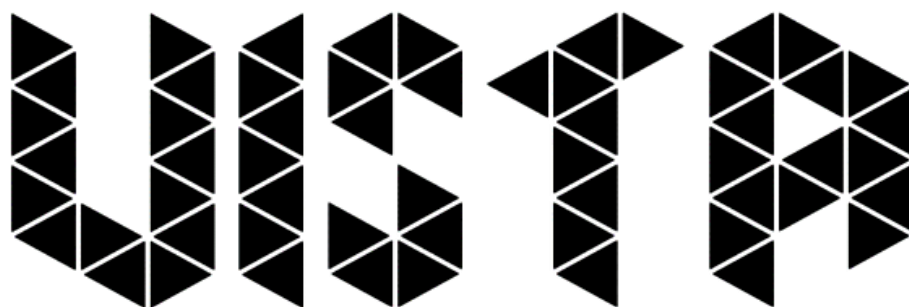




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Portraiture as Denunciation and Resistance in the Work of Eleonora Ghioldi

O Retrato Como Denúncia e Resistência nos Trabalhos de Eleonora Ghioldi

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This article aims to examine the portraits produced by the Argentine feminist photographer and filmmaker Eleonora Ghioldi (1972, Buenos Aires) as forms of denunciation and resistance to gender-based violence, also addressing issues of intersectionality and collaboration in her three main projects: *Guerreras* (Warriors), *Aborto Legal Ya!* (Legal Abortion Now!), and *Atravesadxs* (Traversed).

Guerreras began in 2011, emerging from dialogues between Ghioldi and her friends regarding experiences of violence, and over the years, expanded to include accounts from cis and trans women of various ages and racial backgrounds. *Atravesadxs* originated from the artist's engagement with Gustavo Melmann, father of Natalia Melmann, a victim of femicide in 2001, and now gathers over 70 testimonies from relatives and friends of murdered women. Meanwhile, *Aborto Legal Ya!* documents the struggle for the legalisation and protection of abortion in Argentina, approaching the topic from multiple perspectives, including public health and intergenerational issues. The works consist of portraits accompanied by testimonies, displayed on a large scale in public and institutional spaces, as well as a short film. The analysis is grounded in Emma Lewis's (2021) research on photography and portraiture from a feminist and activist perspective; Dominique Baqué's (2009) contributions on representations of violence in photography and

socially engaged art; and Rita Segato's (2016) studies on the structures of gender-based violence. Our theoretical framework is also informed by the writings of Verónica Gago (2019/2020) on feminist articulation in Latin America, Judith Butler (2016) on vulnerability, resistance, and networks of solidarity, as well as the theoretical contributions of the book *Transfeminismo o Barbarie* (Transfeminism or Barbarism; Gil, 2020).

Keywords: Argentina, feminisms, photography, Eleonora Ghioldi, gender-based violence

O Retrato Como Denúncia e Resistência nos Trabalhos de Eleonora Ghioldi

Este artigo pretende examinar os retratos produzidos pela fotógrafa e cineasta feminista argentina Eleonora Ghioldi (1972, Buenos Aires) como formas de denúncia e resistência à violência de gênero, abordando também questões de interseccionalidade e colaboração em seus três principais projetos: Guerreras (Guerreiras), Aborto Legal Ya! (Aborto Legal Já!) e Atravesadxs (Atravessadxs).

*Guerreras teve início em 2011, a partir de diálogos entre Ghioldi e suas amigas sobre vivências de violência, e ao longo dos anos expandiu-se para incluir relatos de mulheres cis e trans de diversas idades e origens raciais. Atravesadxs surgiu da aproximação da artista com Gustavo Melmann, pai de Natalia Melmann, vítima de feminicídio em 2001, e, hoje, reúne mais de 70 depoimentos de familiares e amigos de mulheres assassinadas. Já Aborto Legal Ya! documenta a luta pela legalização e preservação do aborto na Argentina, abordando o tema a partir de múltiplas perspectivas, incluindo saúde pública e questões intergeracionais. Os trabalhos consistem em retratos acompanhados de testemunhos, exibidos em larga escala em espaços públicos e institucionais, além de um curta-metragem. A análise fundamenta-se na pesquisa de Emma Lewis (2021) sobre fotografia e os retratos a partir de uma perspectiva feminista e ativista; nas contribuições de Dominique Baqué (2009), sobre representações da violência na fotografia e na arte engajada; e nos estudos de Rita Segato (2016) sobre as estruturas da violência de gênero. Nosso embasamento teórico também é informado pelos escritos de Verónica Gago (2019/2020) acerca da articulação feminista na América Latina, e Judith Butler (2016) sobre vulnerabilidade, resistência e redes de solidariedade, além das contribuições teóricas do livro *Transfeminismo o Barbarie* (Transfeminismo ou Barbárie; Gil, 2020).*

Palavras-chave: Argentina, feminismos, fotografia, Eleonora Ghioldi, violência de gênero

Introduction

Eleonora Ghioldi (1972, Buenos Aires) is an Argentine photographer, documentary filmmaker, and researcher. She studied Sociology at the University of Buenos Aires until 1994, when she migrated to the United States to study

Photography at the University of California, Los Angeles, Pasadena City College, and the International Center of Photography in New York. Her academic background incorporates theoretical approaches in fields such as image, visual culture, and anthropology, elements that exert influence on her photographic practice. She has lived between Los Angeles and Buenos Aires since then. She is currently a member of the Nucleus of Postcolonial Studies, Performances, Afro-diasporic Identities and Feminisms at the Institute of Advanced Social Studies, National University of San Martín. In 2019, she co-edited the book *Feminismos Insurgentes* (Insurgent Feminisms) with researchers Andrea Beltramo, Karina Bidasca, Ianina Lois, and Lucía Nuñez Lodwick. In 2022, she published *Guerreras de Eleonora Ghioldi* (Warriors of Eleonora Ghioldi). Both were published by the independent press Milena Caserola. Her work combines artistic practice, research, and social engagement, focusing on authorial and collaborative projects that explore themes of identity, collective memory, urban transformations, and human relations from a feminist perspective.

This article discusses three projects developed by Ghioldi, which address manifestations of gender-based violence and collective articulations in the struggle for rights in Argentina. The projects are *Guerreras* (Warriors), *Aborto Legal Ya!* (Legal Abortion Now!), and *Atravesadxs* (Traversed). Each of these works consists of photographic portraits and the compilation of personal testimonies that deal with the participants' individual experiences in relation to the proposed themes. The analyses are grounded in Emma Lewis's (2021) research on photography and portraiture from a feminist and activist perspective; Dominique Baqué's (2009) contributions on representations of violence in photography and socially engaged art; and Rita Segato's (2016) studies on the structures of gender-based violence. The theoretical and methodological framework of this study is further informed by the writings of Verónica Gago (2019/2020) on feminist cooperation in Latin America, and Judith Butler's (2016) reflections on vulnerability, resistance, and networks of solidarity. Additionally, theoretical contributions are incorporated from the book *Transfeminismo o Barbarie* (Transfeminism or Barbarism; Gil, 2022).

Guerreras

Guerreras was initiated in 2011, arising from conversations between Eleonora Ghioldi and three friends who confided their personal experiences of sexual violence. The project, consisting of a series of portraits accompanied by written and audio testimonies, gradually expanded over time. To the accounts of her friends, collected while Ghioldi was living in the United States, were added testimonies gathered during a trip to Ciudad Juárez¹, Mexico. Upon her return to her country of origin, more people expressed interest in participating, resulting

¹Located on the border of the state of Chihuahua with El Paso, Texas, it became a global symbol of gender-based violence due to the rising number of femicide cases recorded since the 1990s.

in a diverse group. They are, for the most part, cis and trans women of different ages and racial backgrounds, encompassing a range of voices and perspectives. Ghioldi photographs them in their homes, engaging in a process of attentive listening to capture their individuality, vulnerability, dignity, and strength. The scope of the project also broadened, moving beyond sexual violence to encompass related issues that remain marked by it, including the epidemic of femicide in Latin America, forced sterilisation, and the disappearances that occurred during the period of the civil–military dictatorship in Argentina, as well as during democracy. Thus, testimonies and memories of friends and relatives of victims were collected, totalling around 50 accounts that would later form part of the project’s exhibitions.

Among these accounts are the stories of Verónica Sanches, whose parents, Santiago and Cecilia, were abducted, tortured and disappeared by the military dictatorship; of Mariana Montecinos, regarding the repression directed at trans women; and of Norma Laguna Cabral, mother of Idalí Guache Laguna, one of the many young women who disappeared in Ciudad Juárez. Regarding sexual violence, some accounts recall episodes in adulthood in which the perpetrators were strangers, bosses, colleagues, boyfriends, or husbands. Others recount episodes from childhood in which the perpetrators were fathers, brothers, cousins, grandfathers, neighbours, or teachers. In this way, Ghioldi’s work also offers us a systemic perspective on how gender-based violence permeates experiences at different levels, while never losing sight of the subjectivities of each context. Moreover, *Guerreras* seeks to break the logic of isolation and shame imposed upon survivors of gender-based violence. By treating each testimony with respect and sensitivity, Ghioldi demonstrates the importance of not remaining silent and points towards collective solutions through the sharing of experiences — both of violence and of processes of resilience and resistance. By presenting experiences that are at once varied and deeply personal, yet echo those of so many others, two messages become clear: the victim is not alone, and the victim is never to blame.

The project has been exhibited in various Argentine cities, in museums, galleries, and public spaces, always accompanied by discussions and workshops. It was deemed of public interest by the Senado de la Nación, which also hosted the exhibition titled *Guerreras: Historias de Resiliencia* (Warriors: Stories of Resilience) during March 2019, as part of its programming in celebration of International Women’s Day. The portraits are displayed on a large scale and accompanied either by reproductions of the testimonies written in the participants’ own hand (images available at Lucero, 2022)² or by transcriptions of audio recordings.

In 2022, the project was transformed into a bilingual Spanish–English book. Published by Milena Caserola, it includes texts by curator Andrea Beltramo and

²Ghioldi requests via her website and social media that the portraits not be reproduced, in order to safeguard the survivors. Considering that consent is not perpetual, we have used an image showing a view of the exhibition to respect both the artist’s wishes and the survivors’ process.

feminist anthropologist Karina Bidaseca, more than 300 previously unexhibited photographs, and interviews with specialists that contextualise gender-based violence, its roots, and its manifestations in the social sphere.

In its constitutive aspect, *Guerreras* resembles other projects by feminist artists that combine portrait compilation with personal narratives about experiences of various forms of gender-based violence. One example is the work of Nigerian photographer and visual artist Etinosa Yvonne (1989), which addresses issues of trauma, memory, and healing, particularly concerning women survivors of conflict and war. In *It's All In My Head*, initiated in 2018, Yvonne (n.d.) captures intimate and sometimes visually abstract portraits of survivors of terrorism and extreme cases of conflict and cruelty in Nigeria. Using photography as a tool to initiate conversations, she collects testimonies that explore not only the events themselves but also the coping mechanisms adopted by women and girls. The project aims to raise awareness about the long-term effects of conflicts and episodes of extreme violence, advocate for greater access to long-term psychosocial support, and, above all, honour the strength and dignity of survivors. The portraits and audio testimonies are available on the artist's website.

The Brazilian artist Pannela Castro (1981, Rio de Janeiro) works with a similar approach, but using painting as her medium, in her series *Retratos Relatos* (*HerStory*), initiated in 2019. The series was triggered by the significant number of testimonies that Pannela, a survivor and women's rights activist, received via her email and social media accounts. In Pannela's studio, or in partner cultural institutions hosting an open-studio format, each person's portrait is created during a free, non-judgemental dialogue about their experiences, transforming shared pain into a mediated expression imbued with understanding and care. Here, the concept of "dororidade" (sisterhood in pain; Piedade, 2020), which had already informed Castro's (n.d.) poetics and was the title of a mural completed in 2018 in downtown Rio de Janeiro, is essential. The subjects portrayed are women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and the intersection of gender-based and racial violence is highlighted.

Another project conceived from personal experience and the collection of testimonies is *Stop Telling Women to Smile*, by the American artist Tatyana Fazlalizadeh (1985, Oklahoma City), which also resulted in a book published in 2020. Initiated in 2012 in Brooklyn, New York, where the artist lives and works, the project aims to discuss and subvert sexist perceptions of women and non-binary people in public spaces, following the artist's reflections on her own experiences of harassment. The project consists of a series of portraits accompanied by excerpts of testimonies and messages that participants wish to convey to their harassers, installed as wheatpastes, posters, or murals in public spaces. Fazlalizadeh has collaborated with women's rights activists in other countries, including Mexico, France, Canada, Ireland, and Trinidad and Tobago. She interviews cis and transgender women, as well as non-binary individuals, about their experiences of harassment in public spaces. Subsequently, she draws

the portraits based on photographs. The diversity of testimonies allows Fazlalizadeh (2020) to analyse the various intersecting contextual factors in episodes of harassment. Issues of gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, aesthetic standards, territory, and gentrification are highlighted, as well as the precocious age at which women, as children, must learn to navigate and deflect public harassment.

Thus, *Guerreras* is situated within a current of artistic productions that seek to emphasise the importance of voice and personal experience as forms of resistance, particularly regarding the different manifestations of gender-based violence. Ghioldi's approach, however, stands out for its depth and collaborative method, establishing a safe space of attentive listening to capture the dignity and strength of the participants, surpassing mere photographic documentation. Starting from personal testimonies, the artist develops the project as a vehicle for collective critique, which transcends the simple exhibition of violence. Her work does not merely expose pain but constructs a counter-discourse to victim-blaming, highlighting the structures that perpetuate gender-based violence at different levels and intensities. Ghioldi denounces the permissiveness of institutions and the State toward aggressors, showing how violence manifests systemically and is often silenced or naturalised. The title of the project itself is particularly significant, as it does not suggest a voluntary choice by these women to become fighters. On the contrary, the work reveals that this position is, in fact, a forced response to the violations suffered — an identity imposed on them by the violence itself. Here, the choice is determined by the position of survivor rather than by resignation to the role of victim expected by patriarchal structures, driven by the necessity to exist, resist, and assert oneself in the face of violence, transforming silence into denunciation and vulnerability into strength.

Aborto Legal Ya!

Aborto Legal Ya! is a project concerning the struggle for the legalisation of abortion in Argentina and its relation to the broader issues of control over pleasure and the body. The work emerged from the previously presented project and follows the same logic of attentive listening, testimony collection, and photographic documentation. It began in 2011, when, during the *Guerreras*' process, one of Eleonora's friends revealed that her doctor had raped her during an abortion. From that moment, the photographer reflected on the violence experienced by gestating bodies, the conditions of illegality and access, as well as their intersections with markers of race and class in a patriarchal capitalist society.

The project explores issues of female bodily autonomy in relation to the patriarchal system, prevailing economic mechanisms, and the notion of "ownership", demonstrating how the instrumentalisation of the body — reduced to a mere reproductive vessel — operates as a structuring axis in the maintenance of capitalist logic. Simultaneously, it investigates power dynamics involving the

State, health institutions, and religious organisations in the formulation and implementation of public policies related to these issues. How these institutions curtailed autonomy and the right to decide, relegating abortion to illegality, denying access not only to healthcare but also to the justice system, forms an essential part of the collective narrative constructed within the work. The right to sexual pleasure, entirely separate from conception, was also a central theme.

In total, there are more than 70 portraits, accompanied by testimonies provided by participants, with an intersectional and intergenerational approach, including mothers, children, young people, older adults, cis and trans individuals of diverse sexual orientations, and activists from various regions of the country. Among them is the anthropologist Ana Vidal, who describes the feelings of fear, loneliness, and discrimination experienced under illegality, and contrasts these with the difference in undergoing the procedure legally and safely. Also featured in the portraits is the non-binary trans researcher and activist SaSa Testa, who speaks about the necessity of legal and safe abortion for all gestating bodies, and the para-athlete and basketball player Jazz Sallis, who addresses the need for autonomy and the elimination of shame associated with the procedure.

We also highlight the testimony of Martha Rosenberg, a physician, psychoanalyst, and founding member of the National Campaign for the Right to Legal, Safe, and Free Abortion, initiated in 2005. In the early 1990s, Rosenberg was one of the proposers of the Forum for Reproductive Rights, an initiative that subsequently led to the National Women's Meeting, held in Rosario in 2003 — a space for debate that paved the way for the institutionalisation of a movement dedicated to the legalisation of abortion. Two years later, in alliance with the lawyers Nina Brugo and Nelly Minyersky, as well as the historian Dora Barrancos, she coordinated the establishment of the national campaign and co-authored the draft legislation on voluntary pregnancy termination, which was submitted to the Argentine Chamber of Deputies and Senate on successive occasions until its approval in 2020. Only one phrase accompanies Rosenberg's portrait: "a debt of democracy" (<https://www.eleonoraghioldi.com/aborto-legal-ya-muestra/#e-11>).

Ghioldi followed the recurring demonstrations in favour of abortion legalisation in the streets of Buenos Aires, as well as popular assemblies and mobilisations up to the day of approval. All this documentary work was combined with more intimate photographs and testimonies, giving rise to a short documentary film of the same name as the project. The film was released on 28 September 2020, the Day of Action for Access to Safe and Legal Abortion.

The issue of abortion is addressed similarly by the Catalan photographer Laia Abril (2018) in *On Abortion: And the Repercussions of Lack of Access*, the first chapter of her long-term multimedia project *A History of Misogyny*, which resulted in a book published by Dewi Lewis Publishing in 2018. *On Abortion* documents and theorises the dangers and harms caused by women's lack of legal, safe, and free access to abortion, demonstrating the stigmatisation promoted by governments and institutions and emphasising how women and girls are criminalised when fighting for control and autonomy over their own bodies. In

addition to a form of collage combining historical records and press archives, Abril employs authorial photography to document various objects and apparatuses related to the subject. The project also includes portraits and testimonies of experiences with abortion.

The black-and-white portraits created by the artist are presented in full clarity, accompanied by testimonies from women across the world who do not regret what they endured to access the procedure. There are also portraits of police records, shown in negative, depicting women who were arrested and penalised; and portraits, intentionally blurred, of women and girls who died attempting unsafe or desperate methods of terminating pregnancies. In alignment with the perspective of Martha Rosenberg, Abril (2018) includes a quote from the physician and founder of the pro-choice organisation Women on Waves, Rebecca Gompers, stating that the right to abortion is “a thermometer of democracy” (p. 28).

By presenting *Aborto Legal Ya!* in institutional and public spaces, Ghioldi transcends mere documentation to historically canonise the struggle for reproductive rights as a continuation of the fight for democracy. Her portraits function as visual monuments to a battle that, despite legal victories, remains ongoing. The project documents the persistence of the struggle for bodily autonomy, keeping alive the urgency and memory of this cause in the face of the fragility of acquired rights under governmental changes and social setbacks.

Atravesadxs

Developed by Eleonora Ghioldi as a further extension of *Guerreras*, *Atravesadxs* constitutes a photographic investigation centred on the narratives of relatives of victims of femicides, travesticides, and transfeminicides in Argentina. The work transcends individual accounts by revealing them as collective experiences, in which political organisation transforms grief into demands for justice, not only for the victims but also for the communities that inherit this struggle. The research highlights how gender-based violence, although structural, manifests heterogeneously: from everyday microaggressions to extreme forms such as femicide, encompassing dimensions including economic violence, forced sterilisation, and State repression. Ghioldi demonstrates that understanding these nuances is indispensable to confronting the problem, as generalisations obscure specificities that demand equally complex political responses. Materialised in more than 70 images, accompanied by written or audio testimonies, the project documents the realities of affected families from a dual perspective: that of intimate pain and public resistance. According to Ghioldi:

the project looks at the power structures that allow this violence to exist, what we refer to when we speak of a culture of rape, and what is happening with some masculinities that do not accept the autonomy of female bodies. It is clear that the State must understand that its

presence and intervention is necessary not only after the femicides take place with accompaniment to achieve justice but also in prevention. Thinking that the problem of gender violence only concerns to women is simply a fundamental mistake on the way to a profound change in our society. (<https://www.eleonoraghioldi.com/aborto-legal-ya-muestra>)

The work begins with Ghioldi's engagement with Gustavo Melmann (<https://www.eleonoraghioldi.com/8864881-atravesadx>) during the process of collecting testimonies for *Guerreras*. Gustavo is the father of Natalia Melmann, a 14-year-old girl who was abducted, brutally tortured, raped, and murdered by three police officers and a civilian in February 2001 in the city of Miramar. Miramar is a coastal city southeast of Buenos Aires, nicknamed the "city of children and bicycles" due to its layout designed for family vacations and, supposedly, a peaceful life. In 2021, the court sentenced Sergeant Óscar Alberto Echenique and Corporals Ricardo Alfredo Suárez and Ricardo Anselmini to life imprisonment. The civilian, Gustavo Daniel Fernández, was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment following various legal entanglements and public protests.

Following her engagement with Gustavo, the photographer began a collaboration with the families involved in the organisation *Atravesados por el Femicidio*. Founded in 2018 by Melmann, Manuel Iglesias, Marcela Morera, Eva Domínguez, Esther Robledo, Fernanda Albornoz, Hugo Capacio, and Mariano Pizl, it functions as a support network for 180 relatives of 150 young women from different provinces who were murdered due to gender-based violence. The organisation provides emotional and legal support to other bereaved families, promoting justice and redress for cases of femicide across various regions of the country. Collaborating, they transform their grief into political action against sexist violence and into a pursuit of memory, truth, and justice.

In this sense, the photographic series *Atravesadx*s can be related to the work of another Argentine photographer and visual artist, Gustavo Germano (1964, Chajarí; n.d.). In *Ausencias* (Absences), a project initiated in 2006, Germano reconstructs images of families affected by the last Argentine dictatorship (1976–1983), establishing a dialogue between past and present by reproducing, in collaboration with the families, scenes from their photographic albums, now marked by the absence of the disappeared relatives. Between 2010 and 2012, he worked on *Ausencias Brasil*, concerning the victims of forced disappearance during the Brazilian military–corporate dictatorship (1964–1985). In 2015, he developed *Búsquedas* (Search), addressing the theft of newborns in Spain during the Franco dictatorship and early years of democracy, as well as the recovery of grandchildren by the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo. In 2017, he produced the series *Ausencias Uruguay*, on the victims of the Uruguayan dictatorship (1973–1985).

The *Atravesadx*s project reveals the extended responsibility and affective bonds surrounding gender-based violence. The extreme violence that victimises a woman or trans person does not remain confined to them; as with the murders

and disappearances during the dictatorial period, it traverses and affects the family and social nucleus, transforming the intimate pain of grief into a collective and ongoing struggle for justice. By focusing on relatives and friends, Ghioldi's portraits demonstrate how femicide imposes a new identity upon these individuals, who find themselves responsible for safeguarding memory and acting as activists for a safer future. In this sense, the family operates as a microcosm reflecting societal and State failure in protecting its citizens. Ghioldi's work monumentalises this shared grief, transforming the affective bond with the absent person into a potent political force capable of confronting and denouncing the structures of violence that perpetuate themselves.

Portraits as Denunciation and Resistance to Gender-Based Violence

Dominique Baqué (2009), in her work *L'Effroi du Présent: Figurer la Violence* (The Terror of the Present: Representing Violence), discusses the representation of violence in contemporary society, arguing that familiarity with the horrific, conveyed through various media, leads to “anaesthesia” or “disinterest” on the part of the observer, or even “compassion fatigue” (p. 20) in response to constant exposure to images of suffering. The author explores different forms of representing violence in contemporary society and highlights how art can serve as a tool to expose and challenge the normalisation of horror and a culture of violence *per se* through artistic practices that seek to “promote critical intervention against the institutions of everyday life; administer, from within rather than from outside, a critical transformation of culture; raise the level of consciousness (. . .) and address the passive viewer, the alienated citizen” (Baqué, 2009, p. 216). Baqué (2009) advocates for a new regime of images that is “neither too close, nor too distant, neither obscene nor disinterested” (p. 4), while also questioning the position, or lack thereof, of the artistic and cultural field in the face of violence perpetrated against women.

The author criticises the “extension of the domain of violence” (Baqué, 2009, p. 131) in images, without neglecting situations of exploitation, war, conflict, and extreme violence, but also focusing on the silent and everyday violences that affect women — from harassment and domestic violence to rape, including the objectification of the female body in advertising and pornography. According to Baqué (2009), this reality of everyday violence is blurred and distorted by the forms of representation and commercialisation of images, which even shape sexuality and the patriarchal relationship with the female body. A dehumanised body is considered a “body-object, submissive, commodity-body, made to be seen, to circulate, or even to be sold” (Baqué, 2009, pp. 166–167). The author also makes observations on how women internalise a patriarchal relationship with their own bodies, and gradually, victims and survivors are blamed by society, and in some cases, by themselves.

Developing an epilogue to the text, Baqué (2009) issues a kind of warning on behalf of women, emphasising the “dramatic regression of the female condition” (p. 167)³, concluding with an appeal for art to produce “counter-images that are anti-fanatical, anti-religious, profoundly secular, atheistic, feminist, and generous” (p. 179), to awaken consciousness and resist totalitarianisms.

In contrast, Emma Lewis (2021), in her book *Photography, A Feminist History: Gender Rights and Gender Roles on Both Sides of the Camera*, presents a different perspective on photography from a feminist and activist standpoint. Lewis weaves a comprehensive and critical narrative on the traditional history of photography, arguing that it has been predominantly White, Western, and male, and proposing a rebalancing of representation by including female photographers and artists of diverse gender identities. The author explores how photography has become a crucial medium for women to challenge social expectations and gendered constraints since its inception:

for the past two hundred years, these stories have run parallel. A task of feminism is, to paraphrase the American writer Rebecca Solnit, to make women credible and audible; photography has done both. It has been a reliable witness to women’s movements and made the causes for which they fight visible. It has also created images of femininity and sexuality that they had to push back against, often employing their own images as a weapon. Likewise, feminism, as a set of ideas, has shaped how photographers have approached their medium—and how the rest of us have made sense of it. (Lewis, 2021, p. 6)

Lewis (2021) highlights three aspects relevant to this article: portraits, community photography, and participation, in addition to enabling a regime of representation that seeks to promote social and political change. Citing Laia Abril, Palomi Basu, and Zanele Muholi, the author addresses the use of portraits as catalysts for dialogue with diverse individuals to construct testimonies that render different realities and experiences visible to varied audiences, with an approach that “creates conversations, helps change mindsets, and can ultimately pave the way for those who hold the power to legislate change” (Lewis, 2021, p. 114). Regarding community photography, Lewis (2021) examines the relationship between the photographer and the community and how this can influence power dynamics in the development of a project. She warns, however, that simply being a member of the portrayed community or having personal experience with the same issues does not mean that “the perspective of an insider can somehow represent their entire community” (Lewis, 2021, p. 77).

Thus, we enter the issue of participation. Citing the works of Susan Meiselas,

³Even though Baqué’s text was published in 2009, it remains alarmingly relevant at the time of writing this article, as masculinist movements increasingly gain ground and women’s rights suffer various setbacks. With accelerated technological development, the promotion and normalisation of hate speech and misogyny, as well as the insidious radicalisation of young people, new forms of gender-based violence have also emerged.

Paz Errázuriz, and Graciela Iturbide, Lewis (2021) emphasises participation as a fundamental element of feminist photographic practice, capable of challenging power hierarchies, promoting authentic representations, and creating a sense of agency for the subjects portrayed. By breaking the logic of the portrayed individual as a passive object of the work, participation depends on dialogue, consent, and a level of mutual respect, which is essential for the ethical development of the project in question. For Lewis (2021), rather than questioning the extent to which a photographer belongs to the community portrayed, “a more constructive and open-ended line of enquiry might be, what are the principles with which the photographer approaches their subject? What (...) is the nature of their exchange?” (p. 78).

Two aspects of utmost importance for Ghioldi’s work are collaboration, or participation, and an intersectional approach, present across the three projects analysed. Intersectionality, in this case, functions as an analytical tool and a form of critical praxis, as postulated by Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge (2020/2021, p. 55), which allows for encompassing the complexities of different individual identities — formed and traversed by multiple aspects and subjectivities — and understanding how these are affected by structures of power and relate within a social and collective context. From this perspective, the different experiences are brought into dialogue to develop a discourse of social justice that is strengthened by embracing differences and contradictions among the individuals and groups participating in each project.

Regarding intersectionality as a tool, we can also revisit the concept of “dororidade” mentioned earlier as an essential part of Brazilian artist Panmela Castro’s work. Developed by Afro-Brazilian theorist Vilma Piedade to describe solidarity and the recognition of shared pain among women in a system that oppresses them, it is a concept that encourages reflection beyond sorority, focusing on the specificities of the pains and challenges faced by Black women. Piedade proposes it as a link of empathy and mutual support arising from the collective experience of racism and sexism, a call for individually lived pain to be recognised and collectively embraced, transforming it into strength and resistance.

For Piedade (2020), the concept of “sorority” is insufficient to address the racialised violence that intersects with and exacerbates gender-based violence; according to the author, “one concept seems to need the other. One contains the other. Just as noise contains silence. Dororidade, therefore, contains shadows, emptiness, absence, silenced speech, the pain caused by racism” (p. 14)⁴. However, Piedade (2020) does not disregard what is shared despite differences, questioning:

could Pain unite all Women? Do you remember when Eve persuaded
Adam to eat the apple back in Paradise? Eve’s fault, for making
Humanity fall into “sin” and lose “paradise”, has followed us for

⁴The quotations were taken from the book *Dororidade*, retaining their original structure as written by the author in *pretuguês* (Black Portuguese).

millennia. It is at this point that Dororidade is established, traversing the trajectory experienced by Us, the Black Population, and, here, in particular, Us — Women — Black Women. White, of Axé, Indigenous, Gypsy, Quilombola, Lesbian, Trans, Caiçara, Riverside, Favela-dwelling or not, we are Women. (p. 15)

Even though Eleonora Ghioldi does not claim this concept as part of her artistic practice, pain seems to be an essential guiding thread for understanding the projects of the Argentine photographer, not only as something shared among different individuals and groups, but as a force mobilised and transformed into action, denunciation, and resistance. Based on intimate accounts of systemic problems, Ghioldi's work demands attention to the intersections of gender, class, race, and sexuality in systems of violence. When presenting her projects on her website and in interviews, the artist emphasises the need to identify and discuss systemic violence as part of the process of social progress. This motivation aligns with feminist activism and analyses of violence. Sexual violence, in its different intensities, is understood by Rita Segato (2016) as one of the central methods in maintaining this system of power and exploitation through a “mandate of masculinity” (p. 16). The Argentine anthropologist also points out that sexual violence is not necessarily motivated by sexual desire or perpetrated for sexual purposes. It is violence expressed sexually within a hierarchy of demonstration, maintenance, and acquisition of power over another — an “other” who is socially weaker and supposedly more fragile. To it are added different types of aggression, from the most silent, such as psychological violence, to the extreme of femicide. This spectrum of violence, whose persistent threat also serves as a silencing device, is compounded by institutions that help maintain this system and control bodies. As Rita Segato (2016) observes:

the aggressions that women suffer in daily violence, domestic abuse, and new informal forms of war are the thermometer that allows us to diagnose the historical transitions of society as a whole. That is why we must be able to claim the restitution of the ontological fullness of the spaces of female life and the capacity and right of women to speak publicly from their partiality. (p. 95)

Segato (2016) also comments on the feminist slogan of the 1970s that “the personal is political”, reflecting on the few cases in which this motto translated into laws and public policies, and emphasises the need for different approaches to the public sphere, since it is centred on the male subject and “the expropriating and violent structure of gender has yielded nowhere” (Segato, 2016, p. 95). Therefore, to destabilise this order and escape its control, the path would be through a “pluralisation of worlds” (Segato, 2016, p. 96). This proposal is similar to that of activist and philosopher Silvia Gil (2020), who suggests transversality as a strategy, denaturalising inequalities and hierarchies that, even within feminist struggles, still serve as tools of exclusion. For Gil (2020):

the various manifestations against violence express something fundamental: there is no real democracy as long as violence against women

and against all forms of life that challenge the heteropatriarchy exists. It is important to understand how these violences intersect and, therefore, advance struggles capable of articulating different realities. (p. 152)

By documenting both the pain and the political organisation that emerges from it, Ghioldi not only denounces the incompleteness of democracy but also activates feminised bodies as agents of their own representation and historical transformation, escaping an exclusively cis-heteronormative logic. Pluralisation or transversality is present in all three projects, supported by an intersectional approach and the desire to understand and value the multiple layers involved in each account, articulating different realities within a poetics of resistance. This power of the collective — or collaboration among people of diverse origins yet connected by the common thread of violence at different levels — was also analysed by Argentine political scientist Verónica Gago (2019/2020) in her study of feminist mobilisations. Stating that:

violence against women's bodies and feminised bodies is read from a singular situation — the body of each individual — to then produce an understanding of violence as a totalising phenomenon. Each body, as trajectory and experience, thus becomes a means of access, a concrete mode of localisation, from which a specific point of view is produced: how does violence express itself, how do we recognise it, how do we fight it, how does it particularise itself in each body? This rooted mode of understanding violence allows questioning that is transversal to all spaces: from the family to the union, from the school to community centres, from what occurs at borders to what happens in public squares. However, it does so by giving this questioning a material, proximate, corporeal anchoring. (p. 98)

From this perspective, Eleonora Ghioldi's work, in its entirety, can be read as part of a search for a material anchoring mobilised by so many subjectivities. There is also the matter of testimonies and their collection through sensitive listening, exemplifying how shared vulnerability can generate new forms of political action. Judith Butler (2016) proposes that we interpret vulnerability as part of the movement of resistance and not as opposed to autonomy and action. Moreover, since we are all liable to find ourselves in situations of vulnerability, some more, others less, it is also less interpreted through the lens of a gender dichotomy, and more through the dependence that human beings have on the support of institutions and other human beings. According to Butler (2016), feminism "is a crucial part of these networks of solidarity and resistance precisely because feminist critique destabilises those institutions that depend on the reproduction of inequality and injustice" (p. 20).

Final Considerations

The projects *Guerreras*, *Aborto Legal Ya!*, and *Atravesadx*s, developed by Eleonora Ghioldi, draw attention to understanding gender-based violence as a structural phenomenon and expose its multiple dimensions in Argentina and Latin America. These projects demonstrate how such phenomena are articulated through institutional mechanisms and social practices that transcend individual experiences, allowing continuities to be mapped across different forms of violence. By situating each story within the broader context of feminist struggles, Ghioldi offers an analytical model that surpasses the dichotomy between the particular and the universal. The result is a critical cartography of contemporary forms of resistance and their political challenges.

In *Guerreras*, the artist documents sexual violence and other forms of oppression experienced by cis and trans women of diverse backgrounds, transforming pain and isolation into a collective narrative of resilience. *Atravesadx*s focuses on the families of victims of femicides, travesticides, and transfeminicides, showing how grief can act as a catalyst for political organisation and the pursuit of memory, truth, and justice. *Aborto Legal Ya!* addresses the struggle for the legalisation and protection of abortion in Argentina, highlighting intersections between bodily autonomy, patriarchy, and economic systems, and bringing visibility to the intergenerational and intersectional aspects of the fight for the right to pleasure and choice.

Through portraits, testimonies, and the documentation of collective struggles, Ghioldi not only exposes the structural brutality of patriarchy, capitalism, and the state, but also constructs living archives of resistance. Whether through intimate accounts of survivors, mobilisation for legal abortion, or the organisation of families of femicide victims, the artist demonstrates how art can serve as a tool for social transformation, converting pain into action, memory into justice, and isolation into collectivity.

Ghioldi and other artists referenced in relation to her work can be understood as producers of images opposing the “mandate of masculinity” (Segato, 2016, p. 16) and the “extension of the domain of violence” (Baqué, 2009, p. 131) in the visual regime. The subjects portrayed are not passive objects but actively participate in constructing a narrative of denunciation and resistance alongside the photographer, embodying both dignity and radical vulnerability. Ghioldi, by making visible the diverse manifestations of gender-based violence and strategies of resistance, not only exposes democratic incompleteness but also activates feminised bodies as agents of their own representation and historical transformation. Her work invites reflection on the need to destabilise institutions that perpetuate inequality and injustice, reinforcing that the personal is indeed political, and that shared vulnerability can generate new and powerful forms of action and resistance. In this way, the portraits produced by Eleonora Ghioldi go beyond mere visual representation, becoming instruments of testimony, memory, denunciation, and resistance against gender-based violence in Argentina.

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