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Doctoral thesis: *The artwork as a countermonument. Representing antiheroic memory as a resource in contemporary art.*

ABSTRACT

We are witnessing, since the eighties, the north Atlantic and Latin-America region, what many critics have called *Cultural Memory*. Issues in the past have created an upsurge in both cultural and political debates on contemporary artistic production. This Thesis will focus on the research methods of memory within contemporary art and artist representations that base their discourse on transmitting the concern on memory and its interpretation and comparison with the concept of history.

Our approach to memory comes from the concept of *countermonument*, coined by the specialist in Jews and English studies James E. Young. He refers to the display of new monuments, initially in Germany, that meet a range of patterns and characteristics, both formal and conceptual, that challenge the iconography of the traditional monument.

Relying on the basis that define the countermonument, we propose a typology that considers and describes different categories of work displayed in art showrooms, galleries, museums, and which we classify into three blocks. The first focuses on those artworks created from the concepts of dematerialization and the banal, which artists use discarded objects in order to evoke the absence left by the victims of traumatic events in history. In the second block, we analyse artists and artworks that make a revision of history, in which the counter-memory and counter-histories of victims and minority groups serve to question the official and hegemonic versions of history. The last group comprised of works that approach temporality an essential feature, using it as an agent to activate a memory work in the viewer. The formal and conceptual analysis of these artworks turns into a more iconographic examination that allows us to draw conclusions on their social, cultural and aesthetic values.

From applying our theoretical model proposal to particular cases, we have concluded that the artworks covered in this study, which meet the patterns of the countermonument, show a thoughtful commitment with the current concern on memory that have lead them to acquire the commemorating and memorializing functions carried out by museums and monuments in the public space, with the fundamental difference that memory artworks address to the individual viewer and not to a wider audience.