

Emanuel Rodriguez
Chaves
darkroom/The
Assassination of Viviana
Gallardo

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**CREATIVE
VICTORIA**



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Emanuel
Rodriguez Chaves
darkroom/The
Assassination of
Viviana Gallardo
06.06.18—30.06.18

1.

A body, plundered.

The arch of your back a catacomb,
my spine interred beneath yours.

Something has been snatched from
us, in a shuddering, sickening way.

I look up at the clouds, slick like
oysters. You, unstarling, gaze down at
the glistening asphalt.

2.

*In Dickens' Bleak House the case of the
estate of Jarndyce and Jarndyce was
shrouded in such relentless, suffocating
and unnecessary bureaucracy, that
generation after generation of those
eligible to inherit died before the case
could be resolved.*

3.

One event leaks into another in a sprawling, confounding mess. It is impossible to make any logical deduction of the original chronology.

Visiting what was left of her: no longer a discrete and autonomous entity – riddled with fissures, the shock of gazing at what was once whole. Now porous.

Something crept in, to join the shock and torment of loss.

Sitting sharply upright at a lacquered pew. Dwarfed by the cavernous body of the courtroom; the cavernous body of the legal administration.

A projector screen unfolds with a violent snap.

Section 6.2: Fig A.

Gaze to the right of the scene before you.

Section 8.5: Fig C.

A detail overlooked by the defence.

I had never thought myself to be a particularly squeamish individual. It was not the carnage of the actual event that unnerved me, but the photographs. Delicate capillaries that had once fanned a crimson blush across pallid skin. Downy hair that lines the belly, a slight furrow in the brow. The tremulous pulse of a swallowing throat. The searing heat of limbs that encase one another.

The camera becomes a ruthless mechanism, complicit in paralysing its subject through the cold facticity of its lens. What was once a recognizable corporeal form, is now simply flesh rendered in a myriad of dull tones. We could be perusing a butcher's wares. It's odd, when a body deviates from its natural skeletal composition; it scarcely resembles a body at all.

4.

Wading through reams of coroners' notes. Aloof sentences rendering all details of the accident into a sparse skeleton of empirical data.

I remember directly after the accident, the image that would plague me: inching onto television screens, pixel by low resolution pixel. Sitting in a dingy waiting room; the news begins to blare. Assaulted with the image of steel and glass wrought into impossible contortions on the tarmac.

Mobile phones have since become ubiquitous and enable a new frenzy of information. Blue light contracts the muscles; the eyes recoil, aching from its frigid glow.

Images etch themselves into retinas: yet they are simultaneously evasive, as the brain grapples with the impossibility of processing material *en masse*. The sheer volume induces an anxiety that almost borders on a physical sensation of illness. Hours pass without sleep. Bound in a loveless embrace with this screen, the desire to remain entrenched in this crypt of images is overwhelming, but at the same time I am compelled to leave: my vision swims with a kind of optic hysteria...

5.

*Information builds up like plaque on teeth;
stalagmites that stretch upwards like the steeples of
Chartre Cathedral. A fragile new Tower of Babel.*

*Sometimes, when your eyes burn and sizzle, filled to
the brim with metadata, I imagine stretching out my
arm to topple these insistent structures.*

Scrolling through report after report. Pages so
laden with esoteric jargon, the true nature of
the event remained almost entirely
obfuscated.

*Anterior cross section partially severed. Right femur
and acetabulum crushed. Haemorrhage of the left
region of the hippocampus.*

Her body, the skin and flesh I knew so well,
had been obliterated by this report. Wading
through this archival material that left no
room for *her*, it was as if she had died a second
death.

6.

Language acts out all that is asked of it, images too, readily fulfil their intended function. But what is that function? A photograph of a bloodied shirt, bejewelled with gravel and the debris of the dilapidated car; what does this tell us? Photographs may be documents but here, in this archive, they are not stretched to their limits, they merely accommodate the 'irrefutable' facts of the past.

7.

*Later at night- it could be the same night, or one night
next year; or perhaps two years ago.*

An intersection overgrown with moss; pavement
riddled with cracks. To the left of one road, the
land heaves into a perilously steep ravine.

I have returned in the hours before dawn.
Steeped in a claustrophobic fog, and lit only
by the light of a waning moon, trees leap from
the shadows ominously like phantasmagorical
figures.

I have returned to this place at the same time,
once a year, since the accident took place.

Bones compounded to rubble, the body
rendered a fleshy pulp

8.

For a long time, I had thought of this forensic archive as a tomb, a history too far removed to grasp. Information left intact – waiting – secluded from the public. But time passes and facts muddle, a polyphony of histories has been written about the accident, in which details wander, fluctuate and converge until it feels I am reading utter fiction. Now I chose to think of the archive as a cemetery: from above land everything appears orderly and intact in its realm of marble and granite, but below the surface things disintegrate, blur into one another. From this mingling come strange new unions, tendrils stretch up and new narratives begin to bloom.

The Images that Deceived Us
Katie Paine
2018

Emanuel Rodriguez Chaves was born in Costa Rica in 1986. He studied Fine Arts at the University of Costa Rica, San José, Costa Rica from 2005-2012, and at the Kunsthochschule Weissensee, Berlin KhB, under the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) from 2013-2015. He is currently a PhD Candidate at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, where his research examines images as elements in the construction of memory and knowledge, via databases, printed photos, and digital resources. These images are enhanced and distorted, to modify meaning and agency. info at www.emanuelrodriguez.net

Katie Paine is an artist and writer working in Naarm/Melbourne. Her practice investigates systems of meaning making: specifically how narrative is constructed through language and images. Paine has written for Un Projects, Art + Australia, Next Wave Festival and Art Almanac. She also co-edits discursive platform *dumb brun(ette) with artist Diego Ramirez.

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