

B Y E S T H E R P A R A D A

published by the University Art Museum, State University of New York at Binghamton, as part of the *Current Events* series

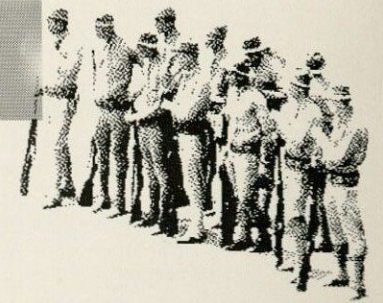
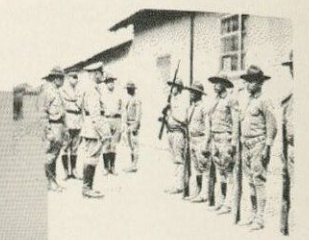
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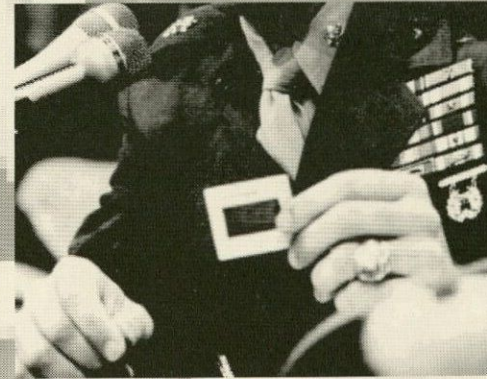
THE FRAME

A N U N F O L D I N G E X H I B I T I O N

B Y E S T H E R P A R A D A

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EXPAND THE MEDIA FRAME:

“Yet it is this condition of Herbert I. Schiller, *The Mind Managers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973), empty as it is of real diversity, which affords great strength to p. 21.

SEE ALSO: Michael Parenti, *The multichannel* *Inventing Reality: The Politics of communications flow creates the Mass Media* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986). confidence in, and lends credibility to, the notion of free EXTRA!, published bi-monthly by informational choice. the national media watch group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting provide continuous (FAIR), 130 W. 25th St., NYC 10001. reinforcement of the Report on the Americas, published status quo...” by the North American Congress

on Latin America (NACLA),

151 W. 19th St., NYC 10011.

etc.

EXPAND THE HISTORICAL FRAME:

“Between 1971 and 1980, a Richard Alan White, *The Morass: United States and enlisted men received training by U.S. Army America* (New York, Harper & Row, 1984), p.182. SEE ALSO: Walter LeFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions: The United States in Central America* (New York, W.W. Norton & ‘Command and General Staff’ Co., 1984). Penny Lernoux, *School of the Americas in the Panama Canal Zone—three times more than any other Latin American nation...*”

Church in Conflict with U.S.

Policy (Penguin Books, 1982).

Howard Zinn,

The Politics of History

(Boston: Beacon Press, 1970).

etc.

On the left and right flaps of this folder you see two individuals — worlds apart in circumstance and cultural background — who sought to share their visual images: North American Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North was in the full glare of U.S. media coverage; Nicaraguan Maria Medina Pavon was in the privacy of her modest home. What are the implications of imposing this symmetry or apparent balance on the lopsided structure of media attention? I ask you to consider my manipulations as part of an ongoing process of challenging received information. The piece within this folder can be looked at as an accordion-fold “book” in two sections. It is also meant to be viewed as a poster by unfolding the two strips side by side, with the predominantly black & white section on the left.

The photograph of North with one of his slides at the Iran-Contra hearing (taken by Paul Hosefros, chief photographer for *The New York Times* in Washington D.C.) ran on page four of *The Times*, July 17, 1987. It accompanied a story headlined “North, Minus His Slides, Makes Case for Contras,” which went on to describe the compromise, worked out by the Senate panel — their intense maneuvering shown in a four-column photograph on the following page: “North was permitted to give his lecture...but without his slides (thereby depriving) him of the visual appeal that pro-contra members of the committee wanted magnified before a national television audience.”

From an artist's perspective there is a certain satisfaction in this Congressional recognition of the power of visual images, although the news story actually went on for several paragraphs with detailed descriptions of the slides. The very last paragraph of the article suggested, with typical journalistic understatement, that there might be alternatives to North's version of the truth: “Like many of the elements in Colonel North's presentation, some of the figures he offered have been the subject of debate...”

Nevertheless *The Times*, like the majority of mainstream media sources in the United States, functions as a forum for official government pronouncements on issues of foreign policy. At best, it showcases the narrow spectrum of debate determined by the administration's agenda: to aid or not to aid; to show (the appeals for aid) or not to show, etc.

The intent of *Define/Defy the Frame* is to encourage an expansion of the viewers' perspective beyond the parameters of attention established by the U.S. government; and reported—whether in meticulous detail or skimpy sound byte—by the media.

Accordingly, the work contained in this folder posits an historical framework dominated by the establishment and proliferation of United States military power throughout the hemisphere. This hierarchical relationship is represented visually through the expansion of a single image—the training of the Nicaraguan National Guard by U.S. officers in Ocotal, Nicaragua, 1927—as a kind of pixel matrix. That framework was first developed in *The Monroe Doctrine, Theme and Variations* (1987). It was elaborated in *The Monroe Doctrine, Part Two* (1989), which introduced a latter-day variant of the 1927 Ocotal image: the closing ceremony at the School of the Americas in Panama. This ceremonial photograph (by James LeMoyne in *The New York Times*, September 24, 1984, p. 8) and the equally benign headline, “School for Latins Closes in Panama,” accompanying LeMoyne's story belie the damage and controversy which this facility provoked. We learn in later paragraphs of the *Times* story that the school trained more than 45,000 Latin American officers since its opening in 1947 and that “Panamanian nationalists and left-wing critics...described the American-run facility as a school for scoundrels whose graduates often turned their guns against their own governments.”

“The school may not have deserved the level of criticism it sometimes received. Several of its graduates did, however, take control of their countries. They included Brig. Gen. Omar Torrijos Herrera of Panama, Gen. Leopoldo Galtieri of Argentina and Gen. Carlos Humberto Romero of El Salvador. In addition, Gen. Gustavo Alvarez Martinez of Honduras asserted a dominant role in his country's politics.”

The article goes on to quote Col. Michael J. Sierra, the school's commander, defending the United States's role in running the school, “The school is an extension of our foreign policy...and our foreign policy tries to influence people in a manner beneficial to the United States.”

It is my hope that you as viewers will extend these perspectives by bringing images, text, or documents from your own personal experience or professional expertise to become participants in this “unfolding exhibiton.”

The images in color introduce an alternative story. They are from my slides, made on a single trip to Managua, Nicaragua in 1983. During a workshop I conducted with the Union of Photographers I met Adriana Angel, a middle-class Colombian woman (then married to a Nicaraguan) who had lived and worked as a photographer, filmmaker, and audio-visual consultant in Nicaragua for many years. She in turn introduced me to her friend and former domestic servant Maria Medina Pavon. Following are excerpts from my interview with the two women (8/6/83):

AA: The time came when our daughter wasn't home all day; we put her in a daycare center. So I told Doña Maria that we wouldn't need her. I felt that we could take over the responsibilities of the house, because, among other things, the contradiction was bothering me: the exploitation of one woman by another. I also felt a little uncomfortable dismissing her, since she had been left by her husband with six children. But we had a very good relationship....

MMP: Before (the revolution) we didn't have a school. I had to leave my kids alone all day while I worked. Now there are more schools. Before we women went to take care of other people's kids — to wash, iron, cook, clean their houses, water, their gardens, run errands, run to the market—while our kids were alone all day. I came home to sleep if I could, but I was gone all day, seven days a week, working. This happened with many people and it still happens, but not so much.

I worked to organize quite a few women. In 1980-81 the union (of domestic workers) was formed in this area of Pancasan with about 300 women, and they began to protest to their employers. They started to demand shorter working hours and more pay. The union continues, but I don't belong anymore because now I work for the Ministry of Education and belong to a different union...

After 1983 these two women's lives diverged more radically. Since 1984 Adriana has lived with her daughter in Washington D.C. where she completed a master's degree in the Romance Literature Program at Catholic University while continuing to work in film and video. In 1987 she published a book of testimonies and photographs of Nicaraguan women, co-authored with Fiona Macintosh, called *The Tiger's Milk*. During the summer of 1989 she returned to Nicaragua to videotape the tenth anniversary celebration of the revolution, as well as other aspects of political and cultural life there. Adriana observes that although Nicaraguans like Maria Medina Pavon can point to a few significant gains in recent years (In the summer of 1989 Maria received title to her house and lot, for example), many of their dreams “have remained in the shadows,” because of the devastation brought by the war and economic blockade.

Incorporating images from one day in the lives of these two women and their families does not begin to encompass the changes that have occurred since 1983. However, I hope to suggest the richness and contradictions of personal struggle in a time of massive social change: Maria, a single woman of color, supporting six children, active in her local chapter of AMNLAE (the Nicaraguan Women's Association), proudly holds up her family photograph; in another frame she leans into the shadows of her one-room cinderblock home, exposing the idyllic image on her T-shirt — a white couple embracing beneath a parasol; at yet another moment she appears small and isolated under the heroic figure of a woman on an AMNLAE poster which proclaims: “Building the New Society We Will Make the New Woman;” Adriana's daughter Maranta with Maria's son Juan Carlos mug for the camera wearing the Monimbo masks which gained notoriety as FSLN disguises during the struggle against Somoza; Maria's daughter Rosa Maria gives a feisty account of her day's work; Maria's son Jose Manuel holds aloft a pet parrot

EXPAND THE NARRATIVE FRAME:

“After I'd been living with Elvia Alvarado, translated and edited Alberto for 15 years, by Medea Benjamin, *Don't Be Afraid* I began to work with the *Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks* mothers' clubs that the *from the Heart* (San Francisco, The Catholic Church was Institute for Food and Development organizing....I loved the Policy, 1987), pp. 11-15. work. I'd go from village

SEE ALSO: to village organizing the Domitila Barrios de Chungara with women, setting up feeding Moema Viezzer, *Let Me Speak!* programs....we even got *Testimony of Domitila, A Woman of construction materials and the Bolivian Mines* (New York, started building

Monthly Review Press, 1978). roads...Together with the Rigoberta Menchu, edited by Elisabeth other women organizers, Burgos-Debray, *L...Rigoberta Menchu: we set up a tremendous An Indian Woman in Guatemala women's organization* (London, Verso Press, 1984). throughout Margaret Randall, *Sandino's Comayagua...But every Daughters: Testimonies of time I'd come home*

Nicaraguan Women in Struggle ...Alberto would start (Toronto, New Star Books, 1981). fighting with me Trinh Minh Ha, *Writing, Post-again....On top of all that, Coloniality and Feminism* I'd still have to put up with (Bloomington, Indiana University his drinking. I'd call him a Press, 1989). drunk, and he'd call me a James Clifford, *“On Ethnographic communist because I was Authority,” from The Predicament of organizing the women...*” *Culture* (Cambridge, Harvard

University Press, 1988).

etc.

EXPAND THE SPIRITUAL FRAME:

“For power-over is, Starhawk, *“Power-Over and Power-ultimately,...the power of From-Witbin,” Dreaming the Dark annihilation that backs up* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1988) p. 3; all the institutions of SEE ALSO: domination. Yet the power Fran Peavey, with Myra Levy and we sense in a seed, in the Charles Varon, *Heart Politics* growth of a child, the (Philadelphia, New Society Publishers, power we feel writing, 1986). weaving,... making Paul L. Wachtel, *The Poverty of choices, has nothing to Affluence: A Psychological Portrait of do with threats of the American Way of Life annihilation. It is the* (Philadelphia, New Society Publishers, power that comes from 1989). within...” etc.

Esther Parada
616 S. Scoville Street
Oak Park, Illinois

This exhibition was organized by Nancy Gonchar for the University Art Museum of the State University of New York at Binghamton. The publication has been made possible by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Nancy Gonchar thanks the University Art Museum staff: Lynn Gamwell, Norma Moses, and Matthew Zupnick for their enthusiasm and support of this project. Esther Parada gratefully acknowledges the research support she has received from the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Illinois, Chicago, where she is on the faculty of the School of Art & Design, and from a National Endowment for the Arts Photography Fellowship. She also thanks the many friends and colleagues who have contributed time and insight to this project, with a special word for the unstinting moral and technical support of Robert Check.

The Art Museum's exhibition (March 2 - April 6, 1990) and publication of work by Esther Parada is part of our *Current Events* series. *Current Events* refers to timely political and cultural events as well as progressive and challenging ways of thinking about art. A critical and experimental approach is characteristic of the artists in this series, who seek a synthesis between visual expression and political or social struggle. The series attempts to present a diversity of opinion that adamantly challenges the notion of a singular Eurocentric or monocultural perspective. Parada's investigations into the representation/misrepresentation of information fit squarely within these parameters.

Define/Defy the Frame attempts to dislocate a conventional reading of museum exhibition and publication formats. The "catalogue" in this case is not documentation, but rather another exhibition venue. It could be described as a folding book or poster; Esther calls it an "unfolding exhibition." In using this experimental form she seeks to open up a dialogue between different elements of the work—such as the poster and the folder—as well as between artist and viewer. Within the gallery space we want to challenge the authority of the museum in determining artistic "quality" and interpretation, and to begin to transform conventional assumptions about art practice. Recognizing the significance of the viewer in the production of meaning, we invite artists, writers, curators, historians, students, and others to collaborate in the development of this "unfolding exhibition." It is in this spirit that Esther (with computer equipment) will be resident in the gallery space during a three-day period to facilitate the processing of text and/or images contributed by those who wish to expand or challenge the printed work. Adriana Angel's offer to transcribe her 1989 interview with Maria Medina for inclusion in the exhibition space is one example of this interactivity.

Nancy Gonchar, Curator

Define/Defy the Frame was generated on a Macintosh II computer using QuarkXpress page layout software. Black & white photographs were digitized using AppleScan or HyperScan software on an Apple Scanner, while slides were digitized with a Barneyscan 35mm slide scanner. These scans were manipulated using SuperPaint, Digital Darkroom, and/or Image Studio software. Color slides were printed by Ross Ehlert Photo Labs, Chicago, or projected and manipulated on a Canon Color Laser Copier 500. Black & white film output from disk was printed by Anzographics, Chicago, while color film separations were made by IPP Lithocolor, Chicago. Offset lithography was by Rider Dickerson, Inc., Chicago, on 80 lb. gloss Productolith text for the 4-color poster and 8 pt. Carolina Cover C2S for the black & white folder.





