APPROPRIATION ART. ON WHAT WE MIGHT CALL *FORDAMNATIVE* APPROPRIATIONS

Appropriation Art. A propósito do que poderemos designar como apropriações paradamnativas

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Abstract

In a 1992 essay, Benjamin Buchloh considered Robert Rauschenberg's famous *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953) to be the first inaugurating gesture and emblem of the postmodern appropriationist act. For our part, we believe that his gesture should be distinguished from current appropriationist practices, and in this article we propose the concept of *fordamnative appropriation* to classify it, as well as other subsequent gestures by other artists who can invoke his example, and which we analyse below. Before this analysis, we will introduce the emergence and development of *Appropriation Art*, which arose in the context of what is known as postmodernism, as well as mentioning some of the historical antecedents of this artistic practice; in addition, in order to contextualise the concept we have introduced and the analysis that follows, we address the origins and use of the Latin phrase *damnatio memoriae*, from ancient Roman civilisation to modern and contemporary politics.

Resumo

Num ensaio de 1992 Benjamin Buchloh considerou o famoso *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953) de Robert Rauschenberg como o primeiro gesto inaugurador, e emblema, do acto apropriacionista pós-moderno. Pela nossa parte, entendemos que o seu gesto deve ser distinguido das práticas apropriacionistas correntes, e propomos neste artigo o conceito de *apropriação paradamnativa* para classificá-lo, assim como a outros gestos posteriores, de outros artistas, que podem invocar o seu exemplo, e que analisamos no seguimento. Antes dessa análise, fazemos uma introdução ao aparecimento e desenvolvimento da *Appropriation Art*, surgida no contexto do denominado pós-modernismo, além de invocarmos alguns antecedentes históricos desta prática artística; ainda, por necessidade de contextualizar o conceito que introduzimos, e a análise sequente, abordamos as origens e o emprego da locução latina *damnatio memoriae*, desde a antiga civilização romana até às políticas modernas e contemporâneas.

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 1970s, in the context of what is known as post-modernism, we saw the development of the artistic practice known as *Appropriation Art*, characterised generically by the appropriation of pre-existing images, whether they come from so-called "high culture" or from broad mass culture, or "low culture", conveyed by the mass media or advertising, in any case, imagery that belongs to the patrimony of collective memory. As a "movement" it emerged in the autumn of 1977, with the exhibition *Pictures* curated by the then art critic for *October* magazine Douglas Crimp, for the Artists'Space gallery in New York, for which he invited a group of artists - Jack Goldstein, Troy Brauntuch, Robert Longo, Sherrie Levine and Philip Smith - who, rather than working with original images from reality or the fruit of their imagination, were instead interested in questioning the image as a mediator of aesthetic experience.[2]

Before we go any further, however, we think it's convenient right away distinguish the practice of appropriation from that of *citation* (with which it is sometimes confused): while in the arts that deal with images an appropriation is always recognisable, a quotation is not always recognisable. Significantly, Arthur C. Danto in his famous book *After the End of Art* would consider appropriative practice to be the main artistic contribution of the 80s:

> In my own view, the major artistic contribution of the decade was the emergence of the appropriated image – the taking over of images with established meaning and identity and giving them a fresh meaning and identity. Since any image could be appropriated, it immediately follows that there could be no perceptual stylistic uniformity among appropriated images (Danto, 1997, p. 15).

For his part, the critic and art historian Craig Owens, in a no less famous essay, included appropriationism among the manifestations of what he considered to be the allegorical impulse of post-modernist historical revivalism:

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[2] Two years later, Crimp wrote a new version of the original essay for the exhibition, in which he didn't use the term 'appropriation', which appeared later: cf. Douglas Crimp (1979, pp. 75-88). See also Douglas Crimp (2005, pp. 37-48); Juan Vicente Aliaga and José Miguel G. Cortés (2002, pp. 261, 263, 271 and 273).

> The first link between allegory and contemporary art may now be made: with the appropriation of images that occurs in the works of Troy Brauntuch, Sherrie Levine, Robert Longo…– artists who generate images through the reproduction of other images. (…) Appropriation, site specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity, hybridization – these diverse strategies characterize much of the art of the present and distinguish it from its modernist predecessors. They also form a whole when seen in relation to allegory, suggesting that postmodernist art may in fact be identified by a single, coherent impulse, and that criticism will remain incapable of accounting for that impulse as long as it continues to think of allegory as aesthetic error (Owens, 1994, pp. 54 e 58).[3]

The practice - or should I say practices, because they are diverse - of appropriationist(s) has used a wide range of techniques with more or less critical intentions, questioning or deconstructing the concepts of "originality", "original" (with the relative "aura", in the Benjaminian sense) or "author", assuming the copy as a reactivation of the original [4], and had the American artist Sherrie Levine as its main representative, or the most recognised. It is clear, however, that we can invoke historical antecedents of this practice which, without being known by the name now used, nevertheless has a long genealogy. Perhaps it's not an exaggeration to say, as Nicole Brenez does (2004, w. p.), that *re-utilisation* (*remploi*) "Dans l' histoire de l'art, (…) constitue probablement la pratique à la fois la plus constante et la plus diverse quant à la fabrication des images."

In the 20th century, the practice of appropriation dates back to the second decade, with the paradigmatic example of Marcel Duchamp, who, with his ready-made works, gave artistic status to ordinary found objects. It was also around this time that an English cinema pioneer, Adrian Brunel, began a practice of reusing anonymous material fixed on celluloid film, which would much later be called *found footage*[5] in cinema:

> From early on, since cinema became a common industrial practice, a repertoire of sequences and stock-shots was created: war scenes, ball scenes, naval scenes, etc. This was usually part of the production economy; with Brunel, and through the creative use of intertitles, the use of stock-shots became properly parodic and an aesthetic proposition..[6] (Seabra, 2007, w. p., own translation).

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[3] On Owens' essay, especially on its relationship with the notion of allegory put forward by Walter Benjamin in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), and its role in modern culture, see also Hal Foster (1996, pp. 86-90); for other interesting reflections on appropriationism (Foster, 1996, pp. 118-120).

[4] On this motivation for appropriation, see Urs Stahel (2012, pp. 36 and 42).

[5] For an in-depth analysis of the origin of the term and its context, and its application in cinema, see Antonio Weinrichter (2009, pp. 112-191).

[6] Out of necessity, the use of *stock-shots* was a resource widely expanded in the American cinema of the so-called B series, where there is generally no second crew in charge of shooting situation shots or action scenes.

After Duchamp and Brunel, the American artist Joseph Cornell, known above all for his "boxes" containing various collected materials and imaginatively combined ideas, made films from the late 1930s onwards, where he systematically appropriated pre-existing celluloid film material (which he bought and collected), coming from different origins[7]. After about a quarter of a century, he was to be followed by other experimental and avant-garde filmmakers, among whom another American artist stands out, if nothing else for chronological reasons: the sculptor Bruce Conner.

It was with the latter, whose most paradigmatic and influential film is *Movie* (1958), the first film he directed, that this particular practice of appropriation, known as *found footage*, began in a more systematic way. If *Movie* is still today Conner's best-known film, for a few years now people have been taking a closer look at the films he made in the 60s and 70s, which many consider today to be the forerunners of the music video and the MTV aesthetic, because the editing of the appropriated archive images, and other filmic materials, obey a very careful harmony with the music, as we were able to see in a special session dedicated to them at the 19th *CURTAS* de Vila do Conde International Film Festival (9-17 July 2011): we point out among them *Cosmic Ray* (1961) and *Breakaway* (1966).[8]

A little later, Andy Warhol would be "El ejemplo principal de actitud pictórica apropiacionista (…) cuyo empleo de las imágenes comerciales y de los medios de comunicación a comienzos de los años sesenta iluminó a sus seguidores."(Taylor, 2000, p. 95)

THE PRACTICE OF *DAMNATIO MEMORIAE*

The elimination of people from documental memory began in very remote times and was a frequent political practice in the ancient world. It is commonly known by the Latin expression *damnatio memoriae*, of contemporary origin. The Latin locution, literally meaning 'condemnation of memory' and encompassing various forms of sanctions against memory, originated in ancient Roman civilisation as a juridical notion.

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[7] *Rose Hobart* is the one that remains the best known today, and will always be remembered as a milestone in the history of experimental cinema; it's his first film, which he made in 1936. We'll also mention the so-called *Children's Trilogy* (c. 1938?) - made up of the films *Cottilion*, *Children's Party* and *The Midnight Party* - or *Jack's Dream* (c. 1938?), among others.

[8] And, in more recent years, we would highlight *America is Waiting* (1981), *Television Assassination* (1995) - a true masterpiece, with images of the assassination of J. F. Kennedy - and *Eastern Morning* (2008). On this facet of Bruce Conner's work, read the article by Daniel Ribas (2011, pp. 168-170).

It comes from public and criminal law, and has played an important role in the cultural history of memory and oblivion; today, its use has become widespread and is commonly applied to similar situations outside the Roman context, when there is clear condemnation by the authorities. This last point is important because it must be emphasised that a common act of destruction, of *vandalism*[9], is not a *damnatio memoriae*.

Arising in the final century of the Republic in response to the instability created by armed violence, or the threat of it, *damnatio memoriae* was initially a customary practice in Rome of official execration, which consisted of condemning the memory of those people considered to be "public enemies" of the state (*res publica*), or in some way representing a "threat to security", especially in cases of treason, and was mainly subject to socially powerful or influential citizens, and later Emperors.

But for such a condemnation to be effective, it needed the approval of the Roman Senate (*senatus consulto*) which, in the event of a positive vote, after the death of the person who had been condemned - there is no unanimity in Roman history studies on this point; however, most experts on antiquity seem to lean towards the opinion that only after the death of the condemned were the measures to suppress them from the collective memory applied[10] - officially decreed that everything that could remember them for posterity should be removed. The decision was applicable to all parts of the Empire. This practice, which is much more in use, can be considered the opposite of the one similarly provided for in Roman law of *consecratio* (consecration), of posthumously "divinising" a political leader, which the same Senate also had the power to grant through the respective suffrage.

The most common sanctions applied, aimed at limiting or destroying the memory of the proscribed person, who was suspended the fundamental rights of any Roman citizen, usually predicted: the removal or destruction of statues, public and private portraits; the erasure of the damnati's name (*tituli*) from all inscriptions on public monuments, tombstones and official documents; the prohibition of the use of his name,

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[9] We use the term in the strict sense defined by Abbé H. Grégoire, who coined it in his *Rapport sur les destructions* (11 January 1794), in the context of the French Revolution. And as Marc Guillaume emphasises (2003, p. 107, own translation), "...the fight against vandalism (...) turns out to be not only the fight against destruction, but also the preventive fight against the vandals that a nation risks generating if it does not yet know how to sensibly manage the heritage of its new riches.". See also Victor I. Stoichita (2009, pp. 367-370) on the notion of vandalism, and on the iconoclastic phenomenon in general.

[10] Even so, according to some, the possibility that the sanctions of a *damnatio memoriae* could be applied to a living outlaw cannot be completely ruled out. On the other hand, in modern times the "abolition of remembrance" of people while they were alive is well attested, a common practice in the various totalitarian regimes of the 20th century. One of the most famous cases is undoubtedly that of Trotsky, which we will analyse later.

extended to family members; the withdrawal from circulation of coins containing any reference to his person, to be remelted. In the case of coins, specimens have survived to the present day in which the names of the condemned were scraped from the captions, as well as the images of their busts cancelled or damaged in some way (with hammers or countersinks, for example); this is the case of known coins of Seianus, a favourite of the emperor Tiberius who fell from grace and was condemned to death, and of the emperors Caligula, Nero or Geta.

In some cases, even the dead person's private home could be demolished to make way for a public space. It should be noted, however, that post-mortem sanctions generally only affected the condemned person, and the dishonour did not apply to their relatives. In the case of emperors too, according to Harald Weinrich (1999, p. 58), "…beaucoup de leurs décrets étaient du jour au lendemain frappés de nullité, afin que ces témoignages ne puissent plus rappeler le souvenir de la «non-personne»."

In the Roman world, such condemnation was undoubtedly a very severe and much-feared punishment, because as historian Ana Teresa Gonçalves says,

> To erase images was to eliminate the possibility of remembering the original (...). That's why (...) damnatio memoriae was such a fearsome punishment in the Roman world. (....) Erasing any reference to the dead was like leaving their corpse unburied, one of the worst things that could happen to the dead, because their soul would be left without a harbour, without direction. (Gonçalves, 2003-4, p. 15, own translation)

However, damnatio memoriae didn't always fulfil its objectives, and not only in Rome. Thus, still referring to the Roman context, Ana Teresa Gonçalves also reminds us:

> It is known that in some cases the senatorial decision to erase the image of a traitor was not fully complied with. For example, Tacitus, in the *Annals*, mentions that when Emperor Claudius visited the house of Silius, one of Messalina's lovers, immediately spotted in the foyer of the house the portrait of Silius' father in the vestibule of the house, "preserved in disobedience to a senatus consulto" (Tacitus, XI. 35). Therefore, not everyone heeded the Senate's decision, since post-mortem disgrace was the reverse of all the practices of remembrance traditionally cultivated by aristocratic families (Gonçalves, 2003-4, p. 18, own translation).

In fact, among the Roman aristocratic clans, the elitist custom of using portraits (*imagines*) of their deceased relatives - particularly associated with funeral celebrations - , usually mortuary masks made of wax or clay, which were kept and worshipped in the foyers of the respective families' houses, was very deep-rooted. And it was even a

distinctive sign of social position, an appanage reserved for members of the aristocracy and those families who had already had the honour of having counted a senator in their midst, the right to carry and display those portraits of their ancestors during the funeral procession (*pompa funebris*) of a relative, in as great a number as the respective history and social prominence justified, whose deeds were praised for the greater greatness of the deceased, and of the living relatives. Later on, from the 2nd century AD onwards, perhaps due to Christian influence, there was a gradual evolution in Roman funeral customs, leading to ceremonies of a more private nature and devoid of that outward appearance of pomp.[11]

During the Imperial period, the practice of *damnatio memoriae* became very important and was often used by the Senate as a political weapon, not so much against the monarchy as a form of government, but rather in response to the despotic and unjust way in which many emperors, who lacked the desired moral qualities, exercised power. Because although it experienced a progressive decline in its political weight during the Empire, with its members invariably being purged at the whim of real or imagined conspiracies, it still maintained an important legislative and judicial role, continuing to act in the interests of all and being "…the symbol of the *res publica*", the "institution that goes beyond every ruler" (Bretone, 1990, p. 167, own translation).

In reality, there were many Roman emperors covered by *damnatio memoriae*: Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Commodus (later rehabilitated by Septimius Severus), Clodius Albinus, Geta, Macrinus, Heliogabalus, Alexander Severus, Maximinus, Gordian III, Philip the Arab, Decius, Emilian, Galienus, Domitius Aurelianus, Marcus Aurelius Probius, Marcus Aurelius Caro, Diocletian, Maximian, Galerius, Severus II, Maxentius, Licinius, Constantine II, Constantine, and Maximus the Great.

In his biography of Emperor Titus Flavius Domitian (81 - 96 AD), the Roman historian Suetonius recounts the mixed reactions that followed his assassination, as well as the subsequent damnatio memoriae measures approved by the Senate:

> The people welcomed Domitian's death with indifference, the soldiers with indignation. They immediately wanted him to be proclaimed divine, and were even ready to avenge him if they had found a leader, which they did shortly afterwards, persisting in demanding the torment of the perpetrators of the crime. The senators, on the other hand, felt such joy at this death that they outraged the memory of the dead man in

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[11] See, in this respect, Michael Siebler (2008, p. 60), who gives us some of the context of this celebrity presentation.

the completely filled curia, with a kind of acclaim that was as infamous as it was cruel. They ordered ladders, ripped out his busts and the shields of his triumphs, smashing them to pieces against the ground, and finally decreed that his titles of honour should be crossed out everywhere and his memory abolished (Suetónio, 2007, p. 58, own translation)[12].

The article by Ana Teresa Gonçalves, which we have already cited here, presents an extensive and rigorous analysis, very detailed and documented, of the case of the *damnatio memoriae* of the emperor Publius Septimius *Geta* (211-212), who was assassinated at the behest of his cruel older brother Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Bassianus, nicknamed *Caracalla* (211-217) because of a long Gallic tunic he was wearing, on 27 February 212 AD.

Sons of Julia Domna and Septimius Severus (193-211), a general who imposed himself in the confusion following the assassination of Commodus, inaugurating the era of the soldier-emperors, and the first Roman emperor of non-European origin[13], after their father's death the two Augustus brothers shared the responsibility of governing the Empire as a collegiate body, as was planned. This was their father's will, but they will never have understood each other very well, the necessary *concordia* was lacking. Then, a little over twelve months after their joint rise to power, taking advantage of an opportunity when Geta was visiting his mother less protected than usual, and living up to an ancient maxim that says power could not be shared, Caracalla sent some centurions to kill him.

 After the murder, Caracalla fled the palace, citing the danger he had been in, and, staging a supposed conspiracy directed against him by his brother, sought refuge in the camp of the Praetorians, where he bought their support. The Praetorians proclaimed him "sole" Emperor and declared Geta a public enemy[14]. It is therefore important to emphasise one aspect that distinguishes this case of *damnatio memoriae* from others, and which Ana Teresa Gonçalves stresses:

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[12] Still on the subject of Domitian, we find an account in Pliny the Younger, quoted in an essay by Victor I. Stoichita (2009, p. 371).

[13] He was a Romanised African from Leptis Magna in Tripolitania, where Libya is today

[14] The day after Geta's murder, Caracalla went to the Senate to justify killing him, whom he accused of being unpleasant to his mother and of planning to kill him using poisons, even citing as a historical precedent his act by Romulus, who had also killed his brother Remus because of conflicts in the city's government. The Senate discussed and approved Geta's damnatio memoriae unusually quickly, as it voted in favour during the same session. Even his corpse was quickly condemned so that it would not receive public honours.

> By being declared a public enemy posthumously, Caracalla was creating an innovation, because it was usually possible for the Senate to proclaim rivals public enemies before they were suppressed, in order to justify the actions taken against them, as Septimius had done with Nigro and Albino. Caracallus first killed his brother and then sought to legitimise his act by declaring public enmity, using his support among the Praetorians rather than the senators to do so (Gonçalves, 2003-4, p. 16, own translation).

In addition to the most common sanctions in these condemnations, we would like to highlight the following, by less usual, which were applied in this particular case: 1. Women were forbidden to mourn the deceased, contrary to the common practice in aristocratic funerals, which at the time was considered an honour that distinguished the social and political importance of the deceased. 2. The family could not present imagines of Geta in public ceremonies; such as during *pompa funebris* of one of its members. 3. All of Geta's property was confiscated and passed into the possession of Caracalla, and likewise all the citizens who had put Geta's name in their wills had their property confiscated (considered in the general list of what belonged to Geta). 4. The use of Geta's name in the works of poets and playwrights was banned.

The article provides us with many known examples of public images of Geta that have been destroyed, as well as inscriptions on monuments and documents bearing his name that have been erased. Among these, we can highlight the Arch of the Roman *Forum*, dedicated by the Senate in 203 AD to Septimius Severus and his family in recognition of their military victories over the Parthians, or, still in Rome, the Arch of the *Argentarii* (204 AD). In the first case, care was taken to expand the title of Caracalla so as to eliminate the name of Geta. On the Arch of the *Argentarii*, in a relief depicting Septimius and Julia Domna offering a sacrifice, a figure observing the act was completely destroyed.[15]

As in other cases, the sanctions of damnatio memoriae were extended to all parts of the Empire, and there are examples of their application in the Roman provinces. One of these, which we present here [see figure 1], is a small painting on wood, 30.5 cm in diameter, found in Egypt and now in the collection of a museum in Berlin. Perhaps it was commissioned to commemorate the visit of the imperial family to this Roman province

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[15] The figure is thought to be Geta or Plautila, the wife of Caracalla, who was also condemned to a *damnatio memoriae* after being excluded from court and sent into exile. In this same Arco, a dedication from the money changers and merchants to the Severian royal family is said to have been amended to omit references to Geta and Plautila.

in 199 AD, because it depicted the effigies of the imperial couple and their two young sons: the effigy of Geta was destroyed. This *tondo*, the only example of a painted portrait of a Roman emperor that has survived to the present day, although we know that many others existed, curiously presents a simple but at the same time revealing composition. In fact, as Michael Siebler points out, we are dealing with

> …a clearly official dynastic arrangement. The busts of the emperor and his son Caracalla stand in front of those of the imperatrice and her youngest son Geta, which reveals a clear iconographic definition of status and succession to the throne: at that time, Caracalla had already risen to the status of Augustus, while Geta was only Caesar (Siebler, 2008, p. 76, own translation).

Figure 1 - Example of the *damnatio memoriae* of the Roman Emperor *Geta*. Tondo with the family of Septimius Severus, where Geta was 'erased' by order of his brother Caracalla. Tempera on wood, diameter 30.5 cm (Berlin, Altes Museum).

Source: photograph by Carlos Trindade.

But, as the *damnatio memoriae* have proven not to be perfect, for the most diverse reasons, Ana Teresa Gonçalves also tells us about the existence of numerous public or private pieces, especially small ones, which have stood the test of time and survived to the present day, and where we find Geta represented. This was the case with several small cameos depicting members of the imperial family, perhaps because they were pieces of great economic value, and with some statue heads, which are now scattered throughout the collections of various museums. However, the best images we have left, and the most numerous, are those of coins of various denominations - denarii, aurei, sesterces, etc. - minted with the effigy of Geta at various times during his life [see figure 2], either alone

or accompanied by the other elements of the domus severiana, propagating the concordia in the Empire, and this in spite of the fact that Caracalla ordered all those bearing it to be melted down, because apart from their intrinsic value they were easy to hide[16]. It was even possible for the researcher R. Cappelli, based on the numismatic study, to draw up a picture showing Geta's physical transformations from childhood to adulthood. [17]. Two colonial bronze medallions, minted in Stratonicea (in Caria, a region of Asian Turkey), have also survived to the present day, bearing the busts of both Augustus brothers on the obverse.

Figure 2 - Obverse and reverse of three coins with Geta's effigy, from different periods of her life.

Source: http://dougsmith.ancients.info/geta.html

We should also add, in relation to this case, that in a considerable number of papyri (one hundred and one) found in Egypt, containing tax receipts sent by the priests of the city of Oxyrhynchus to Rome, Geta's name was preserved, although this was not the case in others from the same batch (thirty-nine) where it was erased in various ways.

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[16]In truth, they wouldn't have reached us either if it weren't for the fact that Geta lived in this period of Roman history, that of the *Empire*; for it wasn't until the dictator Gaius Julius Caesar (in 44 BC, the year he was assassinated by Brutus) that coins were minted with imperial effigies. C, the year he was assassinated by Brutus) that the official political propaganda practice of minting coins with imperial effigies became commonplace, after he was the first Roman politician to obtain authorisation from the Senate to engrave his face on these small circulating pieces during his lifetime - in his case, the minted coin even had the phrase *Caesar dictator perpetuo* inscribed on it, an affirmation of authority that was thus spread throughout the Empire - thus calling into question the old republican principles and habits, in the light of which such boldness implying a cult of personality could be considered a scandal. Because even then, as M. Siebler says (2008, p. 8, own translation) "...it was basically outrageous for a Roman. (...) The honorary statues of deserving politicians and victorious generals erected in the Forum or in public places by decree of the senate and the people were, on the other hand, considered good behaviour among the greats of the Republic."

[17]See R. Cappelli (1963). On the subject of coins bearing the effigy of Geta, see also w. a. (1992, pp. 35-36), where examples are also given of the damnatio memoriae of Caligula, Nero and Seianus (a favourite of Tiberius, associated in the year 31 with the emperor's fifth consulship, who fell into disgrace and was killed).

Although the term is of Roman origin, we must emphasise that in even more remote times a similar phenomenon of *damnatio memoriae* occurred in ancient Egypt. In fact, at least three cases are known, concerning the pharaohs *Amen-hotep IV/Akhenaton*[18] (c. 1364 or 1351/50 - 1347 or 1334/33 BC) , *Hatchepsut* (c. 1490 or 1479 - c. 1468 or 1458 BC)[19] and Menmiré-setepenré *Amenmesés* (1203 or 1202 - 1200 or 1199 BC). The most discussed cases are undoubtedly those of the first two mentioned - with the particularity of the second being a woman - both belonging to the 18th Dynasty of the New Empire, the one that marks the beginning of a new era in the millenary history of Egyptian civilisation, which reached its maximum splendour there, as is recognised. However, as the subject is far too extensive and complex, we can't go into it here.

However, we must emphasise that the practice of appropriation was a constant in Egyptian history. Thus, it was common for the pharaoh, once he had ascended to the throne and to supreme power, to begin by taking over his role as "master builder" and, according to tradition, to take advantage of the architectural and sculptural elements of previous reigns to apply them to his own monuments. In this respect, no one has surpassed Usermaetré *Ramsés II* (c. 1279 - 1212/13 BC), who was perhaps the greatest builder in ancient Egypt, leaving evidence of his extraordinary activity all over the country (the most famous of which today are the two temples of Abu Simbel, in Nubia), seeming to have had little to do with their own achievements in demonstrating their power and greatness, not minding appropriating those of others, affixing their name to monuments and statues that go back as far as the Middle Kingdom. His eagerness in this regard was such that today almost all monuments contain visible cartouches[20] with their coronation name (*Usermaetré*). It's probable, according to many experts, who is also primarily responsible[21] for remove and erasing the names of *Akhenaten* and *Hatchepsut* from the official records (the *Royal Lists*[22]), altering and rewriting them in a practice of palimpsest.

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[18] We have given the dates most commonly referred to in the sources consulted, but we must emphasise that the dates for this period, as for others, are still the subject of controversy today. In reality, despite the numerous studies and much that has been written, in all honesty it is not yet possible to precisely place the reign of this pharaoh, because the scientific data is not yet considered solid enough.

[19] In the case of the reign of this pharaoh-queen, there are also many discrepancies in relation to the dates given in the many sources consulted. We haven't listed any specific bibliography on this subject, or on her *damnatio*, as in the previous case, because to be minimally rigorous we would need dozens of references, which we feel is rather unreasonable for an article like this. We have therefore chosen to summarise.

[20] Both the coronation name and the birth name are usually delimited by what is known as *a cartouche* (each enclosed in its own cartouche). Shaped like a loop of rope with the ends tied together, their presence in hieroglyphic inscriptions makes it easy to recognise the presence of royal names.

[21] Horemheb (c. 1333 or 1319 - 1306 or 1292/91 BC), Tutankhamun's successor, and Thutmose III (c. 1490 or 1479 - 1436 or 1425 BC), the successor to Hatchepsut, are also pointed out as responsible.

[22] Lists of kings inscribed on temples and tombs: the Royal List of Abydos (*in situ*) and the Royal List of Karnak (today in the Louvre Museum), for example.

Modern and contemporary *damnatio memoriae*

The political censorship project known as *Photo-Stalinism*, during the Stalinist period in the former USSR, is well known. It was carried out through the adulteration of photographs exclusively with the effective use of classical laboratory procedures:

> …el tristemente célebre proyecto de censura política ejercido durante el período totalitario del gobierno de Stalin (…). En síntesis, la obsesión de Stalin por acabar con sus enemigos políticos le llevó a no contentarse con eliminarlos fisicamente de la faz de la tierra, sino que también sintió la necesidad de borrarlos para siempre de la historia. Para ello, un experto grupo de técnicos de laboratorio fotográfico al servicio del dictador se ocuparon por manipular sutilmente miles de documentos fotográficos (que servían como testimonio gráfico de los hechos acaecidos en el régimen comunista), con la única finalidad de borrar subrepticiamente a aquellas personas declaradas *non gratas* por el régimen o que habían caído en desgracia a los ojos de Stalin. Un buen número de personajes fueron literalmente "depurados" de las imágenes oficiales negándoles así su derecho a la existencia como agentes activos de la revolución soviética, y todo ello sin que el observador percibiese la ostensible manipulación a la que esas fotografias habían sido sometidas (Isla, 2004, p. 77).

Undoubtedly, one of the political figures most affected by this practice of forgery, which was very common, was Lev Davidovich Bronstein, who became known to history under the name *Trotsky* (1879-1949). The famous revolutionary leader, Lenin's companion, who played a key role in the Bolshevik revolution, having created and organised the Red Army which he commanded throughout the Civil War (1918/20) against the "whites" and was instrumental in the Bolsheviks' victory there, entered a "collision course" with Stalin from 1925 onwards, whose growing power he denounced. Excluded from the Central Committee by the Communist Party leadership in November 1927, he was subsequently expelled from the USSR in 1929 accused of "counter-revolutionary activities". The rest of his life was spent in exile until his announced end on 20 August 1940 in Mexico, where he was assassinated by Ramón Mercader - a member of the Communist Party of Catalonia - an undercover agent at Stalin's behest.

We said that Trotsky's assassination was a foretold end because, from the moment he was expelled from the USSR, his memory was systematically and deliberately erased from all the photographic records released since then. Thus, at first, Trotsky's disappearance from all photographic documentation only announces, in a way, his future and predictable physical disappearance.[23]

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[23] For an analysis of some concrete examples of the manipulation of photos featuring Trotsky, see Pepe Isla (2004, pp. 72-73). It should be added that, in the case of Trotsky, as the cultural historian Peter Burke (2011,

We mentioned the specific case of the manipulation of photographs of Trotsky in the former USSR, but it should be remembered that this practice was common in other Eastern European countries during the same era, such as the former Czechoslovakia. In *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, Czech writer Milan Kundera mentions the case of former Foreign Minister Clementis, who appeared in a widely publicised photo taken on a wintry day in February 1948, during a speech by Communist leader Klement Gottwald on the balcony of a baroque palace in Prague's *Old Town Square*, in front of hundreds of thousands of citizens. Clementis was at Gottwald's side, and because it was snowing and very cold, he took off his fur cap to place it on his comrade's bare head. However, four years later, he was accused of treason and hanged; from then on, he disappeared from all photographs[24]. Also, outside European territory, but also in Soviet orbit, similar cases of photo manipulation are known in Cuba, as was pointed out in a short article published in the Portuguese press on the death of Carlos Franqui on 16 April 2010, who was one of Fidel Castro's former companions in the Sierra Maestra and was then in charge of *Radio Rebelde* and the clandestine newspaper *Revolución*.[25]

The practice we call *damnatio memoriae* still continues today. This was the case with the abolition of symbols linked to fascism in Italy, or those of Nazism in Germany, as well as those of communism in Eastern countries (the well-known case of Poland, for example). In the case of Germany, the years following its reunification in 1990 also saw a process of *damnatio*. One day to the next in the east, the names of towns, streets and buildings were renamed, in many cases reverting to their pre-1933 names. Memorials and rituals were also restored, while buildings from the former GDR were demolished.

In fact, the aim was not to recover history, but to erase it, as the German literary and cultural critic Andreas Huyssen rightly pointed out back in 1997:

> En aquellos excitantes meses posteriores a la caída del Muro, el pasado de Berlín parecía estar en el aire, prácticamente al alcance de la mano. Berlín era una ciudad abierta al Este y al Oeste, tan abierta al pasado como al porvenir. Desde entonces, claro está, se ha expandido una política de olvido deliberado que se dirige en primera línea contra la RDA, es decir, contra aquellos que hicieron posible la reunificación. Así sucedió con los debates por la denominación de las calles, en que se eliminaron los nombres socialistas en favor de los patronímicos

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p. 82) reminds us, there were successive revisions of the Encyclopaedia Sovietica, *with* and *without* the entry concerning him. The same historian, further on (*idem*, p. 83), refers to the position of social psychologist Peter Burger that "…ha sugerido que todos reescribimos constantemente nuestra biografia a la manera de la Enciclopedia Soviética.".

[24] Cf. Milan Kundera (2009, p. 9).

[25] See Luís Almeida Martins (2010, p. 24).

anteriores, a menudo decididamente antisocialistas; así sucedió con las estatuas y los monumentos socialistas que fueron retirados, y, finalmente, con la inenarrable discusión en torno de la demolición del Palacio de la República en favor de una reconstrucción del Palacio de los Hohenzollern. Aunque, en última instancia, no todos esos intentos de demolición tuvieron éxito, hay que recordar que tales maniobras no constituyen tan sólo una edición estilística del texto comunista de la ciudad. Más bien fueron pura estrategia de poder, una última erupción de la ideologia de la Guerra Fria, estrategia perseguida por medio de una política de los signos que, claro está, terminó volviéndose contra sus propios autores (Huyssen, 2002, pp. 196-197).

Also, in recent years (on 26 December 2007), Spain's parliament (*Congreso de los Diputados*) approved, by a narrow margin, a controversial "Law of Historical Memory" (la 52/2007), as it is commonly known, which, among other things, aimed to ban the display of symbols alluding to Francoism, as well as declaring all the criminal justice bodies set up by Franco illegal. After lively debates and a great deal of controversy, the draft law proposed by José Luís Zapatero's Socialist government (approved by the Council of Ministers on 28 July 2006) ended up with an amendment to Article 15, on the initiative of the left-wing parties Izquierda Uni-da (IU) and Iniciativa por Cataluña (ICV, Greens), which broadened its scope and, in addition to banning the display of symbols alluding to Francoism only in state buildings, as provided for in the initial proposal, has also come to cover all public administrations, even those based on private property.[26]

Meanwhile, in 2021, Pedro Sánchez's government approved the preliminary draft of the "Democratic Memory Law" (drafted by Carmen Calvo), which is more ambitious than the previous one - which was boycotted in practice by Rajoy's government, which didn't set aside a single euro for its effective implementation - by promoting the recognition of the victims of Francoism, outlawing the Francisco Franco Foundation and turning the so-called *Vale dos Caídos*[27] (Valley of the Fallen) into a civil cemetery, a kind of museum to contextualise the circumstances of its construction and its significance.

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[26] Another aspect of the law, which we consider very important, has made it possible to highlight the ways in which the control of memory is usually exercised by power. We are referring to that which made it possible to locate and exhume the Republican victims who "disappeared" during the Civil War (1936/39) and the decade of Francoist repression that followed, rehabilitating them: remember, by the way, that it took until 20 November 2002 for the Spanish Parliament to finally recognise, and condemn - as expected, also without unanimity - that the Civil War had begun through an illegitimate coup d'état against the Republican government in power.

[27] The *Vale dos Caídos*, an architectural complex located on the outskirts of Madrid where Spanish dictator Francisco Franco has been buried since his death in 1975, has already lost some of its significance with the exhumation and transfer of his remains in October 2019. The new draft law establishes two days for the recognition of the victims of the dictatorship and the Civil War: 31 October, for all victims, and 8 May specifically for exiles. Also, all court sentences handed down during the Civil War will be annulled; and apologising for Francoism will become an offence and fines will be established.

It's true that in modern times there have also been, without that "legal burden", periods of strong political and social changes (changes of political regime, revolutions, wars), with the resulting upheavals and moments of popular anger, all kinds of destruction in terms of monumental heritage, as happened after the emblematic fall of the Berlin Wall that generated changes in most of the Eastern European countries that were under the orbit of the former USSR– where thousands of statues and other works of art that reminded people of the communist regime were removed, broken, burnt or banned in the late 1980s[28]–, or, in more recent years, in Iraq with the "sad spectacle" of the removal or toppling of the effigies of the dictator Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 2003, with all the symbolic charge they often involve.

SOME EXAMPLES OF *ForDAMNATIVE APPROPRIATION* IN CONTEMPORARY ART

In a 1992 essay, the American art historian and critic Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, also co-editor of *October* magazine, considered Robert Rauschenberg's famous *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953) [see figure 3] to be the first inaugurating gesture and emblem of the postmodern appropriationist act[29]. For our part, we believe that Rauschenberg's gesture should be distinguished from current appropriationist practices, and we propose the concept of *fordamnative appropriation* to classify it, as well as other subsequent gestures by other artists who can invoke his example.

As is well known, Rauschenberg asked De Kooning for one of his drawings, and got it, with the explicit intention of turning it into *his own* work after erasing it and putting his own marks on it, rather than keeping it as a collector's work of art, which resulted in a monochrome, or almost. Rauschenberg himself left testimony of the steps of his procedure:

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[28] A contrasting attitude to that one, reminds us of Françoise Choay (2000, p. 96, own translation), "...of the Soviet revolutionaries who, after 1917, preserved intact the city-symbol of the power of the Tsars, St Petersburg and its palaces, where the Soviet people came to ritually parade in front of the testimonies of their history and the treasures accumulated by the sovereigns, founders of the nation".

[29] Cf. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh (1992). However, this is not the understanding of Brazilian sociologist Lymert Garcia dos Santos (2004, p. 34, own translation), for whom, following a subtle reasoning, "... when Rauschenberg erases a drawing by De Kooning (...) it is not a question of interfering with the image, but also, strictly speaking, of interfering with the work - the gesture is aimed at undoing it, not destroying or altering it, and it functions as a statement: for Rauschenberg, it is a question of declaring that it is necessary to find one's own path, while at the same time paying homage to and recognising all that this path owes to De Kooning's work."

Al principio no le gustó mucho la idea; pero la había comprendido perfectamente y, al cabo de un momento, aceptó. Sacó un cartapacio de sus dibujos y empezó a pasarles revista. Sacó uno, lo miró y dijo: "No, no voy a facilitarle las cosas. Debe ser algo que echaré en falta". Sacó entonces otro cartapacio, lo examinó y me dio finalmente un dibujo que me llevé a casa. No fue para nada fácil. El dibujo había sido hecho com una mina dura, pero también grasa, y tuve que trabajar duro en ello, utilizar todo tipo de gomas. Pero a fin de cuentas, funcionó verdaderamente bien, me gustaba el resultado. Me pareció una obra de arte totalmente legítima, obtenida a partir de un borrado. Así el problema estaba resuelto y no merecía la pena volver a empezar (Rauschenberg *apud* Hernández, 1996, p. 61).

Our position is closer to that of David Bachelor, who emphasises that this drawing by Rauschenberg, like other small works he made in the same year - *Untitled (Gold painting)* - presents the characteristics of a *palimpsest*, something very common in Egyptian examples of *damnatio memoriae*, as we mentioned earlier:

In both examples there is the feeling that there is something physically underlying or temporally prior to the finished work. Removal or concealment. Remoção ou encobrimento. Neither does it have to do with the *reduction* of Rodchenlo's painting, nor is it a simple cancellation of the painting; instead, here monochrome is the **corruption** of another work. A palimpsest. Not a tabula rasa. Neither singular, nor stripped down, nor clear, the palimpsests are always already marked by the world, by contingency. They're not beginnings or ends, they're continuations. They are never pure. They are always both less and more than what immediately precedes them. They are always provisional. And they are always unique. A palimpsest always seems to imply that, because it happened once, this concealment can happen again. It says: be careful; this surface is no safer than the previous one (Bachelor, 2006, p. 135, own translation).

Figure 3 - Robert Rauschenberg, *Erased De Kooning Drawing* (1953).

Source: http://wiki.brown.edu/confluence/display/mcm0750/I+Erased+de+Kooning

As we have already emphasised, when we deal with the subject of *damnatio memoriae*, its origins lie in a condemnation by "authority". We essentially address the political aspects related to the elimination of people in all kinds of records and representations, both in antiquity and in modern times. In the field of art, its application might not be so obvious at first glance, except, of course, in the case of those works (we've given some examples) directly related to people condemned to *damnatio*. But in fact, we can argue that during the counter-reformist period, through the action of the Inquisition, there were in fact cases of damning condemnations of *artistic works*[30], not of people, i.e. artists.

The best known case, of course, is the fresco *The Last Judgement* that Michelangelo painted in the Sistine Chapel. As is well known, when Giovanni Pietro Caraffa, former head of the Inquisition, became Pope Paul IV in 1555, he soon began a campaign, which turned violent, to bring the artist before the Holy Office, which did not happen due to the efforts of Secretary of State San Carlo Borromeo, who was an admirer of the artist. However, following the Council of Trent (1563) - which resulted in a hardening of doctrine and discipline - where a commission of cardinals was set up to resolve the problem, in 1564 Paul IV ordered "restorative interventions" to be carried out on the fresco. Daniele da Volterra, a pupil of Michelangelo's, was commissioned to do this and, in addition to other touch-ups, he covered the "shameful" parts with gauze, veils and cloths: those of the three hundred and fourteen figures, many of them painted by Michelangelo entirely naked. In fact, it is known that, before this intervention, some of them - such as that of St Caterina della Ruota - were destroyed with chisels before being redone.

After this, other interventions followed over the years: Pope Pius IV, still dissatisfied, ordered more clothes to be added, and after him Clement VIII wanted to destroy the fresco, which was only saved thanks to the intervention of the Academy of San Lucas. Pius V also ordered some bodies to be repainted: it was at this time that the

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[30] Before the Counter-Reformation, during the 15th and early 16th centuries, only one case is actually known in which official measures were taken against a painting considered "heretical": *The Assumption of the Virgin* by Francesco Botticini (now in the National Gallery in London), based on a poem by the Florentine Matteo Palmieri. Between 1485 and 1500, the ecclesiastical authorities ordered the painting to be covered up in a chapel in the church of San Pier Maggiore (Florence), where Palmieri was to be buried. The chapel was even banned.

painter El Greco offered to destroy Michelangelo's fresco and paint another in its place, "modesto, decente y no peor pintado que el otro" (Blunt, 1992, p. 127, note 32)[31].

Other cases are also known, such as that of Veronese (Paolo Caliari), who was condemned in July 1573 by the Holy Tribunal of the Inquisition, following an enquiry against him, to alter his painting *Scene in the House of Levi*, which was executed for the back wall of the refectory of the Basilica of St John and St Paul (replacing a painting by Titian, which burned down in a fire in 1571), and is currently in the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice. Veronese was accused by the inquisitors of having introduced certain details into the painting (a maid bleeding from the nose, dwarfs, a crazy person with a parrot, etc.) that are not mentioned in the original biblical story, and considered by them to be out of place in a religious painting [32]; Veronese still tried to argue, but his explanations (centred mainly on artistic grounds, as you might expect) weren't accepted, so he was ordered to make some changes, which he carried out promptly, solving the problem. As Blunt points out (1992, p.125),

> Es típico de los métodos de la Contrarreforma que en este caso la Inquisición quedara satisfecha con algunos cambios de detalle que, por outra parte, dejaron en el cuadro y en el sntimiento que de él se desprende, un carácter tan mundano como el que antes tenía, pero las réplicas de El Veronés son más instructivas todavía. Sus ideas eran enteramente renacentistas. Piensa en términos de belleza y no de verdad espiritual, su objeto era pintar un magnífico espectáculo histórico, no la ilustración de una historia religiosa. Esto se explica por el hecho de que la fase tridentina de la Contrarreforma afectó relativamente poco a Venecia en comparación con casi todo el resto de Italia.

The contemporary artists that we are going to analyse next did not make their work in obedience to an imperative from any "authority" - hence we propose the concept of *fordamnative appropriation* - but in any case they continue, or are in tune with, the

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[31] Blunt mentions that in 1762 Clement XIII ordered more clothes to be added; then, in 1936, there were rumours that Pius XI intended to continue the task. When the restoration of the vault of the Sistine Chapel was carried out at the end of the 1980s, controversy also erupted over the possibility of removing the spurious additions to the *Last Judgement*, with many arguing that this should not be done. At the time, Romeo De Maio (*apud* Minetti, 1989, p. 92, own translation), professor of Renaissance history at the University of Naples and a specialist in Michelangelo's work, gave the following opinion: "From a philological point of view (...) it seems to me anti-historical, criminal, to eliminate a testimony that we can undoubtedly consider a source of documentation relating to an event that lasted for centuries and became the most significant expression of counter-reformation culture." Correction: "Better said, of counter-reformist pedagogy".

[32] In this case, it could be said, the ecclesiastical authorities didn't just appeal to morality, but also made use of an artistic theory - the theory of *decorum* (or *convenevolezza*), first enunciated by Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci - adapting it for purposes other than those for which it had been created: it ceased to be just an element applied to the realistic representation of the outside world, relevant to *history* painting, in order to make it more convincing. It is now required that everything in a painting be appropriate to the scene depicted and the place for which it is intended (is not indifferent if it's for a church or a private palace). For an in-depth approach to the theory of *decorum*, see Rensselaer W. Lee (1967, pp. 34-41).

inaugural, irreverent gesture of the young Rauschenberg. What's more, we fully agree with Thierry de Duve (2008, p. 176), who believes that we have to make a distinction: "…a distinction I think we ought to make between works of art produced, shown and, as the case may be, destroyed as art, and works of art produced, shown and destroyed *in the name* of art".

Jake & Dinos Chapman

In 2003, the brothers Jake and Dinos Chapman produced a set of eight etchings in which, to the great scandal of many, they appropriated Goya's engravings from the series *Los Desastres de la Guerra* (1810-20), printed from the original plates, which they had meanwhile acquired for £25,000. The series, entitled *Insult to Injury*, was described by them as "...'Goya reworked and improved'" (Chapman apud Finger and Weidemann, 2011, p. 113).

In fact, it wasn't the first time they had been inspired by Goya's series, since in 1993 they had already used it to make small sculptures in which they explored the theme of death and torture present in the original etchings, in which the Spanish painter represented the horrors of war caused by the Napoleonic invasions. Except that, this time, they went further, transgressing certain more or less accepted limits by intervening directly on the very materiality of the engravings, adding strange elements by painting clown faces, monkey heads and dogs on the severed heads of the tortured.

But what was the reason behind the Chapmans' artistic gesture? Pure gratuitousness and a desire to cause scandal? Sociologist Lymert Garcia dos Santos, dismissing the latter hypothesis as a simplistic and lazy view on the part of critics, quotes a statement by Jake Chapman in an interview with the *Financial Times*:

> ...what makes Goya a passionate artist is, on the one hand, the intimate contradiction between the artistic influence exerted on him by the Enlightenment and, on the other, the violence committed against his people in the name of reason. It is often said that this work is a representation of the atrocious. In my eyes, Goya wanted above all to show how necessary violence is for reason. These engravings describe the mechanisms of this «enlightened morality» in which violence is an effective means of demonstrating the absolute necessity of an ethical framework (Chapman *apud* Santos, 2004, p. 32, own translation).

And proposes another explanation:

> By interfering in the series, the Chapmans would be doing nothing other than updating and exacerbating the contradiction between violence and reason already admirably exposed by Goya, reconfiguring the question posed at the beginning of the 19th century for the context of the beginning of the 21st century (Chapman *apud* Santos, 2004, pp. 32 e 34, own translation).

In fact, the sociologist believes that the Chapmans are doing nothing more than taking up again, through painting, a problem already pointed out by Heiner Müller in *Guerre sans bataille*: That of the laceration of Goya, who had to live through the contradiction between his admiration for the Enlightenment and the Revolution in France and the situation in his native Spain, monarchical and reactionary, after the invasion of an occupying army, with all that this entailed in terms of abuse and cruelty, senseless violence; where the peasants were the first to form the guerrilla warfare that fought progress, arrived in the form of terror, siding with their exploiters.

For his part, art historian Edward Lucie-Smith (2001, p. 267) saw in these works by British artists, realised under the fascination of Goya's Disasters, a foretaste of what he considered to be their most ambitious artistic project, dedicated to the theme of the Holocaust: the installation *Hell* (1997-2000)[33]. The one reproduced here is a "modernisation" of Goya's engraving no. 39, *Guerra, Grande hazaña! Con muertos!* - which shows three dead, mutilated men - and which had already been the subject of the brothers' well-known sculpture *Great Deeds Against the dead* (1994) [see figures 4 and 5], presented at the famous and controversial exhibition *Sensation – Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*.[34]

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[33] The installation was a kind of updated version of the representation of Hell by the German painter Hieronymus Bosch, as seen in the triptychs The Garden of Delights (Prado Museum, Madrid) and The Last Judgement (Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna). Exhibited at the White Cube Gallery in London, it consisted of a set of nine large glass vitrines, arranged in such a way as to form the Nazi symbol of the swastika, inside which you could see models of landscape scenes, all different, with various constructions and buildings; and all of them served as a stage for a multitude of miniature human figures (at least a few thousand), many of them wearing Nazi uniforms, indulging in every kind of extreme act of violence and cruelty imaginable. In the meantime, living up to its title in an act of autophagy, the installation belonging to Charles Saatchi's collection burned down during the fire at the Momart Warehouse on 24 May 2004. However, as they announced right at the time of the incident, the brothers would produce a new, reactualised installation: this is how *Fucking Hell* (2008) came about, which was presented for the first time at the solo exhibition *IF Hitler Had Been a Hippy How Happy Would We Be*, held once again at the White Gallery.

[34] The title was a conscious reference to the previous exhibition of British art *Brilliant!*, at the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis, and was, in a way, a manifesto for the so-called Young British Artists (YBA) who emerged in the late 1980s/early 1990s and who, after circulating through exhibitions in alternative venues and galleries in London, were taken by the controversial multimillionaire and collector Charles Saatchi to the prestigious Royal Academy of Arts. The exhibition, made up of more than 120 works by young British artists belonging to the aforementioned collection, from which it was a selection, opened in 1997 in London, and then shown in New York and Berlin, was shrouded in controversy from the outset, due to the disturbing nature of the themes addressed by artists such as Marcus Harvey, Chris Ofili or the Chapman brothers, among others.

Figure 4 - Jake & Dinos Chapman, *Insult to Injury* (2003). Goya's etching reworked.
Figure 5 - Jake & Dinos Chapman, *Great Deeds Against the dead* (1994). Various materials with plinth.

Sources: Figure 4 in (Finger e Weidemann, 2011); figure 5 in (*ENCOUNTERS*, 2000).

Precisely by evoking three other well-known works by the brothers, which were exhibited together with *Great Deeds Against the dead* in *Sensation...*, such as the *Tragic Anatomies* installation, Santos extends his argumentation, adding another explanatory reason for the de-sacralising act of a masterpiece of art history, apparently equivalent to the anti-social behaviour of the Joker character in Tim Burton's *Batman* (1989):

> As if Goya's engravings were a rare and precious genome, whose singularities and virtualities stimulate the temptation of reinvention, i.e. a new *design*, capable of promoting a new update. Transgenic art par excellence, not only in the visible results, but especially in the operative procedures, the work of the English leads us to ask whether the recombination of a masterpiece of art is not a demonstration of the meaning of the recombination of species of plants, animals and even human bodies, understood by the artists as masterpieces of evolution, and which now become amenable to recreation (Santos, 2004. p. 36, own translation)[35].

Lymert Garcia dos Santos' argument ends up being related to Edward Lucie-Smith's position - which has the insistence of the brothers' next act in its favour - if we remember the genetic and other sinister experiments carried out by Nazi doctors. And in 2008, the brothers repeated the "fun" of a fordamnative approach, this time with a series of watercolours of Adolf Hitler, painted between 1914 and 1918. Perhaps the latter's watercolours don't really deserve the same consideration as Goya's etchings (in terms of artistic quality, there is no comparison), but they have caused controversy again because they can be considered historical documents. It was a series of eleven watercolours of landscapes that the brothers had bought at an auction, to which they later added dead soldiers, destroyed bridges, rainbows and colourful geometric shapes. The series, entitled *March of The Banal*, was sold during the 35th edition of the International Contemporary Art Fair in Paris (FIAC) in October 2008, through the British gallery White Cube, for the modest sum of 815,000 euros, to buyers who preferred to remain anonymous.

Even though the author of the intervened watercolours is who he is, the critical reactions came immediately. In fact, the issue is not as simple as it seems. The issue is that, as was already the case with Goya's engravings, which are of inestimably greater artistic value, the mere fact that they acquired them does not automatically give them the right to intervene in them, since they are still subject to intellectual or moral rights, which means that the Chapmans, like any other artists who decide to take the same attitude, can be brought to justice; all that is needed is for any descendant of the material author of the works, or their executor, to decide to take action. Furthermore, as art critic Jean-Max Colard argued at the time in *Le Monde*, what the Chapmans did could be considered "irreversible make-up of a historical archive" and, going further, he criticised them for "*cool* revisionism", considering that "...it won't be long before the usual detractors of contemporary art go public once again to denounce the nullity of today's art." (Colard *apud* AG., 2008, outubro 27, own translation).

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[35] On the prints in the *Insult to Injury* series, especially to see more examples than the one presented here, see also the article by Nancy Hightower (2012, March 12).

Figures 6 and 7 - Jake & Dinos Chapman, watercolours from the series *March ofThe Banal*, exhibition *If Hitler Had Been a Hippy How Happy Would We Be* (2008).

Source: https://theoddmentemporium.tumblr.com/post/29271527435/if-hitler-had-been-a-hippy-how-happy-would-we-be

Before that, between May and July of the same year, the brothers had held a solo exhibition at the White Cube gallery in London, entitled *If Hitler Had Been a Hippy How Happy Would We Be*, which was divided into three parts. One of them, from which the title was derived, displayed 20 watercolours of Hitler that the Chapmans bought for £115,000, and then reworked by adding rainbows [see figures 6 and 7], flowers and other elements, then putting them up for sale for £685,000: we don't know if any of them became part of the *March of The Banal series*. The other two parts were made up of the installation *Fucking Hell* (2008) and a series of 17 paintings entitled *One Day You Will No Longer Be Loved*, of portraits from the 18th and 19th centuries, which were in poor condition and which the artists appropriated, reworking them by incorporating (horrible and somewhat macabre) deformations into the faces [see figure 8].

After all, isn't it legitimate, we ask ourselves, to consider the act of erasing, of (re)inscribing, of erasing directly on an original work of art to be reprehensible, because it presupposes opening up a (another) "frontier" that the artist must avoid?: the one that allows us to consider that the ends justify the means.

Figure 8 - Jake & Dinos Chapman, *One Day You Will No Longer Be Loved III* (2008). Oil on canvas.

Source: http://www.artknowledgenews.com/?lang=en&limit=50&limitstart=7350&q=New+Work

Raphaël Denis

In 2008 (10 January/18 February), French photographer Raphaël Denis (Saint-Cloud, 1979) presented the exhibition *Les Bâillons de la Bienséance. Portraits d'une Basse-Cour* at the Paris gallery Kamchatka, comprising several series - *Les Aïeux*, *À force de ressusciter*, *Les poules ont la vie dure* - of photographs made from old glass negatives bought from antique shops, almost all of which were portraits from the early 19th century, which he published in various formats (25 x 19 cm; 53 x 34 cm; 60 x 90 cm; 120 x 85 cm) and varied print runs.

It is therefore an appropriation of pre-existing images because, in reality, Denis created his photographs after the "taking the view", through the various states to which he subjected each negative, until he obtained *his* definitive black-and-white images. It turns out that he didn't intend to retain any nostalgic traces, and so he took the negatives and subjected his material to the greatest outrages, striking and scarifying the gelatine, scribbling on it, cancelling parts of the figures [see figures 9, 10 and 12], or spitting on them, for example; already in print, he tore them up, pricked them, pierced them, or went even further, as in the photo *Deux pas en arrière* [see figure 11]:

> De cette image d'un jeune couple tranquille, Raphaël Denis fait une scène d'horreur: elle a la gorge perforée par un projectile, l'impact sur l'image dessine un soleil noir rayonnant, du sang noir a coulé partout, des humeurs blanches ont tout éclaboussé (Rouges, 2008, s.p.).

Figure 9 – Raphaël Denis, *Pieuvre aux dents d'émail* (2007). Edited in three formats.
Figure 10 – Raphaël Denis, *Pas Bouger* (2006). Edition of 12 copies, 60 x 90 cm.

Source: http://lunettesrouges.blog.lemonde.fr/?s=Raphael+Denis

Aiming to rival painting, or better said, to play off the rivalry between the two arts, Denis thus subjects photographs - intimate pictures from family albums, portraits of mundane women, bourgeois or apparatus portraits, etc. –, to a real *damnatio* operation; hence the title of the article we're quoting, published on the arts blog of *Le Monde* newspaper on 14 January 2008. That's what happens, very clearly, in the photo *Madame la Marquise* [see figure 12], where the one who was a general covered in medals is completely "annihilated". In all the other photos, as in this one, also around the characters

who are disfigured and stripped to a greater or lesser extent of their *décor*, everything is decomposed, decrepit, creating a tension between them and the surrounding atmosphere, as if to say that the world to which they once belonged - in which the new medium had pretensions to equal painting - has definitively collapsed.

Finally, we will also add that the aforementioned exhibition caused something of a stir, and Denis was labelled a "vandal", an "iconoclast" and a "memory eradicator". On the blog we've mentioned, some of the criticisms were violent, but worse still, the photographer reacted badly and felt entitled to respond by insulting those who criticised him.

Figure 11 – Raphaël Denis, *Deux pas en arrière* (2006). Ed. of 12 copies, 60 x 90 cm.
Figure 12– **Raphaël Denis**, *Madame la Marquise* (2007).

**Source**: http://lunettesrouges.blog.lemonde.fr/?s=Raphael+Denis

José Maçãs de Carvalho

Portuguese artist José Maçãs de Carvalho (Anadia, 1960), in a solo exhibition held in 2007/2008 at Solar, Galeria de Arte Cinemática (Vila do Conde, Portugal) - 9 November 2007/12 January 2008 - presented a series of video installations generically entitled *Video killed the painting stars*, all dating from 2007, in which he took as his starting point, in his own words,

> ...the idea that there is an image-destroying drive in us, substantiated by countless examples throughout human history: from Jesus driving the peddlers out of the temple, through Lutheran iconoclasm or the explosion of Afghan Buddhas to Mr Bean erasing Whistler's mother's face. The author invested himself with this destructive drive and chose significant works from the visual culture of our time. To do this, he used the classification of the various types of iconoclasts referred to by Bruno Latour in *"What is iconoclash? Or is there a world beyond the image wars?"* (Carvalho, 2007, s. p., own translation).

Of the installations presented at the exhibition, we will mention only two of them in this article; the ones that seemed the most successful to us, and also the ones that most directly relate to the theme discussed here. In any case, these are works in which José Maçãs de Carvalho did not, fortunately, use original works of art to carry out his "creative"/iconoclastic actions. In any case, they offer viewers a veritable catalogue of damaging techniques, at least *in re* (in spirit), which could be used, if one so wished and had the opportunity, to destroy or modify them in order to create very different ones.

Figures 13, 14 e 15 - José Maçãs de Carvalho, *Video killed the painting stars #8 (newton)*, 2007. Three images of damnative action.
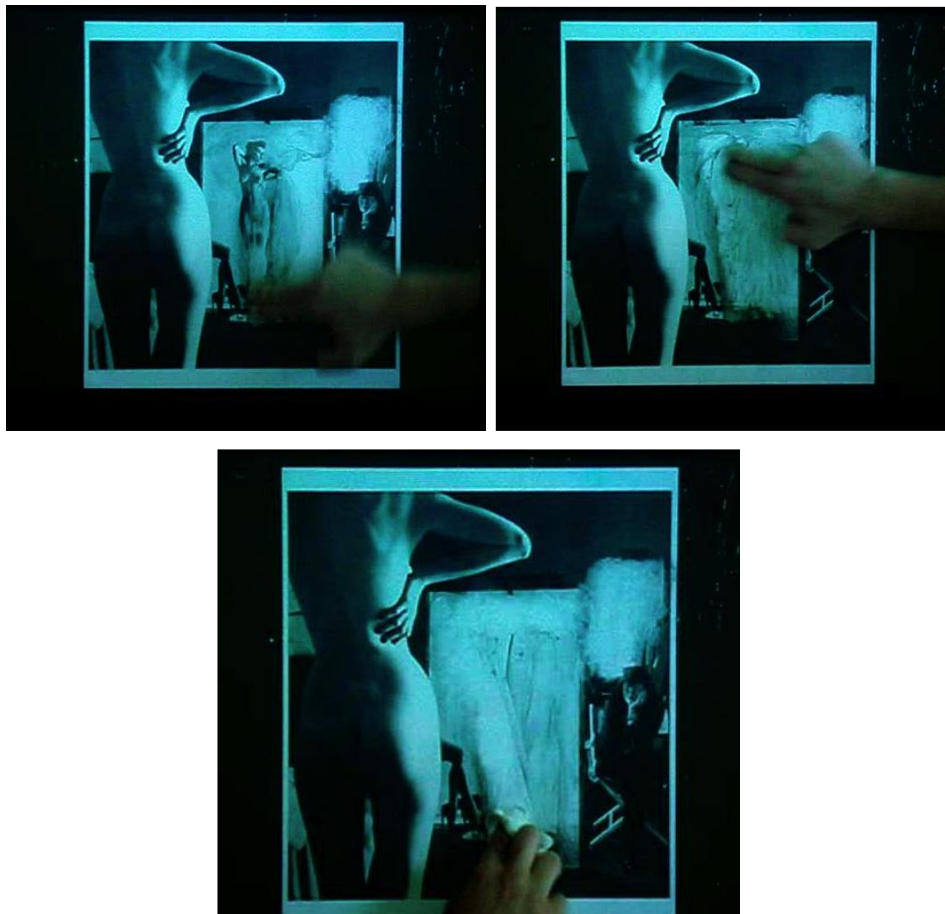
Source: Photographs by Carlos Trindade.

In the installation entitled *Video killed the painting stars #8 (newton)*, of which we present three images belonging to different successive stages of the Portuguese artist's gestural action, carried out very methodically with some solvent substance on a copy of a photographic image [see figures 13, 14 and 15], it is demonstrated how one could easily "erase", literally - the video ends, in fact, with the complete annihilation of the image - a well-known photo by the German (naturalised Australian) fashion photographer Helmut Newton.

The other installation we have chosen as an example, entitled *Video killed the painting stars #9 (caravaggio)*, is much more violent, as the Portuguese artist unleashes an authentic and fierce destructive fury on a copy of a well-known painting by Caravaggio (Michelangelo Merisi), using the most varied utensils (knives, nails and hammers, screwdrivers, spray, etc.) in successive phases [see figures 16 to 19]. The end result is certainly quite provocative, highlighting what could happen to the original painting, either by censoring its symbolic value, or by inscribing new meanings on it, or quite simply by refusing to accept the role of (any) image as a mediator of knowledge.

Figures 16, 17, 18 e 19 - José Maçãs de Carvalho, *Video killed the painting stars #9 (caravaggio)*, 2007. Series of images of the damnative action.

Source: Photographs by Carlos Trindade.

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