



MISTRAL

Journal of Latin American Women's
Intellectual & Cultural History

Sepulchral Intermediality in Paula Markovitch's *Armando y Genoveva* (2013)

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To cite this article: Inela Selimović. 2023. "Sepulchral Intermediality in Paula Markovitch's *Armando y Genoveva* (2013)." *Mistral: Journal of Latin American Women's Intellectual & Cultural History* 3 (1): 100-114, <https://doi.org/10.21827/mistral.3.41203>

Abstract: This article explores Paula Markovitch's intermedial reconstruction of her parents' public (in)visibility in *Armando y Genoveva* (2013). Markovitch's intermedial choices—particularly those moments in the documentary when recorded voices are superimposed on the scenes that brim with her parents' artwork—contain a focused political significance related to her parents' artistic conviviality and existential fragility. As the recorded audio footage and the filmed artwork further intersect with the filmmaker's provocative touch and retrospective voice-over, the parents' key identity traits as well as their uncertain sense of social belonging take center stage. Such intermedial interactions also begin a process of immortalizing the parents' unbroken commitment to artistic expression despite their life-long isolation in response to Argentina's political violence (1976–1983).

Keywords: Paula Markovitch; Latin American Cinema; Intermediality; *Armando y Genoveva*

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Critical art is an art that aims to produce a new perception of the world,
and therefore to create a commitment to its transformation.

(Jacques Rancière 2015, 150)

Paula Markovitch's *Armando y Genoveva* (2013) draws on innovative aesthetic techniques to create a cinematic homage to her parents as artists and political dissidents.¹ The film's novel spirit stems not so much from Markovitch's focus on merging the political with the personal, but rather from her use of intermediality to peer into and document her parents' art-filled past. *Armando y Genoveva*'s intermediality primarily involves the unpredictable connections between the parents' audio letters and their recovered artwork. Such media-based oscillations and interactions lock in the film's structure as well as its multifaceted story from the outset. The result is what Ágnes Pethő (2011) conceptualizes as meaningfully capricious interconnections among different media in contemporary cinema that allow works to communicate in novel ways aesthetically. According to Pethő, such aesthetic tendencies foster a space "of 'in-between' that is continually constructed and deconstructed by the ebb and flow of the images, by their appearance and disappearance" (9). In *Armando y Genoveva*, intermedial relations are based on said "in-betweenness" not solely to convey "concrete, memorable images of formidable power" but also to shed light on the parents' past that concurrently anchors as well as unsettles their present (Nichols 2017, 83). Such intermedial interactions ultimately initiate a process of immortalizing the parents' unbroken commitment to artistic expression despite their life-long isolation in response to Argentina's political violence (1976–1983).²

By 2001, the filmmaker lost both parents. Armando Markovitch died in 1995 and Genoveva Edelstein passed away six years later. Markovitch's decision to incorporate their previously recorded voices into the film intermedially breathes new life into the posthumous images we watch. These images are also enveloped by the sepulchral sounds of Mexican composer and artist Sergio Gurrola. Having composed for other films by Markovitch—*El premio* (2011), *El actor principal* (2019), and *Ángeles* (2024)—Gurrola has remarked that sound in her films often "indaga en la voz humana como signo de resistencia."³ In *Armando y Genoveva*, Gurrola's disquieting soundscape frames the film's grief-stricken excavation of the parents' creativity in order to resist oblivion. Gurrola's dissonance-focused sounds highlight *Armando y Genoveva*'s emotional tension and solidify the film's somber mood. As the filmmaker unpacks, wraps, cleans,

¹ Paula Markovitch's debut film, *El premio* (2011), was nominated for numerous awards and was awarded the Silver Bear for Outstanding Artistic Achievement at the 61st edition of the Berlin International Film Festival. In addition to *Armando y Genoveva*, Markovitch subsequently directed *Cuadros en la oscuridad* (2017), *El actor principal* (2019), and *Ángeles* (in post-production in August, 2023). As the end credits reveal, *Armando y Genoveva* was filmed in November 2006 in Córdoba, Argentina and was edited and made available virtually for the first time by Paloma López Carrillo in México City in April 2013.

² Argentina's military dictatorship led to the killings of approximately 30,000 left-wing political dissidents under General Jorge Rafael Videla's command.

³ Sergio Gurrola, email exchange on 15 September 2021.

and caresses some of the approximately 400 art pieces, *Armando y Genoveva* also reaffirms itself as a unique artefact of intermedial mourning.

This notion of intermedial mourning singularly unites the past and present, thus preventing the formation of dualism and fleetingly summoning Homi Bhabha's notion of "the third space." In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha states that "the third space" does not "merely recall the past as social course or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The past-present becomes part of the necessity, not nostalgia of living" (7). Different degrees of this particular liminality and, more relevantly, Pethő's notion of "in-betweenness" become perceivable as the intermedial relationship between the parents' paintings and audio missives intensifies in *Armando y Genoveva*. Such intermedial intensifications engender novel discernments about the artists' intricate trajectories and their sociopolitical realities. By analyzing the interplay of intimate media from her parents' memorable lives, this article explores Markovitch's intermedial reconstruction of Armando Markovitch's and Genoveva Edelstein's public (in)visibility.

Intimate Distance

Although Markovitch has spent most of her adult life away from her parents' home in Argentina, her closeness to them permeates both her cinematographic and literary work. As already noted by various scholars, *El premio* (2011) was inspired by the filmmaker's childhood vis-à-vis her parents' political past.⁴ *Cuadros en la oscuridad* (2017) was also largely based on her father and his struggles to engage with fellow artists beyond his immediate setting. In *Cacerías imaginarias* (2022), a collection of meditative essays, poetry, and aesthetic musings about film, Markovitch ruminates about the anguish that the death of her mother had caused. She explains in a contemplative mode, "Cuando mi mamá murió, miré a mi alrededor: las horas seguían pasando, los niños reían, los perros ladraban. Sin embargo, el mundo ya no era el mismo mundo. Los detalles más habituales eran asombrosos. ¿Cómo podía ser que hubiera cambiado todo, y al mismo tiempo no hubiera cambiado nada? La realidad se había vuelto inexplicable" (Markovitch 2022, 100). In *Armando y Genoveva*, these kinds of existential bewilderments reemerge intermedially, but now they concern the life and death of both of her parents. The parents' political past also places the documentary's main argument into the larger context of Argentina's post-dictatorial cinema without aligning it entirely with those of, among others, Albertina Carri's *Los rubios* (2003), María Inés Roqué's *Papá Iván* (2004), or Nicolás Prividera's *M* (2007). According to Gonzalo Aguilar's *New Argentine Film: Other Worlds* (2008), these filmmakers have been "direct victims of state terrorism [...] and had begun to use film as a means of expression" to explore, question, and reflect on their parents' explicit involvement in the *montonero* movement and subsequent deaths (156).⁵

⁴ See Geoffrey Maguire (2017); Inela Selimović (2018, 2022, and 2023); Alessandro Rocco (2021 and 2023); and Guillermo Severiche (2023).

⁵ See Aguilar (2013) regarding additional remarks about the "difficulties of reaching personal enunciation" when it comes to documentaries by the children of *desaparecidos* (209). Additionally, *Armando y Genoveva* may be closer *aesthetically* to some of the cultural expressions that Jordana Blejmar clusters epistemologically under the notion of "playful aesthetics" (2016, 4). In *Playful Memories: The Autofictional Turn in Post-Dictatorship Argentina* (2016) Blejmar weds "autofiction" with "playful aesthetics" in order to explore how certain artists and filmmakers of the post-dictatorial generation "are characterized by the use of humor and by an original interplay between imaginative investments of the past, the fictionalization of the self, visual collages, and artistic modifications of documentary archives" in order to respond to the Argentine era of political violence (4). Intermedial tendencies peer through much

Markovitch's *Armando y Genoveva*, in contrast, captures the consequences of her parents' *subdued* political dissidence through their social and economic decline despite the return of democracy in Argentina.

Markovitch's intermedial layering manifests temperately. The director contextualizes through voice-over alternatingly and layers in the parents' artwork and their recorded voices in changeable ways. In the opening moments of *Armando y Genoveva*, Markovitch's voice-over narration lays out the context for the making of the film: she has arrived in Córdoba, Argentina to recover her parents' art (Fig. 1).⁶ The filmmaker's voice-over here seeks to clarify, but it is the interconnectivity of the included artworks—in conjunction with the audio missives and subsequently her touch—that illuminates the aesthetic vitality of the film. Such an approach to intermediality differs from what Cynthia Tompkins (2013) notes regarding Brazilian Jorge Furtado's *O homem que copiava/The Man Who Copied* (2003). According to Tompkins, intermediality principally manifests by merging “cartoon panels, animated cartoons, television clips, and self-reflexive sections” in Furtado's film (2013, 65). More specifically, Furtado unfolds the film's intermedial attributes principally through “pastiche” (2013, 65). As Markovitch strengthens the connection between different media in *Armando y Genoveva*, she instead loosely turns her film into a singular multimedia topography without suspending each medium's intrinsic specificities. This is particularly evident if we consider Janna Houwen's *Film and Video Intermediality* (2017) in which she elucidates on the production of intermedial settings without deferring their individual traits. By merging different media, clarifies Houwen, “the distinction between two media can form a persistent yet productive gap in intermedial objects” (2017, 7).⁷ These “gaps” are particularly at work in *Armando y Genoveva* as the filmmaker's voice-over contextualizes but rarely comments on individually unearthed artworks. The filmmaker additionally establishes an equally interesting paradox between her voice-over interventions and the parents' recorded missives. The paradox materializes as an intimate distance—namely, the voice-over does not establish a posthumous conversation with the recorded missives, even if they are structurally interconnected.



Fig. 1: Paula Markovitch arrives at the parents' home.

of Blejmar's concept and well as the works of many filmmakers and artists in her study, including those of Albertina Carri, Mariana Eva Pérez, Félix Bruzzone, Lucila Quieto, and Lola Arias.

⁶ The images included throughout are reproduced with permission from Paula Markovitch.

⁷ Houwen seeks to understand the specificity of different media in order to define their unique intermedial bonding. She writes that “if medium specificity is dependent on differences with other media, a medium cannot be regarded as an autonomous, isolated unit. It is specified by other media” (10).

Markovitch's hand-held camera remains haptically intimate from the outset within different storage spaces, wardrobes, bedrooms, and attics in her parents' home. We are consequently permitted close contact with copious artworks as well as their condition: framed, rolled up, unframed, impeccably protected, or damaged.⁸ By foregrounding hapticity, the film also implies experiences that exist beyond the audiovisual realm. According to Laura Marks's seminal work, *The Skin of the Film* (2000), haptic images "invite the viewer to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way, and thus facilitate the experience of other sensory impressions" (2). For Marks, film and video can convey certain sensory experiences that transcend their audiovisual qualities, that is, their intrinsic traits. Appealing to touch in *Armando y Genoveva*, as subsequently discussed from yet another angle in this essay, reinforces the notion of "haptic visuality," but from a unique intermedial vantage point (Marks 2000, xi). On the one hand, the intimate close-ups invite us to feel the canvases visually. On the other, the filmmaker's free hand enters the frame on several occasions to feel the discovered paintings protractedly. The filmmaker's provocative touch also invites us to think "how the sense of touch may embody memories that are unavailable to vision," and to contemplate the likelihood of the filmmaker's familial remembrances during those moments (Marks 2000, 22). The presentation of the paintings in *Armando y Genoveva* furthermore contrasts sharply with what Pethő refers to as "the Hitchcockian painting"—namely, a "painterly image [which] emerges as the medium of the unknown, threatening to throw the mind of the character (and implicitly of the viewer) into the abysmal depths of the uncanny and the unidentifiable" (2011, 7). Markovitch's intermedial process remains probing yet also elucidatory: her presentation of the found artworks is framed by the superimposed parents' voices. As a result, the parents' audio recordings posthumously recreate their artistic impulses.

Recovered from a multi-year compilation of cassettes (from approximately 1992 through 1995), the audio recordings keep on offering different glimpses into the artists' everyday life.⁹ The filmmaker explains in *Armando y Genoveva* how these recordings, above all, served as an epistolary connection to her parents:

Cuando vine a vivir en México, mis padres y yo a veces nos comunicábamos por casetes porque en esa época no había mails y las cartas, bueno, las cartas tardaban mucho. Me lo mandaban por cartas también, pero [casetes] eran una manera de mandarme su voz. Y yo también a veces les contestaba con casetes. Pero esos casetes fueron y vinieron y se nos habían olvidado hasta que los encontré.

(04:38–05:01)

By interconnecting several hundred artworks with these recordings in *Armando y Genoveva*, Markovitch essentially continues to ensconce a haptic invitation not solely to the parents' world of artistic exuberance but also existential fragility. Viewed from Pethő's vantage point, such

⁸ Yapeyú is a neighborhood where the family lived. The parents used to gift paintings to their neighbors. Toward the end of the film, we enter one of the neighbors' homes and encounter several paintings from both parents on their walls.

⁹ Interview with Markovitch on 8 March 2022. Although the parents' recordings do not address the specificities of their socio-economic context and survival, their old age coincided with Argentina's economically turbulent post-dictatorial era during and beyond the first democratically elected president, Raúl Alfonsín (1983-1989): Carlos Menem's neoliberal policies-driven presidency (1989–1999); Fernando de la Rúa's (1999–2002) leadership and ultimate resignation during the economic collapse; and the brief leadership of Adolfo Rodríguez Saá (2001). The filmmaker reconnects with the parents' home and artwork in 2006 after the presidency of Eduardo Duhalde (2002-2003) and during Néstor Kirchner's government (2003–2007).

invitations appear to facilitate a sensation-based closeness between the viewer and depicted settings. The “sensuous mode,” Pethő further specifies, “invites the viewer to literally get in touch with a world portrayed not at a distance but at the proximity of entangled synesthetic sensations, and resulting in a cinema that can be perceived in terms of music, painting, architectural forms or haptic textures” (2011, 5). The notion of “haptic textures” heightens as the filmmaker engages a variety of thematically dissimilar excerpts from a total of six hours of her parents’ audio missives.

The interplay of the recordings and recovered art additionally opens up a range of “sensuous interfaces” wherein the filmmaker’s physical presence and memory-oriented journeys intersect in unpredictable ways (Pethő, 2011, 5).¹⁰ This interaction brings us deeper into some of the most intimate crevices of the parents’ lived and stymied pathways, capturing intermedially that which Markovitch wrote in *Cacerías imaginarias*, “mis padres eran insiliados, vivíamos escondidos. En aquel tiempo era importante vivir en cierto grado de aislamiento. Cualquier confianza infantil hubiera podido provocar una tragedia” (2022, 19). Unlike the text from *Cacerías imaginarias*, which addresses the daughter’s anguish through the poetry of her writing, the images of her parents’ found artworks exhibit their emotional potency most palpably when they aesthetically intermingle with her voice-over, audio missives, as well as composed and natural sounds. According to Bill Nichols, voice-over narrations typically work in harmony with images to translate their conceptual and emotional value. “Photographic images,” Nichols explains, “do not present concepts: they embody them. [...] The commentary, as spoken language, can name and define poverty, affluence, or fear directly” (2017, 73). Although the director’s voice-over principally contextualizes the parents’ biographies, her life is inherently implied in theirs. In other words, her commentary also indirectly “embodies” certain autobiographical elements. For Geraldo Sarno, the act of making documentaries involves the notion of inexorable invasion, since a “documentary happens when something in my relation to the other is illuminated and, to some extent, the other invades me” (quoted in Avellar 2013, 17). Pablo Piedras likewise reminds us that at the outset of the 21st century in Argentina “los documentales autobiográficos suelen recurrir a la voz en off de los directores para narrar aspectos de sus vivencias, para trazar los interrogantes que se hallan en el núcleo del relato, así como para remitirse en forma retrospectiva a la historia personal” (1995, 83). Piedras’s characterization is particularly relevant to *Armando y Genoveva*’s subtle intimations about the Argentine political turmoil that had long dominated the Markovitchs’ lives. Intermediality, as “a veritable art of in-betweenness,” moreover, not solely facilitates but also congeals the director’s attempts at dissecting what Piedras calls “la historia personal” (Pethő 2011, 1; Piedras 1995, 83). Nichols denominates such documentary dissections as “personal portrait films” because they “place their focus on the individual rather than the social issue ... [and] demonstrate an intimate connection between the personal and the political” (187). Markovitch appeals to intermediality in order to capture certain layers of said “connection,” especially since the superimposed recordings can also be viewed as the parents’ audio diaries. The recordings are thematically heterogenous and emotionally layered, but they nearly always return to the importance of the parents’ artistic conviviality. As noted earlier, the interconnectedness between these media is supported by Gurrola’s soundtrack, which heightens the film’s emotional tenor and builds a singularly innovative “question of the voice” in the film (Nichols 2017, 49). Gurrola’s disquieting sounds frame the parents’ recorded voices and accentuate their confessional bent.

¹⁰ Another significant intermedial layer is an online compilation of the parents’ artwork, their biographies, and art arrangements www.armandoygenoveva.org. Accessed on 10 May 2020.

Although Genoveva and Armando often converse about their love of painting, politics continues to lurk behind their seemingly lighthearted exchanges. Armando's subtle remarks on his country's past exemplify the idea of a "historical world" that Nichols sees as an essential component of personal portrait films (2017, 82). In her own thoughts on her father's past, the filmmaker has commented on how the political repression and violence in Argentina hardly ever succeeded in curbing her father's search for inspiration and his production of art. Argentina, writes Markovitch, "atravesaba un período histórico de silencio y de represión. Creo que mi padre veía signos en las paredes. Se deslumbraba con los trazos sutiles, las texturas, los fragmentos que encontraba en cualquier parte. Como si pudiera atisbar en ellos indicios de una realidad de la que nadie podía hablar directamente. Eran signos misteriosos llenos de belleza y desesperación" (2016, 27). This amalgam of "beauty" and "despair" permeates nearly all the recordings that frame the artworks excavated in the film. When Genoveva addresses Armando in one of the included missives about his timid approach to promoting himself in the past,—"Vos tampoco has sido un pintor que ha ido, ha expuesto, ha mandado siempre a los salones" (10:10–10:14)—Armando responds by reflecting on broader political disappointments, personal impotence, and existential lament through an ironic tone: "este es un gran error. [...] Me habían lavado el cerebro [...] desde chiquito. Me metieron en el mundo socialista [...] y que todos íbamos a ser, si no iguales, parecidos. Pero todo esto resultó en un gran nada" (11:21–11:31). While the father's comments achieve broader significance concerning the historical period in question, the inclusion of these recordings also emphasizes his deeply personal struggles with isolation, poverty, and solitude.

Voiced Missives and Tactile Listening

In *Listening* (2007), Jean-Luc Nancy uses a philosophical lens to distinguish between hearing and listening. Hearing, in accordance with Nancy's contemplations, is mere receiving, while listening is "to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible" (2007, 6). Listening therefore positions the listener "on the edge of meaning" (2007, 7). This kind of listening gains significance in *Armando y Genoveva* due to the intersection of the parents' voices and their visual artwork which are creatively and communicatively bonded but often interactionally incongruent. Since the parents' voices are not commenting directly on the paintings that the filmmaker touches, unpacks or restores, the incongruent co-presence of their voices and paintings demands that we become doubly attuned to listening while watching.

This kind of listening is linked anew to the filmmaker's touch. If "the sense of touch [...] is perceived as annihilating not only space, but also time," as Constance Classen (2020) states, then Markovitch's film manages to bridge her present to her parents' past not only by making their voices and images cohabit but also through different recalibrations of her touch (278). The intensity of the director's touch—prolonged, passing, recurring, inquiring, spirited or laden—varies as she sifts through the artworks in different settings. In the film's last scene, we watch the filmmaker's hand dust one of the many framed paintings before she begins to caress it (Fig. 2).¹¹ The act of caressing is protracted while the lightness of her fingers renders it intricately nostalgic. This haptic interaction also instantiates, as Marks mentions in another context, how "the residual nonverbal knowledges remain a bodily repository that can only be understood in its own terms"

¹¹ The artworks listed in Figures 2 and 6.1-6.4 are by Genoveva Edelstein. The piece in Figure 5 is part of Armando Markovitch's body of work. Most of these pieces are without title. For more information on the specificity of each piece, see www.armandoygenoveva.org. Accessed on 22 May 2022.

(2000, 71). The director's choice to engage haptically with this particular portrait in an absorbing way generates a number of queries: Could the portrait be of the artists' daughter, relative, friend, student, or someone else? Whose creative undertaking was this and when was it completed? Has the director seen it before? Was this a soothing surprise or a painful happenstance? These questions stem primarily from the director's haptic disposition toward the piece—namely, her complexly concentrated engagement with it. Seeing the filmmaker clean and caress this painting's surface is not enough; we also need to listen to her strokes and contemplate their implications.



Fig. 2: Markovitch engages haptically with an unnamed portrait in protracted ways.

Jacques Derrida's writing about touch becomes particularly relevant here. For Derrida, touch promises inimitability, since "[w]hat I see can be replaced. What I touch cannot, or in any case, we have the feeling, illusory or not, that touch guarantees irreplaceability: hence the thing itself in its uniqueness" (quoted in Pilar Blanco and Peeren 2013, 43). Running her fingers over the paintings' surface in *Armando y Genoveva* has no simple or clear meaning; in fact, the act merely brings to mind additional contemplations. One could read the haptic interaction with the portrait in accordance with Marks's discussion of "object and sense memory" (2000, 110). For Marks, an image "insofar as it engages with memory at all, engages the memory of the senses. [...] the senses often remember when nobody else does" (2000, 110). Markovitch's act of caressing certain paintings might suggest a unique *mélange* of unuttered personal memories and compound emotional experiences. The same haptic interaction highlights the connection between objects and our bodies on a singularly personal level, showing us, as Sara Ahmed states, "how objects acquire value through contact with bodies" (2010, 23). The filmmaker's singular interaction (touching to engage memory with the senses) also simultaneously insists on a particular kind of listening to what is not directly communicated or might be emotionally implied in the amalgamated audio missives.

In *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense, and Place* (1994), Paul Rodaway underscores the importance of understanding all senses as not solely "a medium" but also "a kind of message, or a distinct perspective on the world" (26). As Markovitch's fingers touch the surface of the artworks, the viewer might be also prompted to think of her parents' creative vigor, gravitas, or inspiration at the most intimate and elemental level. Listening to these moments is additionally significant upon considering that which Saul Schanberg highlights about touch—namely, the way it is "ten

times stronger than visual or emotional contact” (quoted in Field 2014, 20). The intersection of this kind of listening and touch bolsters the intermedial attributes of the film for another purpose. According to Classen, touch rudimentarily facilitates interpersonal unifications, since it “annihilates distance and physically unites the toucher and the touched” (2020, 77). Markovitch’s touch not only provocatively disrupts the integrity of the shot but also generates a kind of intermedial union with the parents.

The filmmaker’s selection of recorded missives is equally significant for these kinds of emblematic unifications. Listening to what the recordings say—and imply beyond the moment when they were spoken—also bolsters for the filmmaker, and by extension for the viewer, what Edmund Husserl calls “our near sphere” (quoted in Ahmed 2010, 24). For Husserl, this phenomenologically signifies “a sphere of things that I can reach with my kinesthesia and which I can experience in an optimal form through touching, seeing” (quoted in Ahmed 2010, 24). Through the nexus of touching and listening, *Armando y Genoveva* creates “our near sphere,” around the parents’ art, drawing out the deeper emotional layers of their missives.

One missive does not immediately involve both parents, but rather begins with Genoveva’s timid confession. Before Genoveva’s voice comes on assertively to explain that she will be recording alone for a few minutes, she experiences a literal loss of words, as though she had become petrified before the audio’s blank page. Genoveva admits that she should have written a script in order to be better prepared for this engagement with her daughter. In her frustrated eagerness to express her thoughts, she becomes emotional and admits “hoy se cumple justamente un año que no te veo” (13:45–13:48). Even though this missive remains ambiguous about when it was recorded, it indirectly foregrounds a biographical element about the filmmaker, referring to her absence and new life in Mexico City.¹² If listening, as Nancy suggests, “aims at—or is aroused by—the one where sound and sense mix together and resonate in each other, or through each other,” then listening is reinforced in Genoveva’s missive by the mixing of “sound” and communicational gaps (2007, 7). More concretely, what Genoveva does not communicate verbally seems to cry out indirectly through her hesitations, brief silences, or choppy attempts at articulating her deeply anguished state of being. She hesitates to express the void that her daughter’s prolonged absences must have left in the parents’ lives, and she ultimately admits, “No sé ni cómo lo pude aguantar a ese año” (14:09–14:15). If we attune to listening to Genoveva’s “sphere of things,” we might discern deeper meaning in what she only implies. Genoveva’s despondency reverberates across each word she utters as she discloses, “hijita, te quiero tanto, y quisiera estar con vos. Esta es la verdad; la única verdad. Y nada más” (14:43–14:49). When Armando enters Genoveva’s physical and virtual space, he tries to suspend the recording so his wife can get recomposed. If we listen carefully, however, we can discern a complex *mélange* of forced humor and sedimented anguish about Genoveva’s candid confessions. His concerns about how this particular missive might affect their daughter are also indubitably intact. Such concerns are packed in the interstices of Armando’s nervous laughs, pauses, intonations, and words. These moments come across as easily consumable tokens of familial intimacy. Yet below the surface they likewise intimate other unrevealed emotional states and yearnings.

¹² In *Cacerías imaginarias*, Markovitch comments on her decision to self-exile: “Huí de mi propio miedo. Decidí migrar. Mi plan era vivir en Francia y estudiar cine en la escuela Femmis [La Fémis]. Pero no tenía dinero y el idioma era un obstáculo. Mi maestro de dramaturgia, Sergio Schmucler, había sido exiliado político y me sugirió viajar a México. Allí, según él, yo podía lograr algún empleo de escritora, tal como me lo proponía. Yo quería *vivir de escribir* (original emphasis 2022, 26).

Such intensely intimate moments among the family members cause us to reflect on what events had punctuated their lives and occasioned Markovitch's self-exile. Genoveva's comments allude to the parents' dissidence during the State terror (1976-1983), Argentina's neoliberal tensions in the 1990s, as well as the country's colossal economic crisis (1998-2002). According to Nichols, documentaries' "most social practices—from family life to social welfare, from military policy to urban planning—occupy contested territory" (2017, 77). The parents' intermittent, and seemingly nonchalant, reflections on their past are anchored in a particular kind of angst, which underscores "contested territory" that is both social and political in nature. The aforementioned historical moments appear to be in the background of this missive (as well as others), erupting sporadically in the parents' nervous humor, straightforward regrets, and uneasy confessions about their financial and existential struggles.

If we listen again to Armando's vocal entrance into Genoveva's missive in accordance with Nancy, we notice that his voice and the mother's nervous laughter communicate much more than his own attempts to offset their serious confessions in the missives. As we listen to the parents' voices and watch the director sift through their paintings, Markovitch's film instantiates anew what Pethő calls the "unique configurations of intermediality and their sensuously perceivable excess, uncovering at the same time the way the poetics of intermediality can connect not only arts or media, but also art and life" (2021, 4). This intermedial configuration intensifies as Armando elevates their interrupted conversation to a sort of performative act, where conflicts and afflictions become a necessary theatrical device for ensuring that "el público vuelva" (15:39–15:44). He then masterfully folds Genoveva's vulnerability into another lighthearted moment—"estamos en joda"—so he may disperse any heavy emotional residue (15:44–15:45). When we listen to Armando's emotional maneuvering, we can discern a family that deeply longs for their only child during what ended up being the final stage of their life. Although the audio missives swing between the parents' acutely sorrowful moments and those that brim with lightheartedness, they imply that the parents' acceptance of the filmmaker's absence must have been an onerous task.

At the Atelier: Between Voices and Canvases

Seeing images of the painters' house in *Armando y Genoveva*—even if the images are brief and fragmented—allows us to enter the physical space that was the epicenter of their creativity as well as their confinement (Fig. 3). Darkness, light, and haptics also intersect frequently in and around the house, in both literal and metaphorical ways. The interior of the parents' house space is dark, which creates the differently calibrated moments of suspense about what may be discovered there. The darkness-imbued moments in *Armando y Genoveva* recall Michael Haneke's classic black-outs, particularly in *Le temps du loup / Time of the Wolf* (2002), despite being soft and serving a different purpose. Haneke typically draws his viewer's attention to what frames the deliberately inserted black-outs, whereas Markovitch's focus on darkness signals an emblematic journey to the parents' life-long invisibility. Before the discovered artworks become "objects for the eye," to use Classen's words, the filmmaker moves through the darkness and interacts with the space, first through touch and then with sight (2020, 284). We suddenly see a hand attempting to turn on a lamp in order to vanquish the darkness. The room's lamp turns out to be broken, underscoring rather straightforwardly the parents' permanent absence. When the filmmaker finally opens one of the windows, natural sunlight allows the dilapidated interior to take center stage, thus bringing the parents' artwork to light (Fig. 4).



Fig. 3. The parents' house entrance.



Fig. 4: The moment of shedding light on the parents' atelier.

As the interior grows clearer to the eye, so do its many uses over time by the filmmaker's voice-over. Markovitch helps the viewer to reimagine the house beyond its decaying state, telling us how, over the last twenty years of her parents' lives, the place was not only their home but also Armando's and Genoveva's atelier, Genoveva's workshop for more than 70 students, and the site that housed the family recordings that we hear intermittently in the film. This contextualization is supplemented by another recording. The latter takes place in the atelier, where Armando describes Genoveva at work, revealing enthusiastically: "Estamos en el taller, nena, tu madre sentada frente al caballete. [...] Con los pasteles. [...] Yo quiero que la nena escuche el pastel" (06:11–07:32). This is an intermedially vigorous moment. The act of Genoveva's work with pastels is recorded in an audio form, and the moment is subsequently remediated as a reference within the daughter's cinematic work of art.

While these initial moments in *Armando y Genoveva* focus on some of the most intimate spaces and instances of artmaking in the parents' home, the rest of the film sporadically broadens into their immediate community. Markovitch's engagements with other family members—in particular aunt Anita and several friends (Mario, Silvia, and the others who remain unnamed in the film)—map out the tender moments of communal mourning. Markovitch's choice to capture the commitment of these community members recalls—even if it does not strictly reproduce—"the materiality of mourning" that Mary Schneider Enríquez (2016) finds in the work of Colombian artist Doris Salcedo. Most of Salcedo's installation art and sculptures, notes Schneider Enríquez, directly comment on certain outcomes of Colombian political violence and its consequences, which create "a material presence that evokes, without pictorializing, the absent, unnamed victims of civil war" (2016, 1). The community members in *Armando y Genoveva*—such as Mario and Silvia—embody an altruistic duty that comes closer to what Salcedo witnesses in *Acción de Duelo*, one of her public installations in Bogotá from 2007. This installation was communal and spontaneously interactive: during the installation set up of 24,000 candles, numerous unsolicited passersby ended up lighting the candles in order to commemorate the killing of 12 congressmen by the rebel group FARC.¹³

¹³ The rebel group refers to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). See "Artist Doris Salcedo on Bogotá," 26 July 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/video/2016/jul/26/artist-doris-salcedo-bogota-forces-work-brutal-video>. Accessed on 22 May 2022.

Public interventions in *Armando y Genoveva* likewise figure as communal forms of commemoration, though they are quieter, smaller, and focused on subtle ways of safeguarding the perished painters' works for posterity. Mario, the artists' friend, for instance, is shown in the film as a volunteer guardian of their paintings. In one of the sequences, Mario sifts through numerous artworks and reports straightforwardly that "Hay muchas cosas que no dicen nada" (09:40–09:42). The word "cosas" refers to an abundance of the artists' surviving oil and watercolor paintings as well as engravings that are not always neatly signed. As an attentive guardian of their creativity, Mario expresses the yearning to honor the artworks' authorship and in so doing commemorates them informally (Fig. 5). His voice repeatedly registers concern for those paintings that have been damaged. There is one moment, however, when his voice shows a dosage of delight when he picks up a painting and says "está registrado" (09:52). This particular interaction instantiates the "in-betweenness of body and image [...] of life and art as a site where acute political, social, or psychological issues can materialize in a sensuously layered and intellectually complex [way]" (Pethó 2020, 11). As the dust from the found paintings literally settles during these sequences of communal art excavation and protection, a small, local, and trustworthy community of the painters' friends comes into clear view in the film.



Fig. 5: In the hands of Mario's guardianship



Fig. 6.1



Fig. 6.2



Fig. 6.3



Fig. 6.4

The director's personal resolve to hinder the perils of obscurity concerning her parents' artistic trajectories culminates with *Armando y Genoveva*'s debut but recurs across her subsequent reflections and undertakings. "Ahora, al recordar a mis padres," writes Markovitch in *Cacerías imaginarias* while transcending the familial immediacy and achieving universal significance, "reflexiono acerca de lo curioso e inquebrantable que es el impulso artístico. Al parecer, no existen períodos ni lugares, en que los seres humanos, no hayan sentido el impulso de crear. [...] ¿Cuánta belleza en el mundo habremos ignorado, desperdiciado, y abandonado? ¿Cuántas obras maestras habrán pasado desapercibidas, inéditas u olvidadas?" (2022, 41) (Figs. 6.1-6.4).¹⁴ These questions have been tackled intermedially beyond the film as well, most recently through an exhibition of the parents' artworks at the Museo Municipal Genaro Pérez de Bellas Artes / Genaro Pérez Municipal Museum of Fine Arts in Córdoba, Argentina in 2019. Curated by Gustavo Piñeiro, the exhibition, *Fantasma Disfrazados*, also contained an ongoing screening of *Armando y Genoveva*. This particular effort might be an uncomplicated example of what Florencia Garramuño denominates as "*una confluencia que se opone a la fusión*" (original emphasis 2015, 23-24). Garramuño's observation seems to lead us back to Houwen's theoretical postulations regarding aesthetically enriching potentials when different media interact without compromising their distinctive attributes. The amalgamation that Garramuño upholds allows "la construcción de un sentido en el que se encuentran diversos materiales sin que se busque su confusión o estabilización en una identidad híbrida" (2015, 24). Without naming it as such, Garramuño implies a particular kind of intermedial convergence, which is also at the heart of *Fantasma Disfrazados*, and instantiates what Jørgen Bruhn and Beate Schirmacher designate as "a heterogeneous relation between different forms of meaning-making" (2022, 3-4). This is a renewed appeal to Pethő's "in-betweenness" but now as a result of an intermedial interaction between the materiality of numerous paintings and the film in which they appear. Returning to the film itself, then, *Armando y*

¹⁴ These images are a small artistic sample from *Armando y Genoveva*. Most of the parents' works (approximately 3,000 pieces) are in the filmmaker's conservatorship in Mexico City and several are still with family friends in Córdoba, Argentina (Interview with Paula Markovitch on 8 March 2022).

Genoveva's intermedial modalities cathartically underscore the parents' past powerlessness as well as their quiet tenacity. Seeking to confront oblivion-oriented fears, the film's intermediality also enables the viewer to engage with the tensions between personal pursuits of an artistic nature and broader sociopolitical relations of power. The intermedial outcome illuminates *Armando y Genoveva*'s edifying multidimensionality as a meditative homage, a multisensory art catalogue, and an intimate cultural sanctuary.

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