

The exhibition, which is curated by Jorge Ribalta and was originally organized by àngels barcelona, presents a group of mostly unpublished photographs, taken in 1981, a key moment in the neo-vanguardist politicization of Rosler's work. That year, Rosler published her book *3 Works*, which synthesized some key works from the 1970s and which marked a turning point in her career, partly because it included the publication of the essay "In, Around and Afterthoughts ... On Documentary Photography," one of the key theoretical texts on the "reinvention" of the documentary. (Also in this book was a work centering on the coup in Chile and a visit to northern Mexico.) Further, in that same year she was part of a group of North American artists and intellectuals traveling to Cuba, while a few months later, she participated in the second Latin American Colloquium of Photography in Mexico City. Her artistic and intellectual activity is indissociable from the democratic struggles in Latin America. With the various projects she was working on at the time, this became a biographically crucial moment for her (marked by her return to New York after over a decade in California and Canada), that made her contribute decisively to the paradigm shift in documentary discourse.

In January of 1981, Rosler travelled to Cuba as part of a group of artists and intellectuals (many of them friends) organized by Ana Mendieta and Lucy Lippard. Then, in late April, she spoke at the panel on "photography as struggle" at the second Coloquio Latinoamericano de Fotografía in Mexico City, after which she joined in the May Day demonstration in the center of the city. A couple of days later, on May 3, she marched to the steps of the Pentagon in Washington D.C. as part of the largest anti-war demonstration in a decade, opposing U.S. intervention in El Salvador.

Rosler's solidarity with the Latin American democratic struggles of the 1970s is essential for understanding the politicization of her work. The revolutionary movements became the opposite side of the coin of 1980s neoliberalism. Similarly, the critical "reinvention" of documentary photography and the reaction against the first symptoms of the regressive political wave were part of the same ideological and aesthetic agenda. In hindsight, 1981 represented the end of the potentiality, openness, and experimentation of the 1970s (a product of post-1968 progressive public policies worldwide), and the effective beginning of the Thatcher-Reagan era, which determined the entire political and cultural landscape of subsequent decades.

But, simultaneously to its historical edge, this exhibition raises important questions for today. As we enter the Trump era, the images from 1981 join the current moment of meaning and become active members of a conversation between the artist, the period of time in which they were produced, and

the minds of contemporary viewers. Even more so than before, we consume the world through images, and any response to them is rooted in our social knowledge of the world. That is to say, if we surround ourselves with images that emphasize the aesthetics and form a neoliberal society over their political dimension, they will also breed an imperialist and conformist sensibility across all aspects of cultural life. In this respect, this series offers us an archology of the present.

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