

Gonzalo Díaz

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Gonzalo Díaz, *Los hijos de la dicha*, 1981, diptych, synthetic enamel, stencil, masking tape, graphite, colored pencils, oil pastel on paper, 4' 11" x 12' 2 7/8". Photo: Il Posto.

Art history takes pride in naming its founding fathers, and in the world of Chilean art, Gonzalo Díaz is a noted forebear. Whether conceiving installations coinciding with and commenting on the end of Pinochet's dictatorship (*Lonquén 10 años*, 1989) or questioning the role of institutions through public interventions (*Unidos en la gloria y en la muerte*, 1997–98), Díaz has become the standard for Conceptual art. But what if we were able to appreciate the early works that do not fit within this grand narrative? That is the central question of “Gonzalo Díaz, pintor.” Curated by Amalia Cross, the exhibition includes eight neo-expressionist works from the early '80s mostly unknown to the audience.

The exhibition's two central themes open new interpretations of Díaz's oeuvre, beginning with the artist's representation of violence. A 1981 diptych from the series “Los hijos de la dicha” (The Children of Joy) depicts an abstracted human body, on both sides of the tableau. Beneath them, nebulous forms obscure whether the bodies are grounded or free-falling, while black shadows surrounding them evoke the transition between life and death. Absent any recognizable elements besides sharp colors and curvilinear traces, the surrounding landscape reinforces this sense of liminality—suggesting a vaguely threatening, ever-present violence.

Second, the show reconsiders Díaz's engagement with the pop-culture imaginary—centering his use of the graphic female silhouette taken from an advertisement for Klenzo cleaning products. Seen in the 1982 series

“Historia sentimental de la pintura chilena”(Sentimental History of Chilean Painting), the Klenzo girl is variously clothed in Chilean symbolism, bloodstained attire, and poetic verses. Here, she is transformed into an emblem of complex national identity, where patriotic imagery and difficult histories collide. Finally, in the triptych *La primera comunión* (The First Communion), 1985, Díaz illustrates schematic images of knots, geometric forms, and a car overlaid with a woman performing oral sex—the unusual collision of figures creating a site of strange and contested memory. One thing is clear: Nothing is certain, everything is ambiguous.

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