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PERFORMATIVE REFLECTIONS THROUGH THE LENS OF JOSÉ ORTIZ ECHAGÜE

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ABSTRACT

The Museum University of Navarra (MUN) is home to the vast photographic output of José Ortiz Echagüe. Bequeathed to the University of Navarra in 1990, the collection led to the creation of a permanent exhibition space at the MUN in 2007. Since then, the photographs of Ortiz Echagüe have directly influenced and inspired many other artistic initiatives held at the Museum, with specific impact in contemporary dance. This article reflects on the connections between the photographic output of José Ortiz Echagüe and four dance productions. How do these photographs act as visual triggers for contemporary choreographers and creators? How do still images inspire movement and other elements of scenography? What are the creative processes involved in devising movement to a bidimensional work of art? How does photography turn into performance art? How can these portrayals of 20th Century Spain be translated to our present?

The goal of this chapter is threefold. On one hand, it aims to highlight the relevance of Ortiz Echagüe's photographs at present, the timelessness of his portrayal of Spanish identity, and the relevance of this archive for modern-day creative productions in the art. On the other hand, it contributes to outlining the creative processes related to the creation of a photography-based dance production. Finally, this article will also act as an academic framework for a future artistic collaboration between the MUN and Farout, a Creative and Performative Artistic Research Collective.

KEY WORDS

Performance, Dance, Photography, Creative Processes, José Ortiz Echagüe

INTRODUCTION

Photographer, engineer and pilot José Ortiz Echagüe bequeathed his vast photographic output to Museo Universidad de Navarra (MUN) in 2007, and since then it has constituted the core of its artistic collection. His images, which earned him recognition as one of the key artists in the history of Spanish photography, offer a detailed account of Spanish and North African culture, landscape and architecture. Nevertheless, immortalizing such moments is not the only virtue of his images; the power of his photographs also lies in the ideas and values they bear, their abstraction, and the portrayal of the human relationship with the world. His photographs transmit something else beyond the still image: they allow the viewers to see themselves.

Choreographers Dani Panullo, Antonio Ruz, Jon Maya and Daniel Abreu found a robust source of creativity in this self-reflective facet of Ortiz Echagüe. Their novel works, commissioned and produced by the MUN in the last four years, translate the human essence of Ortiz Echagüe's photographs into bodily narrations. And in doing so, their choreographies provide a valuable insight into the creative processes involved in the transmutation of Ortiz Echagüe's photographs into contemporary dance. Ingredients such as temporality, diegetic construction, embodied knowledge, kinesthetic models, subjectivity, emotions and imagination all feed this creative process. But we must not overlook the fact that Ortiz Echagüe himself addressed his photographic action from a distinct performative approach, similarly to that of choreographers or scenographers. And so, photography and dance performance are two distinct art forms that closely intertwine at the MUN.

1. JOSÉ ORTIZ ECHAGÜE (1886-1980).

1.1. AVIATOR AND ENGINEER

Born into a military family in Guadalajara in 1886, Ortiz Echagüe spent his childhood and teenage years in Logroño, where his father was based. It was during this time that he received his first camera as a gift, an event which clearly sparked his interest in the field of photography. Some years later he declared: “it was a real pleasure for me to go out and look for picturesque spots in the city of my childhood and take photographs of scenes full of popular themes, which was what interested me from the beginning” (Domeño, 2000, p.52). This passion and curious vision are perceptible in one of his first photographs, *Sermón en la aldea*, taken in 1903 (Figure 1). This image soon garnered critical praise and is considered his first major achievement in the field of photography.

In 1903, his family returned to Guadalajara, where 17-year-old Ortiz Echagüe continued the family tradition and enrolled in the Military Engineers Academy. He graduated in June 1909 and obtained the rank of First Engineer Lieutenant. He received his first assignment that summer as the head of the aerial photography service for the Aerostation Service in Melilla. During this five-month mission in North Africa, he became an expert in aerial photography. He contributed to maps and sketches from conflict zones of the War of Melilla (1909), which helped to direct infantry and artillery advances (Lanvín Bordas, 2016).



Figure 1: Sermón en la aldea (1903)
Source. Domeño, 2000

Back in Guadalajara, José Ortiz Echagüe continued his studies. First, he entered the Balloon Services, where he became responsible for the Photography Department, and later as part of the first generation of military pilots in Spain, obtaining his wings in 1911; his was the seventh Spanish license issued. He reached the rank of Captain in Argentina in 1913, though he moved back to join his fellow pilots in Morocco, where a new confrontation had arisen in Tetuán (Domeño, 2000).

For the next three years, his military achievements were varied: he was in charge of the photographic service, carrying out numerous reconnaissance flights and various missions; he created an aircraft repair shop (a preamble of his future profession); he was named first-rate military pilot; and he became the first aviator to cross the Gibraltar straight form

Tetuán to Sevilla covering 400km in three hours. The period between 1913 and 1915 was, in his words, “the happiest time of my aviator life” (Lanvín Bordas, 2016, p.29).

1915 was also the year of his permanent return to Spain. Having experience as aircraft mechanic, he joined the military base in Cuatro Vientos (Madrid) where he directed the construction of Los Flecha airplanes, designed by Eduardo Barrón. From this moment on, he put aside his career as a pilot, and focused his endeavors as a businessman in the private sector, becoming a renowned entrepreneur in the design and construction of airplanes and automobiles.

In this new role, he founded CASA (Construcciones Aeronáuticas S.A.) in 1923. The company was responsible for the production of the first Spanish-manufactured metal aircrafts and reached a total production of over 200 Breguet airplanes. Later on, he was named the first director of the newly founded SEAT (Sociedad Española de Automóviles de Turismo), and launched the company's first vehicle, the 1400, which was followed by the 600, the 1500 and the 850. We must recognize the extraordinary trajectory of Ortiz Echagüe's career: at the age of sixty-four, he became the president of two of the National Industry Institute's flagship companies and remained at the head of both until an unusual age. He resigned as SEAT president in 1967, and as CASA president in 1970, at eighty-one and eighty-four years old respectively. José Ortiz Echagüe died in 1980, at ninety-four years of age.

1.2. PHOTOGRAPHER

This long and fruitful professional career was parallel to his successes as a photographer. Despite not having received any formal education, José Ortiz Echagüe became the first Spanish photographer to gain national and international recognition. His style and mastery are widely recognized, both in the past and now. Domeño (2000) offers a detailed account of the numerous awards that Ortiz Echagüe received during his lifetime: the American Photography Magazine named him one of the three best photographers in the world in 1935; he was awarded first prize in competitions in Washington, New York, Austria, or South Africa; and his photographs were centerpieces of exhibitions in New York,

Washington, Louisville, Paris, Berlin, Milan, London, Brussels, Mexico, China, Moscow or Johannesburg. In 1960, The Metropolitan Museum in New York organized an exhibit, Spectacular Spain, which displayed more than eighty carbon prints by Ortiz Echagüe, including an extensive selection from the Pueblos y paisajes (sixteen photographs) and Castillos y alcázares series (twenty-six photographs) (Ortiz Echagüe, 2017b). In 1980, the National Library in Madrid organized an anthology of 140 works, the last Exhibit in Ortiz Echagüe's lifetime. Since then, his photographic collections have been in constant circulation, appearing in countless Spanish and international museums and exhibitions.

Ortiz Echagüe's style has been frequently linked to Pictorialism: a photographic movement from the early decades of the 20th Century which refers to "a declared submission of the photographic technique to the aesthetic principles that governed painting" (Photoespaña, 2017, p.7). Indeed, Ortiz Echagüe's shares some of this movement's aesthetic premises: the thorough setting of the scenes, or the artistic license to retouch the photograph by means of his carbon printing technique. However, the photographer repeatedly declared that he had never tried to emulate painting (Domeño 2000). Domeño (2000) concludes that we should consider Ortiz Echagüe as "an artistic photographer, as an author who practices photography with artistic values, although these do not necessarily have to come from the pictorial field" (p.172). These artistic values often refer to Ortiz Echagüe's development technique: direct carbon printing on Fresson paper. The photographic action follows these steps (Ortiz Echagüe, 1936a, 1936b):

1. Negative. The photographer takes the photograph (negative) over a thin glass or acetate.
2. Preparation the paper. The paper needs to have been treated. First, it must be covered by a thin layer of a gelatin and rubber mixture; then, by layer of bichromate. This process must be completed the day before.
3. Printing. The negative and the prepared paper are then joined and exposed together to preferably natural light. When exposed to the light, the gelatin reacts: it remains soft in the parts of the

image that received less light but hardens in the parts of the image that received more light. Ortiz Echagüe recommends using a photometer in this step of the process.

4. Developing. Then, the copy is washed with a mixture of water and sawdust to produce friction on the paper (Figure 2). By effect of the streams, the soft gelatin is eliminated with the pigment, leaving the area white, and the hardened gelatin resisted, trapping the pigment inside, and thus producing black areas. The positive image is revealed.
5. Retouch. Before the paper is dry, the photographer can manipulate the colors, lines or shades of the image with different paint-brushes or cotton pads (Figure 3).



Figure 2: Ortiz Echagüe pouring water with sawdust in the developing process.
Source Domeño, 2000

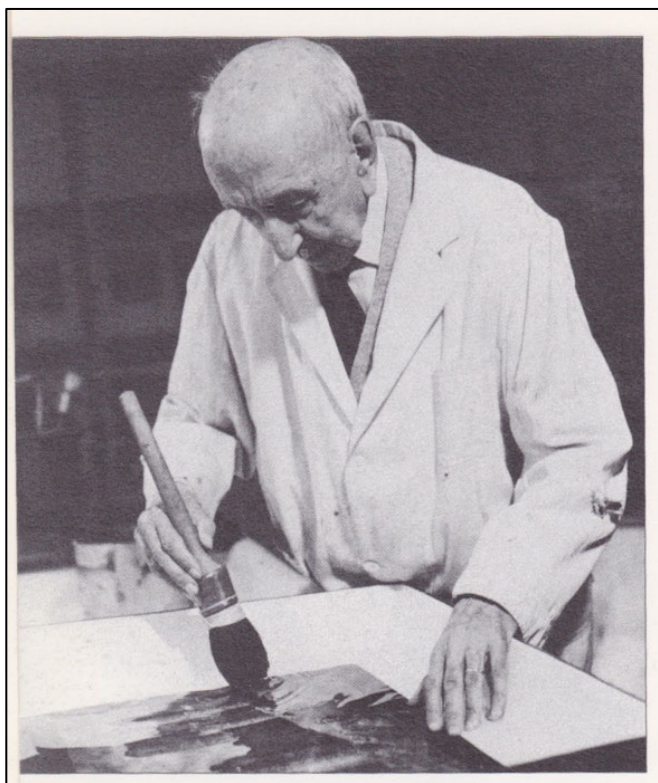


Figure 3: Ortiz Echagüe retouching the image with a soft paintbrush
Source. Domeño, 2000

This technique is complex and requires skill, expertise, patience, aesthetic judgement, dexterity in the manipulation of materials, and a fine eye for detail. Ortiz Echagüe practiced direct carbon procedures consistently throughout his life, drawn by its artisan hallmark, the richness of blacks and whites, and the freedom of working directly with the pigment. He became an absolute master of this method. He stated: “with carbon, some control can be exercised by accentuating the transparency of the shadows and strengthening or attenuating the intensity of blacks and whites to achieve a harmony in the image far superior to that which can be achieved with other systematic registration methods” (Ortiz Echagüe, 1978a, p.10). Furthermore, the artistic freedom that lies beyond the photographic act makes every copy unique, with a characteristic texture, rich in tonalities and contrasts.

Ortiz Echagüe's photographic career showed a strong commitment to the portrayal of the unaltered local reality of rural life and its inhabitants. As an industrial engineer and aviator, he directly witnessed of the transformation and modernization of cities and villages, and, in spite of the benefits of these developments, was aware of the need to protect the endangered ways and traditions and ways of rural Spain and North Africa. Susan Sontag supports these thoughts when she says: "From the start, photographers not only set themselves the task of recording a disappearing world but were so employed by those hastening its disappearance" (Sontag, 1976, p.59). Ortiz Echagüe intention was to perpetuate everything that Spanish and African landscapes, clothing, and culture has been and still is through the timelessness of unalterable graphic documents (Ortiz Echagüe, 1978a).

Ortiz Echagüe's output is embodied in five different thematic projects and publications:

1. Spain, folk characters and costumes. *España, tipos y trajes*. 1929.

His first project was a compilation of costumes from different Spanish regions such as Castilla, Aragón, Andalucía, Asturias and País Vasco (Figure 4, Figure 5). It was first printed in Germany in 1929 as *Spanische Köpfe*, and translated into Spanish the following year, with a prologue written by Spanish philosopher and writer José Ortega y Gasset. The first edition consisted of more than 80 photographs/portraits, but subsequent extended editions followed, reaching 312 portraits in its edition of 1971. This collection constitutes the first systematic record of this nature in Spain; it is precisely for this approach that his photographic output has also been studied from the standpoint of ethnography and documentation.



Figure 4: *Lino de Orio* (1932)
Source. Domeño, 2000



Figure 5: Albercanas en traje de vistas (ca. 1930)
Source. Domeño, 2000

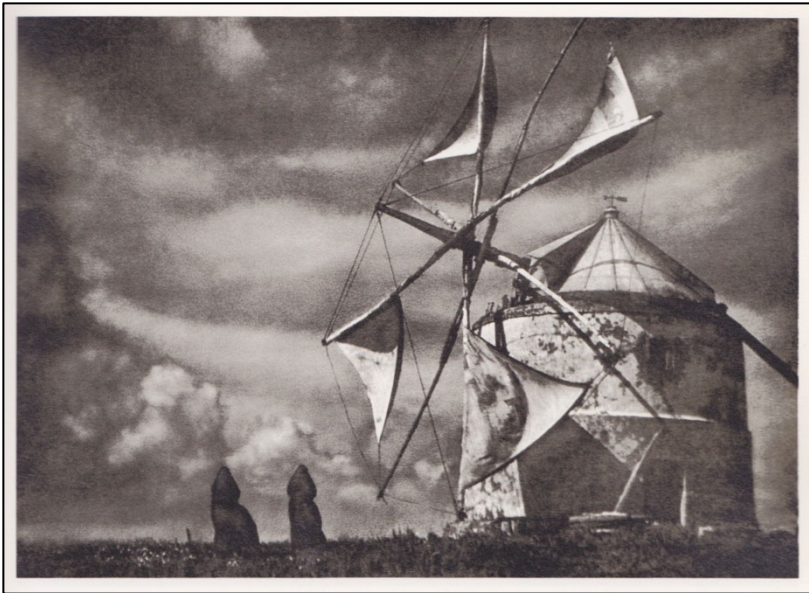
2. Spain, villages and landscapes. *España, pueblos y paisajes*. 1939.

His next book also portrayed Spanish customs, but turned its attention to the architectural and historical Spanish heritage. The first edition compiled 244 photographs of locations around the Spanish peninsula. Ortiz Echagüe was inspired by both the “urban” landscapes (villages, churches plazas, towers, etc.) (Figure 6), and the “natural” ones (landscapes, arid areas, hills, etc.) (Figure 7). These photographs offer a profound illustration of the transitory nature of time, provide evidence of the Spanish grandeur, and aim at recuperating the nation’s glorious past

which is threatened by the industrialization advances (Domeño, 2000).



Figure 6: Plaza de Turégano



Source. Domeño, 2000
Figure 7: *Molino andaluz* (ca. 1926)
Source. Domeño, 2000

3. Mystical Spain. *España mística*. 1943.

Ortiz Echagüe never put aside the interest in the habits and customs of the Spanish people and published his third series concerning Spanish religious traditions (Figure 8, Figure 9). This work, published in book form 1943, presents processions, pilgrimages, chapels, churches, cathedrals, congregations, and the hidden life of the old monasteries. Ortiz Echagüe saw a challenge in this work due to the inaccessibility of the monasteries, and the incompatibility of his professional agenda and the religious calendar. However, he overcame these difficulties driven by his determination to portray the Spanish soul and the aesthetic value of these images (Domeño, 2000).



Figure 8: Capítulo de Poble (1946)
Source. Domeño, 2000



Figure 9: Cruceros de Roncesvalles (1944)
Source. Domeño, 2000

4. Spain, castles and fortresses. *España, castillos y alcázares*. 1956.

His interest in Spanish architectural landscapes and sceneries led to a second collection on the matter, which focused on castles and fortresses. The photographs in this collection present a careful balance between the monumental buildings and the landscape they're located in (Figure 10, Figure 11). Most of these castles are in ruins or abandoned, and so represent the temporary nature of History. With his photographs, Ortiz Echagüe hoped to “prevent their last stones from collapsing and providing company for those that have already been falling for ten centuries” (Ortiz Echagüe, 2017b, p.7). As in his previous works, Ortiz Echagüe documents a vanishing reality.



Figure 10: *Loarre. Huesca* (ca. 1940)
Source. Domeño, 2000



Figure 11: *La Iruela. Jaen* (1954)
Source. Domeño, 2000

5. His fifth and last thematic series was dedicated to the people of the Rif. During the first years of his military career in North Africa, he had captured multiple images of the region and its inhabitants. Later, in the 1960s, he returned to Morocco, Mauritania, and Sahara, where progress had not yet endangered their traditions and ways of life, to continue photographing the people, landscapes, costumes and architecture. However, this project was left unfinished and its book wasn't published in Ortiz Echagüe's lifetime; he ceased his artistic activities in 1968 due to health problems. So, this series presents a unique perspective on Ortiz Echagüe's work, connecting the beginning and ending of his photographic career.

Two of these pictures stand out from the rest: *Siroco en el Sahara* (1964) (Figure 12), and *Moro al viento* (1909) (Figure 13).



Figure 12: *Siroco en el Sahara* (1964)
Source. Domeño, 2000



Figure 13: *Moro al viento* (1909)
Source. Domeño, 2000

2. MUSEO UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA

The vast photographic output of José Ortiz Echagüe was bequeathed to the University of Navarra in 1990, and constitutes the genesis of the Museum Universidad de Navarra. This donation consists of more than 1500 carbon positive pictures and over 30000 negatives, and it encompasses photographs of all thematic groups that the author himself developed in his prosperous career. The collection led to the creation of a permanent exhibition space at the MUN in 2007. It follows Ortiz Echagüe's life and meticulously exhibits his most significant images. The exhibit also presents some of the materials and utensils that he used, and outlines his developing photographic techniques.

Since the inauguration of the permanent exhibition space, the legacy of Ortiz Echagüe has been renewed. His photographs, his artistic vision, his craftsmanship, his ability to capture the depth of the human, his portrayal of old ways of life, and the beauty of his work have directly influenced and inspired many other artistic initiatives at the MUN. Renowned international choreographers, costume designers, and dramaturges have created works based on these photographs. This chapter explores Ortiz Echagüe's impact on the field of contemporary dance. In the last four years, the MUN has commissioned, produced and hosted four dance productions directly inspired by Ortiz Echagüe's photographs. Choreographers Dani Panullo, Antonio Ruz, Jon Maya and Daniel Abreu have curated performances aimed at giving life to these photographs, and in doing so, have undoubtedly expanded Ortiz Echagüe's artistic reach.

These contemporary dance productions are:

1. Atlas, Map of movements. Dani Panullo. November 2018.

Dani Panullo's creation is inspired by the journeys that the photographer José Ortiz Echagüe undertook, where he captured the landscapes, traditions, and customs of the countries he visited with masterful scenographic composition. Drawing on the work of Ortiz Echagüe, Panullo shows the beauty of the static through novel movement-based forms of expression: parkour, b-boying, or work out free style.

2. *Transmutación*. Antonio Ruz. November 2019.

Based on a selection of black and white photographs from the MUN's collection, Antonio Ruz's work transmutes the photographic image into three dimensions, through an evocative dance game in which dancers enter into dialogue with architecture, light, and music in different spaces of the Museum.

3. *Hoy y mañana son ayer*. Jon Maya. June 2020.

Choreographer Jon Maya was inspired by Ortiz Echagüe's photograph Roncalesa (1916-1930) (Figure 14) for the creation of this work, the first one of the trilogy, *A Puerta cerrada*. The artist

constructs a choreographic narrative interpretation that unites the photographs' context of the 1918 pandemic, with the present and the future ahead.



Figure 13: *Roncalesa* (1916-1930)
Source. Domeño, 2000

4. *Desde la ternura*. Daniel Abreu. May 2021.

This work, inspired by *Ternura* (1940) (Figure 14), will interweave tenderness and dance, in an homage to photography. In his creation, Daniel Abreu plans to take the evocative gesture of the photograph as a starting point, captivating the audience with caring movements of affection and respect, magic and mysticism.



Figure 14: *Ternura* (1940)
Source. Domeño, 2000

The timelessness and relevance of Ortiz Echagüe's photographs is manifest in their influence on contemporary art. The costumes and customs that Ortiz Echagüe depicted might have already been lost, but the themes they embody, the complex human relationship with the world, is a perennial matter. In this line of thought, Domeño (2000) points out, the work of Ortiz Echagüe is a transcendental expression of beauty, an expression of introspection and emotion.

As this list of dance productions showcases, his expressive portrayals of the Spanish and African identities provide a never-ending source of creativity, insight, and reflection. The artistic creations of Panullo, Ruz, Maya and Abreu expand the reach of Ortiz Echagüe's work, and provide new and updated readings of his oeuvre and message. "When an image

is valuable to us, it is because in it there is something more than the basic record of the event (more than its crass optical realism): they mobilize a poetic value, question an ethical sense, pose an existential urgency” (Lizarazo, 2014, p.29), and so do Ortiz Echagüe’s photographs.

3. PERFORMATIVE REFLECTIONS: FROM PHOTOGRAPHY TO DANCE

The inspirational power behind Ortiz Echagüe’s photographs is manifest in the fruitful list of performing works that have emerged from them. Once this evidence is noted, some fundamental questions arise: What is the connection between photography and dance? How can still images inspire movement? How can bidimensional artistic works inspire three-dimensional narratives? How are Ortiz Echagüe’s images embedded in these productions? What elements do the creators identify in Ortiz Echagüe’s work that act as visual triggers for their own creative processes?

To address these questions, one must consider the photographic action as a performance process in itself: “the photographic act is not reduced exclusively to the moment of capturing the luminous print, but it is extended to before and after such moment (...) The development of the performative creation is intimately linked to the relationship between operator [photographer], spectator [viewer/interpreter] and spectrum [the photographed subject]. The explanation of their particular interventions in the different moments of the photographic action will reveal, in last instance, the processes of metaphorical construction and diegetic activities in hands of the operator and the spectator, respectively” (Hernández, Zúñiga, Sánchez, 2014, p.56; Barthes, 2004). Following Hernández, Zúñiga, Sánchez, and Barthes’ concept of the photographic work, we will focus our investigation on both the operator’s and spectator’s roles.

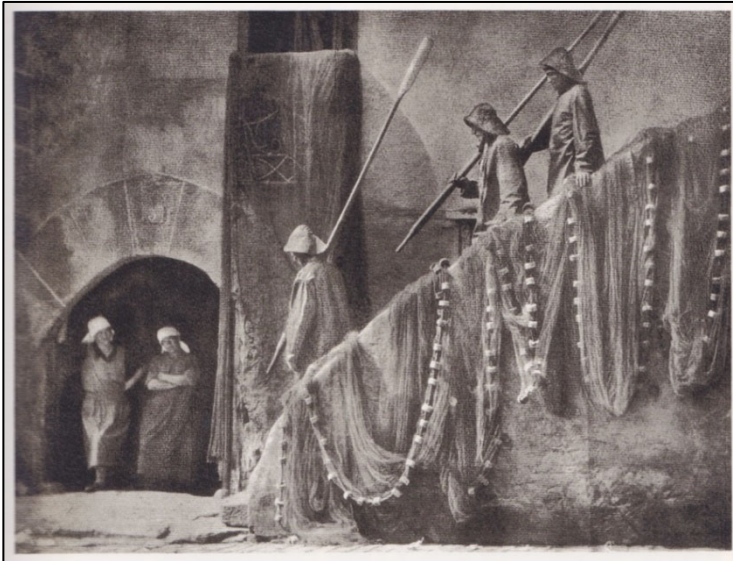
3.1. OPERATOR: PERFORMATIVITY IN JOSÉ ORTIZ ECHAGÜE'S PHOTOGRAPHY

There is a clear performativity in the photographic, specifically in connection to the aesthetics and technique of Ortiz Echagüe. His artistic dexterity was not limited to a brief encounter with the world, but rather encompass a whole process in photographic action. These traits can be identified in all five series of work and can be seen as the foundation of his artistic methodology and creative processes.

Firstly, as we have discussed earlier, Ortiz Echagüe cared deeply for the composition of the image, and so he treated the photographic action from a scenographic approach. His *modus operandi* was based on a seasoned, observant aesthetic judgement; he cared for “the subject matter, the beauty of the composition, the harmony of the lighting, the shape-ness of the figures, the movement of the scene” (Ortiz Echagüe, 2017a, p.5). To attain this goal, he meticulously controlled the photograph from the beginning to end, arranging the scene to better fit the narrative, looking for balanced and emotional compositions, with the correct light to highlight the aesthetical effects (Domeño, 2000). He wandered for days in search of suitable models to dress and photograph in carefully selected environments. In some cases, he asked the locals, dressed in his traditional costumes, to strike a classical pose, he then blurred the background to confer the model with a sculptured-inspired prominence, emphasizing the subject’s clothes, gestures and movements (Balda Arana, Uria Zubizarreta, 2017). As he explained it: “I have them [the models] gather on the scene previously selected, be it the typical plaza, the humble church or the nearby hilltop, from which the village with its towering is included in a marvelous background” (Ortiz Echagüe, 2017b, p.231) (Figure 15, Figure 16). In other cases, he tirelessly searched for landscapes in which he could highlight the architectural lines, majestic façades, monumental characters, verticality of the buildings, and the playful relationship between the horizon and the clouded skies.



Figure 15: La Puerta de Fez



Source. Domeño, 2000
Figure 16: *Los pescadores parten* (ca. 1930)
Source. Domeño, 2000

Ortiz Echagüe's artistic consideration of space, time, energy, movement, lighting and emotion parallels his *mise en scène* with that of other performative genres: directors, choreographers or dramaturgs follow a similar process. Daniel Abreu was intrigued by this relationship: "it is true that throughout his photographic itinerary there are very theatrical passages, almost choreographed, very organized" (personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Additionally, photographing is in itself an interpretation of time and reality (Lizarazo, 2014). This essential attribute is highlighted by Ortiz Echagüe's methodology. His aforementioned carbon printing technique is particularly un-photographic, casting aside the artifactual nature of the medium, by allowing nearly limitless manipulation of the negative/positive: Ortiz Echagüe would further his control, retouching the image with a paint brush to adjust the shades, the colors, or the intensity. As a natural consequence, this artistic methodology emphasizes the role of artist-interpreter over that of the incidental scene; the resulted photograph can be viewed as the first reading of a given reality, a renewed portrayal of the original witnessed image. Thus, Ortiz Echagüe can be seen as more than a photographer, the first interpreter, crafting his performance in photographic language. This reading sets a fundamental precedent and opens the door to free artistic manipulation and interpretation. The artistry and craftsmanship that Ortiz Echagüe applied to carbon printing offer the framework for the translation of his photographs into other art forms such as contemporary dance.

3.2. SPECTATOR: THE INTERPRETATION PROCESS

The photographic process chains three different and interdependent steps: the selection and composition of the event to capture, taking and developing the photograph in itself, and its materialization by the observer's (spectator) approach. "Without an act of interpretation, the previous acts are inane. Without act of production there is no iconic meaning, and without act-registration there is no photography" (Lizarazo, 2014, p.26). This tripartite process highlights not only the necessity of the spectator's interpretation, but also its relevance in the creation of a new and personal diegesis. It is precisely the resolute belief that there is

a reality to be unveiled in Ortiz Echagüe's photographs that drives the creativity of choreographers Panullo, Ruz, Maya and Abreu. And so, it is in the act of interpretation that contemporary artists create, the same way Ortiz Echagüe interprets the people and landscapes around him. Thus, both processes, Ortiz Echagüe's and the choreographers', rely on interpretive creation.

The image then, belongs to its maker and to its interpreter, straddling the cultural world and imagination of them both (Lizarazo, 2014). The four productions that form this study offer such a rich variety of updated readings on Ortiz Echagüe's vision of reality, and demonstrate the versatility of these interpretations, their validity today, and the inexhaustibility of this source of inspiration.

3.2.1. Temporality and diegesis

In her book *On Photography* (1976), Susann Sontag offers the key to understanding the real nature of photography: "each still photograph is a privileged moment, turned into a slim object that one can keep and look again" (p.13). Photography must be considered not as a time-less but as a time-based medium: a photograph captures an instant, a brief lapse of time and space, a series of stills; a photograph has the power of stopping the passing of time, it freezes the motion, and preserves that moment beyond the reality to which it originally belonged. Indeed, the temporal dimension is crucial in the interpretation process and diegetic construction: it reveals what is seen, implies what has happened but has not been seen, and suggests what is about to happen. This temporary triptych guides the construction of a diegetic dimension.

If every picture is a mere transformation of the three-dimensional world into a flat photographic image, spectators must address the interpretation and performance of photographs in search of its reversed process. As we observe a photograph, we must acknowledge that it was originally embedded in a specific reality, its own time and space, its own story. It is up to the spectators to "fill in the blanks" in their minds, as it is only then that they will grasp the full scope of that photographic image. Ortiz Echagüe's output is no exception: "he has great faith in photography, in its communication possibilities, but above all, in the necessity to

narrate” (Domeño, 2000, p.174). The diegetic dimension of Ortiz Echagüe’s photographs is especially relevant in Jon Maya’s production. His artistic proposal invites us to revisit a past that connects to a new future (the previous pandemic of the Spanish flu and the current one), and in doing so he contributes a novel diegesis to a former one. The central motivation of his creative process is to look to the future preserving the essence of our history, to give a current relevance and interact with Ortiz Echagüe’s original narrative, and so “today and tomorrow are yesterday” (*Hoy y mañana son ayer*, Jon Maya, 2020).

The creation of a diegetic space is fundamental in the interpretation of the spectator and creative process of the choreographer. “The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: ‘There is the surface. Now think—or rather feel, intuit—what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way’. Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy” (Sontag, 1976, p.17). Choreographer Daniel Abreu refers to the inherent diegesis and the reconstruction of its narrative with these words: “This image was preceded by a movement and was followed by one. Where does this moment come from? What are they doing? What is going to happen? Where do they go? Evidently, this photograph has a story. Those questions open up a whole world and from them I can build one” (personal communication, November 20, 2020). The possibility of analyzing the fixed image from a theory of the story, becomes central in the choreographer’s work, aware that “only that which narrates can make us understand” (Sontag, 1976, p.18). But since the still image does not present a factual temporal succession but only a suggestion of gestures, what concerns the choreographers in their creative processes is to identify in the image the elements that reveal the existence of diegetic space within it and recreate it: the gestures, the expressions, the skin, the body language, the postures, the attitudes, the light, the scene, the angles, the costumes, the objects, etc. (Lizarazo, 2014). In words of Walton (2018), “the still photographic image as potential dance requires a shift, a re-positioning of the perceptual field of the subject in order to activate it into motion” (p.14). That shift can be achieved by kinesthesia and embodied knowledge.

3.2.2. Kinesthesia and embodied knowledge

To confer a temporality upon the photograph and begin to unravel the complex dialogue between stillness and motion, choreographers rely heavily on kinesthetic models. Kinesthesia is triggered by the ongoing nature of things, the prospect of continuity. This conscious or subconscious tendency to look forward to the next movement is a powerful force of the imagination that can produce evident physical responses (Walton, 2018). “According to Gibson (1968), we can proactively derive kinesthetic information from static visual objects such as the photograph, but until that information is itself integrated as the felt trajectory of a moving force, we will not grasp the dance image” (Stewart, 1998, p.45). Each choreographic reconstruction is rooted in the creator’s embodied knowledge, shaped by a personal and empathic relationship with the image itself, an openness to the suggestion of movement, and the search for sense in the captured gesture.

Their creative processes are nourished by their own experiential understanding of the body in motion, and the projection of their own bodily knowledge into the depicted body of the photograph. The visual trigger of the image, together with the somatic, sensory, tactile, and motor systems, all come to bear on the interpretation of the photograph and provide the choreographer with novel movement ideas (Kirsh, 2011). Abreu states: “I don’t like to transcribe the photographs, I don’t want the spectator to see this caption- that, Ortiz Echagüe did wonderfully. It is about how can I project this work from my own eyes and view. I want to talk about gesture, the understanding between them, the roughness of their small gestures (...) for me, what is important is to reveal the narrative of the work itself” (personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Abreu stresses that the gesture is the central element and creative trigger within this poetic process (personal communication, November 20, 2020). The gesture encapsulates the temporal dimension of the image, it presents before our eyes the key to its temporality and narrative. The immortalized gesture allows choreographers to penetrate the captured time: “it is this experiential understanding of the body in movement

that enables an empathic relationship and openness to the suggestion of movement” (Walton, 2018, p.3). Antonio Ruz’s choreographic interpretation also alludes to this element: “body-action” constituted his main premise when selecting the photographs central to his creative process. The importance of the body, its strong presence, and the study of the physicality of the immortalized characters define his creation, *Transmutación*, a choreographic proposal that explores “the idea of transferring the flat photographic image to the three dimensions” (Museo Universidad de Navarra, 2020, April 29) through novel movement expressions. The title in itself alludes specifically to this process. Similarly, movement and kinesthesia are fundamental in Jon Maya’s creations. The narrative construction for his trilogy revolves around movement and physicality. He explained that: “I started the creative process by reinterpreting *ttun-ttun*, a traditional dance from Roncal (Navarra), and its circular structure, from the individuality to the collective reflection” (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Hoy y mañana son ayer (2020)
Source. MUN (2020, June 12)

3.2.3. Subjectivity, emotions and imagination

Once the relationship between photography, narrative, and movement has been established, it is important to observe that it is personal and subjective. The same way Ortiz Echagüe does not reproduce reality but

offers a separate vision, the choreographers above do not aim at reproducing the image but offer their own personal interpretation of it.

As Susan Sontag argues, “the camera’s rendering of reality must always hide more than it discloses” (Sontag, 1976, p.18), and so every photograph carries a plurality of meanings. Even supposedly realistic photography is open to an array of readings, and while we decipher the image, we let our imagination and creativity run free in search for such understanding. In this search, each spectator is guided by his/her subconscious, perceptual stimulations, recalled memories, and associations. Hence, the interpretation of the photographed still-reality and its conversion back to movement is a personal one: thoughts, understanding of the world, cultural mechanisms, ideologies, presumptions of reality and actions, all become fundamental to the artistic experience. The photographer’s and the choreographer’s creative processes and creations unavoidably emerge from their own psyche, defined by life experience, empathic ability and imagination. As Antonio Ruz stated, his creative process “required plenty of imagination, of what lies behind the photograph, what that photograph inspires” (Museo Universidad de Navarra, 2020, April 29). Or as Daniel Abreu explains it: “in a natural way I compile information and I let the subconscious rather than the conscious work. The way to make things happen is through the subconscious. I only let them happen. The creative process is based on personal intuition” (personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Emotions are one of the foundations of artistic processes. In photography, emotions are what drive Ortiz Echagüe (Domeño, 2000). Indeed, he reaffirmed the centrality of emotion in his artistic discipline: “I don't understand why photographic artists have that marked tendency to speak mainly about the methods used ... instead of the emotions that they have managed to communicate through their negatives” (Domeño, 2000, p.175). This idea can be applied to the choreographer’s works here included. The value of their new dance creations lies in their ability to perceive the emotion and objectify it within their artistic language. As mentioned before, empathy is one of the elements that shapes and feeds the personal creative response. In Hermans’ words (2021), in the creative processes “many decisions are a result of informed intuition”

(p.35), thus, the choreographic productions are not to be considered as duplications of Ortiz Echagüe's shots, but as novel and unique portrayals of the expressed emotions through them.

CONCLUSION

The works of Panullo, Ruz, Maya and Abreu showcase the multivalence of José Ortiz Echagüe's photographs. His output facilitates free artistic exploration, and has proven to be an inexhaustible source of creativity in the realm of the performing arts, and specifically in contemporary dance. The four choreographers masterfully capture the essence of the photographs, create their own metaphors through movement, and reveal the complexity of the choreographers' creative processes: Panullo stresses the performative dexterity and scenographic approach of Ortiz Echagüe, Ruz explores the transmutation from two to three dimensions through embodied knowledge and imagination, Maya focuses on the diegetic dimension and creates a new narrative that complements the original one, and Abreu turns his attention to gesture, movement and emotions. Their creations reaffirm the idea that "the producer of the image is an interpreter of time, and the interpreter of the image is also a producer of its meaning" (Lizarazo, 2014, p.39).

Spanish photographer Joan Fontcuberta refers to photography as a way of reinventing the real, extracting the invisible, and revealing it (Fontcuberta, 1997). In this process, the photographer appropriates the object photographed through a unique and genuine relation between himself and the world, revealing new shades of knowledge and perception. "Photographs are often invoked as an aid to understanding and tolerance. In humanist jargon, the highest vocation of photography is to explain man to man" (Sontag, 1976, p.95). The above choreographers ultimately follow a similar vocation. Their creations aim to capture the human experience portrayed in Ortiz Echagüe's output, and in its translation into movement they provide new powerful meanings of an intrinsically interpretable connection between self and world. These meaningful glances into reality, both in photographic and choreographic form, reflect the malleability of this self-world connection, the

importance of constantly redefining it as a vehicle for self-understanding, and the personal and artistic gains that it provides.

But their dance creations do not represent the end of the interpretation process. As Abreu convincingly said: “ultimately the spectator is the new narrator; because my interpretation is not a definite version of the story, my interpretation is just my own. The spectator will become the narrator of his own interpretation” (personal communication, November 20, 2020). The audience also plays a role in keeping Ortiz Echagüe’s photographs relevant at present, as they too can create new meanings, explore the relationship between self and world, and deepen their understanding of the human experience. That is why preserving Ortiz Echagüe’s legacy and translating it into novel artistic conceptions has become one of the priorities of Museo Universidad de Navarra, which plans to continue to commissioning works inspired by José Ortiz Echagüe.

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