ("Interview" 17). This interest is not only visible in *Pulso*, but in the rest of her photographic work.

<sup>27</sup> In "Archive and Affect in Contemporary Photography" Sarah Bassnett analyzes this growing use of archival practices in contemporary photography—as part of the archival impulse and the turn to the archive identified by Hal Foster and Marianne Hirsch respectively—and how contemporary photographers seek to capture the viewers' attention, challenge them visually and provoke in them a concrete affective response. Bassnett points out that these types of interventions, more than others, act as catalysts for affective responses that are "the basis for a mode of art production that, while not overtly political, are engaged in issues of memory and identity which have deeply political implications" (242). For more on the relationship between photography (documentary and artistic) and archive, see Sekula; Enwezor; Bassnett.

a counter-visual gesture) and offers new ways of looking at it; not only by confronting and contrasting these two sets of images, but by giving them a new function in the photographic realm.

Photography, we say in the present, captures an event or something that *has-been-there* (see Barthes 115). Always from the past. The archival images that Hasbun selects function as “points of memory” (Hirsch 22), as they say more about the needs and desires, fantasies, and fears of the present than of the past itself.<sup>28</sup> While photographs show us the past, what we *do* with them—how we use them—has to do, instead, with the present (see Kuhn 19). This *doing* is always a material doing. I would add that, moreover, by seeing these photographs and seeing them again (in a continuous exercise), reusing and recontextualizing them, there is always a future as possibility in their seeing, orientation, and distance. Thus, for Hasbun, “[Pulso] invigorates our journey forward on and through the land of our ‘terruño,’ embodying a more connected, nuanced, dignified, and restorative future” (“Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 235). Hasbun creates then a “new meeting ground for the future” (“Pulse: New Cultural Registers” 235) through her active work with archives.<sup>29</sup>

When Muriel Hasbun inserts other images in her photographs, she does so not only to confront the viewer with a reflection on the passage of time but also as part of a more extensive reflection on the visual and material nature of photographic images and their intergenerational and transtemporal movements through archival preservation. Hasbun’s work reflects extensively on the essence of photography insofar as it makes visible a double distance—both embedded (in the layers) and historical (in the archives). The concept of double distance by Elizabeth Hoak-Doering invites us to think on what happens when a photograph is rephotographed and how this movement—the one that involves photographing an old photograph, an archive of photographs, or the “photo in the photo”—attributes different meanings to the new image created

<sup>28</sup> Critics have analyzed the work of Muriel Hasbun mainly from the perspective of inherited memory (see Snow, “Muriel;” Hirsch and Spitzer; Marchio) or postmemory (a concept proposed by Marianne Hirsch). In other series, using photographs from her own family archive, one of Hasbun’s main interests has been to unite “past and present, memory and postmemory, individual remembrance and cultural recall” (Hirsch and Spitzer 2) as part of the generation that has inherited the pain of the Holocaust through their parents.

<sup>29</sup> In 2004 Hal Foster identified the archival impulse in “archival art” as a “possible portal for an unfinished past and reopened future” (15). Marianne Hirsch in *The Generation of Postmemory*—where she comments on Hasbun’s work—turns to Foster’s article to talk about an “archival turn” in the ethical and aesthetic practices that are located in the post period of historical catastrophes. In his article, Foster criticizes the Foucaultian conception of the archive—which preserves, orders, selects the past—and indicates that the contemporary impulse to think, study, and reflect on the archive has led contemporary artists to construct pieces made up of recontextualized elements as counter-archives: a desire to “connect what cannot be connected” closely tied to postmodernity and from where “a similar sense of failure in cultural memory” emerges (Foster in Hirsch 227). This dissatisfaction, Hirsch adds, leads artists to create alternative pasts in the present, as futures, by proposing new forms of ordering that are affective (“affective associations,” says Foster [“Archival Impulse” 21]) characterized by “fantasy and hope or fear and disillusionment” (Hirsch 228).

(see 178).<sup>30</sup> This reflection is also built on the very confrontation between these distances, which are not only distances in time, but also distances between affects and memories brought to the present through the encounter between paintings, photos, and archives. In the printing of these photographs, the past converges with the present and the potential future in the layers of images that are also layers of times and affects. Hasbun's work with preserved materials, the private archive that is recovered and made public, is a historical, political, and affective intervention regarding the condition of the medium: the functions of photography are constantly complicated and rethought.

## Final Notes

In March of last year, 2021, I visited RoFa Projects Art Gallery in Potomac, Maryland, where Muriel Hasbun's show *Record: Cultural Pulses* was on display.<sup>31</sup> This exhibit included, printed for the first time on paper and aluminum plates, pieces from the series that I have analyzed in this essay. One of the images that were part of the show was "Pulse: Corazón (Homage, Luis Lazo), 2020" (Fig. 10). In it, an aorta, vena cava, and arteries can be seen behind the lines left by the seismograph. A heart by the Salvadoran artist Luis Lazo (1960), in an intense red, seems to be covered by the blackish cloak of the seismic record. In this photograph, it is evident that it is not only the *pulse* of the land that strikes us. Looking at this image placed on one of the walls of the RoFa showroom, we feel *something* else.

Encountering what a photograph records does not only imply observing, especially when we are faced with historical images or, in this case, an image with multiple layers of stories and temporal registers. Beyond seeing and feeling them, we can also hear them. *Pulso*'s photographs have an auditory aesthetic—what Camppt calls "aural aesthetics"—due to their sonic and vibratory quality. No matter how static they seem, photographs always have "rhythmic and harmonic qualities" (Camppt 19) that, like those that make up *Pulso*, allow us to understand these images as representational practices that play an important role in processes of cultural formation, memory, and history of the diaspora. In this sense, the depth of all the visual records included in the *Pulso* series makes it possible for the photographs to be studied as new cultural registers for that "terruño" (El Salvador) and beyond its borders (from the USA). Sound is never

<sup>30</sup> Following Elizabeth Hoak-Doering's work, the embedded distance is established when photos appear *in*, or as the subject of photographs (see 178). The embedded "photo in the photo" is visual evidence of a temporal dislocation, which constitutes a second type of distance which she calls "historical." Both distances are shown not only in the materiality of the rephotographed, past image, but also "created in the gap between the exposure of the photograph and the viewers' gaze" (178). In other words, the double distance is located in the encounter of different gazes: the gaze of the rephotographed image (plus the past moment of the shot) now meets the gaze of a new viewer. Double distance is even more complicated (or, rather, transhistorical) in Hasbun's work, since photographic exposure is always multiple: when looking at the layers of rephotographed photographs, paintings, and imprinted records we find ourselves, in the present, with two or more shots from the past.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.rofaprojects.com/exhibition-record-cultural-pulses>.



contained in an image (What is heard? What is not heard?), but multiple forms of feeling—such as seeing, touching, and listening—constitute that which is beyond what we see represented and beyond the event of photography, in its material making.



FIGURE 10. PULSE: CORAZÓN (HOMAGE, LUIS LAZO), 2020.

*Pulso*'s counter-visual gesture makes it possible to view the image as a sheet of text to be read, as a map, with multiple stories; it allows us to recognize self-forged subjectivities, legacies, memories, and emotions. When placed together, the stories contained in the images of the past, faced with the photograph made in the present, make possible different interpretations outside the grand narratives of official history and against hegemonic visibility. They break all linearity and grant visibility to that which is common—forming community—to their narratives as transtemporal affectivity: it is in the confrontation of the layers of times that a gaze to the future is made possible as a form of political and restorative affectivity, and that moreover challenges the logics imposed on the visible. Hasbun does not want to erase the specificity of the archives she uses, but rather to reveal—on the basis of their very specificity—political,

aesthetic, and affective strategies for the organization of a new space so that she and the subjects of her community can narrate their stories and memories and in so doing become visible before the eyes of the other. Hasbun not only retrieves and uses archival images and files, but converts these images, by printing them one on top of the other, into a new photograph, rendering a constant potential state in which each image can exist on its own and as a shared image.

*Pulso* creates a synesthetic metaphor of the encounter of gazes, as well as a metaphor for working with those difficult questions of cultural loss, memory, longing, and identity; the study and practice of archives of images. Understanding the encounter of gazes in this way reveals effective, representational, and expressive meanings as a starting point to finally understand how and why certain images confront each other in/across history. *Pulso* thus allows us to understand all the forms of enunciation that articulate the affective relationships between “migration and mobility, homing and dwelling, self-fashioning and reinvention that constitute diasporic formation” (Campt 135). Hasbun alludes to different aspects of the photographic image, apart from the visual, and enables a new and complex space for the diasporic subject, formed by counter-narratives that not only contest a directed experience of the visible but that can also be felt. The multilayered affective and haptic experience involved in encountering the photographic event of *Pulso* points to that which is real and concrete in the material forms that the photographer chooses, and to that which is ineffable that makes up the historical memory and cultural legacy, the passage of time and the emotions of the communities to which we belong and have belonged.



FIGURE 11. PULSE: NO REGISTRA TEMBLOR (HOMAGE, ARMANDO CAMPOS), 2020.

Each image in *Pulso: Nuevos registros culturales* is an affective, imprinted pulse that comes from the land and now emanates from everything seen and felt from the photographs. In this last image, we read the handwritten text, “earthquake not registered,” and a little ant from Armando Campos’ *Hormiga* (1993) seems to be moving over the record of a land that, in calm and silence, awaits its next pulsation.

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