

SHIFRA M. GOLDMAN

**DIMENSIONS OF
THE AMERICAS**

ART AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN LATIN
AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES

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SHIFRA M. GOLDMAN

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DISSIDENCE AND RESISTANCE: ART IN CHILE UNDER THE DICTATORSHIP

Never before in Chile has there been such a concentration of power and wealth in the hands of such a small sector of the population. This was the purpose of the force and the repression: to consolidate this new domination by totally authoritarian forces.¹

At this time it is almost impossible to find in Chile any writer, painter, singer, dancer, or artist who identifies himself [sic] with the regime. Moreover these artists make a deliberate and active point not to. The dictatorship cannot count on their silence or their fear.²

The Long Night of the Generals

Within a little over a decade, from 1964 to 1976, repressive military-dominated governments took power in Brazil (1964) and three other Southern Cone nations: Uruguay (1973), Chile (1973), and Argentina (1976). The upsurge of popular movements in these areas in the 1960s and early 1970s presented a challenge to U.S. multinationals operating in these countries and to their clients, the ruling national elites. As a result, U.S.-backed and trained military leaders seized control of the states. The problem to be explored in what follows concerns the effect of brutal military dictatorship and the suppression of expression in the visual arts.

This essay is a revised and expanded version of a paper given in Mexico City at the XI International Congress of the Latin American Studies Association in 1983.

Chile can be seen as an example of the problems (and their solutions) encountered in other nations subject to special histories and circumstances. Today, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina have been restored to democracy—albeit shaky and facing tremendous financial problems resulting from the period of military rule—but Chile still remains under the oppressive rule of the military junta.³

Pushing beyond Limits

In an article called "The Invisible Chile: Three Years of Cultural Resistance," Ariel Dorfman (exiled Chilean literary critic and novelist) discussed cultural resistance after the 1973 coup in Chile in the following terms: "There are legal initiatives; there are others that border on the prohibited and explore the permissible; and there are still others that are underground. These manifold efforts have one trait in common: they constitute the determination of a people to preserve their identity, to affirm their dignity, to fire up their consciousness." In such circumstances "the mere organization of a cultural event is a victory, a preliminary step to further organizing, to making more contacts, to pushing one more inch beyond the limits which the authorities can tolerate."⁴

Since the last several years have witnessed a number of effective challenges from many sectors of the Chilean population to the military dictatorship of General Pinochet, we can understand more readily Dorfman's concept of cultural resistance as a series of small steps "pushing one more inch beyond the limits." As a matter of fact, this is precisely what has been happening. Chilean cultural resistance started at the moment of the coup with the surreptitious circulation of verses by Pablo Neruda. It continued with posters of denunciation, with art of a political dimension, and with acts of vanguard art whose hidden language permitted forbidden social commentary.

Four arenas of cultural activity might be said to exist under a repressive dictatorship such as Chile's: (1) official or accommodationist art which directly transmits the regime's ideology, or indulges in art-for-art's sake under official patronage; (2) dissident art which develops a critical stance within a country through a cryptic language that utilizes symbolism, allegory, and metaphor, or by the use of new materials and techniques which in themselves constitute a visual language able to surmount censorship, but understood by people sharing the same experiences and beliefs; (3) an art of open resistance and denunciation which is, by necessity, clandestine and is the most difficult to fabricate and distribute owing to the economics of working underground and the consequences of discovery; and (4) the art-in-exile produced by artists who have been forced to leave their country because of past political associations or involve-

ment in dissident and resistant art activities after the imposition of the dictatorship.⁵

Nuñez, Parra, Jaar: Three Dissident Artists

Guillermo Nuñez (born 1930) and Catalina Parra (1940) are two Chilean artists who have produced dissident art within Chile, and are presently in exile: one involuntary, the other self-imposed. Ten years apart in age, they represent two generations of artistic practice in Chile: that which characterized the 1960s and the early 1970s (Nuñez) and was based on a matrix of contemporary painting, printmaking, and sculpture derived from Chile's artistic traditions expanded by international currents; and that of the late 1970s and the 1980s (Parra), which focused on a system in which "language itself and the texture of communication had to be reinvented," representing a rupture with what went before necessitated by the coup, "which destroyed all the languages and models of signification by which these experiences could be named [during] what was a real crisis of intelligibility."⁶ The language considered most effective was that of conceptual art in its many variations, tempered and reorganized to serve the immediate needs of the Chilean situation.

Alfredo Jaar (1956) comes of a still younger generation of artists, whose formation occurred totally within the parameters of the military government, its controls on action and thought, and the widespread suffering inflicted on the Chilean population. Each of these artists responded in an individual way to the crisis, and each represents a different facet of this response. Unifying the three is the act of dissidence itself; the decision to confront Chilean fascism as artists.

From 1975 until his return to Chile in 1987, Nuñez lived in France; Parra and Jaar both reside in New York. Influenced to some extent by the unique surrealist style of his Paris-based compatriot Roberto Sebastian Matta, and also by the neofiguration which was a dominant mode in Latin America during the 1960s, Nuñez was profoundly traumatized by his prison experiences. In May 1974, he had been arrested by the military and held five months with his eyes bandaged. (The same mentality that brutalized the hands of songwriter-guitarist Victor Jara in the Santiago sports stadium, where he was killed in 1973, covered the eyes of a painter—although it is true that cutting off visual communication has been and remains a standard practice for the political prisoners of right-wing regimes.) "This cruel experience," testified Nuñez in 1975 at UNESCO in Paris, "was rendered in drawings, paintings, engravings, sculpture and poetry [in which] I would speak of man alienated, destroyed, annihilated, humiliated, blindfolded, forced to see a distorted reality."⁷

In March 1975, Nuñez mounted exhibitions of these works at four different locations, all but one of which was canceled before opening, while the fourth—at the Instituto Chileno-Francés de Cultura—closed in twelve hours. Using the notion of Duchampian ready-mades, Nuñez exhibited “cages” which contained various allegorical objects: a reproduction of the Mona Lisa, bread, paper hands, birds, flowers, names, mirrors in which spectators could see themselves, and a red, white, and blue necktie (the colors of the Chilean flag) which was knotted and hanging like a noose.⁸ This last item was too much for the Chilean authorities; Nuñez had passed the limits of the dissident artist. Arrested again and imprisoned for four and one-half months at a torture center and a concentration camp, Nuñez was expelled from Chile the same year. Nevertheless, his short-lived exhibit produced a very strong impact on the national artistic consciousness, which was to have consequences within a few years after its closure when artists began to employ even more allegorical forms to contain their artistic dissent.⁹

In exile, Nuñez continued to work through the traumas of his Chilean experiences in prints and paintings. His graphic semiabstract images of this period are more powerful for what they suggest of brutalized, violated, and bound bodies, of bones, teeth, and blood, of monstrous creatures with howling mouths, and of the occasional presence of flies crawling over the putrefaction, than any realistic presentation of torture or pain could be. They attack us at a visceral level, at the level of the nightmare. Created in exile, they are an accusation and denunciation to the world at large of the Chilean condition during the worst years of the dictatorship.

Fig. 36

As late as 1981, Nuñez's gradually changing style continued to refract his experiences in Chile. The more recognizable and more painterly human forms of this period are torn, bound, stitched, taped, mutilated, and crisscrossed with bloody reds.¹⁰ In this aspect of his work, the process of the technique acting on the forms is similar to that of Catalina Parra, though her experience in Chile was on a psychological rather than a physical level.

Catalina Parra, daughter of poet Nicanor Parra and niece of the late folksinger Violeta Parra, had been a domestic woman—running a house, cooking, sewing, and caring for her three children until she traveled to Germany in 1968 with her husband, German-born Ronald Kay. There her artistic direction changed dramatically, influenced by an exhibit she saw of British and U.S. pop art; by the German vanguard art of the 1920s and 1930s; and by the political movements of the 1960s. Her experience in Europe convinced her that the strongest art was that employing materials of everyday life, an attitude first embraced in recent years by pop art and extended by *arte povera* (to which her work has been compared) and Fluxus. Thus, upon her return to Chile in 1972, she began to collect

newspaper clippings, which, after the September 1973 coup, became one of the major materials for her artworks. Her first works after the coup (never exhibited) included postcards of the infamous stadium in Santiago where thousands were held captive, tortured, or killed. By 1977, when she exhibited her *Imbunche* series in the Galería Epoca to enthusiastic crowds drawn by the magic of the name "Parra" in Chile, her works were made of materials loaded with allegorical meanings. She used collages of her newspaper clippings, of periodicals, and of Chilean maps cut, shredded, and sewn together in graphic presentation of Chilean society; gauze which spoke of hospitals, wounds, and the dead; desiccated animal hides, plastic bags, barbed wire from fences, and other "trash." In one case large burlap potato sacks were inserted into plastic bags looking like body bags, and hung with ropes from the walls of the gallery. These *imbunches* reconstituted the memory of the people killed during the height of the coup whose headless bodies floated down the Mapocho River in the central area of Santiago.¹¹ Thread and stitches (or sutures) invoked the myth of the *imbunche* which comes from Chilean Indian lore: it is an infant whose bodily orifices have been sewn shut to prevent suspected evil from expressing itself—a metaphor used in a novel by Chilean novelist José Donoso, *The Obscene Bird of Night*.¹²

In *Diariamente* (Daily, in Spanish), also from the *Imbunche* series, Santiago's most important newspaper, *El Mercurio*, is "daily" bound into a loaf of bread, which is then sliced for distribution and consumption. Crude stitches hold the rifts in the torn paper together while stories are displaced, turned on their side. The key ideas, visually, are binding, slicing, tearing, displacing: processes related to censorship or the construction of an official tissue of lies in print communication. Another of the series, *Diario de vida*, features whole pages of *El Mercurio* covered with acrylic sheets and molded into a block sculpture held tightly together by bolts—an impressive metaphor for the control exercised over the news. Nevertheless, Parra was able to exhibit these works in Chile without interference from the censors. Why was this the case? Parra herself answers: "The message, if there is one, is *in* the material and *in* the technique—in the cuts, the tears, the ruptures, as well as in the stitches, the sutures, the bindings, the gauze. If you know how to read, the message is *there*. Besides, how can you censor a knot or a tear? And I don't say anything myself. I don't have to."¹³ According to Parra, the whole thing was a question of reading between the lines.

Since coming to New York on a Guggenheim grant in 1980, Parra's works have become more explicitly political. Substituting the *New York Times* for *El Mercurio*, such 1981 works as *Is Pleased to Announce* uses tearing and stitching to put together an "America" of prison cells and desolation. The *Reunited States of America* interlaces football players between words (themselves taken from the *Times*), as metaphors for

the Santiago sports stadium that was turned into a concentration camp. In the work *Welcome Home* the title words (which express the profound desire of many Chilean exiles) are juxtaposed against an atomic explosion.

In Chile itself, other artists continued making dissident statements with seemingly innocuous subject matter. Within the painting tradition, for example, René Miranda's *Still Life* combines fruit on a table with a huge lock and a horizontal metal bar as still-life elements. One exhibit in the conceptual mode included, as the only objects on display, envelopes stamped with the word "exile" while in another, photographs of the city of Santiago had the commercial announcements erased and replaced with the ironic phrase "Are you happy?" This latter project by Alfredo Jaar, was two years in process (1980–81), and was titled *Studies about Happiness*. The artist asked people on a major Santiago street, as a sort of game, to respond to the question by dropping candy mints into Plexiglass boxes. Close to a thousand other persons were polled with the same question as part of a museum installation. The results were exhibited as statistical graphs (34 percent said "yes" and 66 percent said "no"; those who declined to answer could eat their mints), accompanied by photographs taken when the data was collected. The graphs measured the degree of happiness in the world, and the degree in Chile.¹⁴ On this subtle personal level, what has been called the "micropolitics of perception, behaviour, affectivity or interpersonal communication"¹⁵ could be carried out as a dissident strategy.

Since his 1982 arrival in New York, Jaar (a practicing architect) has continued to make installations based on a juxtaposition of found or constructed objects with enlarged photographs. Through these means, he has explored—in a more transparent and accessible manner—the condition of the Third World vis-à-vis the First World that is foreseen in the *Happiness* project. In 1984, for example, he presented for exhibition in Los Angeles a caustic installation titled *Motherland, Motherland. What Mother, What Land?* Conical piles of earth (the mother's "breasts?" the Andes?) contrast with high-technology neon tubes placed like tall candles in the cones' tips that shine forth to illuminate four photographic blow-ups illustrating phases of conquest: pre-Columbian Indians, the arrival of the Spaniards, the North American military, and Chilean police with clubs.¹⁶ These have been followed by projects such as his visual exploration of the great pit in Brazil's Amazonia wilderness where thousands of impoverished workers toil like ants to extract grains of gold which might relieve the misery of their lives. The luxury of gold for the West is counterpointed by images of the weary and soiled miners, magnified in large light-filled boxes, which make the point subtly but powerfully. A more recent project concerns the dumping of toxic wastes from industrialized nations in African sites (symbolic of other Third World dumps). "My

Fig. 38

work," says the artist, "focuses on the widening gap between the 'so-called' Third World countries and the 'so-called' Developed Nations. My work deals with both worlds at the same time because no other alternative seems to me real enough."¹⁷

All of Jaar's works show great respect for facture; at the same time he has embraced a principal theory of the young Chilean avant-garde: to keep each work open-ended, requiring the thought and response of the audience for closure. Like his colleagues, he resists the label "political" to the extent that it connotes an ideological posture; however, social engagement is intrinsic to art from Latin America, in his opinion, and any activity can have political connotations.

Cultivating Cultural Dissidence

Chilean government policy toward culture has gone through several phases. The first, from 1973 to 1975, was directed at the eradication of the cultural model that existed under Allende. This was the period of jailings, assassinations, and deportations of thousands of people, intended to destroy the political-social movements. The destruction of culture took the form of book burnings, whitewashing of murals, and the establishment of censorship which prohibited mention of violence, sex, or poverty in the fine arts, to say nothing of political criticism. Chile's cultural movement was in a state of disarray, of trauma, of chaos. Though dates differ, it is clear that within a few years of the coup, there began the development of an alternative cultural movement, especially in the areas of poetry, popular song, and semipublic theater, which took the place of social and political actions that could not be exercised owing to the repression. This artistic discourse, and the spaces generated by it, played an essential role in the maintenance of identity. Facing the disappearance of other signs of identity—those derived from political or other social practices—art provided a symbolic substrata of basic identity. However, artistic practice originally became such a mode of expression and congregation because of the absence of other possibilities, rather than being an alternative cultural-artistic movement offered as a new form of political practice.¹⁸ In other words, when political practice was absolutely dammed up in the early years, the river of political opposition cut new cultural channels to maintain itself, and as a holding action against complete annihilation. The rich stratum of popular participation during the Popular Unity period of Salvador Allende was not allowed to vanish. Instead it became a barely visible subterranean stream until it could, as Dorfman argued, push inch by inch beyond the limits of authority.

In the specific arena of visual arts, artistic practice was dismantled after the coup through the direct repression of artists and intellectuals, many of whom were expelled from the universities and art schools (the

University of Chile was particularly hard hit), or jailed and exiled. As a result, a generation of artists who carried the rich accumulation of Chilean artistic development and its collective memory, as well as those, such as José Balmes, who were instrumental avant-garde figures in contemporary Chilean art, were cut off from their role as teachers. Among these artists, in addition to Balmes, are figures such as his wife, Gracia Barrios, Nemesio Antúnez, Roser Bru, Guillermo Nuñez, and many others who went abroad to live, primarily in Paris, where a large community of exiled Chilean artists and intellectuals gathered.¹⁹

By 1977, the government felt sufficiently secure to vary its tactics. Repression still functioned, but it was more selective and indirect. At this point, corresponding with the rigid restructuring of the Chilean economy, private business and financial institutions entered the camp of the arts, offering an alternative to government control. The arts were promoted through scholarships, exhibitions, and workshops. Somewhat freer, artists nevertheless discovered that control was still exercised: works were censored, certain artists were not shown, scholarship recipients had to comply with certain conditions or repay the monies granted them. On a more subtle level, though artists were permitted to exhibit and earn a living (if they could), they limited their own expression in anticipation of what would be allowed by patrons.²⁰

It is under these circumstances that conscious dissident art could find an audience, using ingenuity and creativity to make a statement and avoid censorship. Conceptual art seemed to offer such a means, and a younger generation of Chilean artists turned to the codes available to them through the international avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s and through the experimentation of artists such as Francisco Brugnoli, an art professor expelled from the University of Chile after the coup. Brugnoli had been exploring the manipulation and possible significations of found objects from daily life since 1963 (an idea triggered by the collaged objects introduced into informalist paintings by his professors, and by himself as a student), and he disseminated his ideas to younger artists through the Visual Arts Workshop, which he established in 1976. In this period, artists began to reject pictorialism, representation, illusion, and the traditional aesthetic formulas and elements. Art was to "present" rather than "represent" daily life, and thus to break the boundaries between the two.

The languages found most attractive were those of the contemporary currents in Europe and the United States which ranged from land art (earthworks), derived from ecological interests in the sixties; body art, in which the artist's own person becomes the terrain of experiences and statements; art language (or lettrism), which employs letters and texts with or without images as a means of visual communication; and the whole area of happenings and performance. The embryonic type of objects with double meanings employed by Guillermo Nuñez in 1975 proved too

transparent, as was evidenced by their immediate comprehension and suppression by the State. A more complex visual language was required: one that undermined the precepts and structures of the dictatorship, that was more opaque but whose message was available to reasoned viewing. The theoretical foundation for this new language was established in his writing and teaching a year before the coup by Ronald Kay, an aesthetician of the University of Chile, and was based on European precepts of structuralism and semiotics. Kay was instrumental in bringing an exhibition by German artist Wolf Vostell to Santiago in 1975. Vostell's combination of mixed media works, film, happenings, and conceptual art had an enormous impact on young artists seeking new means of artistic communication. Within the same period, Kay, Catalina Parra, and Eugenio Dittborn organized themselves into the group VISUAL to produce publications, among which were catalogues of exhibitions by Parra and Dittborn. Kay also published the more theoretical *Manuscritos* magazine.

Art critic, theoretician and committed defender of the post-coup avant-garde, French-born Nelly Richard (who worked closely with Kay after 1976) uses the term *avanzada* ("advanced," or avant-garde) to refer to the experimental art movement that developed from 1977 until 1982. Richard subscribes to the idea that the introduction of photography into the work of art was an early sign of the displacement of traditional pictorial imagery in Chilean art with a series of new codes. This displacement, she argues, coincides with the end of the period of silence after the 1973 coup. Since the photographic image functions as a substitution for the scene it documents, it appealed to Chilean artists at a time when all comprehension of the real and the transformation of living structures was subject to censorship and prohibition. The photograph, says Richard, was able to intervene as a *correction* of so-called reality; as a substitution or analogical copy of the denied reality.²¹

Among the artists employing avant-garde languages modified to respond to their necessities and interests were (in addition to Brugnoli) Virginia Errázuriz, Eugenio Dittborn, Francisco Smythe, Catalina Parra, Carlos Leppe, Gonzalo Mezza, Gonzalo Díaz, Carlos Altamirano, and Alfredo Jaar. Street actions and video also attracted a group of young artists who formed the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA; "Actions of Art" Collective), including, among the visual artists, Lotty Rosenfeld and Juan Castillo; writers Diamela Eltit and Raúl Zurita, and the sociologist Fernando Balcells.²²

Though many of the *avanzada* artists reject the art production of the Allende period as being outmoded in light of their current realities, CADA claims that its closest antecedents were the Brigadas Ramona Parra, the most prominent of the mural brigades that painted walls in a graphic and uniquely Chilean style during the years of the Allende presidency. There is little doubt that the "art actions" of CADA are the most

overtly political projects of the *avanzada* artists. Its 1979 action, *Para no morir de hambre en el arte* (*Not to Die of Hunger in Art*), used milk as a symbol of human and artistic survival. Four activities were mounted in one day: (1) 100 liters of milk in plastic bags were distributed in the *poblaciones* (marginal neighborhoods) of Santiago by the artists, aided by popular artists from the *población*. Each bag was stenciled "Half a liter of milk" (a reminder of the Allende campaign slogan "Half a liter of milk for every Chilean child") and the recipients were asked to return the empty bags so artists could make artworks of them for a gallery exhibition. (2) A text in five languages—Spanish, English, Russian, French, and Chinese—denouncing the marginalization of the Third World, was read over loudspeakers in front of the United Nations building in Santiago. The military appeared, but soon left, another indicator that the critical language codes employed were understood neither as art nor as social criticism of the establishment. (3) A blank page in the magazine *Hoy*, which circulated throughout Chile, included a brief text which said "Imagine that this page is completely blank / imagine that this blank page is the milk needed every day / imagine that the shortage of milk in Chile today resembles this blank page." (4) Finally, thirty liters of milk that had not been distributed, along with the empty plastic bags, were displayed in the Imagen Gallery as a negative reflection on the problem of malnutrition in Chile. Simultaneously, similar actions were carried out by Chilean artists Eugenio Tellez in Canada and Cecelia Vicuña in Bogotá, Colombia.

In a sequel six months later, *Inversion of the Scene*, ten milk trucks, obtained at great risk from the milk factory where the liters had been purchased and obtained with the most imaginative type of subterfuge, were driven through Santiago and stationed at the National Museum of Fine Arts (purportedly as an homage to its tenth anniversary). At the same time, the facade of the museum was covered with a blank banner, effectively closing down the establishment and symbolizing the continuing hunger. All these "social sculptures," as the group refers to them, were carried out "in the cracks of the system" and documented with video and photography.²³

Censorship and the Critical Code

Like artists, critics are also subject to self-censorship, or to selective "blindness." Faced with dissident art, critics may write reviews about art forms that express "universal anguish," thus defusing a latent and very specific political message. In one instance, an official Chilean critic, confronted by a cryptic display and not wishing to be backward in the face of vanguard art, appeared not to understand—or *chose* not to understand—the subterranean message of the works.²⁴ Other critics have been

known to take refuge in the label "surrealist," which signifies "dream-like; not of this world," when confronted by works whose honest and favorable review might place the critic (and the artist) in jeopardy. There have also been cases when official criticism has celebrated the new direction taken by the avant-garde, thus showing off its own good taste in choosing radical works and bringing itself up-to-date. Of course, such selections had the effect of neutralizing the critical content of the works by treating them as museum pieces or as simple episodes in the history of Chilean art. It was made sufficiently clear to the artists that "any work, regardless of its original intention, always runs the risk of being embraced by institutions and tailored to the needs of authority,"²⁵—a situation not unique to Chile, or even to dictatorial regimes.

Resistance at Home and Abroad

At the same time that the dictatorship allowed its middle class and intellectuals a supposed modicum of relaxation and "liberation" (the well-known *apertura* of such governments), its ideological control of the mass media, and of popular art forms (street theater, *nueva canción* (new song), and visuals such as comics, caricatures, street murals, posters, photography, and film) which reached a majority of the people, remained in place. Nevertheless, in both the mass media and the popular arts there also exist forms of dissidence and resistance.

For example, the Santiago group AFI (Asociación Gremial de Fotógrafos Independientes; Fraternal Association of Independent Photographers), organized in 1981, provided an umbrella of protection and support for professional photographers and photojournalists recording daily Chilean life, by which is meant the visible signs of political resistance and repression and the terrible impoverishment of the Chilean working class. From organizing photographic exhibits to protecting the integrity and physical safety of photojournalists recording the most varied type of street activity (including scenes of military and police violence), AFI engaged the social scene determined to maintain free access to information and the exposition of its work without interference or censorship. Toward these ends, it worked to establish a collectively administered Photographic Agency; it set up methods of obtaining quality materials at low costs through group purchases; it sought spaces for exhibitions and funding for photographic publications that could present to the public the real problems and possibilities of photography; and it undertook to aid its members in constantly developing their technical and visual abilities.²⁶ One of AFI's tactics, which may seem minor but actually protects photojournalists from police attack, arrest, and brutality, by identifying them as working professionals, was the issuance of an AFI press credential. On such details can dissidence and resistance depend.

Chilean photographers found their way into documentary books with the most moving and denunciatory of their photographs. Marcelo Montecino, who made his home in Washington, D.C., and is probably Chile's best-known photographer abroad, published *Con sangre en el ojo*, an extraordinary collection of photographs which documented oppression and insurrection in a number of Latin American countries from 1973 to 1980. A more modest effort is a small book published in Chile, *El pan nuestro de cada día*, similarly recording events from Chilean life since the coup. None of the young photojournalists in this book is identified except the five courageous men who worked so hard to produce this publication, which, as they say in the introduction, may be common in other countries but is a genuinely novel testimony in Chile.²⁷

On a popular level, the famous Chilean *arpilleras* (applied and stitched political narratives by women from families of prisoners or the disappeared) are disseminated throughout the world. The first *arpillera* workshop was established in 1974 under the protection of the Vicarate of Solidarity of the Catholic Church to provide aid and a means of survival for the families. Functioning entirely within the strict ecumenical laws of the Church and the office of the Archbishop, the workshops cannot be dissolved by the government, though the government has attacked the Vicarate and confiscated shipments being sent abroad of *arpilleras*. When an exhibition of *arpilleras* was mounted in Santiago's Paulina Waugh Gallery in 1977, the gallery was burned down during the night. Nevertheless, the *arpilleras* continued to be made. The Vicarate provided the materials, bought the finished articles from the workers, and undertook to sell the work (mostly abroad), using money from the sales to buy more materials. While the *arpillera* is not unique to Chile, those of Santiago are the only ones to have political themes.²⁸

Following the example of the wall murals of the Allende period which were eradicated from the walls after the 1973 coup, murals have been created in other countries by groups of artists such as those of the Orlando Letelier Brigade in the U.S. (various locations), the Victor Jara Brigade in France (1975), and the Salvador Allende Brigade in Mexico (1981). The earliest homage to Chile's murals was painted as a protest by Latin American and North American artists in the streets of New York's Soho district in October 1973, one month after the coup. This was the recreation of a 100-foot mural originally located by one of the Ramona Parra Brigades along the River Mapocho in Santiago. A week later, the mural was set up outside the Chilean National Airlines.²⁹

In Chile itself, messages against the junta, combined with images, continued to be painted secretly on walls during the night. However, a more characteristic form of protest was scrawling messages for circulation on paper money, and on the seats of buses. By 1984, when the repression eased and the art of the *avanzada* was slowly being erased from center

stage by a return to painting and a return of exiled artists from abroad, a group of artists calling themselves the Asociación de Artistas Jóvenes (APJ; Young Artists Association) resumed painting murals in the shantytowns and made protest posters for a trade union.

Though criticized by the theoreticians of the *avanzada*, clandestine posters of high quality flourished during the 1970s and into the 1980s, produced by groups such as the Trabajadores del Arte (Art Workers), the Taller Nueva Gráfica (New Graphic Workshop), Gráfica, and Sol; by individuals such as "Alex," "Vicente," and "Toño" (whose last name was Larrea; the last names of the others are unknown), who were postermakers during the Allende period; by artists in exile; or anonymously. In silkscreen and offset, the posters contained political statements (such as one posted on a wall admonishing soldiers not to shoot their own people), announcements of cultural events, and portraits of proscribed cultural personalities such as Pablo Neruda, Violeta Parra, and Victor Jara. In Europe, the Pablo Neruda Brigade, in addition to painting new murals in 1975, produced a series of posters based on the synthetic mural style of the Chilean brigades before September 1973. In San Francisco, California, exile René Castro is known for posters with a focus on social and political issues produced by a silkscreen workshop that has been operating from the Mission Cultural Center for many years.

Artists-in-Exile

In a 1983 speech, Chilean writer Fernando Alegría, living in northern California for many years, pointed out how indispensable it is for artists in exile to give their testimony. In accord with this perception, and freed of constraints that hampered them after the coup, the exiled artists have produced a body of work that makes Chile its center of protest and anguish. Not all exiles followed this course, but there was a sufficient number to make possible a traveling exhibition in 1980 of paintings, sculpture, drawings, and prints by artists of several generations living in Paris, London, Caracas, Mexico, San Francisco, and San José, Costa Rica. Titled "*Chile Presente*": *Images of Betrayal and Defiance*, the presentation included Nemesio Antúnez, José Balmes, Gracia Barrios, Juan Bernal Ponce, René Castro (one of the organizers), Irene Domínguez, Patricia Israel, Helga Krebs, Eduardo León Rodríguez, Humberto Laredo, Roberto Matta, and Guillermo Matta. To this constellation were added Sergio Castillo, Belisario Contreras, Leonardo Ibañez, Hugo Rivera, Carlos Solano, and Raúl Sotomayor. The only shared characteristic was a common vision of denunciation and warning, contained by their presence in the exhibit, if not in the work itself. Neither was this the first nor the only demonstration of the vitality achieved by the artists in exile. With changing personnel, with different works reflecting the heterogeneity of

Chilean art, exhibitions (which should be seen as gestures of denunciation and of support by the institutions and their supporters) have been held in France, Italy, Spain, Australia, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and many other nations. Chilean culture continues to be Chilean culture, between this new culture of external exile and that of the "internal exile."

Unfortunately this is not the reality that prevailed when, beginning in 1982 and concurrent with a state of crisis in Chile which led to a more permissive cultural environment, artists began to return home from exile. Tension arose between the younger generation of the *avanzada* that had filled the void left by the exiled artists and those who returned after bitter years abroad expecting to reinstate themselves in their old positions. Among the returned exiles were leaders of the artistic movement during the Allende period who had supported the mural brigades and popular culture, and had been critical (like remnants of the Left in Chile) of what they viewed as the elite procedures of the *avanzada* during the late 1970s. This period also coincided with the gradual recovery of the student and union movements. As Nelly Richard phrases it, "This return to contestation changed the order of priorities: most of the Chilean dissidents and artists felt the need to have closer ties with the working class struggle, to have a greater voice in the mobilisation of the people. Hence they moved away from the relatively restricted sphere of the *avanzada* towards forms of expression with greater popular appeal."³⁰

Fig. 39

At the same time, another generation of artists, under the influence of Gonzalo Díaz, who had returned from a stint in Italy bearing with him the international modes of transavantgardism and neoexpressionism, returned to painting and the pictorial utilizing new techniques of mixed media. The return to painting, including the use of the new media of spray painting, stenciling, serigraphy, and so forth, which Díaz continues to employ as part of powerful and critical works and installations, is not as serious as the loss of critical content on the part of the younger artists. Postmodernism has invaded Chile, seducing younger artists without a clear view of either Chilean or international politics, and interested in being in fashion during a decade in which Latin American art has been gaining increased visibility in the industrialized world. This is not a phenomenon unique to Chile, but one which is occurring in many of the more cosmopolitan Latin American nations, nevertheless it marks the end of Chile's internal isolation from the international arena just as the formation of the *avanzada* in 1977 marked the beginning of that end.

The more serious problem, however, is the fracture between the exiles and the *avanzada* who needed to make common cause as opponents of the Chilean dictatorship as long as it existed. One might venture to disagree with Nelly Richard in her finding that the reappearance of painting in its new forms automatically means the disappearance of dissident and

resistant art. There is certainly a degree of modish and superficial painting in Chile on display, as my visit in 1988 attested. However, there are painters of considerable weight and substance from both the older and the younger generations, as well as artists at home and abroad who continue to work in the traditions of the *avanzada* but, as already pointed out, with greater transparency and accessibility. Finally there is the growing presence of Chilean photography, doubtless encouraged by the three Colloquia and Exhibitions of Latin American photography that occurred in Mexico in the years 1978 and 1981 and in Cuba in 1984, though Chilean photographers only participated in the second event. The February 1988 issue of *Punto de Vista*, published by the Association of Independent Photographers, joined the historical researches launched by the Colloquia with an article on Chilean photography from 1840 to 1940; and published a lecture given by Pedro Meyer of the Mexican Photography Council which launched the Colloquia.

By 1987, according to one knowledgeable observer, the people of Chile were losing their fear—a fact demonstrated by the majority “No” vote to the continued reign of General Pinochet at the October 1988 plebiscite. Symbolic of this new phase was the appearance of a huge poster on the side of a building in the middle of Santiago which said, “Now that we have lost everything, let’s also lose our fear.” Preceding the plebiscite, from the 11th to the 17th of July 1988, was an immense festival widely publicized in the alternative press as “Chile Crea” (Chile Creates), an “international encounter of art, science, and culture on behalf of Chilean democracy.” During the seven days of the festival, from early morning until late at night, at various sites in Santiago and in cities across the nation, Chile Crea presented films, videos, poetry readings, art exhibits, mural paintings, theater, discussion panels, lectures, dances, song, and music to thousands of participants. Instrumental in organizing this vast endeavor were the returned exiles José Balmes, Gracia Barrios, Patricia Israel, and many others.

Though some members of the *avanzada* carped at Chile Crea as an ineffective gesture and declined to participate, it was, nonetheless, an event of major importance considering the results of the plebiscite, which few people expected. Apparently the former exiles had accurately measured the mood of the time, and perhaps contributed to its success—something very hard to prove. Even the “no” vote was not an automatic guarantee of democracy. Both events, however, were a measure of change occurring in Chile on a mass level; of a unity across groups and classes that might shatter if democracy were actually instituted again, but is functioning to check, even if not to totally dislodge from power, the military junta.

Dissidence and resistance in the arts remain the touchstones of Chi-

lean opposition to the fascist dictatorship, and have proved their viability as cultural processes that raise consciousness, give new insight, and support the morale of an embattled people.

Notes

1. Osvaldo Aguila M., *Propuestas neo-vanguardistas en la plástica chilena: Antecedentes y contexto* (Santiago: CENECA, 1983), 8. All translations from the Spanish are mine.

2. Reynaldo Ramírez and Raúl Silva, "Nelson Osorio: Chilean Culture Under Pinochet," *El Tecolote* (April 1988): 8.

3. The dismantlement of the Pinochet regime occurred in three stages: a plebiscite in October 1988 in which a yes or no vote in favor of the regime was allowed and 57 percent of the votes registered "No" in spite of the fear; elections for president set up in 1989 (Pinochet decided not to be a candidate); and the turning over of power by Pinochet in 1990 to the newly elected president Patricio Aylwin.

By 1990, the newspapers were filled with reports of unearthings of mass graves of the "disappeared." Conceptual artist Gonzalo Díaz installed his 1990 metaphorical work *Lonquen*, the entrance to such a grave inside a mine which had been investigated by human rights advocates ten years earlier. Wired together against an A-frame of wooden beams like those of a mine were numbered stones for each of the victims, and a series of black-framed *via crucis* that led to the entrance.

4. Ariel Dorfman, "The Invisible Chile: Three Years of Cultural Resistance," *Praxis 2*, no. 4 (Goleta, Calif.; 1978): 192.

5. This framework has been adapted from one established by Teresa Latorre in "Arte oficial y arte disidente en Chile," in *Chile vive* (Mexico, D.F.: Centro de Estudios Económicos y Sociales del Tercer Mundo, A.C. y El Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1982), 63–75.

6. Nelly Richard, "Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile Since 1973," *Art & Text* (May–July 1986): 17.

7. Reprinted in *Arte* (Berkeley, Calif.; Fall 1977): 2.

8. Soledad Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico en el conflicto político actual," *Casa de las Américas*, no. 130 (Havana; February 1982).

9. Osvaldo Aguila M., *Propuestas neo-vanguardistas*, 12.

10. See Guillermo Nuñez: *Chilenisches Tagebuch*, a catalogue with texts by Sigrun Paas-Zeidler and Georges Raillard, Wilhelm-Hack-Museum, Ludwigshafen am Rhein, April–May 1981. Author visited the artist at his home in the outskirts of Paris in September 1986; and in Santiago de Chile in July 1988.

11. Author's interviews with the artist: in New York, June 28, 1989, and by phone, October 8, 1989.

12. See Ronald Christ, "Catalina Parra and the Meaning of Materials," *Arts-canada* 38, no. 1 (Toronto, March–April 1981): 3–7.

13. Christ, "Catalina Parra," 5.

14. Author's interview with the artist, New York, April 12, 1986. An illustra-

tion of the project can be found in Gaspar Galaz and Milan Ivelic', *La pintura en Chile desde la colonia hasta 1981* (Valparaíso: Universidad Católica, 1981), 367.

15. Richard, "Margins and Institutions," 19.

16. See Shifra M. Goldman, "Latin Americans Aquí/Here," *Artweek* (December 1, 1984): 3–4.

17. Quoted in the catalogue *Freedom Within*, Fine Arts Center Art Gallery, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1985. For an overview of Jaar's work, see *Alfredo Jaar*, text by Madeleine Grynstejn (La Jolla, Calif.: La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990); also see Shifra M. Goldman, "How Latin American Artists in the U.S. View Art, Politics, and Ethnicity in a Supposedly Multicultural World," in this book.

18. Anny Rivera, *Notas sobre el movimiento social y arte en el regimen autoritario 1973–83* (Santiago: CENECA, 1983), 3–4.

19. It is said that one million Chileans, about 10 percent of the population, became exiles. Chilean artists can be found in many countries of Europe, Latin America as well as in the United States and Canada; however, the largest contingents are to be found in the two international art centers: Paris and New York. Paris offers many support structures, among them the almost three hundred Latin American artists who live there (including Chilean Roberto Sebastian Matta), a certain degree of interest from the French government, the academic world, the Left, and some galleries—both public and private. The Maison de l'Amérique Latine, sponsored by the Centre d'études et de recherches sur l'Amérique Latine et le Tiers Monde, has regular art shows. In addition, the Espace Latino Américain is a gallery maintained by Latin American artists, as is the gallery of the Anyse-tiers du Roy, directed by a Chilean artist. (This latter space is now closed.)

Though artists have been returning to Chile since 1982, a certain number—having made homes abroad and had children who are now in their teens and twenties—will never return to live in Chile.

20. For a more extended discussion of the two phases, see Soledad Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico." The visual arts in the second period enter the market as consumer commodities. Privatization of all forms of culture, including education, is characteristic of this phase.

21. Richard, "Margins and Institutions," 36.

22. See Gaspar Galaz and Milan Ivelic', *La pintura en Chile desde la colonia hasta 1981* (Valparaíso: Universidad Católica de Valparaíso, 1981), 342–65.

23. From the author's interview (and video viewing) with Lotty Rosenfeld, Santiago, July 17, 1988.

24. Teresa Latorre, "Arte oficial y arte disidente," 68.

25. Nelly Richard, "Margins and Institutions," 27.

26. *Punto de vista*, AFI bulletin, no. 1, October 1981.

27. Marcelo Montecino, *Con sangre en el ojo* (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Nueva Imagen, 1981). *El pan nuestro de cada día* (Santiago: Terranova Editores S.A., 1986). Author's interview with the latter photographers, July 1990.

28. *Arpillera* in Spanish means burlap, the fabric on which many of the narratives are embroidered. Chilean women have long had a tradition of using leftover scraps for practical or decorative articles. The nearest form to the Santiago *arpilleras* were the tapestries made by folksinger Violeta Parra in the 1950s. See Marjorie Agosin, *Scraps of Life: Chilean Arpilleras. Chilean Women and the Pinochet*

Dictatorship, trans. by Cola Franzen (Trenton: The Red Sea Press, 1987). For information about Violeta Parra's tapestries, see Isabel Parra, *El libro mayor de Violeta Parra* (Madrid: Ediciones Michay, S.A., 1985), 13, 71–72, 113–16. Also see David Kunzle, "El mural chileno: Arte de una revolución. La arpillera chilena: Arte de protesta y resistencia," in *Chile vive*.

29. See "The Death of a Mural Movement," an edited version of an article by Eva Cockcroft in Lucy R. Lippard, *Get the Message? A Decade of Art for Social Change* (New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1984), 43.

30. Richard, "Margins and Institutions," 106.

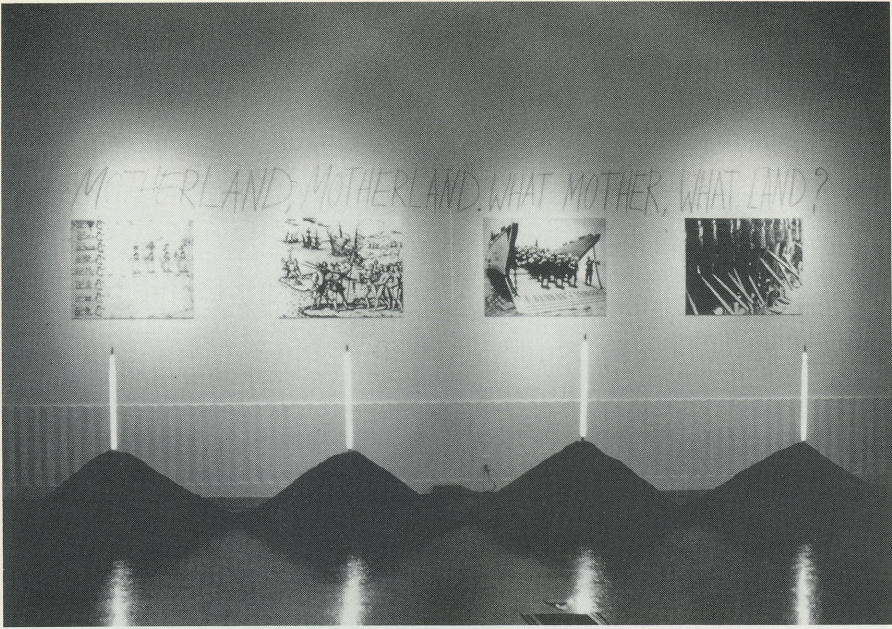


Fig. 38. Alfredo Jaar, *Motherland, Motherland, What Mother, What Land?* 1984. Installation, mixed media, 12 ft. x 20 ft. x 6 ft. (Photo by author.)

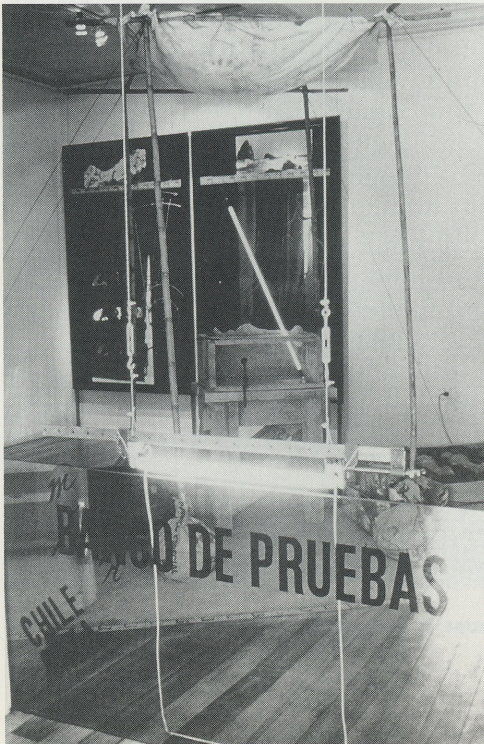


Fig. 39. Gonzalo Díaz, *Banco/Marco de pruebas* (Testing Bank/Frame). 1988. Installation detail, mixed media. Collection of Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas at Austin. (Photo by author.)

"This book is essential reading for anyone interested in the often contradictory developments that have shaped Latin American and U.S. Latino art since the 1970s. The essays break new ground establishing the basis for a social history in Latin American/Latino art. Goldman's multifaceted role (pioneer researcher, art historian, teacher, cultural theoretician, implacable social critic) makes her work stand on its own, with no parallel in the field."

—Mari Carmen Ramírez, Curator of Latin American Art, University of Texas at Austin

This collection of thirty-three well-illustrated essays provides a much-needed overview of the social history of modern and contemporary Latin American and Latino Art. Shifra Goldman focuses on Latin American artists throughout Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean, and the United States, to reveal the complex dynamic shaping their art.

Goldman's extensive introduction provides an up-to-date chronology of modern Latin American art; a brief history of "social art history" in the United States; and synopses of recent theoretical and historical writings by major scholars from throughout the Americas. In her essays, Goldman discusses a vast array of topics including: the influence of the Mexican muralists; the political and artistic significance of poster art and printmaking; the role of women artists; and the increasingly important role of politics and multinational businesses in the art world of the 1970s and 1980s. She explores the reception of Latin American and Latino art in the United States, focusing on major historical exhibits as well as on exhibits by individual artists. Finally, she examines the significance of nationalist and ethnic themes in Latin American and Latino art.

Shifra M. Goldman has been a research associate with the Latin American Center at UCLA for more than a decade and an educator for over twenty years. She is the author of *Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change* and coauthor of *Arte Chicano: A Comprehensive Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Art, 1965-1981*.

Cover illustration: Rupert García,
El Grito de rebelde (The Rebellious Cry).
1975. Silkscreen, 26" x 20".

Cover design: Toni Ellis.

