

Mónica Millán & Adriana Bustos

Plantío Rafael Barrett

By LARISA ZMUD

Land is Not a Metaphor

October 2015; two Argentinean artists till the soil in a plot across from the Palacio Legislativo in Asunción, Paraguay. Establishing a link between body and earth is no small thing, nor is making that link a form of knowledge. This is because the body, in a simple and urgent gesture, digs, remembers and cares for.

They plant maize, beans and manioc, leaving the seeds in care of the community. In the following months, that same plot is surrounded by improvised dwellings, people displaced by flooding. The water rises and housing policies diminish. Land, our only refuge, becomes a precarious space. The *Plantío* [Planting] is not a symbol of abstract hope, it is a direct, material action that is situated and profoundly political.

In 2017, after the proposals involving land and food have followed a course of their own, they till the soil in Florencio Varela. This shared fertile ground was the trench where they were able to carry out the plantío in the province of Buenos Aires. Artists Mónica Millán and Adriana Bustos work with soil as an epistemological surface. The *Plantío Rafael Barrett* piece is an intervention in dominant ways of seeing, caretaking and knowing: planting is a gesture of rebellion.

Landscape as Resource

In Latin America, land is a field of and in dispute. The expansion of agrobusiness, monocultures and neo-extractivism operates on the basis of removing bodies, knowledge and ways of life.

This way, land is merchandise, and those who inhabit it and look after it become logistical obstacles. All this in the name of private property.

It isn't just capital that is advancing, however, it is also a mechanism of symbolic invisibilization. To confront this, *Plantío* is a political and poetic strategy, a way of bringing land to center stage. The gesture of planting points to a different temporality: one of care, one of transmission and of a profound awareness of our interdependence.

Vegetal Memory and Rural Feminism

This project is inscribed in a genealogy of struggle involving feminized bodies. Women like those in the CONAMURI (National Coordination of Rural and Indigenous Working Women's Organizations), who cultivate and teach, who

organize earth recovery workshops and sustain community vegetable gardens despite fields being poisoned and their figures of reference being criminalized. In the logic of capital, land and women share the same destiny of extraction, appropriation and being silenced. The body-territory idea-strength situates feminized bodies in the same place as land. Not from a modern romantic perspective, but as colonized territories, suffering from a neo-extractivism that is typical of models of conquest and possession.

Plantío recovers the knowledge that inhabits bodies that plant, living archives of a different relationship to their surroundings. Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui proposes that "crawling on the ground" is a form of thought, given that it is the movement that gave rise to the myriad of languages that exist. Bustos and Millán crawl out of a need to touch, to inhabit from underneath, to be in the dirt.

In *Plantío*, language is land, drawing is map, and the flag is shelter and nourishment. The work does not reside in the objects, however, but in the collective practices that sustain it.

Archive, Fertilizer and Resistance

This exhibition in W is a drift. Here the flags are bodies, transformed by the weather they have been exposed to and by the passing of time. The drawings are fragments of a moment that is impossible to capture, telling us something about the sediments of the soil. The photographs open a possible genealogy. Every stroke, crease and word recalls the fact that art is also a cultivation tool. Ten years after it was begun, *Plantío* is reactivated to remind us that we are still in time to plant different histories, water them and watch them grow, in a shared territory.



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