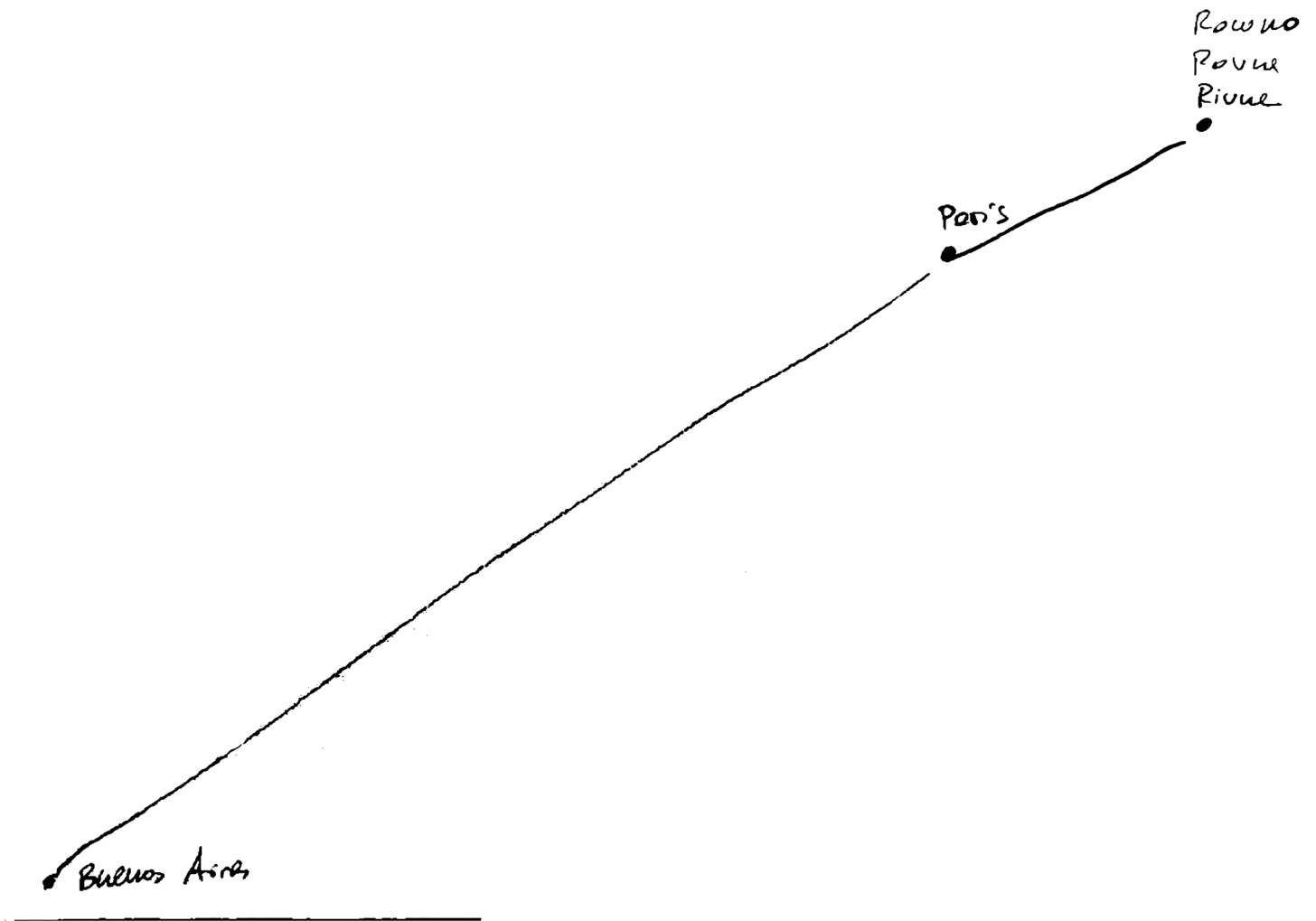




DORA GARCÍA

Walter Benjamin ha muerto

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I have seen the future, and it's much like the present, only longer.

Dan Quisenberry

The verb tense we call the “present perfect” involves a curious temporality in that it describes an action that belongs to both the present and the past; or put another way, it refers to the past in the present, equal partners and contemporaries, dual yet non-oscillatory, the past retaining its past-ness within an ongoing present-ness. In this, it is faithful to one of the deepest and most nuanced aspects of our lived experience; it captures the ever-presence of the past in an ever-passing present.

Walter Benjamin ha muerto (Walter Benjamin Is Dead), Dora García's current exhibition at the Galería Elba Benítez, might be thought of as embodying this particular and peculiar verb tense. The exhibition takes as its starting point García's “reading” of the lives and words of a small group of radical 20th-century intellectual and cultural figures: Asja Lācis, the Latvian theater director and pedagogue; Carla Lonzi, the Italian art critic and feminist; Alejandra Pizarnik, the Argentinian poet; and (somewhat more obliquely and yet still centrally) the German theorist and critic Walter Benjamin. From these figures of the past, and in keeping with her own distinctive artistic practice, García has created a series of interrelated works in various

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text- and drawing-based formats, including wall and floor drawings, drawings on paper, and mixed-media objects. But while grounded in intellectual history, García's own practice is not one of intellectual biography; instead, in creating the art works on view in *Walter Benjamin ha muerto*, García's own "reading" (and writing) of the readings and writings of these historical figures has become part of the story of history, a history that extends (and cannot not extend) to include García herself and the present she (along with us) inhabits. As always, a portrait reveals as much about the portrayer as the portrayed.

This drive to pursue, possess and renew the presence of the past in the present both entails and yet enables a great deal of temporal freedom throughout García's practice, a freedom explicitly expressed here in *Hopscotchs*, a set of drawings that present the basic biographical facts of the exhibition's protagonists (Lācis, Lonzi and Pizarnik) as floor diagrams modeled after the children's game of hopscotch, i.e. in which sequence is determined not by chronology but by chance and choice. In these works, the reference to Julio Cortázar's structurally experimental novel *Rayuela* (Hopscotch) is explicit; more implicit is the challenge to the notion of history as driven by the ineluctable forward-moving progress of dialectical materialism, a notion inseparable from much of the 20th-century political thought that informed these same thinkers.

But again, García's practice is not ludic or theoretical but rather powerfully and persistently empathetic, and something far less playful or abstruse permeates *Walter Benjamin ha muerto*: namely, a spirit of disappointment, of disillusion, of disenchantment, possibly of despair. This becomes explicit in the set of works collectively titled *Cartas del desencanto* (Letters of Disappointment), in which García draws (literally and metaphorically) on private expressions of disappointment in the diaries and private correspondence of the exhibition's three female protagonists, radically committed and politically engaged women who embraced with hopes and dreams the Angel of History and were left, individually and collectively, shattered in its inevitable flight. Walter Benjamin has (past perfect) died, and therefore Walter Benjamin is (present), and will remain (future), dead. As for Walter Benjamin, so for hopes and dreams. The present is anything but perfect. And yet it too belongs to the future.

George Stolz

Dora García (Valladolid, 1965; lives and works in Oslo) works across a variety of media — especially performance, installation and drawing, but also extending to video, theater, film, text and relational projects — using her practice to mine the boundaries between reality and its forms of representation, which in turn form part of that same reality. Central to García's practice is a sensitivity to the negotiated aspect of all cultural artifacts, in their authorial creation as well as their social, cultural, temporal and political reception.

García has had solo exhibitions at the Fondazione Baruchello (Rome, 2024); M HKA– Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp (2023); Amant Foundation (New York, 2023); Es Baluard Museu d'Art Contemporani (Palma de Mallorca, 2023); Patio Herreriano Museo de Arte (Valladolid, 2022, 2004); Centro Cultural Conde Duque (Madrid, 2022); European Kunsthalle Wien (Vienna, 2021); Rose Art Museum (Waltham, 2020); MOAD Museum of Art and Design (Miami, 2020); MNCARS Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid, 2018, 2008, 2005); MUAC Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo (Mexico City, 2017); Fundació Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona, 2017); CA2M Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (Móstoles, 2017); IVAM Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (Valencia, 2016); Power Plant (Toronto, 2015); Centro José Guerrero (Granada, 2013); Rijksakademie (Amsterdam, 2011); Kunsthalle Bern (2010); Moderna Museet (Stockholm, 2010); CGAC Centro Gallego de Arte Contemporánea (2009); MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (2009, 2003); Centre d'Art Santa Mònica (Barcelona, 2007); S.M.A.K. Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (Ghent, 2006); MUSAC Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León (León, 2005); CAAC Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (Sevilla, 1999) and elsewhere.

García represented Spain in the 54th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia in 2011 and was selected to participate again in the Biennale di Venezia in 2015. She also was chosen for dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel in 2012; Skulptur Projekte Münster 07 in 2007; and the 8th Istanbul Biennial in 2003.

Walter Benjamin ha muerto will be Dora García's first solo exhibition at the Galería Elba Benítez, which now represents the artist.