

## **REPORT**

**By Member of the Dissertation Committee on the Dissertation of**

**Cruz Fajardo Yulli Marley on the theme:**

**“War and Violence in Colombian Art of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century”**

**Submitted in conformity with the requirements for the candidate degree in  
art history studies**

**Specialisation 5.10.1 – Theory and History of Culture and Art**

Having read the doctoral dissertation of Cruz Fajardo Yulli Marley in the English-language version, I am ready to offer a series of observations and draw conclusions concerning the academic quality of the work. The thesis concerns the representation and interpretation of different types of violence and conflict in Colombian art of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The topic is at the intersection of several different academic disciplines, which includes among others historical memory, sociology, art history, psychology (especially trauma studies), ethics, culture and identity studies. This thesis is very informative, easy to follow and the text written in an easy to digest format. A very rich set of data from Colombian visual art sources are used to illuminate the use of representation/interpretation/projection of violence and conflict in terms of approach to the evolving and transforming coverage in differing forms of works of art by Colombian artists.

From the analysis and interpretation of the thesis, several relationships and influences between artists with their artwork on audiences is implied by the candidate. Among those points through observed trends, processes and relationships is that art tends to try and represent an existing or a desired ‘reality’. However, art in turn is interpreted by audiences and the artist’s intended meaning may become altered through audience perception. Consequently, art is ideational and even can be ideological in nature. Hence the situation may arise where physical conflict is accompanied by informational conflict through interpretations and representations. This in turn can impact upon the cognitive domain of audiences through the priming and mobilising of hearts and minds. Different artistic medium are covered together with the logic and emotions of conflict with acts of cruelty and violence, and the consequences and aftermath are explored.

The thesis possesses some observable academic and stylistic strengths. A truly impressive number of different works of art and artists were collected in the process of the

research process, which have been subsequently interpreted and analysed. There is also a highly logical and helpful flow and progression in the chapters and sections of the thesis. Each chapter and section build upon the information and knowledge of the previous chapter or section, which prepares the reader for what is to follow. An excellent overview of the various variables that have historically and contemporarily influence the political, social and economic context of Colombia, which in turn influences the artists and their work under examination in the thesis is provided. The stated purpose of the dissertation is both valid and reliable, plus a very good and comprehensive state of the art literature review. Good justification has been provided for the chosen topic, where there is clear and compelling evidence given of a gap in the state-of-the-art knowledge that this scientific work helps to address. The thesis therefore brings forth new knowledge on this topic, and to a potentially much broader audience. A significant contribution of this thesis is its tracing of the social and ideological development and transformation of art, together with changes in Colombian society.

There are also evident weaknesses and problematic aspects observed with the thesis, I shall begin with some of the minor points before moving to more substantial and critical problems. One of the minor points is related to the language of the work, such as the use of “paper” (on page 4, point 4 under scientific novelty) in reference to your thesis (alternatively can be referred to as a dissertation). There seems to be a word missing on page 8 (point 1 under scientific novelty) – “and social upheavals throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century has [NEVER] been studied in Russian just now.” The missing word seems to be ‘never’ for the sentence to make logical sense.

Some more serious weakness and shortcomings were also detected in the course of evaluating the thesis. Perhaps the most serious problem relates to description and justification of the theoretical and methodological framework. Throughout the empirical chapters of the thesis a very clear and consistent approach was taken to interpreting and analysing the material, which has produced some excellent observations. However, there is an evident lack of details on the method and theory used in the thesis, especially in terms of explaining and justifying the choices made by the candidate, and how these are to be implemented in the work. A good and sound description and justification of the theory and method used is needed to enable the replication of an academic study, which is a scientific cornerstone of testing knowledge reliability.

Another point to consider is related to the content of the conclusion, which gives the candidate the opportunity to showcase the uniqueness of their study and its contribution to the wider scientific community as a unique study that develops the state-of-the-art knowledge. In



an act of critical self-reflection, you need to ask yourself and to articulate for the reader what and how does the study contribute to the current state of the art knowledge on the relationship between and interaction of art with war and violence in 20<sup>th</sup> century Colombia? There is a need to demonstrate the contribution of your scientific work to the existing debate, consensus and theoretical framework. Do you challenge, build-on or create brand new knowledge on the topic and the wider theoretical framework? This may well be the product of my final point of criticism. There is no clear and overtly expressed scientifically informed research question or hypothesis posed, rather they were of a more empirical orientation and nature.

In summary, the thesis covers a relatively understudied academic aspect of artistic representation and coverage of a topic of violence and conflict in 20<sup>th</sup> century Colombia, and how this coverage has been directed at different audiences and with different intended effects. The strengths of the work far outweigh the weaknesses of it. One of the consistent themes concerning choices refers to the moral dilemmas faced by artists that require ethical choices. This work contributes to a deeper conceptual and empirical understanding of the nature and practice of artistic interpretations and representations in different forms of media towards violence and conflict in Colombia, the processes and the outcomes. Even if the larger academic and topical significance and contribution is not overtly presented to the reader.

At this point, I would like to ask two questions of a more that are more theoretically and conceptually oriented. 1. Was art in Colombia a driver or supporter of attempts at political and social change in Colombia? 2. Do you consider the Colombian art studied to be an interpretation or a representation of the 'reality', what is the rule and what are the exceptions?

The dissertation meets the basic requirements established by Order No. 11181/1 of 19 November 2021, "On the Procedure for Awarding Academic Degrees at Saint Petersburg State University," the candidate Cruz Fajardo Yulli Marley deserves the award of the scientific degree of Candidate of Art History Studies in the speciality 5.10.1. – Theory and History of Culture and Art. Clause 11 of the aforementioned Order by the author of the thesis is not broken.



12.08.2023

Member of the Dissertation Council

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Independent Researcher, Sweden, Associate Professor Greg Simons