

A Mexican *Angelus Novus*, Popular Culture Chaos as Archive

On multiple occasions, Sergio Guerra Villaboy has emphasized the importance of developing a Latin American historiography that underscores both the national singularities and regional generalities of the development of history as a discipline on the subcontinent.¹ Since the Cuban author has been influential among Latin American historians, his concerns synthesize the apprehensions of a larger group of Hispanic historians. In *Tres estudios de historiografía latinoamericana*, the Cuban author delineates a time line of Latin American historiography that purportedly defines its identity, since it explores how the colonial and racial specificities of the region have influenced the writing of its history. In the epilogue of the book, after describing the crisis ignited by Fukuyama's "End of History," Guerra points out the challenges that the writing of Latin American history would face in the new millennium.

Indeed, Guerra describes how the tendency to replace metanarratives with accounts of the individual and quotidian—triggered by Fukuyama and by the end of the Cold War (locally incarnated by the failure of the Cuban Revolution)—has fragmented the scientific character of history.² Moreover, according to the author, this atomization has compromised the utopian dream of writing a global history able to order every event and, consequently, to connect every context. In this sense, Guerra asserts that only after assimilating and merging foreign and local intellectual tendencies can a new Latin American historiography be created.³ Such local tendencies would require not only an awareness of the history of the region, but also of the history of the discipline on the region. For Guerra, this awareness implies understanding oneself (as a Latin American

¹ Sergio Guerra, *Tres estudios de historiografía latinoamericana*, 1. ed., Colección Alborada latinoamericana ; 15 (Morelia, Michoacán, México: Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Instituto de Investigaciones, Históricas, Departamento de Historia Latinoamericana, 2002).

² *Ibid.* Pag. 179.

³ *Ibid.* Pag. 181-189.

historian) not only as a continuation of the European scholars, but also of the pre-Columbian, colonial, republican and modern Latin American historians. In reference to this feature, Guerra has argued that

la historiografía lationamericana contemporánea manifiesta de alguna manera su inconformidad con el enfoque de la historia establecido con anterioridad, aunque no se puede hablar de una orientación teórico-metodológico única ni tampoco de una temática especialmente tratada pues se persigue una historia que incluya y refleje la diversidad regional, social y humana con todas sus fisuras, resquicios y matices, y que comprenda las disímiles tendencias y dinámicas que influyen sobre las diferentes localidades.⁴

In this sense, one could assert that Guerra has a contradictory understanding of what a utopian Latin American history would resemble. Although Guerra describes the Latin American context as diverse, dissimilar, and cracked, he believes that there is possible to write a Latin American history able to find a thread that unites the heterogeneity of the continent. In this sense, Guerra does not suggest that the fragmented nature of Latin America has forced Hispanic historians to write individual accounts, but that because of the “end of history,” these historians will stop attempting to write a comprehensive historical account of the region. In fact, Guerra alerts his readers that fragmenting history threatens the concept of Latin America as a conceptual and geopolitical region.

The present paper examines a way of documenting history that by emulating the heterogenous nature of Latin America, finds the thread that unites its dissimilar, cracked, and diverse contexts. As a matter of fact, by analyzing *Los Presagios de Moctezuma* (Gasparini and Monsiváis, 1999), this essay examines how the Mexican popular culture inspired the archival practices of Paolo Gasparini (Caracas 1934-). Finally, these archival practices contribute to the consolidation of a utopian Latin American history (as conceptualized by Guerra).

⁴ Ibid. Pag. 187.

In this sense, the present essay is delineated into two parts. The first explores the chaotic dimension of popular culture and its potential archival force. Finally, the second analyzes the images and the editing of Gasparini's photographs in the film, to assert that the chaos of popular culture informed his archival practices.

Los presagios de Moctezuma, a riddle for the lovers of taxonomy

Los presagios de Moctezuma (1999), an audiovisual production⁵ developed by Paolo Gasparini and Carlos Monsiváis, has been labeled as a riddle for the lovers of taxonomy.⁶ As asserted by Fernando Rodríguez, the film is “una forma polifónica que es audiovisual, fascinante ámbito entre la fotografía y el cine.”⁷ Indeed, *Los presagios de Moctezuma* is hard to label. Consequently, given that montage is a term employed in the visual arts as well as in filmmaking, and since the film is a slideshow of individual photographs, *Los presagios de Moctezuma* can be understood as photomontage.

Departing from Walter Benjamin's interpretation of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus*, that in terms of the German writer represented the *angel of history*,⁸ the film offers a local version of Benjamin's interpretation of Klee's Angel (fig. 1). “En lo que ahora es considerado el centro de la ciudad de México, en la iglesia de San Hipólito, se halla un monumento que representa a un indio de la época prehispánica, con aspecto y con expresión tan aterrada como el ángel del cuadro de Klee”⁹ appears written in the film's opening. Immediately after this image, Benjamin's famous conceptualization of history after Klee's angel is cited in the text. The image of this *Mexican angel of history* constitutes a *leitmotiv* of the film that precedes the narration of each of the eight Aztec foreshadows of the Conquer, *los ocho presagios funestos de Moctezuma*, which inspired

⁵ Documentary (that could also be considered a feature film, a slideshow, or video art)

⁶ Paolo Gasparini and Carlos Monsiváis, *Los presagios de Moctezuma*, Ficción, documental, video arte (Fundación Cinemateca Nacional, 1995).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ “Frankfurt School: On the Concept of History by Walter Benjamin,” accessed March 18, 2017, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>.

⁹ Gasparini and Monsiváis, *Los presagios de Moctezuma*.

the visual production.¹⁰ After introducing the description of each prediction, Gasparini's images slowly bombard the viewer, sometimes accompanied by the literary narration of Carlos Monsiváis, whose cynical descriptions replace the eclectic soundtrack that combines canonic operas, mainstream rock, and Mexican *rancheras*. Although sound and narration play a key role in *Los presagios*, the visual dimension of the film is more prominent, since foreseeing implies a visual revelation of the future. In fact, Benjamin's description of Klee's angel emphasizes the fundamental role that sight plays in the writing and documentation of history.¹¹ Through the description of Klee's image (fig. 2), Benjamin states that, "Where *we* [the historians] see the appearance of a chain of events, *he* [the angel of history] sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet."¹² For Benjamin, history corresponds to Klee's *Angel* inasmuch as the figure desperately observes the horrors of the past without being able to fix them in the present. Likewise, *Los presagios* also insist upon the visual dimension of writing history by forcing the viewer to witness the Mexican reality with the same overwhelmed expression of Klee's and Gasparini's angel.

As explained in the film, in the lateral façade of *Church of San Hipólito*, there is a low-relief called *La leyenda del labrador*,¹³ which depicts an Amerindian character whose facial expression resembles that of Klee's print. The legend of the farmer depicts an Aztec man being carried to Moctezuma's palace by an eagle; as the image reveals, the fusion of the bird's wings and the figure's limbs eventually make him look like an angel.

¹⁰ Miguel León Portilla, *Vision de los vencidos; relaciones indigenas de la conquista.*, Coleccion Literatura latinoamericana ; 46 (La Habana, Cuba: Casa de las Americas, 1969). "La visión de los vencidos" narrates the eight Aztec omens that Moctezuma foresaw before the arrival of the Spanish conquistadors. Therefore, it could metaphorize the ability of the historian to predict the future.

¹¹ "Frankfurt School: On the Concept of History by Walter Benjamin."

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ For a detailed version of the legend, consult Duran, Fran Diego. "Historia de las Indias de Nueva España y islas de tierra firme. Distrito Federal": Editora Nacional, 1951.

In *Los presagios de Moctezuma*, this indigenous figure is presented as the Mexican angel of history.

As it is well known, the *Church of San Hipólito*, which was built in 1521 and is currently known as *Iglesia de San Judas Tadeo*, constitutes both an urban icon of Mexico City, given its central location; and a historical icon, because of the foundational moment that it commemorates.¹⁴ The church was built after San Hipólito, the first patron of the city, whose homage was celebrated on the same day of the last Tenochtitlan warriors' rendition. Therefore, the *Church of San Hipólito* celebrates the origin of Mexico as a city of contrast, where Aztecs and Spaniards became Mexicans. For one, as Barbara Mundy has made clear, Tenochtitlan and New Spain lost the nomenclature battle against Mexico.¹⁵

Moreover, in *Los presagios de Moctezuma*, the convoluted montage of Gasparini's photographs intertwined with the narrative of Monsiváis, recreate the characteristic chaos of life, space, and society in Mexico City at the turn of the twenty-first century. Not only Gasparini and Monsiváis depict the chaos of the metropolis, but they also attempt to reproduce the audiovisual overstimulation that characterizes walking in the city, looking at it.¹⁶ In this sense, in one of the images depicting the Mexican angel of history in the film (fig. 3), this figure appears in the background of the picture, overlapped by a group of street sellers and pedestrians that have invaded the church's outside with the imagery of Mexican pop culture i.e. holy cards, magazines, among others. In this sense, the Mexican angel has become a spectator of what Monsiváis has

¹⁴ Pierre Ragon, "Los Santos Patronos de Las Ciudades Del México Central (Siglos XVI Y XVII)," *Historia Mexicana* 52, no. 2 (2002): 361–89. Pag. 364.

¹⁵ Barbara E. Mundy, "Mapping the Aztec Capital: The 1524 Nuremberg Map of Tenochtitlan, Its Sources and Meanings," *Imago Mundi* 50 (1998): 11–33.

¹⁶ "Chaos, Culture in Mexico City Visit: Travel Weekly," accessed May 4, 2017, <http://www.travelweekly.com/Mexico-Travel/Chaos-culture-in-Mexico-City-visit>.

described as the crowds' ability to "destruir toda armonía y al mismo tiempo crear una armonía oculta en la de que cualquier manera, uno termina reconociéndose."

As Nestor Garcia Canclini has asserted, "[D]espite attempts to give [Latin American] elite culture a modern profile, isolating the indigenous and the colonial in the popular sectors, an interclass mixing has generated hybrid formations in all social strata."¹⁷ In fact, one could argue that these hybrid formations resemble the European kitsch, since Clement Greenberg claimed that it requires a "matured cultural tradition" from which to borrow, transform, and build upon.¹⁸ Kitsch is, therefore, referential and historical, and implies an act of borrowing from the past and adapting it to a contemporary, non-elitist, and popular taste.¹⁹

On the contrary, the context that gave origin to the European kitsch²⁰ is not identical to the Latin American. Like the development of cultural institutions in the region created narratives of origin of national identity rather than appropriations of ready-made historical legacies, the Latin American kitsch is also a matter of origins.²¹ The proliferation of kitsch is not the product of decentralizing a mature cultural tradition, but the side effect of constantly attempting to construct an identity through images and bombarding the population with them.²² As asserted by Canclini, the "internal contradiction and discrepancies [of Latin American art] express sociocultural heterogeneity and the difficulty of being realized in the midst of conflicts between different historical temporalities that coexist in the same present."²³ Each political project

¹⁷ Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). Pag. 46.

¹⁸ Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde et Kitsch [Avant-Garde and Kitsch]," *Cahiers Du Musée National d'Art Moderne*, no. 19–20 (1987): 158–169. Pag. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.* Pag. 9.

²¹ Sven Schuster editor, *La nación expuesta: cultura visual y procesos de formación de la nación en América Latina*, Primera edición, Colección Textos de ciencias humanas (Bogotá, D.C.: Editorial Universidad del Rosario, 2014). Pag. 30.

²² *Ibid.* Pag. 1–28.

²³ García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures*. Pag. 54.

that has designed a new cultural identity,²⁴ has designed a new national imagery that kitsch has referenced. In the Latin American context, the contemporary visual chaos that David Joselit²⁵ has attributed to the emergence of the contemporary digital media, can be traced long before, to the same origins of creating national identities.

The kitsch is a mature cultural tradition of Latin America. Hybrid cultures, which are a central component of the regional identity arise through interclass mixing, according to Canclini; furthermore, these hybrid cultures also result from the historical character of the kitsch. Moreover, Monsiváis himself has described this hybridity as chaotic. In “Los rituales del caos” the author questions the urban disorder of Mexico, concluding that “ese desorden final tiene que ver con el diluvio poblacional y la sociedad de masas que caracteriza a la ciudad.”²⁶ Based on Monsiváis’ assertions, Mexican popular culture is perceived as chaotic.

Although Charles Merewether has described “the archive [as a] repository or ordered system of documents and records, both verbal and visual, that is the foundation from which history is written,”²⁷ the Latin American popular culture also functions as an archival mechanism. The chaos generated by the kitsch and cultural hybridity implies and records a coexistence of times and traditions.

A Mexican *Angelus Novus*, or chaos as montage and archive

Paolo Gasparini’s artistic production is usually concerned with documenting the urban character of the Latin American metropolises, usually Caracas or Mexico D.F. As a matter of fact, his images resemble documentary photography,²⁸ as they intend to testify about Mexico’s reality. However, the ways in which he juxtaposes his pictures in *Los*

²⁴ Jorge Larraín, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* (Cambridge, UK : Oxford ; Malden, MA: Polity Press ; In association with Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

²⁵ David Joselit, *After Art*, Point (Princeton, N.J.) (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013).

²⁶ Pons, “Monsi-Caos: La Política, La Poética o La Caótica En Las Crónicas de Carlos Monsiváis.” Pag. 109.

²⁷ Charles Merewether, *The Archive*, Documents of Contemporary Art Series (London : Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel ; MIT Press, 2006).

²⁸ Terri Weissman, “Documentary Photography,” *Grove Art Online*, n.d.

presagios de Moctezuma, provides evidence for the archival nature of Mexican popular culture. The chaos of the city, in addition of constituting a subject matter of his pictures, informed Gasparini's archival practices.

At any rate, Gasparini's images usually portray quotidian life in the metropolis, focusing on depicting Mexican pop culture as found in public spaces, where the taste of the crowds often overlaps the intended uniformity of modern urban design. For one, the encounters of Mexican essentialism²⁹ and Americanization in popular culture are common subject matters of Gasparini's work. In one of the *Los presgios*' pictures (fig. 4), Gasparini depicts a man wearing a sweater stamped with the American and Japanese flags. Not only this character speaks of the development of a kitsch that reconciles contradictory ideologies, but of a chaotic way of arranging images. In fact, the display of magazines outside this appliances shop reveals how pictures (covers) of contrasting scales, with dissimilar or similar subject matters, with different fonts, overlapping each other, arranged in vertical and horizontal axes, constitute *one* picture. Moreover, since the exhibit includes different issues of the same magazine, this implies a coexistence of the old and the new. As such, there is a certain resemblance of this chaotic arrangement of images with the aesthetic of montage. In the visual arts, montage refers to a disparate juxtaposition of images, that "is associated with the discontinuity of the modern world."³⁰31 Against the naturalistic impulse that gave origin to painting and photography, where the mimetic reproduction of reality implied emulating its visual unity, montage constitutes a rupture. It implies a fragmentation of such unity, and reordering these fragments in a way that even if evokes a reality, does not look like it.

²⁹ I refer to essentialism as the fixation of a national identity centered on the pre-Columbian past. Larraín, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America*. Pag. 158-9.

³⁰ Tom Williams, "Montage," *Grove Art Online*, n.d.

³¹ Lewis Kachur, "Collage," *Grove Art Online*, n.d.

However, Gasparini's montage in *Los presagios de Moctezuma* is rather mimetic. Gasparini archives the Mexican reality by documenting the arrangement of images of popular culture, and by emulating it. As previously asserted, the Latin American kitsch has not disarticulated a mature language, but it is the side result of trying to build a discourse that orders the historical chaos of the regions. Since popular culture is hybrid and kitsch, it is fragmented. It is built upon small pieces, that form one sole image. The display of the magazines in the store, for instance, functions as a collage, as a diverse group of individual pictures arranged without a clear narrative, which together form a unity. In his film, Gasparini's editing emulates this organic montage of popular culture, this chaos (fig. 5).

Since in the film this picture is preceded by the image of a mestizo boy wearing a *Woody Woodpecker* t-shirt, and followed by the photograph of a *King Kon* advertisement, this editing extrapolates the chaotic display of the magazines to the realm of the film's montage (fig. 6). Not only the heterogeneous combination of subject matters speaks of the chaos of popular taste, but also the transition of the images. Since each picture dissolves (faints) into the next, this rhythm seems to replicate the overlapping of magazines' covers of the shop. Furthermore, the *leitmotif* of the Mexican angel of history constantly invites the viewer to observe, and to be confused in the face of popular chaos. In many ways, the montage of the film's pictures, supposedly connected by the Aztec narrative thread, instead of guiding the spectator through the urban monstrosity of the Mexican capital, exacerbates its overstimulation, its aesthetic diversity, and its entangled social and spatial dynamics.

Indeed, considering that montage is a filmic technic that articulates the spatial relations in a visual production, as it transports the viewer from one location to the next, it enables the dialectical development of a film's narrative or conceptual content (as first

theorized by the Soviets in the 1920s.)³² In this sense, a film's montage conveys its meaning by the syntagmatic juxtaposition of images. Nevertheless, there is not a clear boundary between narrative and concept in Gasparini's work; therefore, the montage, instead of serving as a conceptual and narrative clarifier, seems to obscure the purpose of the film. When recreating Moctezuma's first foreshadow, which refers to the terrifying sight of a comet,³³ the film displays a bizarre set of images depicting Mexican luchadores, families looking at pre-Columbian sculptures, a subway station built in front of a colonial cathedral, among others.

As a matter of fact, this anti-narrative style developed in *Los presagios de Moctezuma*, where the images do not follow a predefined account of events, could easily be related with Dada photomontage, given the dysfunctional nature of the images' sequence.³⁴ For instance, in *Cut with the Kitchen Knife* (fig. 7), Hanna Höch illustrates Dada anti-narrative: The playful arrangement of the figures, while compositionally well-balanced, appears arbitrarily selected and juxtaposed, especially given the disconnect between the image and its name.

Nevertheless, as asserted by Benjamin Buchloch, during the 1920s the Dadaists started critiquing the inaccessibility and lack of political character of their "absurd" compositions, which seemed to target a bourgeois audience.³⁵ According to the German art historian, Höch's *Meine Haussprüche* (fig. 8) reveals the artist's shift towards a more intelligible language, given the horizontal composition of the montage and the relative correspondence of the images and the text, e.g. the expression that "Death is a *Dadaish*

³² Williams, "Montage."

³³ The traditional Aztec text was rephrased by Monsiváis as "Y Moctezuma se asustó mucho cuando vió las estrellas y los gemelos,"

³⁴ Dawn Ades and Matthew Gale, "Dada," *Grove Art Online*, n.d. The Dadaists "were united not by a common style but by a rejection of conventions in art and thought, seeking through their unorthodox techniques, performances, and provocations to"

³⁵ Benjamin Buchloch, "Gerhard Richter's Atlas: The Anomic Archive (1993)," in *The Archive, Documents of Contemporary Art Series* (London: Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel; MIT Press, 2006), 85–102. Pag. 92.

matter” is located above a crucifix. In the context of this revalorization of a more accessible montage, which would facilitate the comprehension of their artworks, it seems consequent that Gasparini’s film was inspired by the Dada. The Dada’s mistake relied in introducing chaos within a population identified with a different language.³⁶ Their shift toward a more intelligible narrative proved that in order to succeed outside the realm of the cultural elites, emulating the popular is necessary. Therefore, Gasparini’s montage reproduces the chaos of popular culture, which described by Monsiváis, is incomprehensible but familiar (“the secret harmony”). “Pese a todo, dice Monsiváis, ‘veinte millones de personas no renuncian a la ciudad de México, porque no hay otro sitio a donde quieran ir.’”³⁷

Against the scholarly efforts to untangle the chaos of Mexico City, as Arturo Almandoz³⁸ and Néstor García Canclini³⁹ have attempted, Gasparini decides to archive the chaos of popular culture with chaos. In this sense, Gasparini’s montage does not intend to translate. His production constitutes a rupture with the official representations of the city, which seem to reproduce the chaos of popular culture, but that eventually, order it. In this process, Gasparini reacts to previous artistic initiatives that ostensibly employed chaos as an archival mechanism.

As a way of example, Diego Rivera’s *Epopeya del pueblo mexicano* (1929)—a mural whose central figure could have been a good angel of history—illustrates an early intention of demonstrating the archival potential of popular culture’s chaos (fig. 9). In addition of purportedly representing all Mexican history, the pictorial language of the

³⁶ A transcendental difference between Latin America and Europe, resides in how the postcolonial countries have struggled to define narratives of origin and national imageries, while the European nations established their national identities before their colonial expansionism. See Sven Schuster editor, *La nación expuesta*.

³⁷ Pons, “Monsi-Caos: La Política, La Poética O La Caótica En Las Crónicas de Carlos Monsiváis.”

³⁸ Arturo Almandoz Marte author, *Regreso de las metrópolis*, Colección País portátil (Caracas: Bid & coeditor, 2013).

³⁹ Néstor García Canclini author, *La ciudad de los viajeros: travesías e imaginarios urbanos México, 1940-2000*, Primera edición (FCE-UAM) ; nueva edición., Tezontle (Iztapalapa [Mexico City, México, D.F.] : México, D.F.: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana ; Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2013).

mural exemplifies Rivera's "exaltation of popular heritage in Mexican culture."⁴⁰ This fresco puts on display the agglomeration of historical characters, moments, and traditions distinctive of Mexican popular culture. Of its chaos and hybridity. In fact, rather than organizing the events in chronological order, the canonic foundational moment of Mexico—the eagle attacking a snake—appears in the center of the composition. In spite of being separated for more than a century, the revolution and the independence surround this foundational moment, suggesting that they transformed national identity. This chaotic and overcrowded juxtaposition of people, time, and places, constitutes an act of embracing the popular chaos and using it to document the history of the country.

However, this image implies the depiction of a metanarrative that, in addition to promulgating a political project and a visual identity, considers history as an official discourse, able to explain everything and include everyone. In Rivera's mural, history, both as a discipline and as a pictorial genre, is translated into the visual terms of popular culture. Its fictionality implies favoring some narratives and characters over others. The hierarchization of figures and moments undermines the main benefit of a chaotic composition, where the individual loses itself in the indistinctiveness of the crowd. The mural is an archive that looks popular but that is official.

On the other hand, photography, as a medium, offers the advantage of fragmenting the reality by capturing details of larger views. If Rivera offers an official metanarrative of Mexico that assembles a fragmented history, Gasparini favors the documentation of individual stories. Gasparini archives with "the end of history" on mind, and thus the chaos allows him to capture micro-images of popular culture that do not require an order, since they depict and emulate a natural disorder.

⁴⁰ Francis V. O'Connor, "Rivera, Diego," *Grove Art Online*, n.d.

Furthermore, Gasparini also resisted his contemporary official metanarratives. For instance, the multiple albums of Mexican postcards commissioned by the Department of Tourism of Mexico (Secretaría de Turismo de México) during the second half of the twentieth century popularized a rather organized version of the capital city. In an official travel poster titled “Mexico,” (fig. 10) the effort of ordering the convoluted nature of the metropolis is evident. Despite the fact that the image brings different distant sites of the city together, thus depicting an inaccurate geography of the place, amalgamating different images to create a new one (almost emulating a collage), this aesthetic decision simplifies the chaos of the city. It transforms it into an easy-to-see, picturesque and touristic miniature of the metropolis. The pedestrian-free roads, the absence of traffic, and the evolutionary narrative of the image accommodates the city for the eyes of the outsider spectator. From the background to the foreground, and from the old to the most recent, the advertisement depicts Tenochtitlan, a colonial cathedral, the *Palacio de Bellas Artes*, an art deco skyscraper, and a modern train.

Therefore, even if Gasparini’s work makes part of a general desire of recording the city, he favors the depiction of the multiple micronarratives that constitute it, instead of depicting the urban icons. These micro narrative, are evidently, those of popular culture. Additionally, Gasparini does not create an artificial order for this chaos. Instead, the oppressive overpopulation of the metropolis, and the amazing ability of mixture that characterize the city and its citizens (in words of Monsiváis,)⁴¹ are archived with the same chaos that characterize them. His montage does not create an artificial order for the popular chaos.

The Mexican Angelus Novus, which invites to viewer to look at the chaos of the city while being part of it. As Guerra claimed, the Latin American history needs to

⁴¹ Gasparini and Monsiváis, *Los presagios de Moctezuma*.

develop mechanisms to document isolated events but finds the thread that connects them. Gasparini's montage, by acknowledging the chaos⁴² of popular culture, the chaos of the individual accounts of life in Mexico, archives them without disrespecting their heterogeneity. Finally, since the struggle to bring together high and popular culture has been a permanent concern of the Latin American governments and intelligentsia, Gasparini also declares his sense of belonging to the visual culture that he documents. The chaos of montage, the chaos of popular culture, constitutes indeed an archival mechanism.

⁴² Guerra, *Tres estudios de historiografía latinoamericana*. Pag. 188.

Images



Fig. 1 ProtoplasmaKid. *Monumento a los españoles caídos en 1520 en el canal de los toltecas o Tlaltecayohuacan la noche del 30 de junio de 1520*. Templo de San Hipólito, Ciudad de México. 2015. Photography. Available in Wikipedia Commons.



Fig. 2 Paul Klee. *Angelus Novus*. 1920. Monoprint, 31,8cm x 34,2 cm. Museum of Israel, Jerusalem.



Fig. 3 Paolo Gasparini. *Monumento a los españoles caídos en 1520 en el canal de los toltecas o Tlaltecayohuacan la noche del 30 de junio de 1520*. Templo de San Hipólito, Ciudad de México. C. 1990. Still of *Los presagios de Moctezuma*.



Fig. 4 Paolo Gasparini. *Untitled*, Ciudad de México. C. 1990. Still of *Los presagios de Moctezuma*.

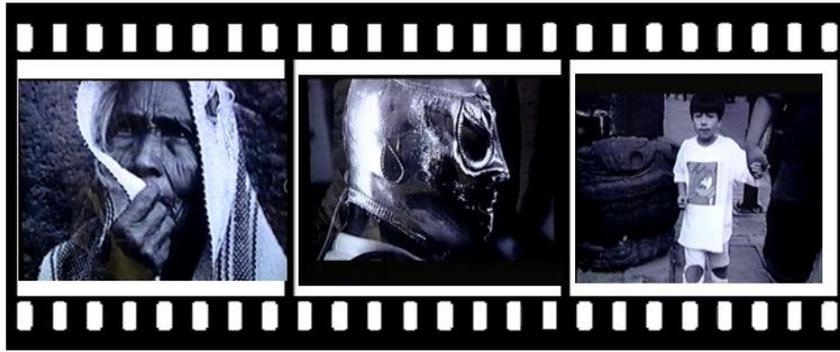


Fig. 6 This filmstrip diagram reproduces one of the photographic sequences displayed in *Los presagios de Moctezuma*. After Paolo Gasparini, *Los presagios de Moctezuma*. 1995-98. Photography and film



Fig. 5 Paolo Gasparini. *Untitled*, Ciudad de México. C. 1990.

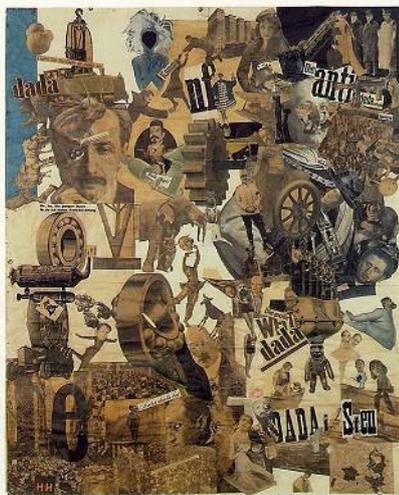


Fig. 7 Hanna Höch, *Cut with the Kitchen Knife*. 1919. Photomontage.

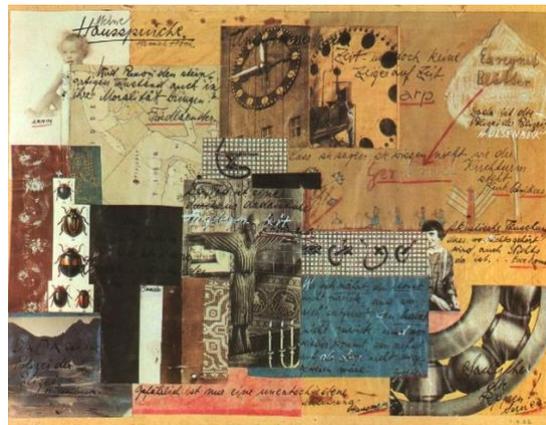
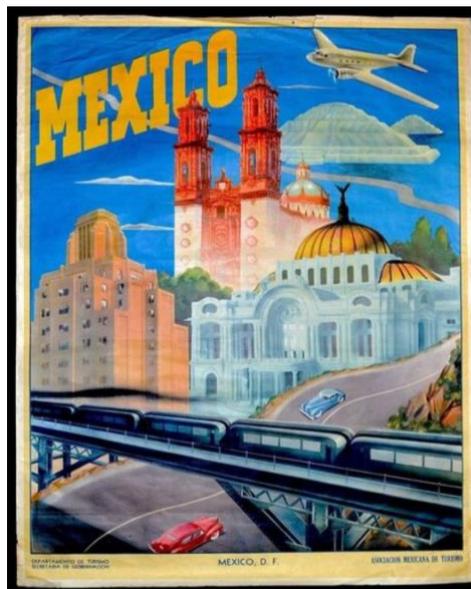


Fig. 8 Hanna Höch, *Meine Haussprüche*. 1922. Photomontage.



Fig. 9 Diego Rivera, Epopeya del Pueblo Mexicano. Palacio Nacional. 1929-1935.



Fi. 10 Asociación Nacional de Turismo, Departamento de Turismo de la Secretaría de Estado. *México D.F.*
c. 1960s. Poster.

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