

El hombre de arena [The Sandman], 1992

This show is a loose adaptation of the short story of the same name by German romantic writer E.T.A. Hoffmann, in addition to Sigmund Freud's essay, *The Uncanny*. At this point, El Periférico did away with all traces of handmade puppetry, delving deeper into working with antique dolls that were found in skips, antique shops, or homes for disabled children. "For a time, we were avid scavengers, trash pickers, scavenging for treasures that, to the rest of the world, were simply waste that had to be disposed of," recounts Emilio García Wehbi of the group's time as urban vagrants.

El hombre de arena marks the group's definitive departure from the use of a table as a stage, and the introduction of a unique staging device: an enormous box filled with five hundred kilos of earth. The puppeteers, dressed as widows, buried and dug up the dolls from this pit – this 'mass grave' – in a ceremony of spiralling violence and mounting anguish. It was a ritual filled with horror yet devoid of words, accompanied by sombre music composed by Cecilia Candia.

Although it was not deliberate on the part of the group, readings of the work immediately saw resonances of the state terror enacted during Argentina's recent history, the disappeared bodies of the last civil-military dictatorship, and echoes of the voices that tried to speak out from this sandpit of history.