

# The Geopoetics of the Image. Ruins as an Aesthetic Path

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## Abstract

The present article exhibits investigative results that focus on ruins, in aesthetic terms. It was posited that a concept different from the *ruin*, traditionally known to society, could be detected by way of multiple visual languages. The *ruins* may speak, via journeys through diverse places: abandoned homes in the city or countryside, in the presence of abandoned figures and objects. For said journeys, *transmedia* is configured as a means of connection between times, memories, and spaces. Thus, when these begin to mark a methodological route, from a given aspect, and one's senses transform into three: experiences (that endured), reflections (interpretation), and creations (artwork). These merge to form the relationship that arises from *ruin* exploration. The *ruins* are understood to be narrations, by way of the times and spaces that resignify their multiple identities

**Key words:** Environmental thought; Memory; Figure; Transit; Art; Aesthetic research.

## 1. Introduction

I never imagined that I would find the comfort in *ruins* that I do now. To think that these spaces have educated me in the small things, details that remain unperceived by a simple glance. The things that compose our living world: figures, objects, and sounds captured by digital technology, such as photography, videos, the facilities and projections amplify the ruins, untie them from fiscalism and cultural reductionism. *Ruins*, for Noguera (2012), serve as a landscape, and a new experience in inhabiting the earth. *Ruins* create life in memory, which walks in the vestiges, and so it is necessary to understand them, not only as physical constructions, but also as feelings that hold the possibility of body-earth contact.

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The interest of the present article is to present investigative results regarding the unfolding of a concept of *ruins* that reaches beyond the traditional view thereof. It is a reflection on ruins as a testament to life, the experience in which bodies-earth are immerse, in which ruins take form and become inhabited, experienced places. This begs the question: how do *transmedia* languages resignify the *ruin* concept, by way of the time-memory-space relationship?

In our environment, abandonment and dispossession are commonplace. Culture fails to comprehend the potential of ruined spaces, and to understand them as figures that are reborn, like cloth woven together in a revival, throughout life. That understood as the concept of abandonment lends *ruins* hope for reinhabitation and reconsideration. *Ruins* are an aesthetic manifestation in complex times, within which, the environmental goes beyond the green, and lies in a human paradigm, of the self and of thought.

Abandoned, deteriorating human structures have been called *ruins*. Their physical and symbolic characteristics are aggrandized by the sanctuary of memory and time, impressed by the marks and experiences which occurred in said spaces. These figures, in ruins, form part of healing and natural recuperation processes, which permit said architectonic figures to return to the earth, and dissolve into a new landscape.

*Ruins* contain a series of elements which convert into testimony of that which has occurred therein. Each of the experiences that they represent is revealed by the evidence on object surfaces, terrain. Ruins peak my interest at a time, and in a culture, that has become bound



to the passage of time. A culture that found, in the hands of man, a tool which worked the earth, and has now become a builder of figures in ruin. Thus, ruins are foundations that are gradually accepted in their environments, and which may to speak of multiple forms of dwelling.

The testimonies of all of the figures that have been inhabited, the *ruins* that have remained printed on these surfaces, and are expressed in letters, forms, figures, marks, or scars, which tell of the presence of figures in ruins. These are not only declarations, but constitute a language that ratifies the ability to perceive a series of narrations of stories, eras, and events. Thus, these languages, within the photographic image, are a testimony inscribed in the memory of the audience, a bid to hold their gaze.

The testimonial dimension achieved by the aesthetic proposals is condensed into short stories, accumulated experiences surrounding the mark, or memory that find dawn in inhabited, dwelled-in, and lastly, desolate territories.

Life told through history, in its different social contexts, shows the way in which languages are transformed by art, poetry, and philosophy, the loyal companions of multiple creative processes. Different artistic manifestations, such as painting, recordings, theater, and music are the living voices of each fiber that feels and thinks in the world. These manifestations have rebuilt, recontextualized, and reformed the concept of the figure, in all of its forms.

Nature, as a way of life, feeds on change, that which is diverse, on the vestige which remains over the passage of time. It is found sculpted into the *ruins*, a mark on the wall, a face, or a thought. The rupture of the physical plane that situates us in an intangible dimension, understood as the dimension of feelings. That which is not physically within the ruin is perceived at other times, as proposed in the methodology, as the experience of that endured and interaction with that which occurs in the ruin. One must think, feel, and relate to these experiences, in order to comprehend the messages that these spaces and objects contain.

Languages are created around ruins, as an aesthetic category, and creative processes are tied together, as over time, different artistic experiences occur. The architectonic transpires, in all of its symbolic and significant manifestations: cracks, wear, the geometric, and the habitable. The corporeal, as an individual and social construction, subject to that which shifts in culture, marks, the organic, scars. The intangible surrounding thoughts and feelings, memories, senses, time, obscurity, experience, existence.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. Photography as an artistic expression

Art and life have close ties to each other, between the beautiful and the sublime. Said relationship is vital for the history of a time that has been supported by the necessity of

individual thought and resistance to an illustrated awakening, a century of high-tech lights and streamlining. Art, and its poetic dimension, are strengthened by today's diverse languages, expressed in the form of plastic, literary, and philosophical manifestations, among others. The testimonial dimension achieved by aesthetic proposals is contained in short stories, experiential groupings surrounding the mark, or memory that find dawn in inhabited, dwelled-in, and lastly, desolate territories.

In this case, photography expresses the sublime dimension, which becomes a photographic print of life taking form, marks and scars depicted on the walls that support architectonic structures, which *ruins* underlie, each of the photographs taken for this plastic proposal, which, in themselves are independent worlds, within a series of journeys in which these intimate spaces have resided. Photographic support, applied in research, such as digital, instant, and analogue compact cameras, permits testimony to be rendered to all of the places and objects portrayed, their naked figures depicted in great detail.

Artistic expressions, such as documentary photographic constructions, audiovisual registries of ephemeral actions, and printed support constitute a surface, a skin, which adheres to the membranes of the palpable, the physical, and which thus constitutes the relationship between the senses and objects, the tangible and intangible. "The skin reads the texture, weight, density, and temperature of subject. The surface of an old object, polished to perfection by an artisan's tool and the diligent hands of its users tempts the hand to caress" (Pallasmaa, 2006, p. 58).

The caress, physical contact that, slowly and carefully, conveys sensations proffered by textures to the senses. It not only recognizes surfaces, but also experiences a series of manifestations and contacts created between two figures, as proposed by Juhani Pallasmaa, in *Los ojos de la piel*. It invites us to consider and contemplate, by way of the senses, the relationship generated with the environment, and which reaches beyond the skin, with the naked eye, beyond the object's surface to a comprehension of the textures, colors, marks, the time that speaks of age, that tells stories of the experiences which permeate objects.

The sense of touch connects us with time and tradition both, by way of tact, we offer a hand to innumerable generations. A pebble, well-polished by the waves, is pleasant to the hand, not just owing to its relaxing form, but also because it expresses the slow process of its formation. A perfect pebble in the palm of one's hand materializes duration, is time in physical form (Pallasmaa, 2006, p. 58).

The concept of ruins should be noted, in this proposal, as it is like the wave-polished pebble, and has been caressed by time. Similarly, ruins are measured by the action of time. In this investigation, surfaces are not only carved by the intangible, habitat is considered, based on the permanence of certain items that fix it to a place, space, and from transit, the fleeting, which comes and goes.

The meaning that I find in the recognition of places and spaces not only occurs owing to the senses that permit us to reach them, and which go beyond the conventional, such



as sight, touch, smell, hearing, and taste, but also owing to those which stem therefrom, and provide a starting point from which to enter into a dialogue about experience and interaction.

The visits and journeys that I have made to places which, in everyday life, have invited me to inhabit them, have occurred with no interest beyond that of hearing testimony turned story, and experience given life. Thus, each space is a different world, my form of inhabitation is configured differently, and is never the same. Spatial intimacy, as may be that of a one's bedroom, a gathering place around a chimney, living room, or kitchen table, the patio, where household items accumulate, the warmth of living in a home that has perhaps housed many families.

For me, the meaning of going home was never so strong as when I saw a light in the window of my childhood home, in a landscape covered in snow at midnight, the inner memory that softly warms my frozen extremities. Home, and the pleasure of the flesh become singular sensations (Pallasmaa, 2006, p. 58).

The close relationship created, by way of interaction with places, generates new notions in a space. Reading, and the perception of experience, memory, and one's own recollections are joined with those which remain, and are instored in those places, generating a new view in the constant dialogue of dwelling. That which emerges from these frameworks is a new view of the landscape, within a new way to perceive an environment. This new view is constructed by way of interactions, and becomes an individual creation for collective dialogue,

in terms of all parts of the individual, from the viewpoint of that which is characteristic to enter, express, and represent before the community.

The concept of landscapes is necessary, so as to perceive the group of viewpoints that develop, in terms of ruins. Said concept is constructed both personally and culturally. Architectonic, natural, and urban landscapes are formed, based on gazes that coalesce in a space, with multiple places. The gaze constructs landscapes, cultural and social evidence, placed in relation, or in conjunction, from the tangible and intangible. It is the way in which landscapes, in relation to ruins, within the view and perception of a general plane, where ruins are constructed, and the way in which each gaze contextualizes this, as a rural environment is not the same as an urban one, nature and the city. Ruins are landscapes within natural landscapes.

In *Nuevos paisajes, nuevas miradas*, Iñaki Bergera (2011) quotes Javier Maderuelo (2005), and submits that it seems obligatory to begin with a terminological approach to the concept of 'landscapes'. Paradoxically, landscapes, in reality, do not exist, and are the fruit of our invention: a landscape is nothing more than what it does. "The idea of a landscape is not so much in the object contemplated, as in the gaze of he who contemplates. It is not that which is before them, but rather what is seen" (Bergera, 2011, p. 14). Creating a changing landscape, beyond the everyday, is one way to comprehend the variable which forms part of *ruins*, as a construction of the man placed in nature. The aesthetic perspective of a landscape, as defined by the Real Academia de la Lengua Española, is "Part of a territory that may be observed from a given place", "A natural space that is admirable, owing to its artistic look". It transcends the plane of cultural and social creation from the territory, the physical, the tangible, to arrive to the subjective, seen from the relationship between the observer and the observed, the interaction between man and nature.

## 2.2. Background

In this investigation, two main references are addressed, among those found in a flow of concepts and techniques which helped me to comprehend that *ruins* are a testimonies spoken in multiple languages, and that, in those references, impeccable work is appreciated from the photographic, audiovisual, action, and *performance* standpoints. Said references are as follows: Bill Viola (1951-present), a contemporary American video artist, and Juan Manuel Echavarría, a Colombian artist (1947-present), who guided the plastic journey in audiovisual production, performance, action, and the gathering of stories in natural contexts.

The plastic proposals of said artists taught me the way in which a visual gathering of a series of occurrences, catastrophes, wars, displacements, and natural affections are the result of human action, and the concept of tragedy expands the aesthetic experience, as power in the visual poetry of ruins, and which is expressed as hope, in reconstruction and regeneration, as part of the inhabiting and uninhabiting processes.

In this study, it is the spaces, the places, the items that dialogue via the image, as a way to present and represent that which is there, the environments and territories conform a

discourse that responds to questions such as the what, when, and why of *ruins*. This proposal, in response to these questions, by way of the testimony of and interaction with *ruins* themselves, leads me to fall back on stories of colonizers or walkers of places, but also on the individual, and very specific stories that I have found visiting these spaces, which are a result of reading and of marks. The results suppose certain stories to be creative possibilities, realities that are recognized through time, and which, when experienced, become testimonies of my interpretation. Each *ruin* is a world that transforms into as many worlds as can be conceived or imagined.

The influence of the environment, as we have seen repeated several times, is instrumental in the construction of a photographic discourse, as it affects the definition and description of its notion. «The head thinks where the feet step» [...]. Coexistence with images requires the permanent evolution of the exploration of new approaches to – not just urban - landscapes (Castellote, 2003, p. 28).

The entire proposal, made in terms of habitation and the experience of *ruins*, is a way to establish a story that considers the new ways in which photography, and its reproducibility, are instored in the present day. Its analogue and digital supports permit the emergence of a plastic proposal that validates visual testimony, based on an encounter in the ruins, and all that which surrounds them.

This photographic artwork was constructed in a series of journeys in which, by way of photography, a series of places and spaces in ruins were described and portrayed. In these spaces, a series of important elements for story-telling were found: texts written on the walls, objects on the floors of abandoned houses, which spurred me to reflect on that which travels through and that which remains in these ruins, just as with the figures that visit these places, or tour them. These two concepts are fundamental for the comprehension that, in ruins, time and objects remain, are eternal, and that, on the outside, in our day-to-day, everything is in transit and constant movement. It is for this reason that, in ruins, marks, scars, and memories form testimony. This photographic and audiovisual artwork arouses the senses that weave the strands of memories and forgetfulness, as in that photo album that one's grandparents kept, and which, generation after generation, tell stories, give accounts, tell tales, and reflect on the lives of those who remain and those who have passed on. Those photos covered in plastic, which protects and conserves them. These, stuck to one piece of paper after another, create a book of memories, a visual photographic illustration of the life lived and the time in which it was lived. *Ruins*, just as with these stories told in albums, speak of experience and landscapes, recreated with the same eyes that give testimony.

The city is a house that is constantly reconstructed. The streets are the halls that we walk, and the walls that divide, that make the city a landscape that speaks from the standpoint of permanence, from testimony as the place that shields. Permanence is not only inscribed in time, but also in the subjectivity of that which remains. Objects and places are constructions, many parts of a whole.



The visible and palpable are marked with colors, forms, writings, and messages that tell the story of what happened and continues to happen, and supposes the continuity of their existence, despite those changes that permit regeneration and continuity in those cases. The inscriptions, texts, and individual words narrate stories that are woven together, by way of that which is said, that which, at one time, someone wished to place in their writings, carvings, and infinity of readings.

How do we live? How do we exist? How do we relate, in the day-to-day, to our environment and context? We are constantly-changing figures. Gestation is our initial formative process, and naturally, thereby, we acquire characteristics that are developed over time. This development includes a process of acquisition and training. We receive a name, citizenship, and nationality, structure a personality, a character, and define our appearance, as we are also subject to the passage of time and the way in which this manifests, physically, within us.

The relationship that exists between photography and memory is permanence. It is symbolic and historical, and thus, attends to an information transfer process. As such, it communicates, as Sontage (2006) proposes:

...in terms of the photographic image, a new meaning of the concept of information has been created. Photography is not just a portion of time, but of space. In a world governed by photographic images, all frontiers (the 'frame') seem arbitrary [...] photography reinforces a nominalist viewpoint of the social reality, which consists of small units, in terms of quantity, which seems as infinite as the number of photos that may be taken of anything (p.41).

That which is inscribed, in different forms, in *ruins*, includes: marks, text on walls, textures, or marks on objects. Thus, photographically, all these become symbols and remains, in this artwork, of identity and recognition. It refers to the perception of certain things that, for each observer or spectator, create ties. The symbol is, then, an appropriation of these elements of the *ruins*, by way of a photographic and audiovisual series.

An important case of photographic vision, in which this plastic proposal is made, also concerns the succession of photographs in which different types of ruins are expressed, known in the photography field as a photographic series. Therein, the main intent is to create a narrative, or story, by way of a given number of photographs, as proposed in the first series of photographs that accompany the beginning of this investigation. They are photographs that show places accompanied by elements that grow to be part of the *ruins*, or are ruins themselves. These photographs include objects such as abandoned chairs, deteriorated shoes, sticks and plants on floors and walls, and an important element, the human factor, those who visit and inhabit these places.

In this reference regarding the series, I will pause to quote two photographic works of art, in which I have found elements that connect with my own work, without the need to be present in the ruin: *Silencios* (2010) and *¿De qué sirve una taza?* (2014). Two photographic works of art, by Juan Manuel Echavarría, collected in his book *Works* (2018), in which the author explores places that have been deserted. In the case of *Silencios*, it depicts classrooms that have remained in a state of abandonment, owing to the forced displacement in the sector of the Montes de María township, in Bolívar. Therein, Echavarría shows a series of classrooms in schools that have been abandoned owing to the war, and have deteriorated over time. Here, he seeks to recuperate, by way of this photographic series, the memory of said spaces, inscriptions on walls, thickets, plants growing in and around, and which may also be inhabited by animals and individuals seeking refuge in these ruins. Thus, this photographic series reflects that which, in silence, remains.

On the other hand, *what is the purpose of a cup?* takes the spectator on certain journeys undertaken by Juan Manuel Echevarría and Fernando Grisales (Colombian plastic artist) in Monte de María, on which he visits 18 FARC-EP camps and finds the vestiges of combatants in the objects found: military uniforms, clothing, shoes, notebooks, and other elements that aid this project to find the marks and traces of combatants who live in these secluded areas. One key element in the journey taken in said project is the accompaniment of guides, who, as excombatants, retrace their steps to testify to that which occurred, perhaps to speak about those individuals who are no longer there, nor anywhere, but whom are inscribed in these photographic pieces. These photographic registries are the result of an interest in depicting a series of events that marks these areas, and for them to become a photographic narrative. This central theme is strengthened by the importance of the elements that compose it, the description, as well as the testimony detailed in each photograph, guiding the spectator from beginning to end.

### 3. Methodology

The method-thesis is a proposal, a weaving of paths configured by way of contacts and feelings of figures between figures-earth. In order to research in the arts, this conceptual construct, created by Ana Patricia Noguera, coordinator of the *Environmental Thought* research group at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Manizales branch, enables the joining of diverse feelings, sensitive forms, the senses, meaning, the sensitive, and sensitive expressions, so as to identify aesthetic and artistic research routes, whose pillars, which emerge from *Environmental Thought* (Noguera, 2012), are figure-land relationships. These relationships are expressed through marks, marks, tattoos, presences, and memories, as well as in the permanence of time experienced, as a manifestation of the contemporary aesthetics in figure language.

‘To feel’, is a verb which names various ways to become sensitive. Herein, another distant, but not necessarily opposite, nor contradictory, path is proposed for the methodology of scientific research and logical processes, as said method mutates when art violates the systemic procedure of logic, as the essence of art lies in the plethora of sensitive relationships that exist between humanity and nature.

Marks, traces, and tattoos are concepts which are considered ‘geopoetically’, as are presences and memories, in accordance with the proposals of José Luis Pardo (1991). ‘Geopoetics’, in this proposal, is comprehended at three times, as in Pardo’s writings, and are important times for the interiorization of this concept, and finding the emergence between sensitivity, spatial reflection on spaces, and the writing of the land, geography, and the way in which we figure into it.

The first time is geography, which, in Pardo’s (1991) words:

...is writing about the land. To speak of «writing about the land» means that the land itself writes and describes its language, without one. Its language is the landscape, its letters mobile and immobile things that decorate and conform the space: mountains on a plateau, shoes on a table, threads under a microscope. The land (d-)escribes itself in its folding and unfolding (p. 31).

Writing is conceived as a life language that narrates, tells, shows, and materializes not only on surfaces, but also reads and observes these to experience the landscape. It is poetry that invites us to breath nature in.

The second time, presented by Pardo, discusses the inscription of the earth and nature (Pardo, 1991), of evoking the mark that penetrates the natural surface, and comprehending then, the sensation of carving, from our own skin, the expansion of the senses of our pores, to achieve a connection with this surface of the earth, with the territory which we inhabit. Pardo states (1991):

Geography also means «to inscribe in the land»: from the time at which one places a sign on the land (any fragment of nature capable of being a territory),

a letter, «natural» space has been duplicated with a second, artificial space (poetry). This artifice is not, however, deceitful: only by way of an artificial space (a geopoetic *a priori*) may the natural path be perceived, may the being become sensitive, as nature not only enjoys hiding, but is completely insensitive. Let us imagine any inscription on the land: footprints on the path, grooves in the dirt or trenches: double registry. On one hand, these are functional objects, alloplastic tools of the story of the adaptation of man to its environment, and of the environment to its inhabitant [...] graphic, written not on papyrus or sheets of paper, but on the land and skin - tattoo, rite, torture (p. 31).

Thus, *ruins* write our stories with other letters. Other forms of testimony describe us as territories of memories and recollections. *Ruins* are like cracks that mark and tattoo carvings in trees or scars that mark our bodies, not only on the physical plane, but also on the sensory plane.

At a third time, to conclude, Pardo finalizes the construction of the sediments of this concept, which uses bodily senses, the body-earth, natural figures.

Still, in a third sense, geography may also denominate «writing about the earth». «About», here, has a double meaning. In the first, similar to «inscription in the earth», it defines the concrete operation of writing. In the second, it refers to all writing operations, as writing entails (if only the nostalgia of) a support, of a supporting surface, inscription, «presupposes» solid ground or



archi-land [...]. Finally, geography is «description of the land”, as is the trajectory traced by an arrow, in its path toward the target. To describe a space is to move through it, place oneself in its breast, within, to inhabit it. But also, it is said that a map describes a territory: describing a space is to host it, paint, duplicate, populate it with signs, or aesthetographic icons, a priori, *ad hoc* of its path sensed (Pardo, 1991, p. 31).

Thus, in this proposal for the interpretation of *ruins*, from the standpoint of the artistic practice, that geopoetics can address, both individually and in community, the entire flow of writings and inscriptions created by a territory are included, as is a description of the various spaces that compose these. It seeks to understand the way in which these spaces and architectures behave, and thus occupy nature's path in the different aspects of culture: beliefs, morals, knowledge, art, sharing in community to live in society.

The following emerges from a reflection on a series of elements inscribed in the relationship between the body and the land, which are constructed based upon the concept of *ruins*, and from the geopoetic perspective: memory, time, space, signs, and symbols which prevail in the search for the senses, and in skin-to-skin contact that breaks at a time in which:

.....the schizophrenia of the West [...] that schizophrenia as a predominance of a power relationship over another which could be called the «citizen», or better yet, another which we could also name, from the perspective of environmental philosophy, of the dissolution of discourses of power of subjectivity and objectivity, have had a strong presence in all world environments in modern life (Noguera, 2004, p. 40).

The investigation of the relationship between figures and land is expressed herein by way of poetic language and connections between contact surfaces (Mesa, 2010), which occur in *ruins*, as a principal field of study, at three times: the experience (that endured), reflection (interpretation), and creation (writing and artwork). This point of view clarifies a proposal of creation characterized by the careful gaze and prudence in inhabiting the *ruins*, both in terms of the ecosystemic space and the architectonic and bodily, from a perspective created by environmental thought, and which halts to thoroughly explore the feelings manifested in the intercorporalities of *ruins*.

The three methodothesis times write a path to rethink the ways in which poetry acts as form of being. At the first time, experience speaks of that endured, of situations which left an important imprint, expressed with words that become narrations, in dialogues with the spaces encountered, in figures with so much to tell, and from which a need emerges to express a feeling.

That of reflection is a moment in which to rethink where nature is, and where figures are, so as to comprehend why *ruins* speak to us from inhabited spaces, and why, in this inhabitation they are conserved or destroyed, given that beyond the language of the earth, these places and spaces become the language of *ruins*.

The time of creation is the manifestation of intangible stories, of experiences of individuals and those places that they have constructed, on this path, the concept of ruins, as written by José Luis Pardo (1991):

...the artist causes us to forget that this is their own story, their own canvas which is inventing these mythical and relational topos, that which tattoos us on the skin of their plastic space, as a gaze caught in the trap of its own reflection. It is not the artist who returns to the origin of the story. It is not the painter who returns to the origins of a wild hand, without divorcing flexible, resistant matter or the sources of an eye unspoiled by the alphabetical epidemic. It is the amnesiac memory that creates, in us, an illusion of that beginning, based on the current state of our illusions (p. 29).

Creation is configured from the standpoint of the writing of the earth, geopoetics speaks by way of that which is tangible, which leads us to experience an image, as a result of multiple incidents, multiple interpretations: the visual, video, and fixed image, which enable contact with a variety of figures.

#### 4. Topic of reflection: What are ruins?

Geopoetics, in accordance with that proposed in the book *El reencantamiento del mundo* (Noguera, 2004), emerge in the form of the epistemological, ethical, and aesthetic question: how does man inhabit this earth? This question refers to the historical and social development of our form of inhabitation of the environment, the dwelling, in the sense of permanence and form in which places and territories are experienced, as feelings are expressed. However, it also refers to the wisdom that lies within the human dwelling, and fills this with sensitivity and respect. It refers to whether we inhabit the earth respectfully, and our responsibility, as humans, to preserve our environment. Thus, beings may inhabit the common house, which generously provides us shelter, as inhabitants of this earth.

Geopoetics explores those dominant forms by way of which cultures seize the land and politically impugn the horrible ways in which a small group of people has been able to dominate this, technification, and development, public policies that regulate the exploitation of natural resources, and for economic purposes, or those of few, as well as wars, and indolence regarding living beings.

Inhabitation and the dwelling come about as a foundation of our permanence on earth, and all that which it constitutes: harmony, respect, and coexistence. Environmental thought permits comprehension of this being, in the place of all human spaces: the earth, which introduces us to thought rooted in the landscape that we form. Environmental thought permits us to return home, which not only follows the logic of and reason for life, as the environmental philosopher, Augusto Ángel Maya (1993) would say, but also follows enigmas characteristic of the poetry of the earth.

Environmental thought places us in another place of enunciation, different from that of official environmentalism, beyond that of the ecological. We are situated in a place in which symbols configure the cultural. Social notions, powerful constructive and deconstructive forces of the instituted and the institutive emerge therefrom. Above all, creative and transformative power arise.

Artists' ethical-aesthetic responsibility confronts a crisis of incalculable proportions: a crisis of the entirety of western civilization, and of a modern culture which seeks to be universal. The twilight of our culture was expressed by artists at the end of the 19th century, who felt the cry of nature within. Artists, such as David Caspar Friedrich (19th century German painter) and Carl Gustav Carus' (German painter, 1789-1869) pictorial work expressed *ruins* by way of romantic landscapes and large architectural constructions, which inspired important poems and recitals that have remained, over time.

Within this framework, *ruins* are events that mark. They are imprints, remembrances, evocations, the presence or absence of forms of inhabitation.

The semantic dimension of *ruins* is quite extensive, if it is considered that these may be understood from many fields: environmental, social, and architectonic. *Ruins* may also be considered deteriorated figures, or figures that emerge, and which hold life. This last point of view causes a rupture, with the way in which the concept of ruins is proposed. It is decoupled from the traditional paradigm, based upon which it is interpreted, which defines ruins as "damage, perdition, cadence, and the fall of a person, family, community, or state" or *ruins* as the "remains of one or more ruined building" (Real Academia Española). More romantically, in the history of art, one of the important questions that lead me to reflect on ruins, as proposed by Rafael Gómez-Alonso (2016) surfaced:

During romanticism, a period which, depending on the cultural and geographical context, extends from the end of the 18th century to the middle of the 19th century, approximately, the cult of ruins supposes a metaphor of the lost spiritual world. Ruins are treated with a melancholic, nostalgic character which alludes to loneliness, abandonment, and destruction, solitary areas, or forgotten places. A metaphor for the stay and the rift that it means, and has left pass to be reinterpreted with certain fusion to the damage, especially in the recreation of descriptions of cemeteries and gravestones mistreated by neglect and the passage of time (p. 40).

With this search, one may walk paths which, in our era, were expressed as aesthetic, contemporary manifestations. Aesthetic manifestations are things of nature and life which, permeated by our experience, generate an aesthetic appreciation, a feeling about the experience of interacting with them. The contemporary situates us in a diffuse field, regarding artistic creation. Álvaro Fernández-Bravo (2016) says that "contemporary art is a land of diffuse limits, and this indefiniteness of borders would seem to be among its distinctive traits" (p. 231). Within contemporary artistic practices is the idea of *ruins* presented in this plastic proposal, which delves into the dissolution of the artistic object in multiple viewpoints of creation. It is then that photography permits me to inhabit creative spaces from different



perspectives, and artwork forms part of the contemporary aesthetic project, in those characteristics salvaged by Castellote (2003):

The contemporary aesthetic project is exactly that search for limitless diversity and multiplicity of procedures, new ways to produce images, based on the idea for which the world begins to be understood in the form of a complex, extraordinary, and unstable plot. On incorporation of these concepts, the extension and diversity of contemporary production may be perceived, with the final support being the photographic basis per se. As such, in this production, there is a clear intention and growing emphasis - although it is not novel - in the movement of the object toward the project, including an intense interest in the creative process and the succession of the different stages of the work procedures (Castellote, 2003, p. 323).

As such, artwork not only focuses on visual intervention, but also metaphorically constructs and reconstructs *ruins*, as a manifestation of and testimony to life, such that it is known as an architectonic construction, as the object encountered, the figure marked by different times and spaces. It should be noted that, in this construction and configuration of ruins, the way in which these contacts are established stands out. The approach to these spaces and places, beyond technical procedures, is via the sensible scope and artist self-recognition.

While in this study, *ruins* are circumscribed as a plastic proposal, from the contemporary point of view, which supposes an opening in the field of conceptualization, reflection, and artistic production, Bravo (2016) says that "...there is a certain consensus in that the term contemporaneity supposes a degree of disciplinary aperture and absence of barriers (or walls, or limits) between symbolic languages, or even a considerable "expansion" of the aesthetic object, with an echo in critical approaches that accompany and contribute to the definition of the object itself" (p. 231).

As such, considering these characteristics, based upon which the contemporary state-of-the-art violates traditional fine arts proposals, this aesthetic perspective permits me, from a self-referential point of view, to express a series of concerns, questions, and reflections that, within the construction and reconstruction of *ruins*, both in the physical and sensorial senses, reconfigure the object, in reference to the different elements that I find in these places in ruins. Its responsibility as a work of art takes it to a point in which it is yet another element in dialogue, and a testimony that narrates the man-nature relationship, considering cultural and social aspects, which necessarily enter into the discussion of the concept.

The search for a new language that expresses, from new perspectives, is that which contemporaneity provides us, and on which this study focuses. Analogous and digital languages in new technologies expand the dimension of the plastic proposal in which ruins unfold, as an aesthetic manifestation. Thus, firstly, this visual search, within photography, led me in the succession of stories directed toward an encounter with the fixed image, and later, adhered also to the moving image.

This contributes to expand its aesthetic idea, the images of *ruins* presented in this artwork, then, are established as resistance and as a habitat. This incites and provokes readers toward these photographic and audiovisual creations, and spurs them to elaborate. From this perspective of photographic creation, I find a passage of the book *Mapas abiertos. Fotografía latinoamericana, 1991-2002*, by Castellote (2002), to be pertinent:

To conclude, we may highlight the importance of the contemporary, documentary, or experimental photographic aesthetic, no matter which of these, as that which interests us is being confronted with an image that permits us to nourish the hope for resistance and freedom. Resistance, by utilizing different procedures that may guarantee the endeavor and an artistic experience different from generalized automatism. Liberation, because these different procedures, when joined creatively, point to an inexhaustible repertoire of combinations that make photography more provocative and invulnerable (p. 324).

The path that this investigation has permitted me to follow has led me to understand that, currently, in our society, there are diverse social and cultural dynamics. Social progress dynamics, such as occupation, technification, industrialization, ways to occupy, as arbitrary societies find in nature, and earth itself, a way to use a consumable resource for human benefit. Said dynamics have been questioned by the symbolic proposals of environmental

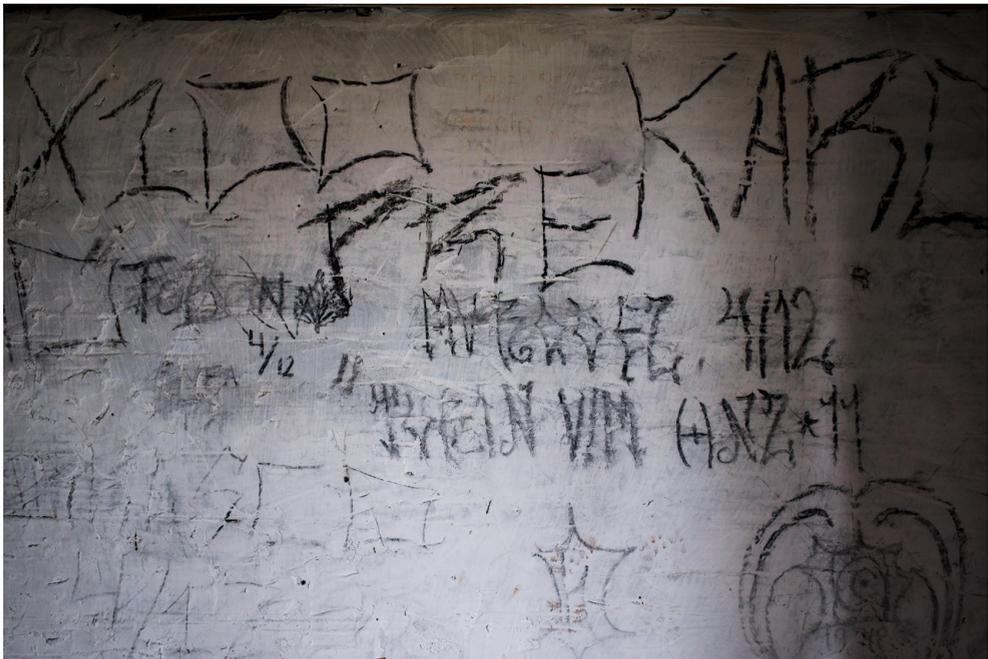
thought, and which are marked as a route to consider human action on the natural, human action in the natural, and from a loving comprehension of the languages of the earth that we inhabit.

## 5. To close

The main objective of this aesthetic investigation proposal has been to propose hopeful reflections for the cultivation of new environmental practices, and thus recognize *ruins* as a profound aesthetic experience of resistance. *Ruins* express forms of crucial stages of human history, in which progress was made a uniquely political, economic, and social end. Also, as a purpose of aesthetic investigation, *ruins* invite one to return, to conjointly think and experience, culturally and artistically, the ways in which we relate to nature and the emerging repairing action in culture and art, as such.

In this investigation, the aesthetic experience of *ruins* has permitted us to experience diverse human-nature relationships, and encounter ways to lovingly, respectfully, fairly, and healthfully inhabit these.

The plastic photographic proposals fulfilled the objective of expanding the gaze before details found in these spaces inhabited during the investigation. Precisely the recognition of these surfaces enabled the series proposal, by way of a story, in photographs in their different forms: digital, analogue, and instant, which target different aesthetic experiences,



from the most traditional to the most experimental, based on action and *performance*, in terms of artistic creation.

This study, finally, transforms into a search for new spaces, so as to reconstruct and reconsider social and cultural dynamics of the time in which we live: times of hardship and scarcity, of otherness, on which the poet Hölderlin commented, at the close of the 18th century: "Why have poets in times of hardship?". *Ruins* as places that contain a series of inscriptions and experiences, marks, prints, absences, and memories, that express who we are.

This investigation opens the door to a long path of plastic *ruins*, a path that stretches forth and seeks to continue to grow and be magnified. Work on transmedia languages and narratives should be continued, such that they may promote not only digital, but also analogue support. Breaking through the borders of the different forms of expression, in which images are constructed, at a time in which visual production is massified, and in which proposals such as this explore the possibilities for the configuration of new strategies surrounding photographic production, are a small step forward. However, that which nourishes the possibility of photographic artwork to be broadened, via a plethora of procedures, not just traditional ones, aiming to generate new forms of expression and interpretation, must be sought.

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