

Imagining Otherwise: Sofía Córdova's Language for Liberation

“Through her work, Córdova seeks to remind us that revolution is a collective process, often enacted by marginalized groups, whose labor is then decentered or erased. Central to *GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry* is the idea that revolution is messy, non-linear, and marked by both failure and resilience.”

by Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle



One must always try to be as radical as reality itself.

Sofía Córdova, *GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry, Yellow: Break Room* (2019–2021)

Photo courtesy of Sofía Córdova

VOL.8



On the evening of February 7, 2024, CCA's Grad Fine Arts division and the Creative Citizens in Action initiative co-hosted mixed media artist Sofía Córdova (Adjunct II Professor, Graduate Film Program) for a talk entitled "New Works: Sofía Córdova." She was invited to speak about her newest work, *GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry* (2019–present), a series of short films that meditate on the histories, processes, and futures of revolution. Revolution as gathering, as community, as unrest, as possibility, as worlds born and reborn.

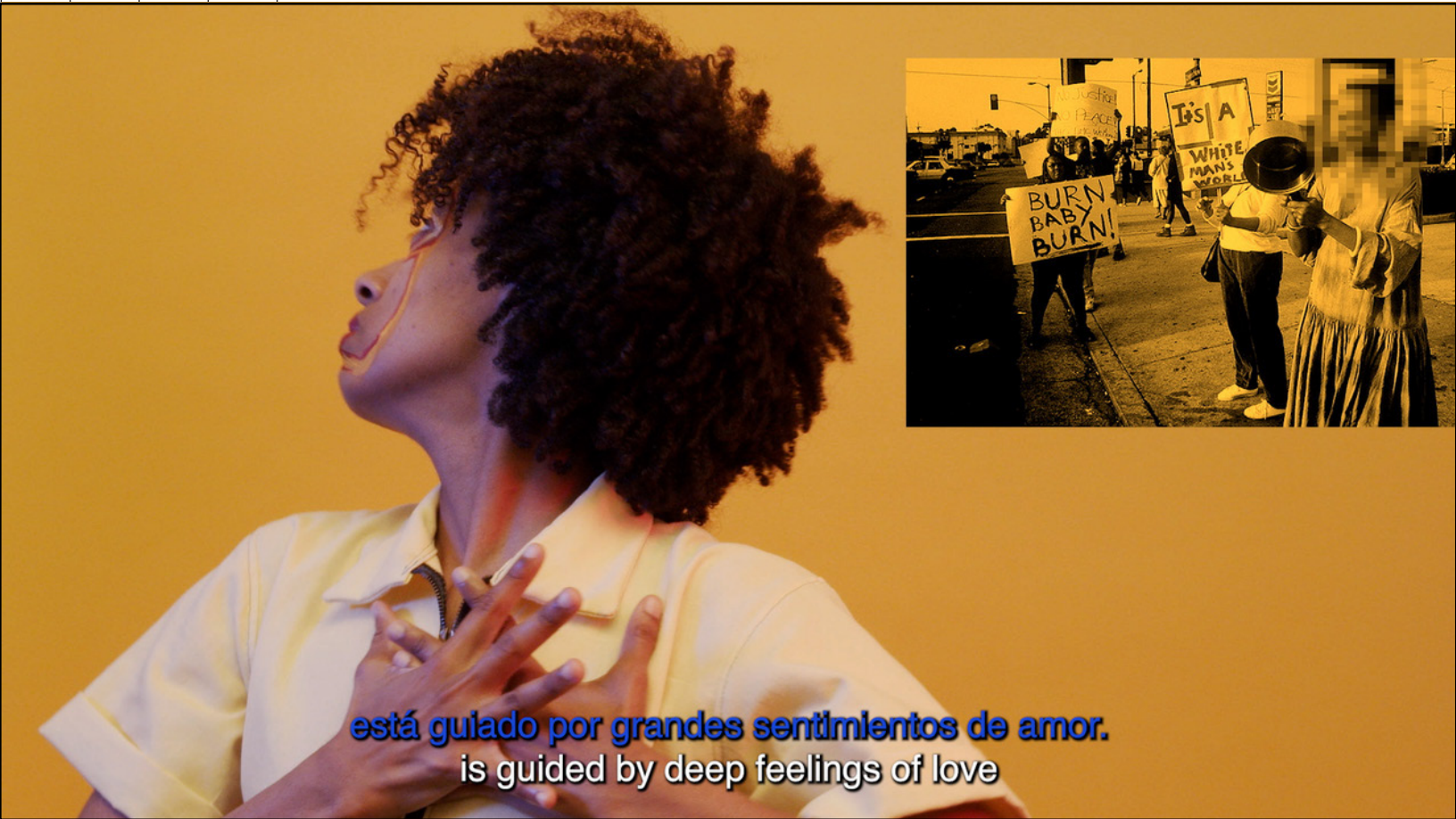
Córdova was introduced by one of her students, Yue Xiang (MFA Fine Arts 2024). Xiang's introduction was thoughtful and personal, and made clear Córdova's significant impact as a mentor and educator, as well as an artist. Xiang's deep admiration and respect for Córdova set the tone for a lecture imbued with care, rigor, and collaboration.



GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry, Yellow: Break Room (2019–2021)
Photo courtesy of Sofía Córdova

It was fitting, then, that to transition into a discussion of her artwork, she declared, “In the spirit of a new world that is begging to be born.”

Córdova began by introducing the series’ overall conceptual framework. The word guillotine is a reference to traditional symbols of historical revolution, which she both references and undermines. Her work is largely guided by two questions: “What is revolution to me?” and “How have I been taught it?” For Córdova, revolution is as much about undoing and unlearning as it is about building and educating. Córdova’s work does both. Her work references historical revolutions, with a particular focus on Latin America, while also combating the popular (and historically imagined) conception that revolutions are fought and won under singular male leadership. Through her work, Córdova seeks to remind us that revolution is a collective process, often enacted by marginalized groups, whose labor is then decentered or



está guiado por grandes sentimientos de amor.
is guided by deep feelings of love

Sofía Córdova, *GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry, Yellow: Break Room* (2019–2021)
Photo courtesy of Sofía Córdova



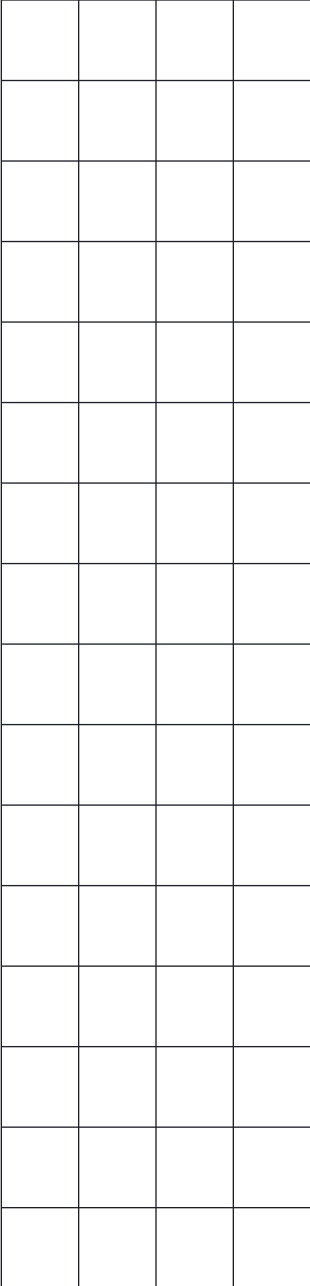
in the Dominican Republic, slaves rose up.

GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry, Green: Savage Sauvage Salvaje (2022)

Photo courtesy of Sofía Córdova

The film alternates between one and three channels: on one channel we see the action occurring in the room, another features a close-up of a single dancer against a solid yellow background, and another shows a series of archival footage and images from various revolutions. The narration includes a plurality of voices. The sample-based score brings together Youtube comments, reality TV quotations, speeches from revolutionaries, and selections from an Adrienne Rich essay. The visuals and narration appear at times alone, at times side by side, but most often they are layered over one another. Through these formal decisions, Córdova visually and sonically signals the layering of time and place, and performs the destabilization and ambiguity necessary to create change. Córdova tells us that her use of the color yellow is also a reference to this generative instability, and that, through this video work, she is forging a new language of revolution.

The second film she shared was *GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry, Green: Savage Sauvage Salvaje (2022)*. In this film, Córdova turns her attention to nature and the land. To ground our understanding of the film, Córdova explains that imperio-colonialism conflates the racialized “other” with the land or place they live, and both are



Salvaje was a particularly captivating expression of the themes central to Córdoba's work. The natural landscape in conversation with the dancers' organic movements, alongside a confluence of voices past and present effectively performed the conflation of time and space Córdoba spoke about at the start of the talk.

Córdoba's lecture—and the work she shared—is deeply layered with information, historical context, and references ranging from critical race theory to popular culture. In the hands of another artist, this formal and conceptual density could feel inaccessible or overwhelming. Córdoba, however, generously invites us to think and imagine alongside her. Grounded in the realities of our past and present, her films are both measured and urgent, deliberate and unafraid, gesturing toward a decolonial future. I left Córdoba's lecture thinking deeply about the ways in which art can be a language for ideas, worlds, and futures we have yet to realize. Córdoba shared that she is currently working on the next film in the *GUILLOTINÆ WannaCry* series, and I look forward to seeing what comes next.

Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle (MA Visual & Critical Studies 2024) is a writer and curator whose interdisciplinary research centers on decolonial notions of selfhood and community.