

# VALLOIS

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Project Room

## FREDI CASCO

### Operaciones en la selva

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In 2009, as I was taking one of my usual strolls through the small flea market which takes place every Sunday in the city of Asunción, I encountered, on a stall covered with old objects, a series of instruction manuals published by the United States' army in the 1960s and 1970s.

Part of the lot consisted in manuals of anti-guerilla operations with instructional texts and illustrations for the training of counter-insurrection military groups in the tropical forests and deserted regions of Latin America. Every publication was translated in Spanish and aimed at Latin American officers who had obtained a scholarship at the sadly famous "School of Americas".<sup>1</sup>

The Project Room *Operaciones en la selva* ("Operations in the jungle") is part of a larger work, *Operations and Ceremonies*, and presents itself as a kind of work-in-progress including objects, documents, drawings and graphic studies referring directly to the content of these manuals, which I then freely related to other images and discourses, often very antagonistic.

In the first part of the project, I intervened on photographs included in the "Manual for the Training and Operations in the Jungle", with the typography and episode titles found on the covers of the magazine *Killing* (Kiling in Argentina), an Italian photo-story popular in South America in the 1970s.

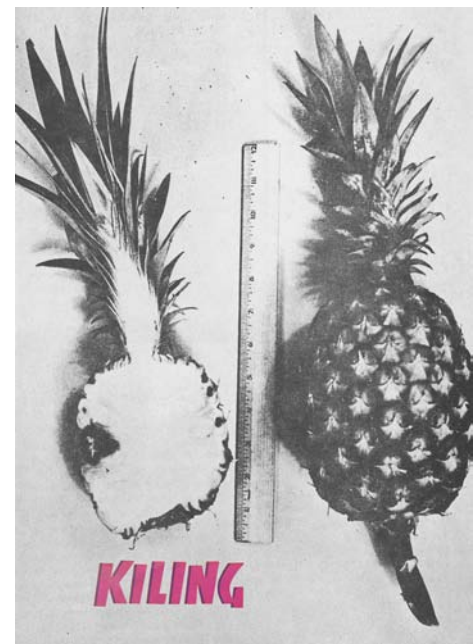
In the second part, on two photographs of landscapes extracted from these same anti-guerilla manuals, I inserted fragments of a manuscript allegedly written by Osmar Martínez, leader of the EPP guerilla (Paraguayan People's Army), seized by the police in 2009. The fragments show survival instructions for the guerilla group in the wooden areas of the Oriental region of Paraguay. This way, an anachronistic and improbable dialogue is being established between two discourses radically antagonistic, although drafted to be used in similar contexts.

The third part is articulated around fake propaganda pamphlets constructed with images from the chapter "El Programa 'Conozca su mundo', la amistad a través del entendimiento" ("Programme 'Know your world', friendship through understanding")

from the magazine *¡Adelante!* distributed within the School of Americas. These pamphlets allow us to look at families of militaries from Fort Gulick, wearing traditional clothing revealing their origins, in the aim of learning about each other's culture and encouraging "friendship between peoples". "The contrast between images from anti-guerilla manuals and the hypocrisy of this chapter supposedly reflecting a community united in difference, refer to the Western countries' double discourse towards Latin American dictatorships."<sup>2</sup>

A series of drawings closes the exhibition in which the pencil, acting as an awl, allows us to make out instruments used by militaries during their missions in the Latin American jungle. Spectral silhouettes then appear as fragile instruments of memory of the atrocities committed in the larger context of the Cold War, and in the name of a supposedly "Christian Western civilisation".

Fredi Casco



<sup>1</sup> The School of Americas is an organisation for military training founded by the United States' government and established at Fort Gulick in Panamá since 1946. In this military training school were taught fighting techniques, torture, assassinations and repression, aiming at guaranteeing the permanence of Latin American dictatorships.

<sup>2</sup> Ana Maria Guerrero, from the catalogue published for the monographic exhibition *Fredi Casco - La fascination des Sirènes*, shown from June 3 to September 23, 2014 at the Maison de l'Amérique Latine, Paris

09 January

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21 February  
2015

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