The 'Past' as Transcultural Space: Using Ethnographic Installation in the Study of Archaeology

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This article presents a methodology of ethnographic fieldwork that can be used in the ethnographic study of archaeology. The methodology is called ethnographic installation and was developed in the context of research on the social contexts of archaeology in Yucatán, México. The core idea is to develop an exhibition of materials relevant to a community, and design this installation as a site of ethnographic fieldwork. This article discusses the theoretical and ontological underpinnings of this methodology, such as performativity, staging, expanded documentation, transcultural dynamics, ethnographic triggers, and evocation. Ethnographic installation is explained through the example of a research project conducted in a Maya community located near Chichén Itzá. The project used archival materials pertaining to the history of archaeological research sponsored by the Carnegie Institution of Washington between 1923 and 1941. These materials were presented to the community as a way to facilitate community reappropriation of a shared history with archaeology.

KEYWORDS Transculturation, Archaeological ethnography, Chichén Itzá, Performativity, Levinas, ethnomethodology, Theatre anthropology

This article presents a research methodology for use in the ethnographic study of archaeology. *Ethnographic installation* is one in a series of experimental practices and strategies of ethnographic fieldwork developed in the course of research conducted in the Maya community of Pisté near the archaeological-tourism site of Chichén Itzá, Yucatán, México, from 1997 to 1999.[1] These strategies derive from an ontological analysis of the performative and dialogical principles of ethnographic fieldwork (see Castañeda, 2006b) and are designed to focus on *transcultural* processes, dynamics and objects of study.[2] I use transcultural as a descriptive concept to identify *for investigation* and *analysis* a range of borrowings, fusions, mixings, re-adaptations,

and hybridizations that occur across those reified cultural boundaries of identity groups which are preconceived by those groups as absolute and non-porous, if not also foundational of the difference between the groups. These mutual and reciprocal, if also uneven and non-equivalent, mixings are constructed to express a difference, authenticity, or uniqueness of the group; thus, this *transcultural appropriation* and readaptation of elements necessarily entails a lack of acknowledgement, if not active erasure, of these borrowings and hybridization.[3] My use of the notion extends the meaning of 'transcultural' as elaborated by Tomas (1996) and Pratt (1992) to emphasize not culture loss, acculturation, and subsequent synthesis into a new 'culture' (as in Ortiz's original 1940 notion), but the differentiation of cultures and the spaces where borrowings/adaptations occur. Shifting the concept to the spaces of interaction thus targets the dynamics and processes that produce transcultural meanings, values, and objects. This reconceptualization of the notion of *transculturation* enables the extension of the term *transcultural* to identify for analysis not only the borrowings of meanings across communities (as typically conceived) but also between socio-cultural communities and diverse kinds of institutions, sets of practices, bodies of knowledge, and social agents, including science.

There are two transcultural zones relevant to this article. On the one hand, the intersection and interaction between archaeology and the communities where archaeological research is conducted is a significant space of transcultural processes that lead to or result in a diversity of transcultural meanings, values and constructions of 'the past'. On the other hand, there is an ongoing hybridization of ethnography and archaeology in which ethnography is being used by archaeologists to study diverse aspects of the social contexts, historical effects, political roles, and economic ramifications of archaeology. I discuss research in which ethnographic installation was used as a methodological strategy to investigate the construction of a community's 'past' relationship with archaeology. My aim is not to analyse the results of this research but to present an example of how this method was used in one situation and thus to engage the question of how ethnography can be used in the study of archaeology — i.e., both as a means *to study archaeology as an object* and as *a method in the archaeological study of 'pasts'*.

The next section provides a general orientation to ethnographic installation as a methodology. Following this, I describe how the method was used in a research project called the Chilam Balam Project in Memory and History.[4] The article then moves to sections that discuss specific additional methodological principles, such as staging, trigger, evocation, and expanded documentation. In the conclusion, I draw out ways in which this method can be used concretely by other researchers and the implications that this methodology has for archaeology.

Ethnographic installation as methodological strategy

In my research on tourism and archaeology at Chichén Itzá (Castañeda, 1996, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005a, 2005b), I collected a variety of textual and photographic materials that document the anthropological presence in the nearby Maya community of Pisté during the first half of the 20th century. The archival material derives primarily from the archaeological and ethnographic research conducted at Chichén and Pisté

between 1923 and 1938 under sponsorship of the Carnegie Institution of Washington (CIW), but also includes photographs from archaeologists from the late 19th century. The CIW materials include administrative letters, letters between researchers, budgets, minutes of trustee meetings, research reports, project proposals, and photographs of archaeological excavation and restoration from 1923 to 1940. I also collected materials from the archives of CIW researchers Robert Redfield in the Rubenstein Library, University of Chicago, and Morris Steggerda in the Hartford Seminary Foundation. The latter materials include all of Steggerda's unpublished fieldnotes and photography from his ethnographic and anthropometric research from 1930 to 1938 in Pisté, such as complete genealogies and annual censuses of all inhabitants in the years 1930 to 1935, fieldnotes, diaries, maps, and exhaustive descriptions of all architecture from 1933 to 1938, as well as materials he collected (e.g. 1918 town census). In 1997 I initiated an ethnographic project on memory and history that was designed around the idea of sharing these historical materials with the community of Pisté.

On the one hand, the project was conceived in an ethical spirit of decolonizing anthropology: a goal was to bring this archive of materials that embody anthropological knowledge into the hands of the community that was the subject of these ethnographic and archaeological projects. On the other hand, a goal was to investigate processes by which community members of Pisté would/could create a 'shared' history and past through the appropriation of these documentary fragments that simultaneously *was* and *was not part of their past* and, thus, *was and was not their 'history'*.

These two aspects could be considered as a type of 'public data sharing and outreach' combined with an applied research agenda that aimed simultaneously to 'invent the past' and to study this (re)invention of past history. I use *invented* in a particular sense: although Pistéleños share a history with archaeologists who worked at Chichén, these materials document events and activities about which Pistéleños may or may not have had any direct experience, memories, or any historical recollection through anecdotes passed on by previous generations of relatives and neighbours who were employed by archaeologists. The past is invented, therefore, because new knowledge, meanings, and interpretations of a 'shared' past are created and circulated in the present. In hindsight, this project, therefore, was quite like the work of archaeology, which *constructs the 'past'* by producing new knowledge in the present about historical times that has otherwise receded into a mute materiality, that is, an empirical reality silently waiting to be narrativized.[5] To satisfy this agenda, we developed the methodology of ethnographic installation.

This is best explained by retracing the logic: in order to share this material with the community we sought to design a public exhibition in the town hall. Given our ethical and political concerns for polyvocality, open-ended interpretation, and breaking up the absolute authority of the ethnographic voice, we were not interested in communicating to (or imposing on) the audience a preformed, coherent, totalizing narrative of the history of Pisté, the excavations at Chichén, or interactions between community members and archaeologists. Rather, the goal was to use the documents as ethnographic triggers and provocations to elicit local views, experiences, meanings, memories, and stories about the time referenced by the images. Further, we sought to

transform the exhibition into a site of ethnographic fieldwork by using unstructured interviewing and documenting the transcultural dynamics by which exhibit-goers engaged the 'past/their history' expressed by the materials.

Key to ethnographic installation is the ontological principle of fieldwork staging. This idea builds on the symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology of Goffman and Garfinkel, as well as the theories of performance of Agosto Boal, Eugenio Barba, Richard Schechner, and Gary Izzo.[6] Just as individuals frame everyday encounters in which to perform their selves, all ethnography requires a staging (framing, presentation, structuring) of fieldwork encounters. This explicitly does not mean that, one, interactions with subjects of research are inherently or always controlled and mastered by the fieldworker, two, that the artifice of staging thereby renders fieldwork false, illegitimate, ethically deceitful or manipulative, and, three, that fieldwork staging implies that it is always or necessarily elaborate, high tech, an explicit structure, or a physical reshaping of space (a 'stage').[7] Typically, we do not so much control encounters as negotiate the staging of interactions; we are simply at the mercy of our informants who impose their restrictions on interviews and encounters. Staging of fieldwork can be as minimalist as setting up a time to visit someone at their house and preparing topics for an unstructured, informal interview. or as thoughtful as determining the spatial order of chairs, the wall decorations, the room lighting, and the location of recording devices, as in focus group methods. Staging of fieldwork encounters can be impromptu or elaborately planned in advance; it can rely on meta-linguistic framing devices and definitions of the situation (e.g. 'meet me at the park bench at 5 p.m. and I will give you the interview') or explicit alterations of physical space including material components (e.g. a structured exhibition). Staging, then, is a principle by which we frame interactions as spaces and times of and for fieldwork. Ethnographic installation is a strategy by which the principle of staging is explicitly and deliberately used to design fieldwork in accordance with the research problem that one has formulated in a project.

In the Chilam Balam project, one of our goals was to facilitate the recirculation of the archival documentation of the archaeological presence in the community, i.e., to present these historical documents about the community's past to the community as a means to enable their reappropriation of this information. We therefore did not want to present a preformed narrative exegesis or historical narrative of this archive that we were sharing and publicly disseminating. Our motive was certainly to 'return knowledge back to the community', but a second goal was to use this historical material as triggers to elicit and provoke local views of and experiences with this history of Chichén archaeology through these documents that bear the indelible mark of the archaeologists' perspective. While we were seeking to enable appropriation of this knowledge, we also maintained a third objective, which was to do ethnography of the dynamics and processes of this re-encounter with a past that was simultaneously theirs and not-theirs, known and unknown, experienced but not remembered, remembered but not experienced. In other words, the ethnographic installation was not simply 'public outreach' but we used outreach as the pretext and enabling condition to also do something else: 'sharing' the archival materials was the stage and staging for ethnographic research on how the community would engage a part of their past history that was shared with archaeology, about which they did not necessarily

know or 'own' in the usual sense of this phrase. In the same manner that archaeology makes the past present through its constructions of archaeological history, this project aimed to make the past present in two senses: to present the past for a contemporary audience that has some stake in this past; and to make the presence of this past as open-ended in its meaning as possible, as a means to facilitate its appropriation by those in the community who would claim a stake in this present(ed) past.

This is without doubt a transcultural past constituted through a double articulation between two native points of view, that of the archaeologists and of the Pisté community. To fully grasp this complex hybridity, however, one must recognize that there is still yet another layering: for this object of study, 'the archaeological past' was simultaneously a there and then, dead and gone past, and a here and now, alive and present 'past' whose fluid, momentary presence as absence and experiential absence as presence were only possible through the very artifice of the ethnographic installation and fieldwork. The past that was provoked and triggered by ethnography was not a pre-existent, pre-given, substantive thing out there but was only evoked by the installation itself. In other words, this experimental ethnography is, therefore, also a part of the very object of study. Our comprehension of the hybrid complexity of this object, therefore, had also to include the fact that the ethnography of this transcultural past is itself transcultural and is a part of this evoked past.[8] Further, to make a point specifically germane to archaeology: our ethnographic project of presenting the past, is indeed already based on a 'pre-understanding' (to use terminology of classical hermeneutics) that constructs the content and expression of the past which is presented as available for appropriation by the community.

The Chilam Balam installation

Grounding ourselves in the art theory of conceptualism and concept art, we designed the installation as an interactive exhibition with five zones. Overall these zones modelled, alluded to or directly symbolized the traditional Maya cosmological division of space into five colour-coded cardinal directions. Although there is more to say about this, let's instead characterize the spatial logic of the content. Zone one was the entrance foyer with a set of posters that described in general terms the agenda of the Field School in Experimental Ethnography and introduced the goals of the installation. I must note that virtually all the installation materials were presented in both Spanish and English. The explanatory texts were originally written in English and translated into Spanish by native bilingual speakers. We also translated a good chunk of the anthropological publications of Morris Steggerda. One poster offered a text that sought to expand the notion of history by asking 'what is history?' and listing, somewhat poetically, the ephemerality of history by defining it as moments, acts, actions, events that are remembered, spatialized, experienced, collected, visualized, visited, monumentalized, and so on. Further, one poster explained the familiar cultural figure of the Chilam Balam as a prophet–priest historian and suggested that not only the archaeologists and their Pisté workmen who constructed Chichén Itzá again, but all of us who visited the installation were also in a sense Chilam Balams, ready to interpret, write and rewrite history.

FIGURE 1   The space of ethnographic installation, the public assembly hall of the city hall, Pisté, Yucatán, México. Photograph of the Field School of Experimental Ethnography, used by permission. © The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology.

The second zone was a photographic essay hung along a ramp leading to the stage of the open-air assembly hall and on the first section of the back wall. The photo-essay culminated in a set of images of the Pyramid of Kukulcan (the Castillo) displayed in a shape evoking a pyramid. In this zone, our strategy was to exploit the visual image with minimal textual exegesis. Each photo only had the minimalist descriptive caption found in the CIW archive that identified the building; we added

the approximate year if necessary. A poster at the start of the ramp was the only other language-based framing of these images. The text, titled 'Maya Building Maya Buildings', ended with the following:

> Our goal is not so much to salvage this history that has been erased from the official history books, but to relive these histories (in the plural) as the lived memories of all of you, the Chilam Balams of Pisté that today are looking at and enjoying these photos.

One man who was studying the images acknowledged that he and others, of course, had never seen these photographs. He was interested to know how I had got hold of them because, he then asserted, these were highly critical of the government for what they showed, Maya building the ruins. While this may be overdramatic and a bit misguided (toward the government versus archaeology), it underscored a fact of which locals and close readers of Maya archaeology are aware, i.e., that 20th-century representation of Maya ruins has mostly erased living Maya from the photographic and audiovisual discourses of Maya archaeological sites.

The third zone was conceived as the symbolic centre of the installation and was located in the column-framed centre stage of the assembly space. Placed on the floor so as to be seen from the stage above was a 1938 map of Pisté, painted in batik by local artist Juan Gutierrez.[9] Near one column a tape recorder was placed that played a prayer to the founding of the four corners as taken from the sacred Maya history book called the *Chilam Balam of Chumayel*. A poster with the map's legend that listed the name of the male head of household that corresponded to the 80-plus house markers on the map was set in front of the map.

This map created different reactions. It triggered a particularly strong engagement in one man, who spent about 30 minutes analysing the map and then the legend-key. Going back and forth, back and forth, between the two representational systems, he read the numbered names of each household on the list and then patiently scanned the map below to find its location. Toggling between map and legend, between then and now, he engaged a few persons who also looked at the map or who inspected his engaged focus.

The fourth zone was stage right, on the opposite side of the map from the photo-essay. This space was devoted to the relationship between Morris Steggerda, the ethnographer of Pisté in the 1930s, and Martiniano, aka Martin, aka Marty, Dzib. At the start of the Carnegie excavations of Chichén in 1923, Marty was ten years old and was sent to live and work for two years in the New México home of archae-ologist Jesse Nussbaum. Upon returning to Pisté, trilingual Marty first worked for Morris and then became one of the first tour guides. The first subcomponent consisted of a table with a near complete array of Steggerda's English language pub-lications and all of his unpublished fieldnotes, much of which we also presented in Spanish translation. The second component was a set of posters that detailed the Morris and Marty relationship, especially the extent to which Morris acknowledged Marty as one of his key sources of knowledge. This exhibit was our syntagmatic emblem of transcultural dynamics: in this exhibit we sought to concretize the fact that what anthropology knows and the anthropological production of knowledge are based on transcultural processes and dynamics. The erasure and elision of these traces in the written/textual ethnography has been a theoretical and political preoccupation since the 1980s. Ethnographic installation, generally and our
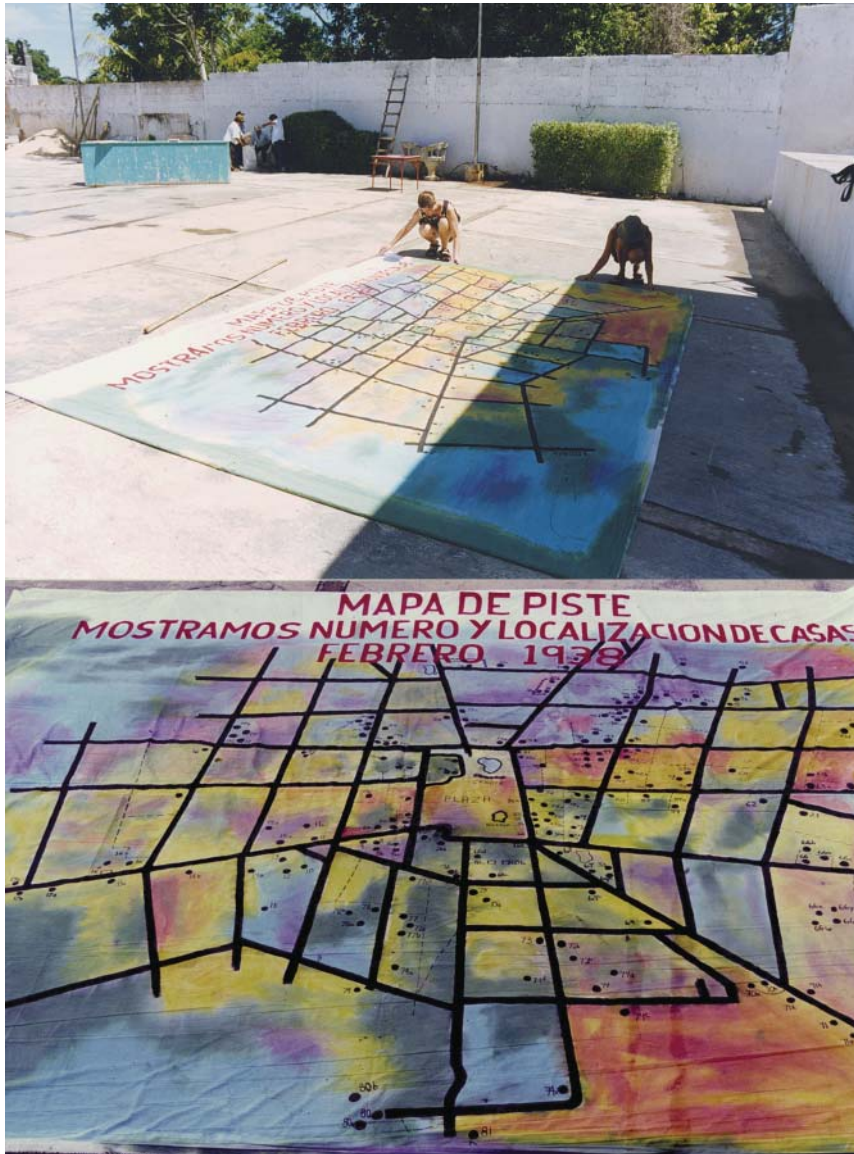
FIGURE 2   'Mapping Pisté History': close-up of the 1938 map of Pisté in tutti-frutti batik. Photograph of the Field School of Experimental Ethnography, used by permission. © The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology.

specific use of this method, sought to make intelligible and bring under scrutiny the transcultural complexities of the past, archaeology, and, in this exhibit zone, ethnographic fieldwork.

The fifth zone was designed as the interactive core based on a book that we created, the *Chilam Balam of Pisté*. This was an oversize 'book' consisting of 11 folio pages made on seven 24 by 26 inch poster boards. Each page was constructed as a collage of images and texts which were designed as triggers and provocations.

Textual materials were primarily taken from the corpus of Steggerda's studies while the visual materials were unpublished images primarily from the Carnegie photographic collection. Upon opening the book, a reader would be able to see two pages at a time, a top page held in the air and a bottom page laying flat on a table. The book was set on a table with chairs so that multiple persons could read and discuss the book. Methodologically, the concept was to stage an interactive exhibit as a space for unstructured, informal focus group encounters.

The cover page consisted of a simple enlarged black and white line drawing of the 1938 map of Pisté and a title. Page two reiterated the title and stated that: 'The books of the Chilam Balam were never completed books. The Chilam Balams wrote the history of the past and prophecies of the future, continually adding pages, prophecy histories, according to their reading of their calendar.' Page three included two unpublished images showing, first, the flooding of the house yard of CIW foreman and Pisté resident Juan Olalde caused by a 1928 hail storm and, second, an unnamed Maya workman sitting next to an apparently just excavated Chac Mol stone statue (photo by Edward Thompson circa 1890s). The accompanying text asks 'When does the history of Pisté begin? It is said that during Colonial times, when Chichén was abandoned, a small population lived in the vicinity of the ruins. Was this Pisté?'

The fourth page presented five unpublished images that depicted the presence and involvement of Maya from the Pisté community in the archaeological investigations of Chichén. In a provocative counter to what the images depicted, the captions and quotes highlighted the classic interpretation of the abandonment of Chichén and the traditional interpretation of Maya cities as 'empty ceremonial centres'. Pages five and six posed questions about the excavation of Chichén. A copy of the Carnegie excavation budget for 1928 was juxtaposed with images of Pisté Maya workmen in a group photograph at the Temple of the Warriors. On the bottom page a space for writing was provided for those wanting to answer the question, 'can you identify any of these men?'

The materials did not impose or present a coherent, unifying historical narrative or interpretation. The structure and content of the book was designed to provoke and trigger evocations (memories, experiences, thoughts, questions, dialogue). The design logic consisted of a symbolic–conceptual frame that sought to evoke transcultural dynamics and processes as the basis of history. Methodologically, we conceived of these devices as triggers, that is as methodological tools and tactics derived from our epistemological assumptions about the transcultural hybridity of the past and present.

Triggers, fieldwork, evocation

Trigger is related to the notions of elicitation and interaction. Elicitation presupposes that there is a pre-given, previously formulated cultural thing — an idea, meaning, or fact — that is sought as the response to the devices used to elicit information and data. Even in open-ended elicitation, such as unstructured and informal interviews, there is still a strong sense that there is a targeted content and form of response. Similarly, the idea of exhibit interactivity is a curatorial notion in which spontaneous reactions are incited by carefully designed devices and displays. Nonetheless, curatorial design has an agenda to create specific kinds of effects and

responses to the exhibition. Put another way: museum exhibits are designed and funded to communicate specific content to its publics; the open-ended, free-flowing responses of interactive displays are fundamentally curtailed by this agenda to create and communicate particular messages and meanings. The concept of trigger is a methodological device that aims towards a radical extension of the open-ended logics of elicitation and interactivity.

One of our research goals was to try to explore the limits of open-endedness in a methodology based on a structured presentation of exhibit materials. Was it possible to hone a tool that triggered not so much a pre-existent 'native point of view', but a dialogical and transcultural process of meaning-making? In other words, if, at the level of epistemology:

1. elicitation works to draw out an answer that is posited as there, and
2. interactivity provokes open-ended responses,
3. can trigger be developed as a device that evokes transcultural complexity and, in the case of the Chilam Balam project, the transcultural dynamics of constructing the past?

The design and structure of exhibit components had different aims in terms of eliciting, evoking and triggering responses. In general, we framed the exhibit in ways that we hoped would open up alternative ways of consciously thinking about, remembering and narrating the past. This we imagined would set up the possibility of provoking critical or thoughtful commentary about archaeology and the history of archaeology in the community. At other points we wanted to elicit open-ended conversations, free response memories, thoughts, and anecdotes. For example, one man called me over to the Steggerda table after reading the 1918 censuses and 1930s genealogies. He was anxious to tell me why his family was not mentioned and so he related a story that is present in the anthropological discourse about the Maya (see Redfield and Villa Rojas, 1934; Redfield, 1950; Goldkind, 1966; Castaneda, 1996, 2003a).

Consider the set of pages in the Chilam Book revolving around gender. We selected a number of photos of Maya women and children in the act of daily life and house scenes. We explicitly asked questions such as: what would it feel like to be posed as a typical Maya? On one page we set two photos of a woman, identified in the caption as Paulina Dzib, who the Carnegie photographer had posed to illustrate washing clothes and grinding corn. On a translucent overlay we scripted a quote about the typical domestic chores, the following quote from Steggerda: 'the women wake up before dawn, stoke the fire to start making tortillas, and then get water from the well, after breakfast she starts to wash clothes'.

By lifting the overlay one reads the question, 'What would Paulina Dzib say to us now if she could tell us what she felt?' Clearly, this is a different kind of question than asking if the workmen in the other image could be identified; the former is a radically open-ended trigger and the latter is an elicitation of a pre-given piece of information.

The most interesting reading of the book was from two sisters in their 60s. Rebeca Pat, a long-time collaborator and friend, anxiously brought in her mother and aunt, who happened to be the younger cousins of Paulina. Unfortunately, the blur between

FIGURE 3   Reading the *Book of the Chilam Balam of Pisté*. Photograph of the Field School of Experimental Ethnography, used by permission. © The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology.
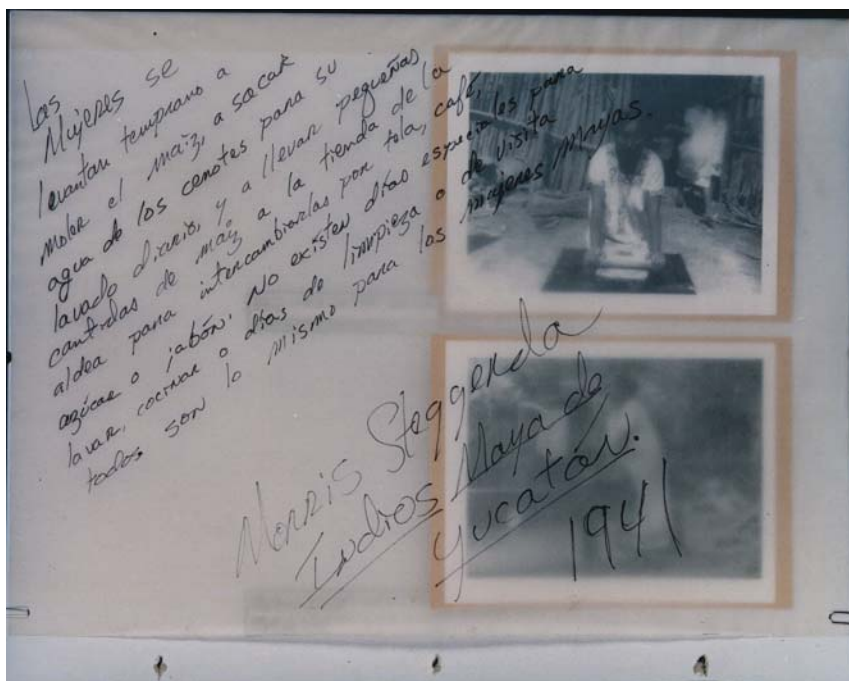

FIGURE 4   Translucent page with quote from Morris Steggerda used to cover Carnegie photographs of Paulina Dzib staged as a 'typical Maya woman'. Photograph of the Field School of Experimental Ethnography, used by permission. © The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology.

their aging eyesight, the poor quality of the photo-reproduction, and a forgetfulness of persons, did not give us much data in terms of the workmen's names or even nicknames. (Note that at the time of Carnegie archaeology the town of Pisté had less than 500 inhabitants of all ages.) They did, however, recognize one man in the photo because he was famous for always wearing a handkerchief; but no anecdotes were offered. Then the two sisters saw the photos of Paulina and we read them the accompanying text. Everyone who was gathered was quietly anticipating some great response, some great evocation. A long pause followed my reading of the question, 'What would Paulina say?' Rebeca's mom mumbled something and the aunt mumbled back. Turning to Rebeca to ask her to repeat what they had said, she declared that her name was Paula. Then in a more audible voice the sisters agreed that Paula left her husband and had run off with her lover to Mérida. The gossip was sketchy, not very narrative. Then Rebeca tried to get them to respond to the question, what would Paula say? Silence. Nothing. After some more prodding, one finally said, 'What do you mean, what would she say? She is dead'. Aaaah! Ok, then Rebeca tried out rephrasing the question with other uses of the Spanish subjunctive, 'Ok, yes, but, imagine. . .' for example. Finally, the aunt proposed hypothetically, 'well, I am really happy to be doing my chores, and after this I have to prepare lunch. I am happy in my heart I work.' *Ki'imak in wool kin meyah* (in Maya).

Fieldwork, documentation, ethnography

The goal here is not to analyse ethnographic data, but to define methodological concepts, tools, and strategies for doing archaeological ethnography, by which I mean ethnographic study of archaeology. In this regard, it is important to underscore that our fieldwork was conceived as an experiment in exploration of a set of principles that sought to foreground the transcultural complexity of the 'past' and the transcultural dynamics of how the past is created. However, the experiment or experimental nature of the research does not correspond in any way to the scientific concept of experiment, neither in the hard science or 'soft' social science senses of 'experimental method' and 'natural experiment'. Grounding our notion of experiment in the word's etymological meaning of 'try, risk/risky, putting into peril', we formulated a research problem that gave primary value to the experience of and interaction in fieldwork (Tyler, 1987). The valorization of fieldwork — the meanings, significance, feelings, and relationships that emerge in fieldwork — derives in equal parts from a Levinassian ethics that prioritizes face-to-face dynamics, an epistemology premised on transcultural complexity, and a politics based in the power of knowledge production (see Bauman, 1993; Levinas, 1969, 1987, 1998; Critchley, 1999; Derrida, 1999; Castañeda, 2006a; Benson and O'Neill, 2007). The axiological centre of fieldwork engagement dislodges the otherwise hegemonic agenda of knowledge production as the only measure of ethnography. Knowledge production, however, is not abandoned as an epistemological impossibility or as an ethically (or politically) corrupt endeavour. Our objective, as expressed earlier, was less to 'produce' new than to 'return' unknown knowledge by creating enabling conditions for it to be borrowed and adapted: transcultural ethnography, then, is premised on facilitating the reappropriation of anthropology and archaeology by those communities engaged and targeted by these research activities.

We tried to design ethnographic installation as a methodological strategy that articulates these three objectives of sharing, producing, and experiencing. There are two elements that make installation an ethnographic method and not just an interactive exhibit. I have tried to explain how we experimented with a concept of trigger that we hoped could expand the difference between installation and exhibition. But, in both cases, there is ultimately a staging of elements in space for communicative, interactive, and evocative purposes. Thus, the fundamental difference is not in the principles of staging design or in the epistemology that undergirds the design and staging of elements, but rather in the presence or absence of documentation.

Recalling Geertz in his famous 'thick description' article, the key difference between everyday life and ethnography is that the ethnographer 'writes' it all down. Today, however, the ethnographer is not the only one who writes or inscribes 'culture': the proliferation of technologies of autoethnography — such as video-telephoning, chat rooms, reality TV, reality game shows, Facebook/Myspace, blogs, internet dating, wiki sites, second life gaming, edu-tainment shows, YouTube, travel documentaries, and so on — make it abundantly clear that for ethnography to count (or have value) as knowledge production (and as ethnography, even), the ethnographer must master documentary methodologies. Not simply master documentary technologies, but also devise and deploy effective strategies of using documentation in a way that corresponds to research problems. Without coherent and strategic, if not systematic, documentation of the processes of research, research dissolves into some other kind of quotidian activity. Without a documentary strategy of fieldwork, the ethnographic installation is simply just another exhibit, more or less interactive, interesting, and meaningful. Without linking documentation to an ethnographic research problem, the documentation is not ethnography, just another form of the everyday 'ethnography' that saturates TV, the internet, city streets, classroom pedagogy, and tourism among other sites of quotidian life.

Expanded documentation

An ethnographic installation, quite simply, is the staging of a site of fieldwork based in the exhibition of materials in an exhibitionary form that was designed to trigger and provoke specific forms of interaction. These reactions, responses, and engagement with the staged triggers were in turn also documented as an analytical object of study of ethnographic fieldwork. In the knowledge-production model of science, the later use of documents produced in fieldwork is given over to processes of analysis that convert information into knowledge (of one type or another) and, then, in this new form, dissemination to determinate audiences. In applied-practising models of science, the analytical process converts the documents into useable information that is more or less immediately put into practical action to address a social issue. In the experimental model of fieldwork, we proposed an additional process of reusing documents from fieldwork in subsequent moments of fieldwork — i.e., a stage of research later on in the same field season or in a future field season or in a future research project. This redeployment, however, does not necessarily or inherently exclude the analysis of ethnographic documentation created in fieldwork in terms of knowledge production or applied research objectives. We called this experimental process expanded documentation. We defined this methodological principle as the

idea of bringing back into subsequent fieldwork in the form of triggers and elicitation devices the ethnographic documentation that had been created in previous fieldwork situations.

This fieldwork technique and method is not entirely new or unique. What little innovation we bring to this idea is in terms of, first, defining it as a methodological principle with a particular name and, second, associating it with a determinate set of related notions in order to develop a methodological framework or toolkit of transcultural ethnography, based in experimental fieldwork. To reiterate, I think there are many examples of ethnographers who have collected materials such as photographs, texts, video, and audio recordings and then at a later moment, whether in the 'same' or in a following fieldwork season, have used the materials to elicit responses and reactions. For example, Fernandez and Herzfeld (1998), in their 'search for meaningful methods' of ethnography, devote a paragraph to Herzfeld's use of this technique. But, to my knowledge, there has been little discussion of this fieldwork tactic that would develop it into a more rigorous principle that could inform the design of fieldwork strategies.

Expanded documentation assumes carefully planned and conducted documentation of fieldwork. In the Chilam Balam installation we had six field school researchers participate in the installation. Some carried tape recorders, others photographic cameras, another manned the video camcorder. All had notebooks. We developed a plan in which certain fieldworkers would be stationed in certain zones to observe responses to the exhibit, but everyone was charged with the task of engaging persons in informal, unstructured conversations as these naturally occurred and to write up notes as soon as possible on these interactions. Despite shortcomings, the Chilam Balam ethnographic installation was a success in many ways, but primarily as an interactive exhibition that facilitated community reappropriation of a shared historical legacy. Although I have alluded to this, the overall community experience was profound and positive. Project shortcomings and strengths became lessons in a number of areas: for example, it is crucial to train fieldworkers in the technical dimensions of media technologies so that they may make effective use of recording devices in changing contexts of space, time, lighting, body movement, performance, climate, and environment. Expanded documentation can be and still should be further developed as a methodological principle and practice.

Expanded documentation is premised on a kind of doubling that is related to reflexivity, but this is not the core structure of the concept that I would emphasize. To reduce the principle as a means of reflexivity or to hold reflexivity as the ultimate objective is possible but I would suggest a truncated use of the methodology. Reflexivity in one way or another invokes representational mirroring in a literal or metaphoric way. Rather, if we return to the epistemological framework of hybrid complexities, expanded documentation is a principle that is honed, first, to reveal transcultural processes and second, to multiply and generate new levels, registers, or planes of transcultural dynamics. These registers are experiential, not representational. When deployed in a strategic fashion versus as a one-time tool of restricted use in a project, expanded documentation interweaves subjects into ever thickening webs of dialogical, transcultural, sentient connectivity. By recirculating the fieldwork documents into new fieldwork encounters in an ongoing process according to the design of the research problem, these transcultural experiences and dynamics are

concretized in material objects, opened to subjective revalorization, and grounded in shared historical memory. Transcultural relations between fieldworkers and collaborating subjects of research are then manifested and expressed in new ways, with new dialogues and new experiences. Reflexivity and self-awareness can be a part of this process, but, again, are not the goal or telos of the methodological principle of expanded documentation.

Further, while ethnographic installation requires (is dependent upon) carefully conceived plans for expanded documentation, the latter is a methodology that can be articulated to other fieldwork strategies. Strategically, the possibilities of using expanded documentation are only constrained by the design of research problems that one formulates. Here it is important to reiterate that expanded documentation is in itself just a principle of ethnographic fieldwork. It produces a corpus of materials, an archive of documents that are historical and ethnographic in content. This archive can then be brought into play into new and subsequent stages of research as a body of triggers. But, the plans, design and conception of how to use this set of materials in fieldwork is where expanded documentation is strategic and a strategy that corresponds to the broader design of research.[10]

Using ethnographic installation: first conclusion

What practical methodological tools can be extracted from the Chilam Balam Project on Memory and History? Putting aside the theoretical and ontological principles, ethnographic installation can be distilled into three methodological steps. First, a set of materials is selected from a corpus of documentation pertinent to the social context at hand; this material is selected in order to design an exhibition for a determinate public with whom one wishes to conduct research and for whom this corpus of materials has significance. A corollary principle to this first protocol is the presup-position that a prior research or fieldwork project must be undertaken to create the relevant archive of ethnographic documentation and/or material culture from which to make a selection. In the case of the Chilam Balam project, the archival documents from the history of the archaeological excavations at Chichén Itzá were collected over a 12-year period before their use in the installation. In a hypothetical case of a currently ongoing archaeological research project, the materials to be used as triggers may be material artefacts from either the recent or archaeological 'past' or from contemporary material culture; alternatively, a corpus of triggers could also be created through ethnographic fieldwork in which participant observation prioritized the systematic or least conceptually coherent photographic and audiovisual documentation of the ongoing excavation process. Such documentation should prioritize facets of everyday activities and interactions that have meaning for nearby communities, for example the portraiture of local workers in work contexts (see Hamilakis, Anagnostopoulos and Ifantidis, this volume), photo-essays of workmen and their interactions among themselves, with staff archaeologists, the archaeological remains, and interviewing of workers and their families in social contexts of the community. Plenty of materials can be produced in one season of archaeological research for the design and elaboration of a rich and rewarding ethnographic installation.

Second, the exhibition of the selected materials is designed with the goals of maximizing interaction with the exhibited elements, triggering radically open-ended

responses or engagement, and facilitating an implicit redefinition of the social encounter with exhibited materials as a fieldwork process of participant observation. A corollary to this second protocol is that the concept of 'public data sharing and outreach' must continually be converted into a principle and technique of 'learning from the public' in order to create a 'two-way' or more accurately a *multidirectional dynamic* that facilitates mutual transcultural exchange. In other words, ethnographic installation is *not* 'we teach them about their past', but rather 'all of us, we community members and we archaeologists, *we learn from each other's different experiences about what the past means to us today*'.

Third, an explicit strategy of multimedia documentation of the public's engagement with the exhibition and fieldwork encounters in the installation is crafted with the explicit goal of creating or further enriching a *historical archive of the present moment* that can/will be used on future occasions as a resource available to both the community and the archaeologists. In other words, the corollary to this third protocol is that in learning from each other through ethnographic installation, *we together are making a shared history right now in the present*. The project therefore entails a public acknowledgement that a shared history is being made in and out of the present moment of interaction and therefore that there is a shared responsibility of documenting for future generations of grandchildren — whether these be flesh and blood descendants of the community or intellectual children of archaeologists — who will want to know about this past. If it is true that archaeology *constructs the past* through its knowledge production technologies, then the presence of archaeologists in a community for the purpose of excavating a site *makes history* in a profoundly immediate, tangible and real sense. This idea is not new but is evident as a motivation and design concept for a number of projects, such as at Annapolis and Catalhöyük (e.g. Potter, 1994; Hodder, 2000; Matthews, 2008) where research focuses on recuperating histories of minority groups that otherwise have been erased from official narratives. Further, it is just as likely that the lived, experiential history that is made with archaeology, especially if it is a celebrated and documented encounter, has vastly more significance, at least sentient and pervasive value, for these nearby and descendant communities than the heritage that archaeologists construct as monuments of knowledge for a diversity of publics, tourists, stakeholders, and descendent groups.

The problem of the research problem: second conclusion

There is one problem with this three-step recipe for how to use ethnographic installation. As a methodological recipe I hope that it is a tool that will enable and facilitate others to use this strategy of ethnographic fieldwork. However, the recipe does not provide an answer to the question why and for what purpose should one use ethnographic installation. In fact, recipes for methods will always fall short on this account. Even when we shift from methods (understood as a specified tool or set of procedures that entail predetermined steps by which they are used) to methodologies (understood as a way by which to approach an issue or 'way to go about'), we are still left with questions of why do research *this* way. As distinct from methods, methodologies are more explicitly connected to theoretical frameworks and philosophical assumptions. It is for this reason that I have sought to elaborate at least a few of the core notions

that ground ethnographic installation as a methodological principle. Yet, the question remains: Why design one's research with this or some other methodology?

Methodological prescriptions necessarily raise the perennial issue of what I call the 'problem of the research problem'. In short, this is *the question of how research problems are to be conceived, formulated, and designed*. This means, not only 'how are research themes and issues identified?' but also it entails the meta-question of 'how are issues shaped into *problems* that are worthy of and significant for investigation in relation to frameworks of theories and to criteria of value that derive from real-world social and political contexts?' What is the explicit knowledge production agenda of research and what is the implicit, underlying social agenda of research? Most often, that is, in cases of Kuhnian 'normal' or even otherwise routine science, these questions are left unasked and their implicit answers are presupposed. In many sciences such questions might never, or only rarely, have been asked. In the contemporary situation of proliferation of archaeologies and experimentation with ethnography (e.g. Meskell, 2005; Edgeworth, 2006; Duke, 2007; Castañeda and Matthews, 2008; Mortensen and Hollowell, 2009; and papers in this volume), these issues surrounding the problem of the research problem must be put out on the table for scrutiny. At least, it seems imperative to address these questions in the present contexts of this special issue, the *ethnographic turn* in archaeology (Castañeda, 2008), and the proliferation of *social* archaeologies: what could or might be the role, purpose, and long-term implications of bringing ethnography into the archaeological endeavour?

Ethnographic installation was developed as a methodology within the disciplinary horizon of ethnography to address specific ethical, political, and applied issues of what it means to do ethnography in the contemporary (decolonizing) world. In other words, neither ethnographic installation nor the project of which it formed a part was originally designed *as* 'archaeology'. Further, although the project was not explicitly conceived as an 'ethnography of archaeology' (primarily because this topic is really only now emerging as a discrete field study), it certainly contributes to the anthropological study of archaeology. The project goal was to use ethnographic installation as a methodology to investigate processes of memory and history in the construction of a community's 'past' which included archaeology as subject matter and the ethnographic research itself as a participating agent in the dynamics of 'making history'.

This context and focus of research is irrelevant, however, to the potential use that can be made of this methodology within archaeology. I believe there are obvious, beneficial implications to the use of ethnographic installation that would unfold in the way archaeological projects relate to and interact with communities near research sites. However, the incorporation of the ethnographic study of archaeology raises a question of some significance: can archaeology remain archaeology, if it also undertakes understanding of the social contexts, political roles, historical effects, economic consequences, and the cultural implications of how it constructs the past? Given that archaeology *constructs the past* through various technologies of knowledge production, can it expand its investigative purview to include how 'it' participates with diverse other social agents *to make history in the present*? How might the integration of ethnography as a routinized practice of disciplinary archaeology transform the very vision and conception of archaeology? Transformations

¿Quién
tiene el poder
para escribir y determinar
las versiones
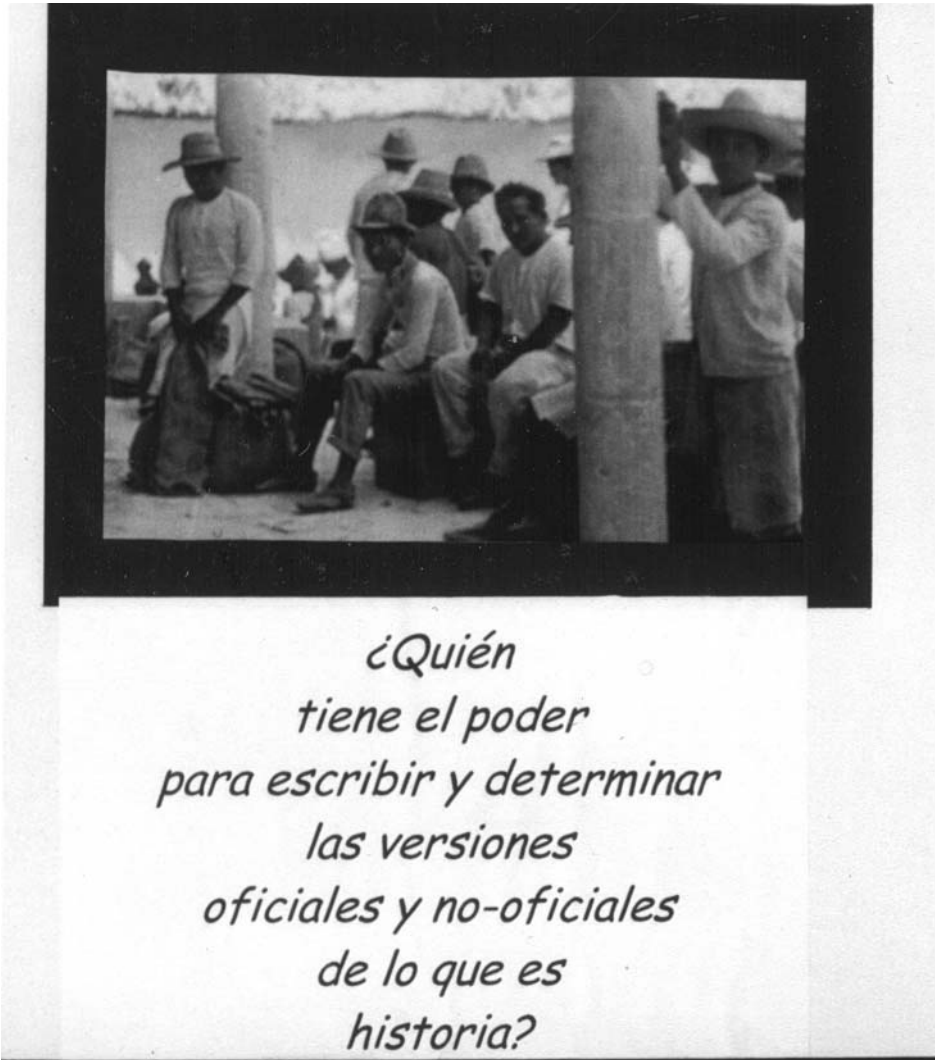oficiales y no-oficiales
de lo que es
historia?

FIGURE 5   A page from the installation *Book of the Chilam Balam of Pisté*: translucent overlay has a picture of the archaeologist, Edward H Thompson, preparing his scuba gear to 'excavate' the Sacred Cenote of Chichén Itzá and the text asks, 'Who makes history?' The page underneath has a photograph of Thompson's Maya workmen sitting on the porch of his Hacienda at Chichén waiting to be paid. The text reads: 'Are persons [the objects] or the subjects and makers of history? Who has the power to write and determine the official and unofficial versions of what is history?' Photograph of the Field School of Experimental Ethnography, used by permission. © The Open School of Ethnography and Anthropology.

along these lines are already evident in the proliferation of diverse types of social archaeologies. The crux of these shifts and what would further the process, however, is less the development or definition of new methodologies, but innovation in and open debate about how research problems in archaeology might be formulated and designed.

Notes

1   This research, which was designed and conducted as experimental fieldwork under the concept of transcultural ethnography, is discussed in Logan (n.d.) and Castañeda (2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2006a, 2006b; see also Benson and O'Neil, 2007).

2   By ontology I reference Heidegger (e.g. 1977); however, my use of ontology is less about the disclosure or interpretation of the 'meaning of being' in general. Rather, an ontological analysis of fieldwork is a focused analysis of the existential meanings of practices in terms of performativity; that is, the unfolding of fieldwork as a transcultural dynamic based in interaction, exchange, dialogue, and presentation of self and other. Although it is not appropriate to elaborate at greater length on this topic in the present context, my difference with Heideggerian ontology is based on a conmingling of Levinassian ethics (ethics before ontology), feminist post-structural notions of performativity (e.g. Judith Butler), and the concept of transculturation as derived from the tradition of Latin American cultural critique (e.g. Alberto Moreiras, Fernando Ortiz, Jean-Paul Dumont).

3   This concept of transcultural derives from Ortiz's (1940) notion of transculturation and has been further developed in diverse ways by Ramos (1982, 1996), Pratt (1992), Tomas (1996), Beverly (1999), Kraniauskas (2000), Moreiras (2001), for transculturation, and Garcia Canclini (1995), Young (1995), Brah and Coombes (2000), on hybridity.

4   Chilam balam, 'spokespiece' 'jaguar', were town scribes or historians of Maya communities. They recorded social and political history as well as sacred knowledge related to astronomy, calendrical prophecies, ritual, prayers, medicinal prescriptions, and origin narratives. The books in which this was written are also called Chilam Balams, with specific books being identified by name of the town, such as the most famous *Book of the Chilam Balam of Chumayel*. These books were open-ended registers in which different scribes continually added information over the course of three centuries of Spanish colonial rule in Yucatán.

5   Taylor (1948) was among the first to argue that archaeology *constructs* not 'reconstructs' the past. See Maca, Reyman and Folan (2009) for reassessment of Taylor's theoretical framework.

6   See Castañeda (2006b) for a full discussion. Basic sources include: Garfinkel (1967), Goffman (1975), Boal (1985, 1992), Schechner (1985, 1988), Butler (1990, 1997), Barba (1991, 1995), Coulon (1995), Izzo (1997, 1998), Pollner and Emerson (2001), Rock (2001).

7   The idea of staging presupposes a performative theory of ontology; or, to phrase it differently, the presupposition is that everyday life, the ontological reality of experience, is indeed theatrical, performative, and staged.

8   Stephen Tyler (1987) introduced the concept of evocation to ethnography (also see Hernández 1999). This concept is fundamental to the theory of experimental ethnograph-fieldwork. Closely articulated to that concept is the notion of 'therapy' that returns its meaning to the Greek etymology of heal/healing to the idea of restore/restoration, a return to the same but with difference. Experimental ethnography uses both principles of evocation and therapy, especially in relation to the notion of performativity.

9   The idea of viewing the map, an emblematic fragment of history, from above with one's back to the wall of the stage also evoked Walter Benjamin's Angel of History (1968). All this is to point out the crucial use of conceptualism and concept art in the installation design (Kosuth 1991), on the one hand, and that on the other hand the concept design was itself a transcultural complexity based on hybridizing cultural and cosmological elements from Maya civilization with various philosophical and art traditions from the archive of European culture. Thus, the space of history was construed as a grid of memory which in turn was a key organizing concept of the installation design; however, transcultural dynamics as a substantive issue and pattern of articulation was used as a design element.

10 Expanded documentation can also become a crucial principle and strategy for ethnographic representation.

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