

Chapter Seven

Practices of Artistic Fieldwork and Representation: The Case of Teresa Pereda's *Bajo el Nombre de San Juan*

Introduction

In this chapter I continue to explore artistic practices of appropriation and creation. Here the emphasis is on the "research" strategies artists employ in the appropriation of indigenous cultures. I focus on the work of one particular artist, Teresa Pereda, whose project *Bajo el Nombre de San Juan* I followed over a period of six months during my fieldwork in 1999/2000.

Before I discuss the project in more detail below, I want to provide a brief introduction to what I mean by "artistic fieldwork" in relation to such projects. Fieldwork, despite the many criticisms leveled against it, still remains *the* method of defining anthropology with respect to neighboring disciplines, such as sociology, cultural studies, or history. When I use the term fieldwork in connection with artistic practices, I do so in reference to those practices of artistic research that include travel, the appropriation of cultural sites (in a symbolic and practical sense), and direct contact with local populations.

There are significant antecedents to such fieldwork practices in the history of modern and contemporary art, which I have discussed at some length elsewhere (Schneider 1993, 1996, Schneider and Wright 2006).¹ Here it will suffice to point out the main characteristics of "artistic fieldwork" and the specific problems it involves. In contrast with anthropologists, and with few exceptions, such as famously Paul Gauguin (and more recently, Nikolaus Lang, cf. Lang 1991), artists stay for comparatively shorter periods in the "field" or their site of cultural appropriation. Whereas anthropologists would aim to learn the local language as a matter of course, artists do not necessarily put a primary emphasis on acquiring language skills during travel. Artists' methods of recording their impressions during travel, historically, have included the drawn and written diary, the sketchbook in a range of media, and more recently, photography, film, video, and, in the case of those

interested in first-hand accounts of people (such as Teresa Pereda), the tape recorder.

The main difference between artists and anthropologists is that the latter work with what they hold to be established and standardized methodologies and theoretical paradigms, whereas artists' approaches seem to be more idiosyncratic and individual. This at least is the received wisdom from a scientific or social-science point of view. However, artists acquire their skills in art world institutions, and arguably work from certain standardized paradigms within any given period, just that the forms of expression seem more idiosyncratic and individualistic to the outside, anthropological observer.

Inspired by Native Spaces: The Work of Teresa Pereda

I had interviewed the Teresa Pereda in Buenos Aires, visited her Buenos Aires studio² and also went with her to gallery openings of other artists. During the time of my fieldwork, Teresa was working on her project *Bajo el Nombre de Juan*. She invited me to accompany herself, her husband, and a photographer on the second research trip connected with this project.

Teresa Pereda obtained a degree in Art History from the University of Buenos Aires (UBA) and trained as a painter at the studios of Estela Pereda (her mother), Ana Eckell and Néstor Cruz, who are well-recognized Argentine painters. By the 1990s, she had established a significant track-record of national and international group and solo exhibitions. Yet in the Buenos Aires art world Teresa felt marginalized because of her interest in indigenous topics. "They think of me always as the 'Teresa who paints little Indians,'" she once told me. On the same occasion, an opening of a retrospective by Alfredo Portillos,³ she remarked that this artist really would have merited a more prestigious venue, such as the Museo de Bellas Artes, or Centro Cultural Recoleta. As pointed out in chapter three, the art world of Buenos Aires is hierarchically structured not only by institutions, but also in terms of how specific themes and trends take preference over others, and how artists working in the field of indigenous cultures feel effectively marginalized.

Teresa Pereda's work is heavily influenced by direct experiences with indigenous people, mainly the Mapuche in Patagonia (she spent some time of her childhood on a large farm *campo* of her father in Neuquén province). In one of our interviews she explained to me how the deeper motivations for her work were influenced by her upbringing.

For a long time, I grew up far away from here, not in the cities. I have now lived for twenty years in Lincoln [in the Province of Buenos Aires], and when I was little I lived in the Andes of Neuquén Province. My life has always been marked by travel, because one had to go to the cities to study. Inside of me, I always had this dichotomy: land vs. city. . . . I was always preoccupied, in this coming and



Figure 44 Teresa Pereda transcribing patterns from Chicha pottery, Javi Chico, NW Argentina. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

going to the city, with how little conscience or knowledge people had in the big city of Buenos Aires of the rest of the country. . . .

The other dichotomy was produced by this enormous European migration we experienced relatively recently. Because this migration was numerically much larger than the original population it created really a different country, imposing itself on the existing one. . . . I think a great fissure was created. Argentina is different from the rest of Latin America, and the Argentines feel different within Latin America. Take, for example, "race": my ancestors were Italian, French, and Spanish. I don't have one drop of Indian blood. My family arrived in 1860 and I have relatives in Europe. My reality is a [typical] Argentine reality. But the indigenous reality, and the reality of *mestizaje* since the 16th century, remained somehow hidden on the other side.

Therefore, I was interested to amalgamate these two worlds in my work, because I am a little bit a daughter of both. I grew up among Mapuche, an indigenous people in Patagonia. When one grew up on a farm (*campo*), the people of the area were indigenous, and during childhood one lived this very naturally. I learned a lot from them.

What I aim at is that my work follows this kind of *mestizaje*. To adopt and re-read the *mestizaje* of my country, not to obliterate as it was done in the past. *Mestizaje* not only is mixture of "races," but it also means maté, poncho, and a series of elements which are completely incorporated into our culture, but we don't know their origin. . . .

I also want the book to be something which enables the two "races" to amalgamate, and does not separate them even more. I think there is an area of ignorance and fear from both sides, and that results in the fact that there are two worlds today which are not sharing.

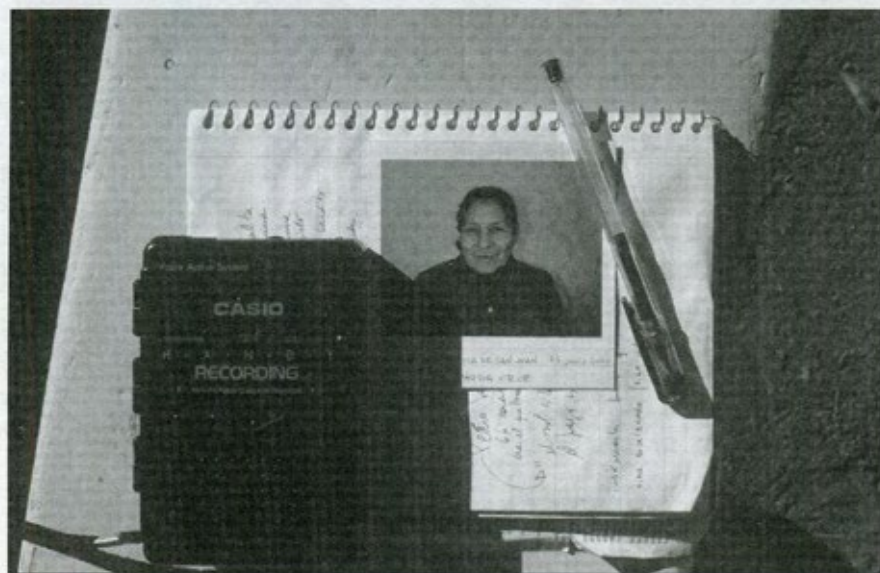


Figure 45 Teresa Pereda's notebook, tape recorder, and a polaroid print of Doña Eduarda. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

In another context, during our travel in the *Puna* (the Andean Highlands), Teresa said to me:

I know that I am white, but maybe being white helps that white people understand better [the indigenous population].

Teresa's works fall into two principal genres, that is paintings, which often depict indigenous symbols or objects and, more recently, artist's books, which are based on longer investigations of indigenous topics, often including travel and fieldwork.⁴ It is one such book, *Bajo el Nombre de Juan*, which Teresa Pereda was preparing in 1999/2000, that forms the basis of this chapter.

Conjuring up Indigenous Spaces in Old and New Worlds: *Bajo el Nombre Juan*

The background to Teresa Pereda's book project *Bajo el Nombre de Juan* (Under the name of John) are religious celebrations of the feast of St. John on the 24th of June, in the Catalan Pyrenees in northeast Spain, and in the province of Jujuy in northwest Argentina.

Her idea was to document and artistically rework the tradition of St. John's day celebrations both in an Old World and a New World locality.

When I first met Teresa Pereda, she had completed the Catalan part of her project, and was very enthusiastic about the forthcoming visit to Jujuy. Sponsorship of this part of the project came from the Argentine telephone company *Telefónica*. She showed me her drafts of text passages pertaining to the Catalan part of the project, and explained how she had prepared the trip to Jujuy.

The research phase was divided into two stages, the first of which consisted in contacting people whom Teresa wanted to interview. Later, she would phone or write to them, explaining the purposes of the project. Second, once in the area, the idea was to establish close contact with local people, conduct interviews (with notes and tape recorder), draw sketches of artefacts, and importantly, document the journey photographically, as well as to produce further artistic photographs with the cooperation of a professional photographer.

The Politics of Visual Representations

During the interviews, three to four people took photographs. Primarily, Michel Riehl, a friend of Teresa Pereda and a professional photographer who was employed as the official photographer of the project, would shoot photographs with a variety of still cameras for specific tasks (a Hasselblad, a 35-mm camera and panoramic view camera), and a selection of his photos would be used in Teresa's artist book.⁵ Teresa took photos with a small, automatic 35-mm camera, and so did her husband, Rafael, with the same camera. It was also often Rafael who would use the Polaroid camera, the instant prints of which

were given to people immediately. Finally, I was aiming to document this process with two cameras, a small, automatic 35-mm camera and a semi-automatic 35-mm camera.

Although, ideally, I had envisioned for myself a back-stage role, just observing Teresa, Rafael, and Michel at work, in practice I became part of the team, and was also perceived as such by the people we visited. There was no doubt that thus I was inextricably linked to the politics of representation which our project involved (much in the same way as I was part of the film crew of *El Camino*, as seen in the previous chapter).

The ways in which cameras were used in interaction with local people is indicative of the way the representation of the research was set up. Usually, Teresa Pereda would introduce ourselves and then interview the person(s), taking notes in a notebook and recording the interview with a cassette recorder if that was acceptable. During the conversation Rafael and Michel would sometimes be present. After a while—often toward the end of the interview, in order not to upset the interview process—Teresa Pereda would ask the person(s) whether they would object to Michel Riehl taking photographs. They were also promised and given instant photos from the Polaroid camera, the shots taken by Rafael Llorente (figure 46).

In our conception, the idea was to give something “back” to our hosts and interview partners. We were frequently told of the common assumption among local people that outsiders just come, “steal” images, and make money from them. In many parts of the Andean highlands of Argentina, Bolivia and Peru it is now common to ask for money in return for being photographed. However, in general, we were not asked for money, but the polaroid photographs were appreciated. People obviously realized that these were not the same photographs as those we were taking, but it did not matter, nor did it concern us. To paraphrase John L. Jackson Jr.’s remarks on native video making, as gifts our Polaroid photographs possessed the “aura” of the photographers but they were also literally, the receivers’ images (Jackson 2004: 40). Whilst for us giving Polaroid prints was a moral compensation for our “taking” of photographs, to them it represented probably a souvenir, a memoir of this event. It was also interesting to note what kind of photographs people wanted of themselves. They had to be socially meaningful, and therefore to include family members and the animals belonging to the household.

Even when there was this “exchange” of giving Polaroid photos for taking other photos as well as more general hospitality, it remained an inevitably unbalanced relation, with us having superior material and economic means at our hands (which is typical of outsiders, tourists, explorers, and government officials visiting this area). Whilst our attitude could try to mitigate the exploitative relationship outsiders have with local populations of the *Puna*, it could not do away with, or contradict, the underlying substantial power differences between “us” and “them,” which are at the heart of such relationships. This is not to say that on a human level, we could not entertain deep, and equal, interchanges, spiritually and intellectually, with, for instance, Don Víctor, and his wife Doña Eduarda, and many other people. This would happen independent of educational or economic background.



Figure 46 Rafael Llorente and Doña Xenobia with a Polaroid photograph. In the background, Michel Riehl photographs Doña Xenobia's husband, Javi, NW Argentina. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

The above remarks should remind the reader that equal relationships with interview subjects under these conditions (in the *Buna* and elsewhere) remain an idealistic illusion.

Most people felt comfortable with being photographed, after the purpose of the project had been explained to them. Of course, cameras are not unknown and some people even have their own or have used simple cameras at some point. Often they were surprised to see the large and bulky equipment and cameras which Michel Riehl brought with him, but soon realized that this was part of his profession.

I remember one instance where it was impossible for me to take a photograph, however much I would have liked to. It happened after Teresa had interviewed Don Víctor and I wanted to take another shot of Don Víctor just by himself (figure 47). But because he was almost deaf, and because his wife, Doña Eduarda, had just called to serve some coffee, he suddenly rose up, and my opportunity was gone.

Camera and Power

Much has been written about the how the gaze is fortified and multiplied by the camera, the power it evokes, and the weapon-like extension it represents.⁶ Bulky professional camera equipment can be intimidating, and appear ostentatious. This, at least, is the received wisdom in postmodern discourse about the media. I am not sure whether it was actually true in Michel Riehl's case. When I looked for the first time at my own slides I took backstage, he indeed appeared well "armed," and some photographic sessions



Figure 47 Teresa Pereda and Don Victor. Photo: Arnd Schneider.



Figure 48 Michel Riehl taking a picture of Doña Xenobia and her husband. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

I documented would show the photographer as a marksman, waiting to “shoot” his victims (figure 48), and reminded me eerily in their composition if not in their subject, of Francisco Goya’s *Third of May [Executions, 1814–15]* or Édouard Manet’s *Execution of the Emperor Maximilian [1867]*.

But such ad-hoc associations were in *my mind*. Not only were my own photographs framed by these preconceptions, but also local people would not have perceived it that way. For instance, when we were visiting Don Víctor's house, Michel's heavy gear rested on the table (as we have just seen on one of the slides during Teresa's talk). But nobody objected, and it did not in the slightest influence a most animated and amicable conversation with our hosts (figure 49).

On another occasion, during the celebration of St. John's feast, Michel would allow children to peep through his Hasselblad camera, thus making the very instrument of power and curiosity available for inspection (figure 50). In the previous chapter, I explained how this device is now also used by filmmakers, to diffuse *ab initio* any accusations of political incorrectness. Giving "fictive" visual power to the others thus circumvents admission of the real power difference.

The following example shows how one could also be trapped in one's expectations of events, which become accomplice to later representations. On one occasion, Teresa and I were talking to a man gathering firewood on the hillside below the Church of Tafna. At a certain point, Michel appeared in full gear, three cameras strung across him, and looking *to me* like a stereotypical National Geographic reporter, or somebody on an African safari. I waited anxiously for the moment he would point a camera at the man, Teresa, me, or the whole group. But he just greeted us, passed by sideways, and walked down into the valley, to photograph llamas, grazing near the riverbed. So much for the gaze of the photographer, and whose gaze, after all?

Here it was *me* who desperately *wanted* a picture of Michel pointing his camera at us, preferably with the local man sitting helplessly and bewildered in the middle, the clear victim of our visual desires. Yet it turned out differently.



Figure 49 Michel Riehl, Doña Eduarda, and Don Víctor. Photo: Arnd Schneider.



Figure 50 Children looking through Michel Riehl's camera. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

I had become victim of my own agenda, and had to accept that visual agency and representations work differently, and in a more complex manner to the ways described by poststructuralist discourse.

What kind of enhanced (or hidden) agenda did we and our camera(s) carry? Was the camera just an extension of the person, or a medium of interaction and intervention in its own right? I am still sometimes unsure how people felt about our presence and the use of cameras. In one instance, when interviewing Doña Xenobia in Javi, her daughter did not want to be photographed, and ran away or hid behind the door when somebody made an attempt to take a photograph.

Local people can control, to some degree, their own image-production, such as the wooden ornamented house altar, the *misachico*, the representation of saints in the church and during procession, but rarely would they own cameras of which there are very few in use locally. I would assume that ownership patterns change with social class, but further research is needed on this. Clearly, what is called for is a comprehensive study of the visual culture of the people of the *Buna*, in the way that Jorge Prelorán studied the image world of the Argentine Andes through his films.⁷

Whilst we were interested in "taking" (pictures, interviews, information), in the interview situations we were treated as guests with an attitude of "giving" on the part of our hosts, who offered drinks and food, such as the dried grapes pictured below (figure 51). Of course, there were also differences between what we thought mattered to people, and what they told us was important to them. Thus, for instance, when I was with Rafael on an



Figure 51 Doña Xenobia's grapes in Javi. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

excursion to an archaeological site near Cochínoca we met a lady with a llama and a tame vicuña (a rarity, as these animals are normally wild). We wanted shots of the woman, but she insisted that she be photographed with both llama and especially vicuña on the Polaroid, as she said, "*con los animalitos*" ("with the animals"), which were her pride and for which she was responsible.

In the rural parts of Jujuy, it is women who look after the *hacienda*, the flock of animals belonging to a household. Men are only asked for heavy tasks, women do the day-to-day work with animals, and the grazing grounds are associated with their names.⁸

As on this occasion, we would sometimes stop people "on the spot" and involve them in conversations, and then take photographs of them. Thus, for example, when meeting a man walking in the *Buna*, spinning wool on a hand spindle, we were most intrigued by this ancient technique. We greeted him, and spoke with him till Michel got his camera ready and, with the man's consent, took his photograph, and so did I (figure 52). Yet the whole situation and set-up somehow had been premeditated, in order to get a shot of him. Rafael, meanwhile, would make the obligatory Polaroid photograph, whilst the man was also showing us *his* photograph, a passport-size one he kept with his documents.

A Clash of Expectations: Indigenous versus Outsiders' Agendas

The problematic and complex negotiation between indigenous expectations and the agenda and practice of Teresa Pereda's team can be illustrated by the encounter with Sixto Vázquez Zuleta, a Colla⁹ intellectual and cultural promoter in Humahuaca. Vázquez Zuleta has written several books on the customs of the Humahuaca,¹⁰ as well as short stories and poetry, is the founding director of the Folklore Museum of Humahuaca, and also runs an indigenous radio station. "*Yo soy indio*," I am Indian, he said proudly at one point of our visit. Teresa Pereda wanted to meet him, in order to get more information about the context of San Juan celebrations, especially the custom of fire-walking and whether there was any connection between this and the ancient Inca rites commemorating the solstice (on June 21), the "Inti Raymi" (the "Sun Feast").¹¹

However, because of the late arrival of Teresa Pereda and her crew in Tilcara (they had traveled by car from the province of Buenos Aires), and a diversion of ours to Purmamarca, we arrived late in Humahuaca. Vázquez Zuleta had been expecting us on the previous evening. Teresa Pereda had assumed that the appointment was approximate, and not specific for that evening. Yet, as we learned later, Vázquez Zuleta had had to cancel a dinner with friends. So when we arrived at about noon the next day, he was not available, and a woman in the Folklore Museum who received us told us that he had gone out. We hung about, in a rather subdued way. When Vázquez Zuleta eventually arrived, his attitude toward us was very cold, and he said



Figure 52 A man with a hand spindle in the *Puna*. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

that he had been canceling his engagements for us, and would have very little time for us now. "Five minutes," he said, since he had to look after bricklayers further down the road. Obviously, he was very offended by Teresa Pereda not keeping the appointment, or failing to inform him of our delay. According to Teresa, there was a misunderstanding here, in that she had assumed that this was a kind of open appointment. She admitted to me that it must be upsetting for an indigenous person when a "white" person from Buenos Aires does not honor an appointment. In the end, she persuaded him to show us the museum (we obviously paid the entrance fee of \$5). He gave a very committed and detailed tour of the exhibits documenting customs in the Humahuaca area. When I mentioned to him that I was doing research on the "appropriation of indigenous images by 'white' Argentine artists," he commented, "Oh, some time ago some Austrians came here and wanted motifs and symbols for their textile production which I didn't permit, since they did not want to pay any royalties. They just want to steal from the Indians. The same with the pharmaceutical companies, who take knowledge from our shamans. And they even have the guts to patent it! I know, because my father was a traditional healer (*curandero*) from the Junglas region of Bolivia."

This was a stark warning regarding any unwanted appropriation. In fact, coupled with his harsh but understandable reaction toward the missed appointment, it demonstrated that he would not bow to Teresa Pereda's request of more information on the *Inti Raymi*, the feast of St. John, and the dancers, the *sicuris*, whose paraphernalia (*suri* feathers—the *suri* is an Andean ostrich) were featured in the museum and whose dance was illustrated by photographs. His father had been a shaman who came from Bolivia, but Vázquez Zuleta remained rather taciturn during our visit to the witchcraft room of the museum. He restricted himself to the essential explanations, and not even my question, of what rosemary (one of the exhibits) was good for, was answered. I had the impression, that though showing us a museum with public exhibits, he must have perceived us as scavenging for information, and having not honored our appointment, we had not earned his respect in the first place.

When I look again at the slides I took in Humahuaca, I realize that in his posture there was also a change implied of traditional roles between whites and indigenous people, or local people and outsiders. Now it was he who did the explaining, and who had ordered the museum. Although this was done according to Western display techniques it followed his criteria. The "museum" in the Americas was, after all, a "Western" import ("collections," of course, also existed in other cultures). But here, Vázquez Zuleta told *us* about *his* culture, not the other way round. This was an indigenous appropriation of white space and hierarchies which, for once, had been inverted.

The Construction of Artistic Evidence: Observing and Participating in St. John's Feast

The aim of this section is not primarily an in-depth description of St. John's Feast in Cochinoca (figure 53). No pretence is made here to double as an



Figure 53 The church in Cochinoca. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

anthropologist who could offer a deep description of the feast and its cultural meaning, informed by long-term fieldwork.¹² Our stay in the area lasted only a week, with time spent in Cochinoca amounting to two-and-a-half days. As in the last chapter, where the principal subject were not the Mapuche of Ruka Choroi, but the film crew's dealings with them, here the focus of this section is on our role in observing and documenting the celebrations, and on our interaction with local people. I will be occupied with the writing of "our story" (rather than trying to represent the stories of others), and this should shed light on the process of artistic work and the construction of artistic evidence.

We were not the only outsiders to observe the celebrations. There were other people, among them some Argentine tourists, an agricultural expert from Jujuy who was involved with development projects in the area and came to see the livestock show (which was held on the church square), and last but not least, an Argentine anthropologist doing fieldwork further south in the Valley of Humahuaca who was a friend of Don Víctor's son, Ramón, as well as an American couple (who were friends of the anthropologist).

We had established our base in La Quiaca, the Argentine frontier post with Bolivia at an altitude of almost 3,500 metres, from where we explored the territory to the south (figure 54). We visited Javi, Javi Chico, Tafna, and eventually, Cochinoca. Teresa's aim was to select the most appropriate place in terms of her art project: where celebrations for St. John would take place, including walking on the hot ashes, or fire walking. Javi and Javi Chico celebrated St. John, but there would be no fire walking, whereas Tafna and Cochinoca were the only places where this part of the ceremony was included. However, a



Figure 54 Map of Jujuy Province.

Source: <http://www.facilitarviajes.com.ar/espanol/juuyymapa.htm>; 2004.

man who gathered firewood for the event on the hills, just below Tafna's church overlooking the valley, told us that he was expecting not more than a dozen people to attend. So, obviously, the choice was Cochino, a little village with approximately eighty inhabitants in 2000,¹³ but which once had a much larger population due to its role in colonial times as an entrepôt on the mule route leading to the silver mines of Potosí in today's Bolivia. When we arrived, several men were unloading firewood from a truck for the fire on the village square in front of the church. The whole village and the visitors were going to participate in the celebrations. A small animal fair would be mounted on the sides of the square, showing the best animals, llamas, goats and sheep, some of which wore colourful ribbons, which they had received in a *señalada*, indicating their owner and that they were "married" to another animal. Don Víctor later explained that the animals were exhibited for a competition, and there would be a prize awarded to encourage good breeding.

Initially, we were not sure where we would stay the night, but Doña Eduarda arranged for us to stay in the community center on the outskirts of Cochino. This, apart from the school, was one of the few nonadobe buildings. The money we would pay for our stay would go to the community. Originally, we had also asked to stay privately with somebody, but there was no space, because most people were expecting friends and relatives for St. John's. However, it also meant that we were placed slightly on the margins and could not observe first-hand how one particular family, for instance, would prepare for the celebrations. Yet our close rapport with Doña Eduarda and Don Víctor

allowed us to get a good insight into the fiesta, albeit just from one perspective, and a privileged one. Don Víctor occupied a central position in the village. A retired agricultural engineer, he was something of a local *caudillo* and influential land-owner, who was also called upon by politicians, as we could observe when a group of members of the Radical Party from Jujuy arrived to campaign for the forthcoming elections. His wife run the only pay phone service in the village, with the telephone box installed in the middle of their living room. Most of the time, Teresa would try to be with Doña Eduarda: as men it would have been more difficult for us to follow her everywhere in the village. We stayed at the house, I interviewed Don Víctor in the sitting room near the fireplace (temperatures in the *Buna* fall dramatically at night, as low as -20°C in winter), and we were later joined by Michel, Rafael, and Teresa.

We shared with the villagers a mounting sense of expectation, that was waiting for the priest, who strangely did not arrive on St. John's night.

The statue of St. John was placed at the right-hand corner of the church (figures 55 and 56). In front of it the halved lamb carcasses were placed. Slowly, people began to arrive in the church. I saw what I believed at first were mothers, but in fact were relatively young grandmothers, carrying their grandchildren in a carrier belt on the back. They had come a long way, 10 to 15 kilometers from their rural homes—barefoot. "No wonder they can do the fire walking," I thought. They lit a candle and placed it near the statue of St. John.



Figure 55 The statue of St. John and two Suri dancers to the left.



Figure 56 The statue of St. John with halved sheep carcasses laid out in front. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

More people arrived and gradually the rows filled up. People looked at me, and at Teresa and Rafael who stood in the back of the church. I asked for permission to take some photographs of children, and they had no objections. Then Don Concepción started singing, and the rest of the congregation joined in.

Don Concepción blessed St. John with water. Then the *cuarteadoras*, consisting of two women (who later would also perform the rite for the *pachamama*), two girls, and a boy took the lamb carcasses (or *cuartos*—St. John is the protector of sheep and shepherds¹⁴) (figure 57).

Together with the male dancers (*samilantes*) in their Andean ostrich (*suri*) costumes in front (figure 58), they walked, looking toward the saint's statue and with their backs to the exits, to perform an one-hour dance in front of



Figure 57 The *cuarteadoras*. Photo: Arnd Schneider.



Figure 58 The *samilantes*. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

the main entrance of the church, rocking back and forth, by which the *samilantes* held up sticks and crossed their arms, thereby forming a bridge under which the children and the women with the lamb carcasses walked and passed in front again. The women and children did this alternating, and also

(like the *samilantes* with their sticks) held up the halved lamb carcasses (the fleshy side pointing forward, and the unshorn outer side backwards), and the other *cuarteadores* walked under them. On the left corner, at the entrance of the church, a man played the *erke* (Quechua) or *corneta* (Spanish), an extremely long alpenhorn-like flute, consisting of an iron tube, three meters long, starting with a lateral mouthpiece, and ending in a cow's horn (cf. Biró de Stern 1967: 320). Another man played a large hand-held drum (*tambor*, or *bombo*). Then a little procession (*misachico*) started, carrying the statue of St. John around the four corners of the plaza and finally back into the church.

As I mentioned, the priest from Abra Pampa, who should have presided over the ceremony did not arrive, so people just went ahead, following Don Concepción who, in the absence of the priest, was their spiritual leader and lay preacher, and guarded both the church and chapel of Santa Barbara. On the following morning, however, the priest had arrived and a larger procession was carried out, passing the four corners of the village, and the *misachico* receiving a blessing on each corner (figure 59).

The celebrations for St. John in Cochinoca were a combination of the dance of *samilantes*¹⁵ with *suri* costumes, and the dance of the *cuarteadoras*, which can also be performed separately. According to Cabezas/Cabezas (1989: 12, 21), the dances have undergone changes, with less elaborate elements characterizing the present. Traditionally, only five to seven men danced as *samilantes*, in a complex dance in pairs of up to fourteen different choreographic parts, the main elements consisting in turning movements imitating the *suri*. Only the last man, called *teque*, dances alone.¹⁶



Figure 59 The priest blessing the *misachico*. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

According to Cabezas/Cabezas (1989: 45), the dance of the *cuartos* or *cuarteada*, on the other hand, is a complement to the *misachico* (the procession for a saintly image placed on a little table, or carried around in a box) (Figure 59 above). The dance is carried out in honor of San Santiago or St. John, the protectors of animal flocks. It is practiced in the *Buna* and the Quebrada de Humahuaca, and sometimes also associated with other saints, for example, St. Joseph in Abra Pampa (Biró de Stern 1967: 318). It is danced in pairs, which can be formed by men, women, or both. Lamb or sheep are sacrificed and cut in halves (*cuartos*), leaving the outside unshorn, and the inside open and bled dry. These are carried by a pair which takes the animal half by the feet and offers it to the saint during the *misachico*.

Cabezas/Cabezas (1989:45) also mention that the halved lamb carcasses are to be barbecued without salt. However, they do not indicate whether this would happen before or after the dance and *misachico*. According to Biró de Stern (1967: 321), describing the dance of the lamb halves (*baile de los cuartos*) held in January/February for the feast of St. Joseph in Abra Pampa, at the end of the dance the dancers would tear apart the halves, and the dancers and their families would later eat the fractured pieces thus obtained.

In Cochinoca the lamb halves were bled dry, and there were rumors circulating that they would be grilled after the ceremony or on the following day. But for some reason unknown to me this did not happen, or perhaps it did happen and I got no news of it.

Although the priest had not arrived, everything was set for the fire walking. First, however, Doña Eduarda distributed some *ponche*, the alcoholic drink made from milk and strong alcohol, like whiskey or rum. It was freezing on that night and the drink helped people warm up. The fire in front of the plaza calmed down and the fire walking started. Everybody was expectant and excited about who would start the fire walking. There were shouts for the mayor of Cochinoca to come forward. But after about fifteen minutes some women and girls lined up. I heard shouts "*¡Viva San Juan! ¡Viva San Juan!*" (Long live St. John! Long live St. John!) and the girls walked across the glowing charcoal. Actually, they walked across quite slowly and steadfastly without any attempt to jump or evade the fire. More and more people lined up, and Don Concepción was among them, as well as an older man with a poncho and the mayor. Some people even went twice, such as Sol Argentina, one of the girls whom Teresa would later use in an interview extract for her artist book. Nobody got hurt or burnt—this was an act of faith as people said.¹⁷ *Ponche* continued to be served for everybody around the fire, as it was bitterly cold. I noticed one of the women with a little baby I had seen earlier in the church. Then people went back into the church and a rite of baptism was performed in front of St. John's statue, administered by Don Concepción, who poured water on those kneeling in a long double row in front of St. John.

In Search of "Protagonists"

Teresa had contacts in the village through some priests in La Quiaca, and decided that we should visit Don Víctor, who as I mentioned before, was a

former engineer, important landholder, and an important person of respect in the village. Teresa's intention was to find a "protagonist," somebody who, through his or her life-story, could not only illuminate the meaning of the fiesta but also the social and economic conditions of the area. So, during our stay, Teresa interviewed quite a few people, took notes, and shot photographs (with the help of Michel Riehl and her husband, Rafael). Whilst the interviews provided valuable background information, interviews were also carried out, in order to get an idea of who might be a suitable "protagonist." Teresa explained to me that, as in the first part of the work relating to the Catalan Pyrenees, she needed two or three protagonists who would have strong and rich life-histories, "expressive faces," and be at ease to talking to us. Thus both criteria of content (life-history, knowledge of the fiesta and local culture), and aesthetics (expressive faces), would influence her choice.

At times, Teresa sounded gloomy about finding the "right" protagonists. Even when the main celebrations were over, the ashes from the fire walking had been gathered by Teresa and Doña Eduarda to be used in the future art work, Teresa was not sure who would make a strong protagonist. She had second thoughts about Don Víctor (who seemed to be the obvious choice to me) and Doña Eduarda (Teresa also wanted a woman) did not seem to have the time to be interviewed in depth and on her own.

Doña Eduarda had been very busy in welcoming friends and relatives, and with two other women preparing *empanadas*, the traditional Argentine meat pastries, and then for the whole village boiling *ponche* to warm the participants of the feast.

So initially, Teresa reckoned that three of the "candidates" would not make good protagonists: Don Víctor, because he was difficult to understand and too sceptical about the religious aspects of the ceremony; Doña Eduarda, because she lacked charisma; and Don Concepción because he was too much of a catechist (remember he was the lay-preacher in the church, as Cochinoca did not have a resident priest, only a visiting one from Abra Pampa).

There was also a "hidden story," another text to the fiesta, which Teresa was keen to emphasize and find out about, and which people were equally keen to occlude from her, at least partially. At the end of the procession and celebration, following the night of St. John, a few people, amongst them Don Concepción and the female *cuarteadoras*, would gather in the north-western corner of the enclosed churchyard and make an offering ceremony, or *chayada*, to the *Pachamama* (see note 18). Teresa enquired about this, but we were not allowed to enter the churchyard to watch the ceremony or to take photos.

The youngest protagonist, Jorge Olmos, later spoke movingly about the event and Teresa, with his permission, used his statement in her artist book:

... after this wonderful and much loved feast which we all shared, we are going to sprinkle the earth with liquor, we make the *corpacho*.¹⁸ Everybody, following his own feelings makes a little dip, into which we pour a bit of coca leaves, *chicha*¹⁹ and wine, all alcoholic drinks, thanking the Holy Mother Earth the *Pachamama*, who is sacred for us ...

People co-operated with Teresa and the rest of the team not only by making available time for interviews, opening the doors of their houses, and offering food: physically, too, we could count on their help. One instance of such collaboration was Teresa and Doña Eduarda gathering ashes together at the fireplace in the village square on the morning after the celebrations. The ashes were still hot, so double plastic bags had to be used.

Teresa would use the ashes, together with earth gathered on the road from Abra Pampa to Cochinoca, in her paintings and prints.

Different Agendas and Expectations

So, what characterized Teresa's and our interaction with the people of Cochinoca? We came in as outsiders, not long-term residents in the area, not even as anthropologists residing in the area long-term for research. How did we conceptualize the research, expectations, actual events?

In my conversations with members of the team, I first seemed to sense an attitude similar to that of "explorers on an expedition," who would visit the area quickly, go in, and gather the materials necessary to the project. Yet, in all fairness, this was a product of the nature of the project, the brevity of our stay, and our way of traveling (by 4×4 -wheel-drive car, rather than on foots by public transport, or on mule back). The team were aware of the limitations this type of travel entailed. Also, as mentioned before, the concept of "respect" was frequently evoked when commenting on local people and their culture.



Figure 60 Teresa Pereda and Doña Eduarda collecting ashes. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

What were then the dynamics of our field-trip? I think Teresa's principal attitude was one of "respect." Although the concept was not verbalized as frequently as it had been among Javier Olivera's film crew in Patagonia (see previous chapter), it was nevertheless present, and probably also assumed more naturally, since Teresa had grown up surrounded by indigenous people (see above). As Teresa once said to me in conversation, *hay que hacer las cosas con respeto*, "one has to do things with respect."

Teresa's main approach was to interview people, take notes, and shoot photographs (with the help of Michel Riehl and her husband). Occasionally, however, she would also resort to drawing and making sketches. For instance, when we were in Javi Chico, the custodian of the small church showed us the astounding collection of Pre-Columbian pottery of the local Chicha culture that had been excavated not far from there. Now there are plans to transform a storage house, just opposite the church, into a museum. We placed some of the artefacts on a chair outside in the bright sunlight, and Michel photographed them. Later, inside the church, Teresa took some time to draw, and effectively copied the designs from some of the pottery into her notebook (see also previous figure 44). Before that she had enquired about the significance of the designs.

The Transformation of Artistic Evidence

In this chapter I have been interested mainly in the process of artistic field-work, in the role the artist establishes with her subject, and to a lesser degree with my own role as an anthropologist being at the same time witness to, and part of, that process.

It is in this context that artworks are of interest to me, not as isolated objects on their own. As mentioned before in this book, I see artworks really only as one instance, or one point of materialization, in a long, and drawn out artistic process of preparation, research, evidence gathering, and, finally, also the making of the art object—all characterized by artistic creativity.

When I first visited Teresa Pereda's flat in Buenos Aires, I had seen her paintings and artist's books from the *El libro de las cuatro tierras* (1998) series, which incorporated images of maps, and actual samples of earth gathered on travels from these places (see figures 61, 62 and 63).

Teresa would also use statements from people she had interviewed in her catalogues and artist books. She explained to me the procedure she followed for *El libro de las cuatro tierras*:

In this book I wanted to represent Argentina as a totality. I selected four geographic areas, which ultimately represent the whole, that is the Pampas, the Littoral, the Desert, and the Andes. Except for the coast, the rest of the country is represented by these four areas. I selected a person of each place whom I went to visit. I specially made the journey to see him or her, having written and told them what my work was about. The contact was always recommended by a

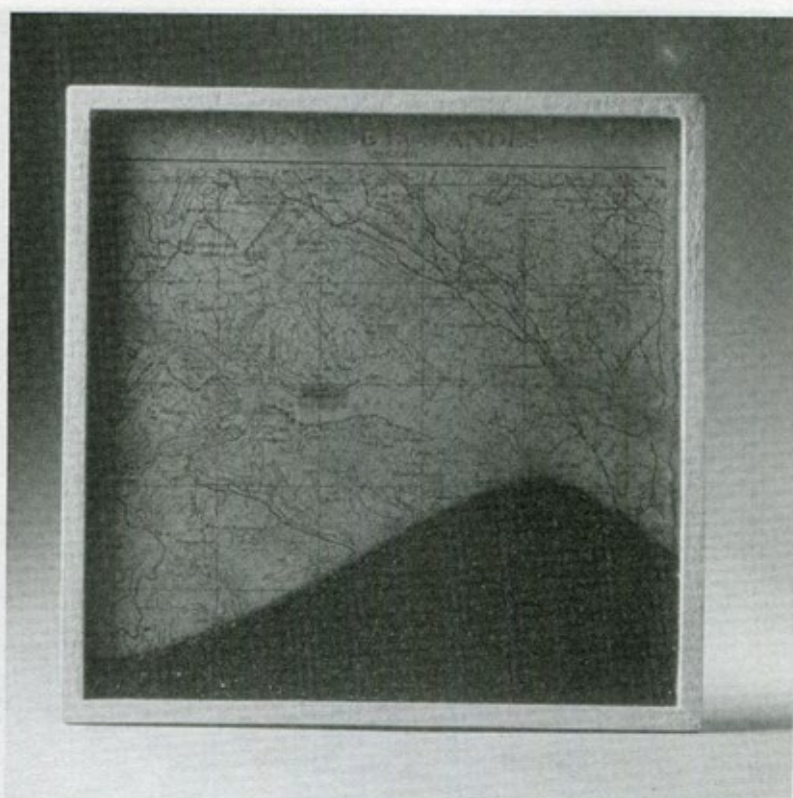


Figure 61 Teresa Pereda, from *El libro de las cuatro tierras*, 1998. By permission of the artist. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

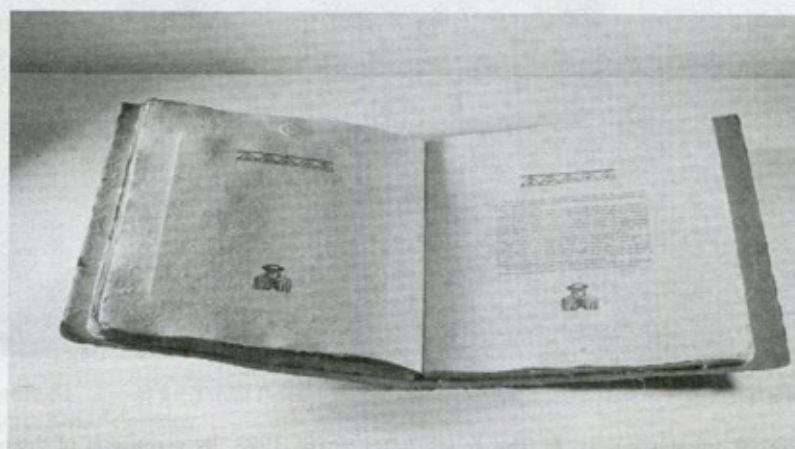


Figure 62 Teresa Pereda, *El libro de las cuatro tierras*, 1998. By permission of the artist. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

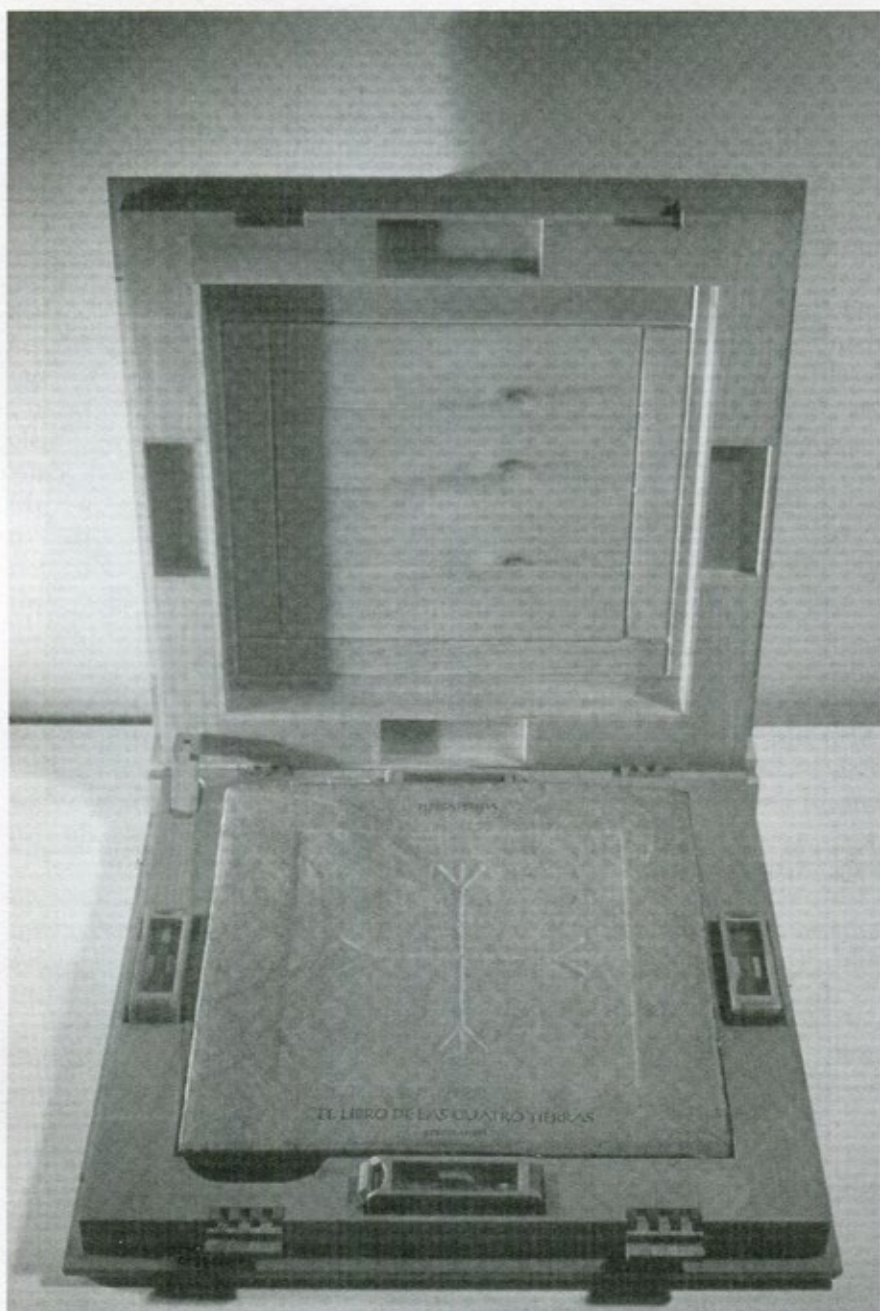


Figure 63 Teresa Pereda, *El libro de las cuatro tierras*, 1998. By permission of the artist. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

friend who knew the person. [When we met] I asked them to tell me their history and to give me an earth sample from their house. With the earth I made the paper for the book—so it is a book with four different earth samples, which resulted in different shades of colour. And with the histories I made the texts for the book, because I also write the books, and I felt the necessity to write. However, they are not books of essays, but rather of poetry.

The pattern of her methodology becomes clear through these works and also *Bajo el nombre de Juan* (see figure 64). It consists mainly of three phases, or steps. After initial planning, comes first a visit (or more) to the area of research, in which photographs are taken, people are interviewed, some of them more formally (as “protagonists”) than others, and physical evidence is taken (usually earth samples, but in the case of *Bajo el nombre de Juan*, also ashes). Then the transformation of artistic evidence in the studio begins. Obviously, there is also the issue of selection of material. From the whole range of evidence gathered, only a small part finds its way into the final artwork, painting or artist book. So, evidently there is an element of artistic choice—not dissimilar to what an anthropologist will finally select from his or her fieldnotes. Teresa’s books usually have a mixture of description, interview extracts, poetry, photographs, and explanatory notes and maps in addition to her use of artistic techniques of silk screen printing, and painting (figures 65 and 66).



Figure 64 Proofs for Teresa Pereda, *Bajo el nombre de Juan*, 2001. By permission of the artist. Photo: Arnd Schneider.



Figure 65 Teresa Pereda painting with earth. By permission of the artist. Photo: Arnd Schneider.



Figure 66 Teresa Pereda passing earth through a screen. By permission of the artist. Photo: Arnd Schneider.

Conclusion: An Artist Who Emulates the Anthropologist

Teresa Pereda's project *Bajo el nombre de Juan*, as those of the other artists mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, throws up larger questions, of how artists are different from anthropologists, what anthropologists can contribute to artistic research (or what their role can be in such projects), and what, more generally, the relation between representation and engagement with one's research location and its people is. To start with, Teresa has a family background in anthropology, as one of her aunts is an anthropologist, and Teresa had been influenced by her writing (and also accompanied her as a child on some of her research). For this project, too, she sought her advice, as she explained:

The information I had was on Cochinoca, Javi and Tafna. These are the three locations where the celebrations of St. John are most important, according to an anthropologist who researched the area in the 1920s or 1930s. I had this information from my aunt whom I consulted before the trip, in order to see which celebrations to chose. The anthropologist, Felix Coluccio,²⁰ specialised in folkloric feasts of Argentina, mentioned Cochinoca and Rinconada, but in Rinconada there is no church, that is why I discarded Rinconada.

Although not having a formal training in anthropology, through contact with her aunt, as well as the long interest of her family in Argentine folklore, Teresa has a long-standing, and informed interest in anthropological subjects. Her artworks have mostly focused on these matters. Whilst she is not a professional

anthropologist, it can certainly be said that she emulates anthropologists (and archaeologists) to some degree in her research trips, "excavation" of earth materials, using visual information from her sketchbook, and so forth. However, she then proceeds differently to an anthropologist when using her material evidence, such as earth materials, in her artists' books. Such a procedure would contrast, for example, with an anthropologist collecting material culture for a museum collection. It is important to note that such similarities and differences are best made transparent through direct observation and description of artistic activity as demonstrated in this book, not in abstract statements, informed by rigid disciplinary boundaries. In this sense, my own practice as anthropologist has also been one of participation in the artistic projects of Javier Olivera (chapter 6), and even more so in Teresa's. As outlined in the earlier sections *The Politics of Visual Representation* and *Camera and Power*, the anthropologist is not located in an innocent position as detached observer, but is always ab initio implicated in the agenda of the artistic project and its execution (even if the design might not be of the anthropologist's making). In addition, the anthropological agenda (in my case a certain theoretical disposition as to the functioning of expeditionary photography), also influences perception and interpretation, and becomes enmeshed with the artistic fieldwork project.

This chapter has provided an insight into the difficult process of artistic research and negotiating appropriation of the indigenous in contemporary Argentina. Teresa Pereda's work in some ways is exceptional, in that it seeks the direct contact with indigenous populations. Most artists working with some kind of inspiration from indigenous cultures do not seek direct contact, but get their information through museum collections and second-hand sources, such as books. Whilst few can enjoy the financial independence, and backing by sponsors as for this project of Teresa Pereda's, a great number of them, especially those based in Buenos Aires or other urban centers, can conceivably travel to the "sites" of cultural appropriation (albeit by more modest means). Yet this possibility is only taken up by a minority.

Finally, Teresa's work has to be seen against the background of new formulations of identity within the Argentine nation-state. As is demonstrated in the final chapter, in the present, after the failure of European models of progress as well as melting-pot paradigms of ethnic and national identity, a number of artists (and others) anchor themselves in the contemporary nation-state, especially by appropriating past and present indigenous cultures, and making reference to a wider Latin American identity.