

# Ana María Caballero

## Echo Graph

20.February - 04.April 2025

### Will the body of the poem please stand up?

Text by Doreen Ríos

“It’s not the phrase, I don’t think, that I find intriguing (...) It’s the ellipsis I notice. You can hear those three dots.” (Stone, 1991)

If we had to determine what encompasses the body of a poem, what would that be? Ana María Caballero’s *Echo Graph* refuses static answers, instead unfolding as a living interrogation of poetry’s boundaries. This exhibition—part requiem, part rebirth—traces a single poem’s journey from the intimacy of trauma to the expansiveness of digital realms. Rooted in a medical emergency that left the artist in an emergency room, the poem *Echo Graph* emerges not as a one directional verse but as an organism. It mutates, fractures, and regenerates across mediums, channeling the largest process of virtualization—the transformation of lived experience to text—by insisting that poetry’s true body thrives in the liminal spaces between language and materiality, memory and medium.

In *Echo Graph*’s mini film, the poem escapes the page. It pulses through motion-captured choreography, where Caballero’s body inverts hierarchies and echoes the interoperability of digital languages, 0’s and 1’s, full and empty, on and off. Recorded via cutting-edge technology, her gestures translate spoken word into visceral movement, the digital rendering a mirror for the contradictions of human communication. The video’s layers—voice, motion, pixel—ask us to reconsider where poetry resides. Is it in the trembling of a limb, the flicker of a screen, the silence between syllables or, perhaps, it inhabits all of them at once? Caballero’s work suggests all and none, proposing that poetry’s essence lies in its refusal to be pinned down.

Transitioning from screen to print, the poem fractures into stills—fragments of motion suspended in time. These images, modular and open-ended, echo the way memory shatters and reassembles. A single verse repeats across prints, each iteration a timestamp from the choreographic score, inviting viewers to reconstruct narratives from shards. The poem’s body here is both absent and omnipresent, a ghost lingering in the negative space between image and text. Nearby, the fourth volume of the series *Book Sculptures* confronts the textual fetishism head-on. A tome containing *Echo Graph* printed 197 times—its digits spiraling toward the number 8, symbolizing abundance—the sculpture reimagines the book as artifact and cipher. Blockchain provenance and a video of its pages turning endlessly amplify its materiality, transforming poetry into a transactable object. Caballero asks: Is a poem’s value in its words, its weight, or the cryptographic code that immortalizes it?

The violence of extraction haunts *Page Breaks*, where Caballero frames published books alongside a single page ripped from their spines. The jagged edge left behind speaks to the struggle of elevating poetry to fine art, the physical act of removal mirroring the cultural labor of demanding reverence for verse. Yet the diptych—book and orphaned page—transforms absence into presence, celebrating the book as an object of desire. The poem's space becomes both the void it leaves and the new context it inhabits, a paradox that reflects Caballero's broader meditation on poetry's resilience.

Elsewhere, *Ciclo*—a hand-painted, 3D-printed sculpture—emerges from the whispers of audiences worldwide. Born of *Paperwork*, a series that digitizes emotional responses to Caballero's poem performances, *Ciclo* materializes ephemeral moments: a scribbled word, an origami swan, a collective sigh. These fragments, fed into AI to generate digital paper sculptures, are later rendered tactile, bridging algorithmic abstraction and human touch. In this fusion, poetry transcends the individual to become a shared archive, its body woven from the fibers of collective memory. The digital and the physical, often mistakenly framed as opposites, here collapse into a singular testament to poetry's enduring materiality.

*Echo Graph* is a manifesto of intertextuality. Where the materiality of poetry becomes elusive, the artist restores poetry's multidimensionality—its capacity to inhabit video, sculpture, image, skin, and bone. Like fingers in a hand, the apparitions of the poem within this exhibition cast their individual universe while, simultaneously, working as a constellation. The poem is not a relic but a reverberation, echoing across mediums. It lives in the tremor of a motion-captured wrist, the gloss of a painted polystyrene curve, the silent turn of a blockchain-encoded page. Trauma, once confined to medical records, becomes a catalyst for reinvention, proving that poetry's true body is wherever it is felt, shared, and remade.

If a poem can dwell in a flickering screen, a torn page, or a body possessed by movement, where else might it reside? And what might it yet become? *Echo Graph* reveals to us how the medium doesn't make the poem but rather the medium becomes the poem, it invites us to listen to the reverberations of a boundless poem, unafraid to shapeshift.