

self-accusation



bárbara paz

I died on December 25, 1992.  
In a white chevet to the sound of Erotica by Madonna.

I don't like those people who always wake up happy. Those who post photos smiling. As if the whole world was happy.

. I hate Christmas. 434 points, thickness.-size. glass powder. Tear. Cut . Fracture. Exposed. Teeth, jaw. Pray, alcohol, lesbians? -teenagers: twins, Music . Christmas . Book . White dress . -It was peaches that I ate. She didn't want to sleep at his house. She asked for the car. 17 years.

head trauma. loss of consciousness/fainting; intense headache; bleeding from the head, mouth, nose or ear; decreased muscle strength; drowsiness; difficulty speaking; changes in vision and hearing; memory loss; I try to measure the size. Tear from right ear to mouth. Skin suspended by a nerve. Exposed teeth. On the left side . Tear from the eye to the mouth. Glass dust. Music . X-ray.

Let's pray a novena.

She lost her mother, she doesn't have a father. She died too. She says she is a model.

Does not stop talking . Chatterbox. She needs to stop so she doesn't tear the skin anymore. Morphine. 'Morphine is a narcotic drug with high analgesic power used to relieve severe pain. Belonging to the group of opioids, it was isolated for the first time in 1804 by Friedrich Sertürner, who began distributing the drug in 1817.'

I'm very sleepy, but I'm not going to stop giving my statement. You can call 597-1595 no! There's no one...call...Mr. Gonzales in Novo Hamburgo. He is a doctor. Father of the girls.

what time is it ?

I drank. I got drunk. Champagne.

Can I tell you something ?

I was born to the sound of Rebel Rebel by David Bowie in 1974

The year he played Eagles, Linda Rostad, Rollin Stones, Gloria Syanor with Never say Goodbye, George MacCrace with Rock you baby, Nazareth with Love hurts...Queen, Killer Queen, Bob Marley, with No women no cry, Gita by Raul Seixas...Roberto Carlos, Clara Nunes, Dry and Wet. and Jair Rodrigues S=Dont let the sun go down on me .. and Good Bye Yellow Brick road..by Elton John( on the most played list) ..1974 ..

-Do you have Coca-Cola?

She only wakes up with a very cold glass of coke.

-Can you not smile?

-I am unable ...

-But there's glass in your face...

-but it's very funny..

-Isn't there coke in the hospital?

-It's just that today is a holiday, it's Christmas.

- and there's no coke?



A



B



C



D



D



D



D



A



A



E

E



G



F

F



H



H





J

J



K



L



L

Bárbara and her collective of individuals, torn open, inside out. What are the borders demarcated by each individual in their being in the world? What events cross us, mark us, make us bleed until these borders dissolve and everything becomes a single territory?

Her body, her face, and every piece of her most absolute being as a political territory: everything happens and is communicated. A body that constantly tears outward. A body that deeply tears inward.

It is necessary to disarm the fragments of worlds between themselves and within themselves so that the boiling can happen and allow this dialogue between body, earth, and soul. It is necessary to get close, to meticulously look at the pores, and to sew with invisible threads. It is necessary to heal—or not. One choice layered upon another in a potent and lacerating plurality.

Some close completely, others insist on reopening from time to time, reminding us even more that they exist. An open wound with a scab that never comes off. There are scars that tear, that expose obscure pieces of what was. They cross multiple layers of skin and leave us raw. Even in the form of a scar, they continue to pour out history. They continue to lay bare a past. A scar is always a past and a present. Even if it still throbs internally, it was and is. We carry it with us. The landscape carries it with her. Each has its beginning, middle, and end.

There is a difference between being and having been. And to appropriate one's own story. And she does this every day, in all the fields of art through which she moves. They are not disconnected "selves" that inhabit the performance, the camera, the voice, the moving image, the photograph. The tears came from the actress self, the pain and guts, from the real self. An intermittent crossing.

Here is Bárbara, raw. Without the fantasy of the mask and with the truth of her scars. Imprinted on her body. Imprinted on her happenings. In each of the works—installations, photographs, videos, and words—exhibited in her first solo show "Auto-accusation" at the Fonte Gallery, the fear of being Bárbara is moving. As she transmutes, her memories are activated. From other worlds, with other creatures. As she bleeds, her memories extend. As she tears, glass powder flows through her bloodstream.

A trace of skin on her own skin. Narratives about a body. Tears that multiply, transform, proliferate, and tear again. They cry, sob, throb. Memories engraved in the skin, in the house, in the landscape. Death. End. Mourning. Birth. Beginning. Celebration. A new layer forms.

The beginning is the singular. We are born and die in the absolute self. Walking the earth in a world that does not echo it is frightening. But yes, inhabiting this self in pain, trauma, and guts requires courage. A personal story told through the image is at risk.

At 17, her face split in two. A crack in the skin crossed her self. Her scar made her dive into imperfection. 434 stitches in the attempt to hide from the mirror and from others. For years she avoided what was most beautiful in her skin. For years, her truth was masked. "I remade myself as I did; I managed to disguise myself, to hide." said the scar. "A thread held my halves. A nerve kept my parts together. I decided not to remove this mark. Who am I? I was afraid of myself without it. A broken vase." Bárbara Paz

**Cassiana Der Haroutiounian**  
**Self-Accusation**



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PAZ, Barbara Raquel "PAET"  
Rua Santa Teresinha nº 295 Campo Bom.  
D.N. 1700734 Fone: 5971251.  
Profissão: modelo. Mãe Surm  
28/12/92: Círculo fino (acabado) cirurgia em  
25/12/97: - Sutura intra-dim. es. e de - visão  
- curvatura e pi. labio sup. D. - Fratura punho E.  
Foto PD em 06/01 - Óleo Rm. Magenta + F. H. S. Solu  
Microporos:  
12/01/83: Círculo cicatrizado -

O

## Self-Accusation

In the works brought together in *Self-accusation*, artist Bárbara Paz presents us with a sequence of elaborations around scars – real and symbolic – from a serious car accident she experienced when she was still very young, in which she suddenly saw her life hanging by a thread. In this process of elaboration, however, Paz does not to seek to entirely reconstruct or replicate her traumatic past experience as it actually was, but rather deal with the pieces, reminiscences, fragmented images that populate her memory of the event.

While the work *Aquela menina* [That girl] (1992) presents us with slides from the time of the accident, the rest of the works exhibited today were produced three decades later. From a tangle of past threads, Paz weaves a plot that goes beyond solely autobiographical details, resulting in images that are at once poetic and characterised by a latent violence. The artist’s gesture tells us that we never remember the past as it actually was, since memory is a mechanism that fabricates, constructs, edits and adds. Consequently, taking care of an open wound from the past is not about establishing facts, but rather making use of the fictional nature of memory itself in order to re-signify what happened – as if remembering that the future can only exist when the past is no longer. The images Paz creates are therefore imbued with an opaqueness and lacunosity, components of remembering that do not seek to restore a totality, but rather operate by means of fragments.

Shards of the traumatic accident appear, for example, in the video *Festa de Natal* [Christmas Party] (2023) and in the photograph *A montanha com o peso nas costas* [The mountain with the weight on its shoulders] (2023). While the matter that injured her – glass – shows up in these works, the elements that participated in her healing, such as gauze, surgical suture, saline and bandages, are revealed in a series of other works, like in the triptych of photographs *Untitled* (2023), and also in *Soro de atriz* [Actress saline] (2023) and *A mulher com soro* [Woman with a drip] (2023).

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Skin is not only the misleading appearance of things, but rather, as Paul Valéry famously asserts,<sup>1</sup> ‘the deepest thing’ in the human being. This membrane that separates interior and exterior contains marks that reveal intersections between past and present. The epidermal surface of the artist is marked and subjected to measurements in the video *De-marcação* [De-marcation] (2023), fragmented in axes of symmetry and crossings-out, which evoke a scientific anthropometry. Her works operate on and from her own body, seen not merely as a biological organism but as a matter steeped in history.

Over the course of the exhibition the multidisciplinary nature of the artist, who is also, more frequently, an actress and director, becomes clear. Thus, we come across a kind of threshold between fiction and reality, dramaturgy and report. In some of her performative gestures, Paz carries out activities that put her own physical integrity at risk, in order to break with specular illusion. By affirming a carnal, palpable, finite body, her works distance themselves from the typical idealisation of classical paradigms of representation. These ideas/paradigms, it is worth noting, focus in particular on the image of the female body. Thus, we believe it is pertinent to consider connections between the works brought together today and a contemporary production that dates back to the 1960s, when experimentation related to body art and performance made the body the matter of visual expression.

In this context, confronting an idealising imagery imposed on female bodies, a series of women artists emerged as key figures. In Brazil, names like Sônia Andrade, Letícia Parente and Anna Maria Maiolino produced ground-breaking performances recorded in photos and on video, in which they subjected their own bodies to potential violence, as if emulating in the private territory of the body a larger violence that was taking place in the social and collective fabric of the country with the military dictatorship in place.

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<sup>1</sup>VALÉRY, Paul. *Idée Fixe*. Nova Iorque: Pantheon Books, 1965.

In the video *Auto-acusação* [Self-accusation] (2023), which gives the exhibition its title, Paz references the 1960s by paying tribute to Austrian playwright Peter Handke. In the play of the same name, written in 1965, the latter sought to make spectators aware of the artificiality of theatre, in order to break with the illusionary paradigms of classical dramaturgy. While Handke’s text was conceived to dispense with sets and reduce scenic elements as much as possible, the artist’s video also operates according to an economy of means. We see only the outline of her lips, which become almost abstract elements and remind us of an open wound. The detached mouth of the actress-artist recites the text of the play in darkness. Note that the play was written in first person, in order to blur the boundaries between character and actor. This dissolution of limits takes on other meanings in Paz’s poetics, which also operate on the limit between biographical details and fiction.

A central object in the exhibition, the artist’s body sometimes appears as a finite and fragile material, subjected to acts of imminent violence, like when shards of a mirror press into her face in the video *Silêncio* [Silence] (2023). Carried out by the artist herself, these acts verge on violating the surface of her skin, as if they seek to re-enact the tragic moment of the accident. At the same time, the mirror plays a singular role in her research, appearing as a simultaneously cutting and totalising element. It is through using a mirror that we are able to view ourselves fully; without this resource we would only see fragments of our body.

The face, on the other hand, the body part most impacted by Paz’s accident, plays a central role in defining what is unique in each of us, being the means through which desires, fears, pleasure, anger, a whole myriad of emotions find expression before the eyes of the other. Thus, the mutilation resulting from the car crash can be seen as something that ultimately called into question her own identity. It is no coincidence that in the series of photographs *Cabelos* [Hair] (2023) her face is camouflaged, oscillating between revealing and hiding, showing and covering.

Her hair, which somehow protects her from the invasive nature of the other’s gaze, can be seen as a multiplicity of threads. Threads, in turn, are a recurring theme of the exhibition. In the photograph *Ponto de sutura* [Stitch] (2023), we see her hand being subtly stitched together. Here, there is a dialogue between the taut thread that enacts the scarring and the lines of the artist’s palm. Lines/patterns that can, for some, bring clues about the future, as if indicating the opposite of the signs present in scars – traces that show how the past left its marks on the visible landscape of the skin.

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Walter Benjamin reminds us that ‘to articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it “the way it really was”. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.’<sup>2</sup> The words of the Jewish philosopher, dedicated to rethinking our relationship with history in a broad sense, can be applied to the course of a life story. Ultimately, in ‘Self-accusation’ Bárbara Paz appropriates the memory of a traumatic event that had every likelihood of leaving her a paralysed present in order to construct, weaving the thread connecting fact and fabrication, a different future from the one the shards of the accident seemed to assign her.

## Luisa Duarte, May 2024

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<sup>2</sup>BENJAMIN, Walter (Trad. Harry Zohn) Theses on the Philosophy of History In: *Illuminations*, p. 247

subtitles

A. PONTOS DE SUTURA, 2023

90x60

Impressão em Jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

B. SORO DE ATRIZ, 2023

30x45

Impressão em Jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

Base líquida , ponto de sutura , atadura

(Solução de cloreto de sódio a 0,9%)

Impressão em Jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

C. A MULHER COM SORO

1.06 x 160

Impressão em Jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

D. SEM TÍTULO, 2023

60 X 40

Trípico

Impressão de jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel algodão

E. AUTO-ACUSAÇÃO, 2023

Texto: Peter Handke

Videoart

Red Komodo - Zeiss lens

20'

F. Silêncio, 2023

Videoart,

Red Komodo - Zeiss lens

3'47

G. SILÊNCIO, 2023

Videoart,

Red Komodo - Zeiss lens

3'47

H. DE-MARCAÇÃO

Videoart, 2023

Red Komodo - Zeiss lens

4min

I. SEM TÍTULO, 2023

60 x 40cm

Trípico

Impressão em jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

J. MORFINA, 2023

Bse líquida

Videoart

Red Komodo - Zeiss lens

7'42''

K. A MONTANHA COM O PESO NAS COSTAS, 2023

60x40

90x60

Vidros/Impressão em Jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

L. FESTA DE NATAL, 2023

Videoart

Red Komodo - Zeiss lens

1'46''

M. CABELOS, 2023

13 Fotos

30x45 - cada

Impressão em Jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

cabelos

N. AUTO-RETRATO, 2023

20x30

Impressão em Jato de tinta pigmentado sobre papel de algodão

O. AQUELA MENINA, 1992

Papel fotográfico glossy

18 x 10,22cm

24 x 13,5cm

