

V2V XVIII

## “The Disappeared Ana Forcinito:”

2023-2024, 36” x 24”, Acrylic paint on Canvas

The contributors were Ana Forcinito (storyteller), V2V collaborative team: David Feinberg, Luis Ramos-Garcia, Beth Andrews, Peter Truran, Sima Shahriar, Kirk Allison, Kimchi Hoang, Ben Mchie, Jennifer Barnett-Hensel, and Bahareh Shah.



Ana Forcinito, originally from Argentina, is a professor at the University of Minnesota where she specializes in modern and contemporary Latin American literature and cultural studies. When we first met, we discussed her drawings related to "the disappeared" and other issues in Argentina when she was living there during the years of the dictatorship.



Above is Ana's detail of grandmothers and granddaughters protesting together in mass demonstrations, which appears in different scales on the painting. The background was painted spontaneously with no reference to any subject matter. When the drawings were placed on it, the abstract imagery was no longer random.

The mothers decided to wear their children's nappies (diapers) as headscarves during mass protests to commemorate the memory of their disappeared. Wearing the nappies of their lost children, embroidered with the names and dates of birth of their offspring, who now

would be young adults, the mothers marched in twos in solidarity to protest the denials of their children's existence or their mistreatment by the military regime.

A hand-written document represents 30,000 disappeared letters inquiring of missing family members.

In the lower righthand corner is the image of a building located along one of the main access roads to the city of Buenos Aires – Av. del Libertador. During the last civil-military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983) this Navy School of Mechanics (ESMA) building operated as a clandestine detention, torture, and extermination center. The former officer's quarters, originally intended for recreation and rest, became the operational core for illegal repression. The eyes at the bottom of the document are a visual metaphor for music as the only thing that has sounds instead of words, "Listen to me with the sound of the voice".

Approximately 5,000 people, detainees and disappeared, went through this place. Most were dropped alive into the sea on the so-called "death flights". The smoke coming out above the navy officer's headquarters was reminiscent of the smoke coming from the gas chambers during the Holocaust. The difference was that the victims of mass extermination in Argentina were taken out to sea by helicopter and pushed overboard.

Today the former Officer's Quarters provides material evidence about state terrorism and proof in trials concerning crimes against humanity. This "Museum and Site of Memory ESMA" was nominated by the government of Argentina for UNESCO's World Heritage list. It houses a museographic exhibition based on the testimonies by survivors given at the *Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas*, CONADEP (1984), Trial of the Juntas (1985) and on documents declassified by State agencies for the 2017 ESMA "Mega-case" trial of 54 defendants concerning 789 victims, among other files, and includes images of the disappeared. All detention centers throughout Argentina are now museums dedicated to the disappeared and other historic atrocities.

The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo is an Argentine human rights association formed in response to the National Reorganization Process after the military dictatorship of Jorge Rafael Videla, with the goal of finding the desaparecidos, initially, and then determining the culprits of crimes against humanity to promote their trial and sentencing. Thousands of women gathered each year in Argentina with the slogan "Never Again".

The eyes in the artwork will eventually be surrounded by musical notes in reference to Ana's research.