

STATEMENT

JULIA MONTILLA

Since late-2008, my research has focused on the role played by religious beliefs and, particularly, feminine icons, in the construction and conservation of national myths. As a result, the main body of productions contained in this portfolio centres on the characteristics of visionary phenomena and religious paroxysms, the ideologies they generate and their impact on the lives of individuals and communities.

I am interested in religion because it is one of the most important elements in shaping identity. Religion has very deep cultural roots and plays a crucial role in socialisation and social control processes.

When we observe historic processes, we note that religious conquests cannot be explained without the images and symbols that configure new identities, invent memories and produce spaces for representation in the heart of societies that discriminated against them. In exploring these aspects, I focused on the properties of the hierophanies of Mary in Spain during the 20th century. Whether these hierophanies were recognised or condemned is explained through the production and insertion of “visual constructions” by the official regimes.

The aspects I consider with regard to these representations include: revision of history, the formulation of the account of events, the conflict between legitimate and heterodox narratives, the use of the spectacular and the updating of the collective imagination.

Finally, the knowledge and discourses present in the construction of these images led me to question both the use of such categories as “normal” and “pathological” in medical science, particularly psychiatry and psychology, and the process in which the everyday is medicalised.

My work is shaped by the dense family of media for expression that interrelate with one another within mass culture, from video to photography, not forgetting installations and publications. Since I believe that a multidisciplinary approach cannot give a good account of social complexity, the methodological focus that I employ to examine productions mixes semiotics, art history and anthropology, amongst other things.

My production centres on our culture’s iconic configurations. I am interested in analysing such models and in destabilising the reading codes of collective identity constructions, revealing their artificial and arbitrary nature. Guided by these goals, I examine popular visual creation, representations which, in my view, may reveal social conventions relating to ideas about gender, affection or beliefs.

The methodology I use in my practice is based on documentation about the mechanisms employed to formulate an account (both its narrative codes and the techniques that sustain it) and recreation of those same mechanisms, introducing aspects that alter them and pointing to some of the ideological goals and/or economic objectives that are revealed when they are put into operation. By working in this way, I accept the supposition that, despite our cultural differences, we have a kind of shared memory as regards images and their references, and that this is built entirely from clichés. My interpretation and contribution to what I consider my contemporary nature lies in my subtle variation on this commonplace.