more comprehensive staff training. Removing locks from internal compound gates as a symbolic gesture of trust and removing shade cloth from chain-link fences for better visibility will be permitted. Small groups from the Delta compound will be allowed to walk on the adjacent beach and paddle in the water.

5. Budgetary measures released in May 2014 suggest that six of these centers, including Manus Island, will be closed and the detainees transferred elsewhere. Foreseen closures affect the Northern Immigration Detention Centre in Darwin, Darwin’s Airport Lodge, the Aqua/Lilac facilities for women and children on Christmas Island, and the Curtin Facility in Western Australia.


The term “military-industry complex” was coined by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his farewell address to the American nation on 17 January 1961. Akin to the “academic-military-industrial” complex in the twentieth century as foreseen by historians of science Peter Galison and Stuart Leslie, the “security-industrial complex” can be viewed in relation to the “prison-industrial complex,” prevalent in US immigration and privatization of prisons. See Eve Goldberg and Linda Evans, The Prison-Industrial Complex and the Global Economy (Oakland, Calif.: PM Press, 2009).


12. Operation Sovereign Borders commenced on 18 September 2013 and is a “command structure” managed by the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.


14. Ibid.


Staging Entrapment in Mexico City:
La Máquina de Teatro’s Reconstruction of the Massacres in Tenochtitlan and Tlatelolco

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Five actors move around an almost empty theater stage carrying ubiquitous gray building bricks; they are costumed in jeans, skirts, shirts, and blouses that have been dyed to produce a whitish mottled coloring, as if covered in brick dust from construction work. Gradually, at center-front stage, they collectively construct a single-layer square platform of bricks—a stage on a stage. Standing side by side behind the square of bricks, the actors leap into the air in unison, gesturing upward. Together they take a step onto the brick stage, facing the audience square on.

—It was the day of the fiesta of our lord Huitzilopochtli. We were celebrating in the temple…. The plaza was full of people …

—There were snipers on the roofs.

—Those who were going to kill us covered one hand with a white glove.

—Suddenly there was a gunshot in the distance. We didn’t know where it came from.

—“Get down!” someone shouted. “They’re going to kill us!”

—They closed the eagle entrance in the smaller palace … and when it was closed, they all took their positions.

—The plaza was a mousetrap.

The actors gaze out into the darkness of the auditorium, staring directly at the audience, as intensive bright lights shine in their faces, illuminating expressions of fear and terror.
Pressed together they form a tight cluster of bodies. Standing huddled, the bodies push, touch, crouch, and lean sideways, falling … falling as one body, in slow motion, bodies contorted, awkward, one on top of the other, heads falling slowly down to the ground.

—I remember perfectly the blood running down the forehead of someone who was by my side.
—I had blood in the sides of my shoes, in the hem of my dress.
—“Everyone against the wall! Everyone on the ground, and whoever raises their head will go to hell!” they said to us.

One actor removes a red kerchief from her pocket and stares at it as she speaks:

—in the plaza the following day there was rubbish, clothes, bloodstains covered with newspaper, blood that was still fresh mixed with water.
—The people cried for their dead, our dead, and prepared them for incineration.
—They said, “They are just bodies.”
—Do you remember?
…
—Today, the liars know the truth.
—in an instant they were stabbed, with deep slashes …

As the lights transform, washing the stage with a subtle muted hue, the actors step off the brick platform, moving to pick up more gray bricks that are strewn around the stage and slowly placing them one on top of another as they construct a pyramid (Figure 1).

This brief scenario of ferocious brutality is part of Trilogía Mexicana (Mexican trilogy), three devised, experimental theater works created and performed by the renowned and innovative Mexico City–based company La Máquina de Teatro (the Theater Machine), directed by Juliana Faesler and Clarissa Malheiros. With a prime goal of creating bridges between the present and past, and between reality and fiction, the company searches for relations among conditions of the contemporary world, history, memory, and all the stage arts as they explore the essence of being Mexican and its identity from distinct points of view.

Architecture, space, and architectonics are key to Faesler’s work. Rather than dramatic literary text dominating the scenario, she is interested in the reconstruction of spatial and architectural forms, where the space is fundamentally important to the creative and artistic process and where architectural forms inspire her use of space inside the theater. Faesler notes, “I understand architectonics as the architecture of the space—it’s like the definition of the forms and the organicness of the space in relation to the human being who inhabits it.”1 Architecture, space, and architectonics were crucial elements in the conceptualization and creation of Trilogía Mexicana. As Faesler and Malheiros discuss in their program notes, the three works were devised by the company between 2006 and 2010, with the ultimate aim of exploring concepts of memory, history, and Mexican identity, specifically examining the question, “How do we share our lives with what is left?”

A core component of the work involves crossing cultural fictions with historical realities as a way of questioning and probing received histories, and of seeking insights into current politics. Given the profound traumas of recent Mexican history, from the Spanish invasion in the sixteenth century followed by three hundred years of colonial rule to the wars of independence and the huge loss of territory to the United States in the nineteenth century, from the revolutionary wars of 1910–20 to the processes of nationalism, modernization,

Figure 1 Renowned Mexico City–based experimental theater company La Máquina de Teatro performs a scenario of entrapment from Trilogía Mexicana (Mexican trilogy), 2009 (photo by Christa Cowrie; used by permission of La Máquina de Teatro).
neoliberalism, and indigenous rights activism in the twentieth century, it is not surprising that the *Triología* encompasses state-driven violent and traumatic events, many of which are directly connected to attributes and characteristics of spatial and architectural forms.

In the heart of Mexico City, beyond the confines of the theater stage, buildings, structures, stone ruins, and statues are ever present in the cultural landscape, providing visual evidence of military and legislative incursions, power struggles, and victories, and offering daily reminders of painful and transformative acts. Yet within the confines of a purpose-built theater space, with a stage and fixed auditorium seating, how can state violence perpetrated through architectural specificities and spatial characteristics be re-presented and reconstructed to enable reflection on, and engagement with, the terror, the legacies, and ongoing injustices?

The scenario from *Triología Mexicana* I briefly described at the beginning of this article is a powerful example of an innovative staged reconstruction and theatricalization that captures and examines some spatial and architectural attributes of two acts of violence, not through literal representation but through embodied physicalities of the actors combined with lighting, stage objects (bricks), and spoken narrative. In this scenario two horrific massacres are brought together, paralleled and coexisting through architectural entrapment, yet separated temporally by 448 years: the massacre in 1520 in México-Tenochtitlan of indigenous Mexico (Aztec) nobles by the Spanish invaders and the massacre in 1968 of students and other citizens by state soldiers in Mexico City’s Plaza of the Three Cultures (*Las Tres Culturas*), Tlatelolco. Locationally, the events occurred within a mile of each other. In both instances those killed were unarmed and unsuspecting of the violence that was meted out to them. Both massacres happened in enclosed plazas, with no possibility of escape.

In 1520, just one year after the arrival of the Spanish conquistadores, in the monumental conurbation of México-Tenochtitlan—the sophisticated center of the powerful Mexico empire, built on an island in Lake Texcoco—thousands of Mexico nobles were executed by Spanish invaders. The killings took place during a religious celebration being held in the Templo Mayor.

On 2 October 1968, just ten days before the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Mexico City, soldiers under orders from the Mexican government opened fire on a demonstration of some 10,000 students and other citizens in the Plaza of the Three Cultures. At least forty-four people were killed (the actual number has never been determined) and hundreds wounded. Thousands were detained and over 1,200 arrested. Significantly, the Plaza of the Three Cultures is a weighty architectural and spatial site/sight encompassing remains of a large pre-Hispanic pyramid, a colonial church, and 1960s apartment blocks constructed with forward-looking visions of generating community life.

Both massacres persist as deep wounds in the Mexican psyche: one, temporally distant yet wholly present in the politics of daily racialized life; the other, existing in living memory and marking a defining action of state control. It was in 2008, during the making of *Triología Mexicana*, that director Faesler—in a moment of inspiration and awfulness—comprehended the correspondences between the 1520 and 1968 massacres, where the confinement of the space and the architectural structures were at the core of the efficacy of the state violence. Working with documented narrative histories, site visits, and improvisation, the company reconstructed the two massacres as one scenario.

On the theater stage the built environment of both events is constructed through the emptiness of the space, a single layer of gray bricks, embodied actions, narrative text, and penetratively dazzling lighting that shines directly into the faces of the actors as they cluster together, pointing and looking directly at the audience, positioning the spectators as part of the unfolding events. The actors speak short fragments of past-tense narration and present-tense action in quick succession, interweaving, merging, and blurring boundaries. A repeated motivic interrogation—“Do you remember?”—acts as a real provocation to recall and to question. In stark contrast to the confinement and entrapment of the two plazas, the absence of any physical constraining wall is powerfully significant. The actors could step off the edge of the brick stage and outside the border of the “plaza” at any moment, yet they continue to crowd together, with the claustrophobia and inevitability of the entrapment being reconstructed through verbal description and physicalization.

The absence of representation of the two different architectural styles—1520 Mexico and 1960s modernism—generates a form of coexistence, fusion, and collapse, where the reading is that of spatial coherency and intersection. This is powerfully resonant theater of violence, in which spatial architeconics generate a chilling and kinesthetic experience for actors and audiences alike.

**Notes**


3. The scenario takes place within work two, *Moctezuma II // La Guerra Sucia* (The dirty war), which encompasses the moment of encounter between the Mexica emperor, Moctezuma II, and the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, and deals with the thematicity of trauma, violence, collective memory, politics and corruption, civilian interventions, subversive movements, indigenous rights, historiography, and the writing of history. For this work Faesler had already had the inspiration of using the concept and physical action of bricks and construction, building a pyramid during the performance. Immediately after the scenario of the two massacres, a pyramid of bricks is constructed on the base of the single layer. Faesler notes, “We started working with the bricks, removing things from the text and telling ourselves the story of who ‘they’ could be. First they are these subversive groups, employees of Moctezuma; then they are bricklayers like you find at all the construction sites in Mexico City—they’re on every corner. When they find a stone underneath the construction site the work is stopped until someone from INAH [Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia] says, ‘Oh, stone!’ Each time the city moves, it opens up and vomits what is below. So I imagined these groups of laborers and workers” (Faesler, interview with the author, 1 May 2010).

4. After the fall and destruction of the Mexica empire, the building materials of the Templo Mayor were used for the construction of the church that was transformed into the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City. In 1978, the site of the Templo Mayor was uncovered by workers digging for an electric company and was subsequently fully excavated.

5. In the early 1300s, the conurbations of México-Tlatelolco and México-Tenochtitlan were established as twin cities.

6. “Immediately it was clear to me that we could weaver together those two great wounds that the city has. The Trilogy is very much of Mexico City: it’s very ‘chilanga’—of Mexico City. It brought together those two experiences: of the Mexica warriors and the students. They were both in the same celebration, or rather in political meetings demanding action for certain things, which is like a religious ceremony but at the same time it’s a reaffirmation of identity. They were already surrounded: the entrances were closed; the story is the same. As I began to read both, what started happening to me—I remember it perfectly—the impact on my body … that the two were absolutely the same … the lighting—the signals—the gunshots—how they closed the doors, they didn’t let anybody get out … So then we decided to put them together. The thing about history is that it is not one, it’s many—it repeats itself, it alters, it continues happening” (Faesler, interview with the author, 1 May 2010).

7. For both massacres, the company used firsthand narrative accounts as source material: for the 1520 massacre these were translations of selections of Nahuatl-language accounts from the indigenous perspective, published by scholar Miguel León-Portilla in the twentieth century. See Miguel León-Portilla, *Visión de los vencidos: Relaciones indígenas de la conquista* (1959; Mexico City, D.F.: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2007; available in English as *The Broken Spears: The Aztec Account of the Conquest of Mexico*, trans. Lysander Kemp (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1991). For the 1968 massacre at Tlatelolco, they used *La noche de Tlatelolco: Testimonios de historia oral* (Mexico City, D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1998) by renowned Mexican author and journalist Elena Poniatowska; in English as *Massacre in Mexico*, trans. Helen R. Lane (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1991). Tiny fragments of these firsthand graphic and poetic descriptions are spoken as present-tense verbatim accounts, effectively creating one narrative.

8. The five actors are Horacio García Rojas, Diana Fidelia, Natyeli Flores, Clarissa Malheiros, and Roldán Ramírez.