



***Women, Art, and the Periphery &
Latin American Video Art in the VIVO
Media Arts Centre Archives***

Gendered Violence: Responses and Remediation

A Guide for Postsecondary Education

**VIVO Media Arts Centre – Archive/Counter-Archive
Educational Guide**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview	1
Recommended Levels of Study	3
Subject Areas	3
Themes	3
About the Guide	3
About VIVO Media Arts Centre and the Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive	4
About Archive/Counter-Archive	4
About the Collection: Women, Art and the Periphery (adapted from statement by Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda)	5
Curated Films for Classroom Viewing	6
<i>El Padre Mío (My Father) (Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld, 1985)</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento (A mile of crosses on the pavement) (Lotty Rosenfeld, 1979)</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Popsicles (Gloria Camiruaga, 1982 USA/1984 Chile)</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Autocríticas (Self-critics) (Marcela Serrano, 1980)</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Acá Nada: Acá Elsewhere (Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Sarah Shamash and Osvaldo Ramírez 2013)</i>	<i>8</i>
A Living Archive of Diaspora: Women's Bodies as Sites of Resistance – Curatorial Essay by Roya Akbari	9
Discussion Questions	13
References and Further Reading	14
Guide Credits	15



Recommended Study Levels Undergraduate Students, Graduate Students

Subject Areas Film Studies; Media Studies; Women and Film; Sexuality Studies; Diaspora Studies; Latin American Studies; Canadian Studies

Themes Chilean Video Art; Latin American Video Art; Experimental Video; Feminist Video Art; Anti-Capitalism and Anti-Fascism; Embodiment; Resistance; Diaspora; Gendered Violence; Female Desire; Sexuality

About the Guide

This educational guide activates **one of three archival collections** held at **VIVO Media Arts Centre's** Crista Dahl Media Library that focus on the subject of **gendered violence** as it was discussed, debated, and exhibited in and around Vancouver in the 1980s. Although united by a common theme, these collections span a variety of topics: feminist porn wars and resistance to censorship, activist video responses to the Pinochet dictatorship, and the 1989 In Visible Colours film and media festival which aimed to foreground discussions of settler colonialism, decolonization, Indigeneity, and solidarity.

Taken together, these three collections generate intersectional and multigenerational dialogue about gendered violence; as such, the films and videos in this archive are modes of creative resistance against several forms of subordination and oppression. In partnership with VIVO, the **Archive/Counter-Archive** project has developed three separate educational guides that engage with each collection as part of its Gendered Violence: Responses and Remediation Case Study. **These guides are available digitally and for free at counterarchive.ca**

This specific guide centres on **Women, Art & the Periphery (WAP)**, a series of multimedia events conceived and curated by artist and academic Sara Diamond in 1987 which featured contemporary art by Chilean women, and draws from the 2023 revisitation of WAP, **Latin American Video Art in the VIVO Media Arts Archives**, curated by media artist and cultural historian Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda. Taking the documentation of *Women, Art and the Periphery* as a point of departure, this recent event featured a screening and library showcase of a selection of Latin American video, audio, and archival documentation from the Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive (CDMLA) at VIVO to celebrate the launch of the edited volume *Encounters in Video Art in Latin America* (eds. Elena Shtromberg and Glenn Phillips, 2023).

This guide includes a curatorial essay by Roya Akbari, a list of 5 videos suggested for classroom viewing, synopses, and discussion questions oriented toward a range of thematic areas. We recommend previewing the works before you screen them for your students and reading the contextualizing information provided in this guide.

Please note that some of the works involve nudity and sexual innuendos.



About VIVO Media Arts Centre and the Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive

VIVO Media Arts Centre is located on the unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səílłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) First Nations. Incorporated as Satellite Video Exchange Society, VIVO is a steward of critical history and an agent for emergent experimental media arts practices. Our programs foster formal and critical approaches to media arts and reflect the diversity of contemporary technologies and communities that coalesce around new forms of knowledge and creativity.

The Crista Dahl Media Library & Archive (CDMLA) at VIVO stewards a significant repository of videotapes by artists and independent producers. Spanning over 50 years of production, its nearly 8000 media works reflect the complexity of video art history. <http://archive.vivomediaarts.com/>

This guide draws on the Satellite Video Exchange Society fonds (SVES) at The Crista Dahl Media CDMLA. The fonds holds files related to the *Women, Art and the Periphery* (1987) and documentation of the *Latin American Video Art in the VIVO Media Arts Archives event* (2023).

More at: archive.vivomediaarts.com

About Archive/Counter-Archive

Archive/Counter-Archive (A/CA): Activating Canada's Moving Image Heritage is a seven-year research creation project led by Janine Marchessault and funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Grant. Comprising four universities, numerous community partners, memory institutions, and policy advocates, the project is dedicated to activating and remediating audiovisual heritage created by Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, Inuit), Black communities and People of Colour, women, LGBT2Q+ and immigrant communities, and to fostering a community and network dedicated to creating best practices and cultural policies. As part of the project, Archive/Counter-Archive has produced a number of open-access educational guides which are available for free on its website: counterarchive.ca



About the Collection: Women, Art and the Periphery (adapted from statement by Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda)

Women, Art and the Periphery (WAP) was a series of multimedia events featuring the work of Chilean women artists who played an active role in the unofficial culture developed in Chile after Augusto Pinochet's military takeover in 1973. As Sepúlveda (2023) writes, "[t]he hostile military environment that destroyed all institutions paradoxically 'opened up a space for the marginal,' and both women and queer artists found more space for expression" (126). These artists developed an audiovisual language to challenge media representations of femininity while simultaneously re-inscribing marginalized bodies as sites of violence and political potential in the Chilean context.

Organized by Sara Diamond and Karen Knights at Video In (now VIVO Media Arts) in collaboration with Donna Clark from the Women in Focus Society in Vancouver in 1987, WAP was one of the earliest all-women shows that included a unique program of videos produced by Latin American artists, now fully restored and accessible at VIVO Media Arts (Sepúlveda 2023, 110-133). WAP brought international attention to the first generation of Chilean video artists, including Lotty Rosenfeld, Daniela Eltit, Gloria Camiruaga, Patricia Navarro, Tatiana Gaviola, Soledad Fariña, Magali Meneses, Sybil Brintrup, Marcela Serrano, and Sandra Quilaqueo.

The artistic and political interventions featured in

the exhibition influenced and have had a lasting impact on the local art, literary, and leftist scenes in Vancouver (Verjee 2019, 420). Their activism against Pinochet especially resonated with anti-colonial movements across Turtle Island, and more recent generations of Latin-American Canadian artists have carried forward the feminist, anti-fascist, and anti-colonial framework of *Women, Art and the Periphery* and Chilean women's activism of the 1980s.

"With these beautiful but imperfect videos, we want to present the trajectory of this type of art in our country. First, they show the historical development of video as an art form in Chile; secondly, they capture the current Chilean scenes in duplicating images of a country in which bodies are constantly harassed" (Daniela Eltit 1987).





Curated Films and Videos for Classroom Viewing

Five short films and videos curated by Roya Akbari for classroom screening.

Total run time: 29 minutes

The films and videos are available to stream via the Canadian streaming and distribution platform [VUCAVU](#) or by contacting [VIVO Media Arts Centre](#)



***El Padre Mío (My Father)* (Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld, 1985)**

Length: 9:00min.

Genre: Documentary

Synopsis: Reflecting upon power, madness, and poverty, this tape superimposes three matrix scenes: images of a rambling man from Santiago; footage from a Chilean TV program featuring Pinochet commemorating the military coup; and images of a community from the periphery of Santiago during a cultural and artistic gathering.



***Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento (A mile of crosses on the pavement)* (Lotty Rosenfeld, 1979)**

Length: 4:43min

Genre: Video performance

Synopsis: Rosenfeld paints white lines over the dividing lines of Avenida Manquehue in Santiago. Hours later, Rosenfeld screens her actions at the same site.



***Popsicles* (Gloria Camiruaga, 1982 USA/1984 Chile)**

Length: 4:47min

Genre: Experimental

Synopsis: A succession of tight shots of Camiruaga's daughters licking and enjoying popsicles that encase toy soldiers while they recite the Hail Mary.





Autocríticas (Self-critics) (Marcela Serrano, 1980)

Length: 4:04min

Genre: Video Performance

Synopsis: Serrano paints a nude female body through visual effects, positing it as a site of intervention and inscription.



Acá Nada: Acá Elsewhere (Gabriela Aceves Sepúlveda, Sarah Shamash and Osvaldo Ramírez 2013)

Length: 5:54min

Genre: Video Performance

Synopsis: An audiovisual portrait of aka art collective. The video is inspired by aka's interest in interrogating how subjectivities, political stances, and modes of social engagement formed elsewhere morph, adapt, and contribute to the artists' positioning within the local, cultural landscape of Vancouver.





Curatorial Essay: A Living Archive of Diaspora: Women's Bodies as Sites of Resistance by Roya Akbari

"In our very flesh, (r)evolution works out the clash of cultures"
– Gloria Anzaldúa

According to Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), the borderland is a site of multiple oppressions, struggle, alienation, and hybrid identity. It is a liminal space, a site of in-between-ness, a perpetual state of non-belonging. Borderlands are geographical but also metaphorical. They are places where women of colour's embodied experiences, along with their shared struggle toward liberation, become the basis for resistance to and refusal of the multiple systems of power and oppression that intersect with capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and white supremacy (Anzaldúa 1987). Today, as social movements have proliferated, such an intersectional analysis has become commonplace. It has been felt, for instance, in contemporary Chilean feminist movements such as *Un violador en tu camino* ("A rapist in your path") which denounced rape culture and patriarchy and found echoes around the world. Already in the 1980s, however, *Women, Art & the Periphery* (WAP) employed an intersectional framework to deliver anti-fascist and anti-capitalist feminist messages.

In addition to being revolutionarily intersectional, WAP also documented women Chilean artists who explored the potential of yet another revolutionary tool, video, to challenge the male-dominated artworld as well as the traditional archive (Shtromberg and Philips 2023, 8). As Sepúlveda (2023) writes, these artists "developed an audio-visual language to challenge stereotypical gender representations in media while simultaneously reinscribing the female body as both a site of violence and political articulation as a response to military dictatorships" (111).

In this curatorial essay, I approach *Women, Art and the Periphery & Latin American Video Art* through the embodied experiences of Chilean artist-activist women in the 1980s during the time of Pinochet's military dictatorship and those of a new generation of Latin American artists located on Coast Salish territory (Vancouver). A series of underlying related themes runs through the five short videos featured in this guide: women's bodies as sites of resistance, gendered and military violence imposed on women's bodies and the toll that Chile's hostile environment took on these bodies, transgressing the boundaries of normative female desire, and diasporic identities.

El padre mío (My Father, 1985) by Diamela Eltit and Lotty Rosenfeld is a testament to the deleterious effects of Augusto Pinochet's oppressive regime on the everyday lives of poor Chileans, and the ways in which the dictatorship curtails women's access to healthcare, education, and economic opportunities. The video includes televised footage of Pinochet delivering a speech to commemorate the military coup of September 11, 1973, that deposed the democratically elected president Salvador Allende and paved the way for the dictator's near 17-year rule. These clips are overlaid with various images: crowds on the street, an eight-year-old girl, Marisol Díaz,





testifying about her father's abuse, a group of women talking, an old man in a field, a child spray-painting the contour of a teen leaning against a wall, and a man inhaling a substance from a brown paper bag.



In contrast to the documentary style of *El padre mío*, Lotty Rosenfeld's 1979 ephemeral intervention, *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* (A mile of crosses on the pavement), is an experimental response to the coup. In this work, Rosenfeld lays out strips of white fabric perpendicularly across white dotted lines dividing lanes of traffic along Santiago's Avenida Manquehue; she is then seen applying adhesive to the two ends of the fabric which turns the traffic lines into crosses. This symbol could variously invoke the Christian cross or a plus sign—denoting “more,” which became part of an anti-fascist slogan in Chile, as in “no more torture,” “no more dictatorship.”

Rosenfeld's body intervenes in public space and rejects the obedience that the sign commands. She states: “a mile of crosses on the pavement is for me a way of presenting our bodies violating the functional inertia of their paths” (Rosenfeld). Rosenfeld documents the intervention on videotape and subsequently projects the documentation on a screen at the same location—an act which is shown

in the video itself. “By introducing the screen on the site, Rosenfeld investigates video's potential as an intervening agent rather than just as a recording device,” notes Gabriela Sepúlveda (2023, 126). Rosenfeld later reenacted this ephemeral intervention in front of the Vancouver Art Gallery in 1987 and used the image of the crosses/plus signs in many of her other videos with an accompanying audio track repeating the single word “no.” Rosenfeld's act of refusal thus mobilizes a new audio-visual language that disrupts the status quo and centres her body as a site of resistance.





Gloria Camiruaga's *Popsicles* (1982-84) also uses the experimental genre to respond to the military regime, this time through the depiction of erotic acts. As Sepúlveda (2023) explains, the video consists of "tight shots of Camiruaga's daughters licking and enjoying popsicles that encase toy soldiers while they recite the Hail Mary" (127). Female sexuality and desire are used to critique the phallogentric order of the military regime and the oppressive nature of religious institutions. Through this juxtaposition of images, Camiruaga addresses the lack of visibility of a woman who "desires life, light, truth, and solidarity, but who instead sees and receives death and fear" (Sepúlveda 2023, 127). This transgressive artist considered female sexuality and youth eroticism as a refusal of all that is "destruction and death" and as a form of resistance in the face of political repression.

Autocriticas (1980, Self-critics) by Marcela Serrano, too, encourages female sexual agency through her performative practice of painting a nude female body. In the video, the body itself becomes the canvas on which to paint, as the artist is seen covering her body with white paint. The video ends with the camera zooming out and focusing on the female body fully painted. This refusal of the male-dominated art world, in turn, becomes a liberatory practice as Serrano positions the female body as a site of intervention against patriarchal structures and pushes for a shift in the representation of female iconographies.

Other videos which were showcased during WAP in 1987 and are part of VIVO's rich archive (although not included in this guide), also centre the female body as a site of potential, transgression, and violence, as Sepúlveda highlights in a statement delivered during the 2023 revisit of WAP, *Latin American Video Art in the VIVO Media Arts Archives*:



In *Zona del dolor I* (1980; Zone of pain I), for example, Diamela Eltit cuts and burns herself before going to a brothel; there, she videorecords herself reading parts of her novel and washing the floor as images of herself are projected onto the walls. In *Yo No Tengo Miedo a Nada* (I am not afraid of anything, 1984), artist Tatiana Gaviola videotapes a woman repeating the phrase: "I am not afraid of anything." In *La Gallina Ciega* (The Blind Chicken, 1987), Patricia Navarro depicts a blindfolded woman haunted by ghosts as she walks, accompanied by laments and cries by someone being tortured. In *Topología I* (Topology I, 1983), Soledad Fariña shows tight shots of a woman shaving her armpit as a symbol of the social expectations put on the female body, signaling violence and censorship (Sepúlveda, 2023).



Acá Nada: Acá Elsewhere (2013), a more contemporary work, follows the trajectory of Latin American diasporic bodies in the present Canadian context. The video gathers a number of Latin American artists living and working in Coast Salish territory (Vancouver) to discuss their work, as well as their experiences of exile, isolation, and community building. As the title suggests, *Acá Nada* refers to a name given to the northern part of the American continent by Iberian explorers. This history of the naming of so-called Canada and its subsequent colonization by England and France resonates with the anti-colonial perspective of the Latin American artists featured in the video. Still, the body remains present in this work; the distortion of the map alludes to the relation between bodies and land, and bodies crossing borders. Indigenous peoples across the Americas resist the borders of nation-states and diasporic bodies cross borders to find refuge/asylum.



Each of the five videos in this program presents borderlands and bodies as sites of resistance. *El padre mío* features marginalized people who were most negatively affected by Pinochet's military violence. Rosenfeld's *Una milla de cruces sobre el pavimento* is an act of refusal and resistance that crosses borders. Camiruaga's *Popsicles* transgresses the border of forbidden female sexual desire while Serrano's *Autocríticas* blurs the boundary between subject and object, between artist and artwork, private and public. *Acá Nada: Acá Elsewhere* presents a geographical, more literal manifestation of the borderlands but is also lyrical in its evocation of the fluidity of the artists' bodies that travel across time and space and the depiction of their subjectivity in relation to the local cultural landscape of Vancouver.





Discussion Questions

1. Diana Eltit writes: *“With these beautiful but imperfect videos, we want to present the trajectory of this type of art in our country. First, they show the historical development of video as an art form in Chile.”*

- What is video art? When did it originate? How would you define it?
- What is the relationship between video art and feminism? How did Chilean women use new portable video technology to “transgress dominant narratives about technology and gender”? (Shtromberg and Phillips 2023, 8)
- More broadly, how and why has video been embraced by underrepresented individuals and groups? What avenues does video art open as opposed to more traditional forms of art (painting, film, sculpture, photography etc.)?
- In what ways are the videos imperfect? Is that a good or a bad thing?



2. Eltit also states that these videos capture *“the... Chilean scenes in duplicating images of a country in which bodies are constantly harassed.”*

- Shifting from thinking about identity to political and cultural frameworks, how did video enable the creation of a countercultural and counter-political space in defiance of the Pinochet dictatorship?
- Bearing in mind their historical context, what images of Chile and of activism do these videos convey?
- How do these videos question authority and power? How can the strategies, techniques, and aesthetics used by the artists in the selected videos be employed in current anti-fascist struggles?





3. **Roya Akbari proposes that the videos included in her curated selection all foreground bodies—women’s bodies in particular—as sites of resistance, while engaging with diasporic narratives and histories.**

- a) How do these various women artists mobilize video and performance art to do so? What is the role of performance in these works?
- b) Can you think of similar contemporary examples of works by women or LGBTQ2+ artists of colour / diasporic artists?





References and Further Reading

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