

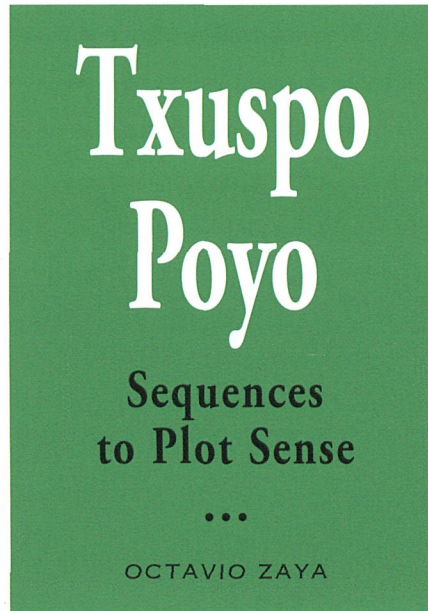
REVIEWS

In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in flashes. The text is the thunder rolling long afterward.

Walter Benjamin

1 ...radically, Txuspo Poyo's celluloid strips weave a skeptical passion for the impossible: the impossibility of narrative, the impossibility of arriving at any resolution, the impossibility of communication. The "fabric" emerging out of these strips attempts to come to terms with the complexities of the present without resorting to the idealized images of the past or the future. These pieces are, in a sense, post-utopian; assuming, on the one hand, that our problem is that our goals and objectives evaporated before they had been achieved, before they had become reality. On the other hand, they are completely aware of the fact that each one of us, while different from each other in interests, wealth, power, 'culture', are nevertheless "contained in a world where, tumbled as [we] are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way" (1)...

2 ...simultaneously high-tech and handcrafted, spectacular and familiar, Txuspo's pieces evoke the sensibility of Piet Mondrian and Ad Reinhardt as much as that of Miriam Shapiro, one male and the other female. Still, these make reference to Modernist painting



proper by way of their geometric compositions and to some extent, their colour. However, these patterns never really assume the authority of Mondrian's or Barnett Newman's canvases; their geometry is delicate and intricate, not bold. In any case, Txuspo establishes a syncopated field of overlapping and underlapping vertical and horizontal strips which disable information, as if he would suppress a letter from a word, as if we might momentarily lose the flow of, say, a radio frequency...

3 ...Txuspo's work doesn't have any beginning or ending. Such concepts imply linearity. But if we assume that the "fabric" created by Txuspo possesses multiple sequences rather than having an entire absence of linearity and sequence, then the work may have

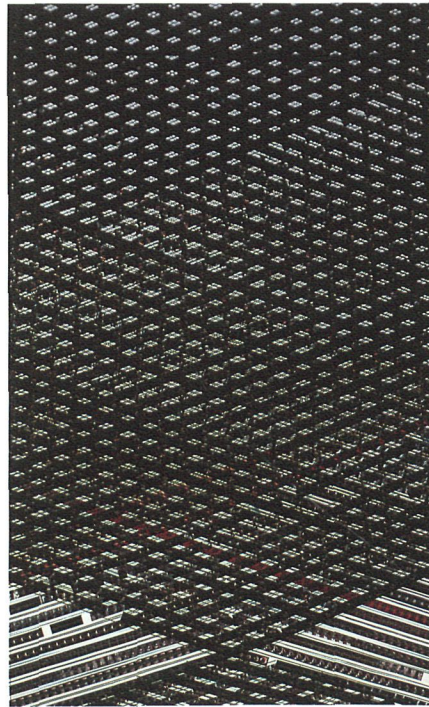
multiple beginnings and endings.

Regarding the origins and openings, one can suggest that Txuspo's "fabric" offers at least two different kinds of beginnings. The first concerns individual lexia, the second, a gathering of these into a kind of metatext. Because the work exists as a system within a frame (a plastic covering), however transiently, the viewer considers the work at some point, starting at one or another frame, in one or another sequence, and this moment, this frame, this sequence, is the beginning. Writing of print, Edward W. Said explains that "a work's beginning is, practically speaking, the main entrance to what it offers" (2). But, what happens when a work offers many "main" entrances, as does Txuspo's? Said provides resources for an answer when he argues that a "beginning" is designated in order to indicate, clarify, or define a later time, place, or action". In other words, the designation of a beginning generally also involves the designation of a consequent *intention*. A link, a patch from the "fabric", or a frame, may then assume either the role of the beginning of a chain or the point of departure. "The beginning, then, is the first step in the intentional *production of meaning*". But Txuspo's "fabric" makes the determination of the beginning difficult, because it changes our conception of the "fabric" and permits viewers to "begin" at any

number of different points, thus similarly changing the sense of ending. And, it not only allows different ending points but also continues to add to the “fabric”, to extend it, to make of it more than it was when we began. There is never one last strip. As Txuspo himself recognizes, “the piece has two versions: one is conceived of as unity, but because of its abysmal surface –since it lacks any perspective– one feels compelled to search for one’s own logic in the piece. One searches for one’s own logic” (3)...

2 ...Txuspo’s pieces are not paintings, though they have a pictorial quality. Yet, as pictures they are exceptionally mute -scenes and images literally taken from the mass media, movies, photographs, etc., which don’t appear to make up a complete story. Like the “fabric”, the artist too is stitched together in bits and pieces, a forever fragmented subject. Constructed as they are by means of splicing and editing found images, the pieces never come across as self-sufficient. Quite the opposite, they appear at once innocent and impure, noble and illegitimate... “The work exists as fragmentary.” Txuspo asserts “a frame, a fragment of the piece, always has the same intensity as the whole.” There is thus no documentary, processual or self-referential narrative. There is only a narrative of instants, as in a set of photo-booth pictures. It is this time: the time between one instant and another...

1 ...a fragmented, elliptical, repetitive, yet infinite, or at least indefinite, “fabric” of images and colors, no part of which, however, may be separated from the whole “fabric”, with its transparent holes and endless edges. A strip, a sequence, a frame, may be seen as transitional, as if it was inserted into a



Txuspo Poyo. *Internet*, 1993. 170 x 110 cm.
Celluloid 35 mm/colour, plastified.

major narrative sequence, creating in the sensory imagination a vertiginous kaleidoscope of abstractions. But this diversion, which would be nothing in a work comprised only of such notations, is not gratuitous here, because here, that “documentary” sequence, besides being subordinated to or transpiring through a “fictional” ground, registers a subjectivity in the behavior and expression of these notations. “The work moves from the individual to the

collective sense”. Txuspo explains. “It is reminiscent of the way we get information, make it private and then turn it back to the public. The title refers to what is happening in the piece...”

4 “...I’m interested in the celluloid as transparency, as something transient. This interest began in 1989, after a trip to London. I brought back some rolls of films that I found in the garbage. I then had a show at the Casa de la Cultura in Basauri and prepared a three by two meter curtain which I had previously put together for an Art Encounter organized in Mondragón. The piece was hung away from the wall, so as to emphasize the transparent condition of the celluloid. Later I got back to that idea of transparency as transition, as a feeling of something passing. The celluloid offers information which is rather abstract, because it is information in motion. It is like an absence, or a presence passing away...” A presence that passes away because Txuspo’s work is exemplary of the crisis of the action-image. What is happening in the image is beyond the image itself, beyond movement: it is what Deleuze would call the mental image, a mutation of cinema...(4).

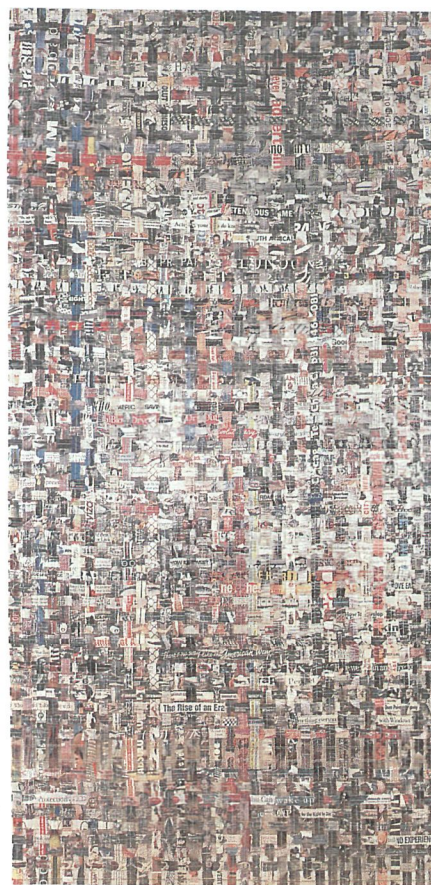
2 ...Txuspo: “I need so bad Godard...”

1 ...Godard: “as I say, to discover what it’s and what dots, like aircraft waiting to take off, better at the moment, rather

than answers and questions, rivers of feelings promptly losing themselves in the sea of thoughts or vice versa, better to dissolve, dissolve, dissolve till one is out of breath as François sometimes does, and he alone, because no one else knows how, or else it's fashion, yes, better to drift into digressions so as to sew up again, with films as needles, the scattered pieces of our great white canvas, the one which is patched each year, today, this morning, as work begins, so we finally end by not knowing it is virgin, still virgin, like negative stock whether it be called Dupont, Ilford or Kodak, still in one piece too, and which one only has to blow on vigorously to stretch, that is to say to set those who have lost their way sailing in the right direction, whatever the name of the prompter may be, Skolimowski, Hitchcock, Langlois, Yes, dissolve, magnetic montage of ideas, without points of suspension, this is neither a thriller nor Céline, let's leave him to literature, he well deserves it, suffering and piling book upon book amid the regiments of language, we, with the cinema, are something else, life first of all, which isn't new, but difficult to speak of, one can barely live and die, but speak of it, well there are books, but in the cinema, we have no books, we have only music and painting, and even those, as you know, can be lived, rarely spoken...(5)

3 ...this sort of *bricolage* provides a new kind of unity, one appropriate to the

"fabric". As long as we grant that plot is a phenomenon created by the viewer-author with the materials offered by the *lexia*, rather than a phenomenon belonging solely to the "fabric", then we can accept that reading the "fabric"



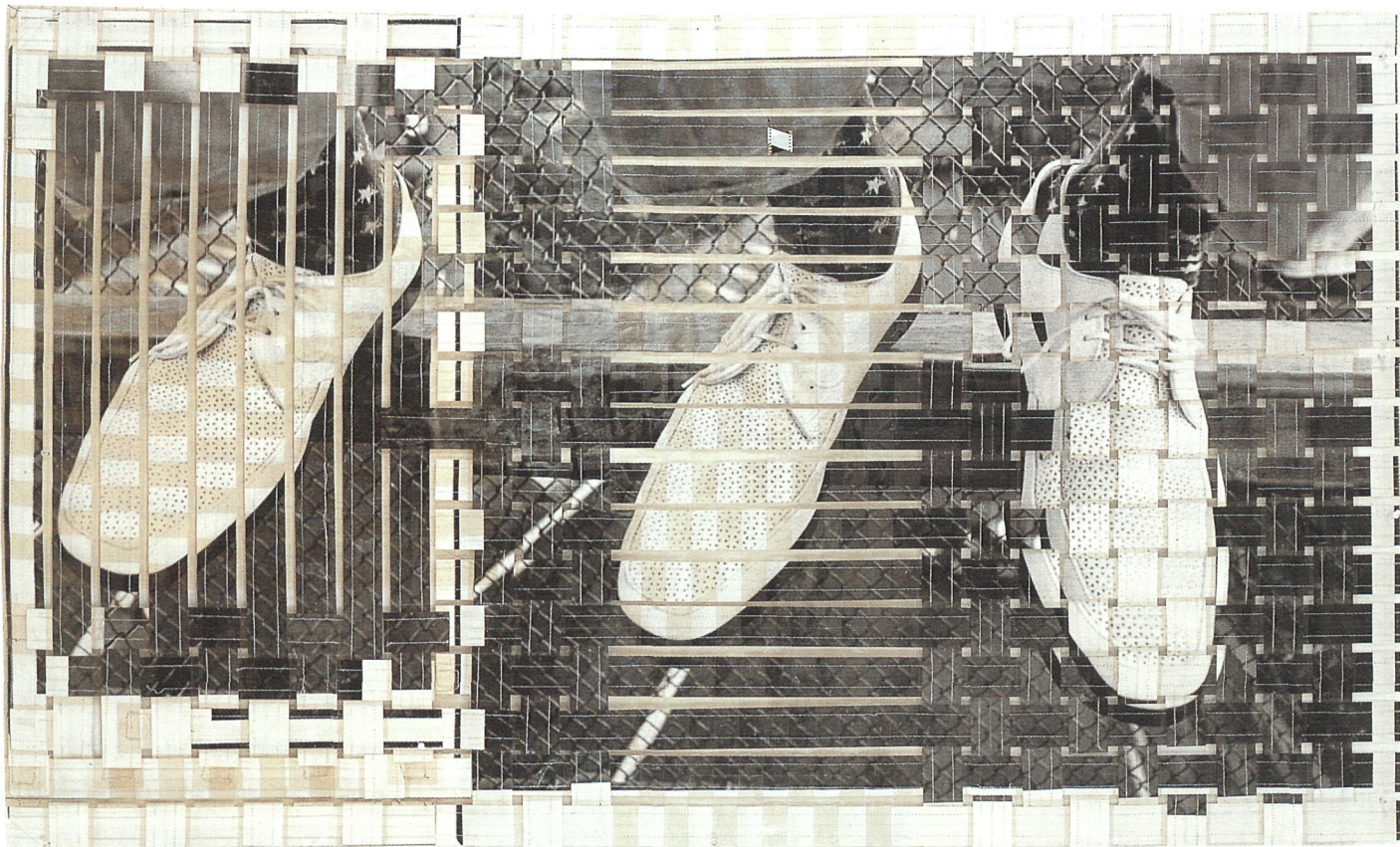
Txuspo Poyo. *I Need so Bad*, 1995.
240 x 120 cm. Celluloid 35 mm/colour.
Pieces of magazine.

produces an experience very similar to that provided by reading the unified plot described by narratologists from Aristotle to Ricoeur. Ricoeur defines plot, "on the most *formal* level, as an integrating dynamism that draws a unified and complete story from a variety of incidents, in other words, that transforms this variety into a unified and complete story. This formal definition opens a field

of rule-governed transformations worthy of being called plots so long as we can discern temporal wholes, bringing about a synthesis of the heterogeneous between circumstances, goals, means, interactions, and intended or unintended results" (6). According to Ricoeur, the metaphorical imagination produces narrative by a process of what he terms "predicative assimilation," which "grasps together" and integrates into one whole and complete story, multiple and scattered events, thereby schematizing the intelligible signification attached to the narrative taken as a whole." (7) As viewers, we find ourselves forced to fabricate a whole; to integrate multiple and scattered events, separate parts, into a whole complete story...

4 ...the consequences of this are evident for Txuspo when he mixes celluloid strips to establish differential relations with the visual elements. Interstices thus proliferate everywhere; in the visual image, in the celluloid strips, in the sewn photographs, in the interwoven strips. This is not to say that the discontinuous prevails over the continuous. On the contrary, the cuts and breaks in cinema have always forged the power of the continuous. But here, these cuts and breaks have become the interstices, without an end or a beginning. The interaction of two images engenders or traces a frontier which belongs to neither one nor the other...

2 ...links, fabrics, chains, interweavings,



Txuspo Poyo. *3 Feet 4 Death*, 1995. 200 x 120 cm. Celluloid 35 mm/colour and picture. Tape.

crossings, plots...the net that each piece plots amounts to a short circuit of time into space, emptiness into saturation, the bodily into technology...the obsessive reiteration of fragmented memories...Even his most recent work (*Go A-head* and *3 Feet 4 Death*) continuously replays its own fragmentation, alienation, and deterritorialization, emptying out all present and former referential meanings, and fracturing the coherence of the discourses-images that contain them...This suspension elicits an entirely different set of meaningful formations...which brings together the before and the after in a becoming which crosses them and displaces them

infinitely...Narration is constantly being completely modified, in each of its episodes, not according to subjective variations, but as a consequence of disconnected places and dechronologized moments...

4 ...“the pieces are like safes of meaning” (Txuspo Poyo). The problem, as with Raymond Roussel books, is to get the right combination in order to open the safe. Meanwhile, as Txuspo asserts, “it doesn’t have a head or tail. It lacks something, but we don’t know what it is”. This is precisely the subject of Txuspo’s work; that fundamental lack for which he attempts to compensate with saturation and excess of images. Its

importance emerges precisely from the interstices of its own signifying impossibility; between the flashes of its own ruin...

NOTES

- 1 Clifford Geertz. *Works and Lives: The Anthropologist as Author* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 147.
- 2 Edward W. Said. *Beginnings: Intentions and Method* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p.3.
- 3 From a conversation with the artist. Unpublished, February 1995.
- 4 See Gilles Deleuze. *Cinema 2, The Time-Image* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1989).
- 5 Jean Luc Godard. *Godard on Godard* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), p.213.
- 6 Paul Ricoeur. *Time and Narrative* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1984), Vol.2, p.8.
- 7 Ibidem, volume 1,p.X.