CONTENTS

FINDINGS

Introduction
REPASOS: ART & LIFE IN PINOCHET'S CHILE 3

Chapter 1
HISTORICAL & CULTURAL CONTEXT:
PINOCHET, POWER AND POSTMODERNISM 3

Chapter 2
BLURRING THE BOUNDARIES:
POETRY, ART, POLITICS AND LIFE 21

Chapter 3
THE RELEVANCE OF FORM:
A DEMAND FOR THE SYMBOLIC 51

Chapter 4
"EL TERCER PERIODO": THE NEXT GENERATION 73

FACES

Carlos Altamirano, Santiago de Chile, 9 October 2002 91
Arturo Duclos, Santiago de Chile, 23 October 2002 97
Isabel Aninat, Santiago de Chile, 23 October 2002 107
Guillermo Machuca, Santiago de Chile, 6 November 2002 111
Francisco Brugnoli, Santiago de Chile, 9 November 2002 121
Virginia Errazuriz, Santiago de Chile, 9 November 2002 131
Nelly Richard, Santiago de Chile, 19 November 2002 137
Justo Pastor Mellado, Santiago de Chile, 24 July 2003 143
Diemela Eltit, Santiago de Chile, 28 July 2003 157

SOURCES

General Bibliography 169
REPA\textsuperscript{S}OS: ART & LIFE IN PINOCHE\textsuperscript{T}'S CHILE

Formally my ‘honors thesis,’ though more precisely the personification of my combined accumulated experiences in artistic practice and academic study, “REPA\textsuperscript{S}OS” is the brainchild born within the marginal crossroads of “Art-Semiotics” and “International Relations.”

Through personal interviews with artists, writers, museum and gallery directors, as well as analysis drawn from books, publications and exhibition catalogues, “REPA\textsuperscript{S}OS” tells the story of the artists and intellectuals who chose to stay in Chile during the years of despotic military rule – those who “dared to gamble on a form of creativity”\footnote{Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 17.} not only to defy pressures of censorship and restrictions imposed on language and representation, but to recover the elements of critical thought, reflection and expression long-stifled in the Chilean consciousness.

Studying the inherent relationship between art and politics (and between art and life) within the context of a country plagued by dictatorship and marked by the polemics of postmodernism and globalization, the project specifically looks to the “transgressive” art movements of the Escena Avanzada and the CADA (“Colectivo Acciones de Arte” or “Art Actions Collective”). The body of work produced within these artistic and intellectual circles cannot be reduced to any prefixed category or class – not purely emblematic of ‘conceptual art,’ ‘poor art,’ ‘body art,’ ‘happening,’ ‘intervention,’ ‘installation’ or ‘performance art,’ their work presents the viewer with a critical combination and reevaluation of them all.

Having emerged on the ‘scene’ of cultural production in the late 1970’s, these movements turned to the celebrated practices of post-Structuralist discourse, experimenting with various ways to manipulate language (semiotic and linguistic codes), in order to publicly express a rational, critical voice – to express the inexpressible. While it is true that their critical production effectively sought the means to communicate, even if from the margins, a discourse that opposed the regime, it is important to note that their work cannot simply be explained by the mere existence of dictatorship, but is deeply affected, inspired and influenced by a number of factors and forces that far precede the military coup of September 11, 1973.

\textbf{Historical and Cultural Context: Pinochet, Power and Postmodernism}

Any evaluation of cultural production must necessarily consider its historical context, contingency, and places of origin. As the CADA explicitly announced in a statement made for the 1983 \textit{“In/Out” exhibition in Washington D.C.}, “the answers go beyond the axiomatics of semiotics... These issues must be approached in the context of the struggles and developments of our social reality.”\footnote{CADA, statement made in the catalogue for the “In / Out” exhibition held in Washington D.C. in 1983.} To discuss the artistic movements in Chile under Pinochet, then, it is relevant to consider the cultural impact of Chile’s historical succession, which has included a long line of authoritative rule and produced a history significantly marked by war; in effect, Chile has forever been subjected to the
discourses and practices of dominant groups. Indeed, since the arrival of the Spaniards it appears that Chilean history has revealed a certain fixation with order and an inherent fear of chaos, the different, or some unknown ‘Other.’ It is also true, as Diamela Eltit affirms in her essay “CADA 20 Aníos,” that “the fear of critical discussion seems to be one of the sharp focal points that penetrate dominant systems”; in this respect, there are claims that the drive for critical analysis and debate have long been stifled in Chile, impeding collaborative discussion to the detriment, many argue, of collective conscience and Chilean cultural identity. Chile’s own coat-of-arms boldly bears the motto “By Reason or by Force” (“Por la razón o por la fuerza”); the military coup of September 11, 1973 would demonstrate that once again force would prevail, and all possible outlets for the former would be suppressed, brutally fracturing public performance and communicative exchange. This impossibility of representation marked the setting from whence the artists of REPASOS emerged – a result of dictatorial repression further extended by the normalization of the market and the cultural logic of the neo-liberal economic model that swept Chile at the end of the 21st century.

According to Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela, co-authors of A Nation of Enemies, “in the early 80’s the military-ruled nation of Chile stood “divided by hatred and frozen by fear.” With respect to Chile’s division, it appears that a veritable feeling of “in-between-ness” characterized the situation for many Chileans at the time of the dictatorship. There are arguably many facets to the idea. In my interview with Arturo Duclos, he spoke to me of his desire to be “in between” the politically compromised and the politically correct; we must also consider the elements of being ‘in-between’ the real and the ‘other,’ ‘memory and forgetfulness,” the center and the periphery, the right and the left, the ‘Yes’ and the ‘No,’ etc.” On the one hand, for some, the military take-over represented a relieving escape from Allende’s “Marxist outfit,” one that served to instill the solid

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33 Bernardo Subercaseaux, Transformaciones de la crítica literaria en Chile, 1960-1982. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, page 49, note 1.)
7 Julio Ortega, in his discussion of Eltit’s work uses the following words: “Between writing and the psyche, between compulsive socialization and its systematic fracture, between the vulnerable body and the identities that redeem it, between the space occupied by Law and the unoccupied extremes of the City, between the men constructed by occidental discourse and the women inscribed with ethnic sayings, between a deserted a forgotten history and a nomadic and wounded future, between the footprints of a popular saga and the blood of its survivors, these novels outline their margins as a fluid and ongoing zone; as a subterranean map that recovers with trajectories of rebellion and desire, with lucidity and confrontation.” (Caja de Heramientas, page 38.)
establishment of peace and order, while others saw Pinochet as a fascist dictator who had abrasively dismantled the nation’s democratic autonomy. It can be said, however, that most Chileans stood somewhere between these two poles – they could neither relate to the harsh policies of the right, nor to the radical doctrine of the opposition, as the art actions and practices explored within this project illustrate. The average Chilean wasn’t a protagonist or participant in Pinochet’s dictatorship, he was merely a spectator, caught up in a system he was unfamiliar with and had not chosen. In the preface of her book, *Margins and Institutions*, Nelly Richard states that it is a book “about what you can and cannot say in order to survive in the middle – caught between forces of progress on the one hand and openly repressive forces on the other.” In Chile under Pinochet, artists associated with movements such as the Escena Avanzada and the CADA found that their work was not supported by either the regime or the opposition’s progressive ideology, and therefore situated themselves outside of the major party structures – outside the traditional positions of political discourse. “Thus they had to juggle between two competing desires: the desire to communicate a defiance of censorship and the cultural hegemony, and the desire to avoid the circumscribed language and forms used to similar effect by both the government and the left.” In response to these “conflictual or competing strands of signification” and to constraints of censorship, the artists explored in this project turned to critical theory and experimentations with language. As Richard explains, it was precisely their strategy of using unorthodox signs that made them “unserviceable to either side, inassimilable to their respective cultural programs.”

The reality, however, was that superficially most Chileans remained tied to the regime, whether by fear or preference. *Constable and Valenzuela* effectively delineate the nature of Chile’s ‘culture of fear’ that permeated the nation’s consciousness after the coup. Indeed, in its strict campaign of “psychological warfare,” aimed at promoting anticommunist ideology, the Pinochet project successfully maintained a national atmosphere marked by fear and apprehension; by means of widespread, exaggerated propaganda and severe, repressive censorship, the regime set out to impose a “nationwide ideological purge,” “a moral cleansing,” and a “change in mentality” throughout society.

According to Nelly Richard, the military takeover in Chile, in addition to ‘shattering’ the preceding framework of social and political experiences, also effectively destroyed the language and models of signification by which those experiences could be named; “the political and administrative control of expression through restrictions imposed on language and its socio-cultural structures was simply an expedient by which the regime could keep the production of meaning under surveillance.” Francisco Brugnoli, in our interview, discussed these ‘restrictions imposed on language’: “Language always represents

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power; the one who names (labels) is ultimately the one who designates, and therefore delivers something’s designated value based on a predetermined reading. In this sense, the dictatorship as controller of power, established itself as a controller of language in general. It named a new national reality, or at least attempted to name one... and was rather successful in this endeavor.”

In order to sever any ties to the Popular Unity movement of the Allende days and silence the voice of opposition, the regime would not tolerate any mention whatsoever of human rights and censored mockery or dissidence of any kind; according to the British online periodical, The Guardian, a total of 3,197 people were tortured, murdered and then disappeared under Pinochet's 17-year regime.13 Journalists, for one, were sent to prison for printing cartoons of military officials; In 1987, when Apsi published a humor issue with a caricature of Pinochet as Louis XIV on the cover, the chief editor was charged as an ‘intellectual extremist.’ And jailed for 2 months.14

Before long, “Chilean reality was abuse of power and rampant self-censorship.15” Indeed, because there was no fixed rationale of censorship, no one inflexible position, self-censorship16 often proved more restricting than the censorship of the regime. As official norms of censorship became more severe, its processes became increasingly abstract and liberally applied – even arbitrary in nature – ironically serving both to endow the dictatorial model with an “image as protector and stimulator of the arts,”17 and to trigger an increase in self-censorship and the inhibition of voluntary production. If someone were against Pinochet and his policies, they wouldn’t have the courage or the nerve to say so.18 As Arturo Duclos told me in our interview “everybody lived in latent fear,” it was symptomatic of the era; to ‘play along’ was in fact “the path of least resistance,” and therefore the road most often chosen.”19 In the time leading up to the 1988 Plebiscite, “No” supporters were harassed, repressed, and silenced; one man interviewed by Constable and Valenzuela in A Nation of Enemies was quoted saying, “everyone in my neighborhood is for the No ...but it is not safe to say so.” Thus, the majority of the Chilean people chose to submit, as intellectual suppression affected all forms of expression. Fernando Balcells, one of the founding members of the CADA, articulates

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13 http://www.guardian.co.uk/pinochet
15 Ibid, page 163.
16 According to Richard, self-censorship differs from administrative censorship (the erasure or suppression of materials of communication) as it operates at the individual level “by structuring speech acts” – “what is forbidden is speech itself, under a regime of intimidation that overwhelmingly controls access to the verbalization of areas of experience.” (Margins and Institutions, page 19.)
18 “Today kids pick up fear at school, it’s in the atmosphere.” (Lucia Santa Cruz, 1984. Cited by Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela, A Nation of Enemies, page 146.)
19 “One banker confided that for years he hid his concern for human rights in order to avoid jeopardizing his social and professional position. ‘In meetings, I often said things I didn’t believe, so as not to go against the tide,’ he confessed.” (…) (A Nation of Enemies, page 145.)
how, at the time, representation necessarily succumbed to institutionalism, which effectively created the risk of *supplantation* and *immersion*; “It was a time when the dominant political model sought to recycle our historical consciousness, erasing from our memory and everyday life all traces of cultural identity that didn’t function within its project – a time when complete areas of our collective experience were in danger of being lost, buried under the disciplinary demands of a fatal conformism.” It can be said that when historical, social and political specificity are denied and when the structures and codes used to process and understand these realms are masked, critical thought and engagement are effectively stifled. Fernando Balcells warns his readers not only of the risk of *immersion* and *fatal conformism*, but of *inertia*, attributable to the sacrifice of one’s “own memory” in abandoning passion and critical imagination.

As Richard illustrates, to understand how the apparatus of censorship governed the production of art under the dictatorship in Chile, one must examine the social *norms* set forth by the regime in its design for cultural policy, intended to *reappropriate* (rather than *eliminate*) politics, and create ‘a version of the social’ that could exist in harmony with its own ideologies and initiatives. Effectively, what ensued was a form of politics that ‘functioned as a myth’ – a situation that Roland Barthes affirms serves to “do away with all dialectics,” to lend a certain superficiality to representation, to “organize a world without contradictions …without depth.” In place of a fixed, single body of official representations or centralized cultural model, there was instead “a consensus on the ideals or values inherent in [the regime’s] cultural aim;” i.e. *patriarchal values* which “consecrated a mythology of the family in a traditionally Catholic framework.” “Above all, it used essentialist categories of the Beautiful, the True, and the Universal, and idealistic schemes expressing the bourgeois ideology in a modern form.” Within Richard’s discourse and that of her contemporaries, there are visible traces of the modes of analysis of the “Frankfurt School,” a doctrine of critical theory that gained a wide audience in both Europe and America during the protest movements of the 1960’s. While originally indebted to Karl Marx’s ideas about sources of domination and authority in society that impede the possibility of human freedom, it departs from Marxism in its claim that sources of domination are not solely derived from society’s economic structure, but are to be found in the realms of culture and ideology as well. For example, a collective work produced by Frankfurt School theorists in 1950, entitled *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950), investigates the sources of obedience to authority, and examines what makes certain people susceptible to fascist propaganda. In a country like Chile, according to Richard, the distinction between the public and the private (or the

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21 Ibid.
24 In the Fall of 2002 I was enrolled as a student in the “Journalism” department at the Universidad de Playa Ancha in Valparaiso, Chile, and took a class entitled “Comunicación y Cultura” (“Communication and Culture”), taught by Professor Luciano San Martin. San Martin spoke to us of the critical theory embodied in the Frankfurt School of thought, and its connotations within the discourse of contemporary Chilean culture.
political and the apolitical) is increasingly arbitrary and diffuse, for authoritarianism penetrates the ‘everyday.’

With regard to measures of censorship, it appears that the years immediately following the coup were the irrefutably the most repressive; as stated by Constable and Valenzuela, “the first years of dictatorship were like putting society in a straightjacket...” As cultural spaces were shut down and institutions were dismantled, there were very few available outlets for non-official culture. It was during this period that the regime aimed to completely eliminate any memory of the previous government; this ‘first stage,’ according to Richard, witnessed a major “negation” of the past. In discourse, in practice and in representation, “the political” was a force widely condemned by the regime. (‘Human rights,’ for example, was essentially a synonym for Marxist propaganda.) In truth, during the time of the dictatorship, the only remaining autonomous institution able to safeguard the defense of human rights was the Catholic Church, whose roots ran deep in Chilean society; under its protection, cultural and educational activities otherwise barred and excluded from official spaces were given support.

Outside of the sanctuary of the Church, Chilean cultural life remained petrified as authorities effectively suppressed all traces of political life; by 1974 50% of journalists had retired and the number of daily newspapers in Chile was reduced from 11 to 4; 5 radio stations were bombed, the magazines of the left were shut down, and television stations were strictly censored. In 2001, the progressive newspaper The Clinic published an article on the policies of the press under the dictatorship (“La prensa durante la dictadura.”) Fortright and candid, the article exposed the corruption and fraud of the regime in its influence over dominant modes of communication: “The Pinochet regime was particularly hard on the media. Censorship, self-censorship, prohibitions, closures, imprisonment, harassment, threats, arrests, trials, pressures, death: the ‘information professionals’ suffered all in those relentless days.” The enduring repercussions of the repressive measures imposed on the media are apparently discernible even today, as Diamel Eltit expressed to me when I spoke with

26 Pamela Constable and Arturo Valenzuela. A Nation of Enemies, page 147.
27 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 106.
29 Virginia Errázuriz. Interview: On the collective piece ‘ARCHIVO,’ done in 1978, which abstractly addressed issues of labor security, torture, exile, and the disappeared... “This was a key exhibition... very important; (...) it was the first exhibition where we could show this sort of art that had an element of remembrance. [It was] done under the protection of the church and exhibited inside of a convent – that is the only reason we were granted such security.”
30 “Apagón Cultural,” page 149.
31 THE CLINIC, Jueves 3 de Mayo del 2001, Año 3, No. 50
32 “El régimen de Pinochet puso particularmente a prueba al periodismo. Censuras, autocensuras, prohibiciones, clausuras, prisiones, acosos, amenazas, arrestos, juicios, presiones, muertes: de todo padecieron los profesionales de la información en esos días inexorables.”
her; Diamela Eltit was resolute in her opinion that the great majority of publications continue to be of “a clear, unmitigated and irreversible right wing perspective.”

In addition to severe censorship in the media and press, universities and other educational institutions were subject to intense restructuring in Pinochet’s quest to obliter all signs of opposition. Diamela Eltit, in an interview with Robert Neudstat, describes her recollection of the university experience: “The university didn’t have any possible space open for creativity or active participation. There were soldiers in the hallways with machine guns! ...It was completely intervened and its curriculums reprogrammed, entirely formulated to criticize the “Marxists.” [Soldiers] were there, armed and watching. Before, university autonomy was very sacred. Soldiers weren’t allowed to enter – whatever happened happened – the university was an untouchable space. After the coup, they put up bars and one had to identify themselves upon entering. There was a frightening atmosphere.” The dictatorship clearly aimed to suppress critical expression at its seed; after all, “it was within the university where intellectualty and the impulse of professional creation were concentrated, and from whence the greatest potential for artistic proposition and experimentation emanated. Consequently, student activity was subject to strict control, in an apparent attempt to narrow students’ exposure to ideas. In addition to the conspicuous presence of soldiers and military affiliates that Eltit describes, university libraries were subject to lists of books that were to be turned in to the authorities or burned, and, as Nelly Richard affirms, “the ‘economy of dialogue’ was impoverished in proportion to the dwindling resources for reading.”

Indeed, the field of literature in Chile felt the harsh effects of Pinochet’s ideological purge as severely as other areas of cultural production; Pablo Neruda, the great poet, was one of many writers to be censored and exiled, and books by great Latin American authors such as Gabriel García-Marquez and Julio Cortázar were banned. The film industry suffered similar consequences; the offices of Chile Films were closed the day after the coup and the distribution of major Hollywood films was reestablished, having been suspended in 1971 by the Motion Picture Association of America. Government officials tried to bribe film production companies with contract-guarantees, asking them to create films for the “Fondo de Reconstrucción Nacional,” in support of Pinochet’s unrelenting pursuit to create an official national culture. (Chile Films was later taken over by Radio Nacional “in a mysterious transaction, whose principal motives were political in nature: the criteria of privatization collided once again with the danger that yet another mode of communication [branch of the media] would fall into unsuitable hands.”)

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33 Catalina Parra exhibited a piece entitled, “Imbunches” at the Galería Época in Santiago in 1977; “her work [in this exhibit] manipulated one of the official symbols of Chile, the daily newspaper, El Mercurio, as an illustration of the way in which the media’s monopoly of a single imposed truth distorts meaning. (Nelly Richard, “Women’s Art Practices and the Critique of Signs,” Recovering Histories catalogue, page 91.)

34 Robert Neudstat, interview with Diamela Eltit, CADA DÍA, page 91.


36 (Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 47.) (As a consequence of this impoverished ‘economy of dialogue,’ the critical apparatus necessary to assess the critical practice of the works described in this project was ostensibly absent within the universities and educational institutions at the time.)

37 “Apagón Cultural,” page 149.

38 Ibid, page 152.
As for the realm of artistic production, while it did not disappear altogether, it ran, for the most part, the risk of being complicit with the dictatorship by being representative of "official" culture or else it survived "underground." Having few legal channels for self-expression, many students began to see art as a somewhat safer avenue of expression – hymns, folk songs, poetry and drama were all used as forms of representation and protest. Consequently, it appears that the regime felt more threatened by such genres as theatre and music (which were considered more “capable of bringing about greater ideological consensus or popular unity”) than by more abstract movements such as the CADA and the Escena Avanzada in the scene of visual arts, which, by 1977 had begun to experiment with recreating art and community. Apparently, according to Nelly Richard, the ‘refined games of signs’ used by these movements “to divert social communication”, attested to their marginality with regard to other creative forms, thereby causing them to appear less menacing in the eyes of the dictator and his regime.

Nevertheless, as is illustrated in the article “Apagón cultural” (“Cultural blackout”), art was not exempt from the repression and violence symptomatic of the times, especially during the first years of the dictatorship. Two days following the coup, military tanks surrounded the Bellas Artes museum, under the ‘assumption’ that 200 conspirators of the opposition had entered there. Moments later they were informed that they were mistaken and ceased fire, though not before destroying or damaging a great number of the museum’s works. The vast majority (90%) of museum directors and university art professors were accused of conspiracy, imprisoned, and exiled (Francisco Brugnoli included). As a result, artistic discourses and practices were confined to enclosed, perhaps exclusive circuits, as Arturo Duclos explained his interview: “What changed was that people had to produce work from enclosed spaces, very enclosed circuits ...within which everyone knew everyone else. They were the same people that were in the galleries and exhibitions, the private workshops, the universities, etc. It was a type of camaraderie, a club. So... what changed was that production occurred at this

40 “Las raíces latinoamericanas, la identidad cultural, los heroés populares, los dolores sociales, la historia revisitada, formaron la temática de esa incipiente resistencia cultural, hecha de peñas sombrías y guitarreos colectivos.” (“Apagón Cultural,” page 153.)
41 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 23.
42 Arturo Duclos Interview: “I remember one time when Pinochet’s police people came to ask questions, but [none of the artists in this scene] were ever detained, interrogated, taken for a beating, tortured... Instead there was this latent fear. (...) I thought they might put me in jail ...but there was a certain sense of pride in all that; in the end we were all looking to become martyrs of some sort. However, none of this happened; because it was all happening in such enclosed circles, and because everything was functioning underground, it was impossible for any major danger to occur. There was never a very real risk situation, because we were not exposing ourselves in the streets...”
43 “Apagon Cultural,” page 146.
44 Guillermo Machuca Interview
45 Francisco Brugnoli Interview: “There was never an official art, but there did exist ‘black lists.’ ...For those of us on these black lists, it was a very difficult situation to overcome. It wasn’t until 1978, for example, that I was able to reemerge on the scene.”
level – within a clique, a private circle. There weren’t exhibitions projected outside of this ... the entire sphere of artistic expression was closed ... Everything happened in only two or three galleries or places, so nothing came outside of that.” (...) “And it was very difficult for people outside of the circle to enter.”

A distinction must be made, however, between what Nelly Richard refers to as the ‘first’ and ‘second’ stages of the dictatorship: while the first years following the coup undoubtedly bore witness to the most severe types of repression, it was during the period from 1977 to 1981, according to Richard, that “transgressive” works such as those of the CADA and the Avanzada gradually found an outlet through galleries such as CAL (1979) and Sur (1980). It was apparently during this ‘second stage’ (which Richard has dubbed the ‘foundational’ stage of the regime) that the government tried to create an image for itself establishing social and cultural standards, consolidating its own ideology and promoting prevailing ‘logic of the marketplace’ (and the model of an ‘art industry’). With respect to the latter, the neo-liberal political and economic positions prevailing at the time, tied to the right-wing sectors of the modern bourgeoisie, effectively rendered culture to be considered, like all else, a marketable asset to be developed commercially.

In the absence of other legal media channels to authorize or sponsor thought on the works of the ‘new scene’ of art, the self-reflection and critical thinking characteristic of these movements found an outlet in exhibition catalogues and a few privately distributed magazines, monographs, or Xeroxes, hardly any of which lasted more than a year or even survived beyond the first issue. Among the self-financed journals created to explore the theoretical questions behind this ‘transgressive’ art some were linked to galleries (i.e. the Epoca or Cromo publications in 1977, CAL magazine in 1979, or La Separata and the Sur catalogues in 1982), if not to collective projects (i.e. CUADERNOS DE/PARA ANALYSIS in 1983.) Texts such as these 

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46 Arturo Díeclos Interview: “During the 80’s all these movements began to converge into a large manifestation that inhabited exhibition spaces like the ‘Galería Sur’ and the ‘Galería CAL,’’ which were galleries that didn’t last very long. But those were the spaces that published practically all of the events of the time. They showed artists like Juan Davila, Alfredo Jaar, Carlos Leppe, Raúl Zurita, Eugenio Dittborn, Carlos Altamirano...”

47 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 105.


49 “I think that the advent of these magazines respond to the common necessity to publish critical thought.” (Carlos Altamirano, interview printed in CAL no. 3, August 1979.)

50 Printed on the first page of the issue to which Machuca and Richard refer (CAL, No. 3, “La Crítica de Arte”) is the following: “CAL, in its last issue, opened its pages to distinct representatives of literary activity in Chile: critics, writers and poets who, in publishing their opinions in that issue, drew us closer to the current state of criticism and literature in our country, thus delivering a living document, open to discussion and new reports, which we are sure will serve to make us more aware of the cultural reality in which we are participating. (...) Continuing with this initiative, today CAL has opened its pages to those who make up the panorama of our visual arts, acknowledging that CAL is not responsible for the opinions that are given – offering this space in order for those who occupy it to take charge of an open dialogue ...that ultimately aims to protect a more enriched and enlivened state Chile’s artistic reality, which is constructed just as much by critics and the general public as it is by the creators themselves.”
were undoubtedly ‘burdened’ with considerable cultural ‘responsibility,’ as they were the principal few outlets for critical reflections, and no network for cultural production existed to sanction their work or assess their contributions. It goes without saying that the limited distribution imposed on the creators of these editorial projects gradually exhausted them, and limited the discourse of the artistic movements explored throughout this project to the very type of “internal dialogue” to which Duclos refers.

This factor of exclusivity is echoed in the final statement made by Fernando Balcells (a founding member of the CADA), in his article Hoy Como Aver: “La destinación de la obra del CADA está ligada a la cultura crítica y en esos tiempos su lugar se guarda triste y parodójicamente en la academia y en los callejones más apagados de la ciudad.” (“The CADA’s place is academia and in the city’s darkest dead ends and alleyways.”)

To be sure, due to the restrictions imposed by the dictatorship, the discourses produced by artistic movements like the CADA and the Avanzada were forced to remain hidden, restricted to a small, private intellectual circuit.

While it is undoubtedly true that the regime asserted its power in the form of harsh censorship, political repression and severe despotic measures, it is equally true that Pinochet served to initiate a radical transformation of the economy. Beginning in 1975, the military teamed up with a small group of rightwing technocrats, dubbed the “Chicago Boys,” to develop a neo-liberal economic model that would substitute the state run economy with a liberal open market system. Aside from the industrialization of the art market that necessarily accompanied these economic changes, the principle players of REPASOS were subject to the greater ideological implications of globalization and capitalism, and the ostensible dependency on foreign models that marked Chilean reality before, during and after the dictatorship. In identifying the conditions through which these artists and intellectuals became “critical agents” against all odds, one must closely examine and expose what Henry Giroux refers to as the “ethic of consumerism,” and its affects on identity formation and critical practice.

In his book, El consumo me consume, (“Consumption consumes Me”), Tomas Mulian effectively illustrates the hazardous effects of consumerism, urging his readers to understand “the social dynamics of consumption and their relationship to the subjectivity of the individual,” presumably in reference to the Chilean individual, who, he affirms, has been “thrown into the uncertainty of living in the neoliberal societies of globalized capitalism.” Since the time of the dictatorship, Chilean culture has noticeably been in a state of permanent and continuous flux; according to the PNUD, today’s Chilean could not imagine life without television, telephones, and other ‘advanced’ technological consumer goods. The development of lavish department stores and shopping malls has amply expanded

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53 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, page 23.
54 Tomas Mulian, El consumo me consume, page 9.
55 (“Programa de Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo”)
around centralized urban areas throughout Chile; according to Mulian, the mall (or the ‘cathedral of consumption’) represents, for the Chilean today, a seemingly limitless labyrinth of fantasy and variety, the ultimate ‘initiator of desire,’ a ‘simulacrum of paradise.’ “The mall is the place of forgetting, where for one instant one can dream of the rich.” Mulian is apt to point out that the mall simulates the spectacle of Chile’s ‘public plaza’ while privately owned, ordered, and watched over, and thus can be seen as a metaphor for social control. He carefully examines the notion of ‘a culture of vigilance,’ throughout this short book, describing to his readers the inevitably ‘public nature’ of their seemingly ‘private acts,’ and warning them against a dangerous dependency on credit systems, which only serves to produce ‘addicted consumers’ in providing false ‘instant’ gratification (“The rapid fulfillment of one’s desire.”) It is precisely this “democratization of credit” that dooms the ‘poor’ to remain as such - immobile and ever subjected to the spectacle of the rich through ubiquitous and incessant propaganda and ideological discourses, which glorify modernity and invite people to consume.

It is relevant to include a reflection on the political implications of a ‘democratizing’ credit system; according to Mulian, the outcome quantified in the era of the “bourgeoisification of the working class,” effectively “debilitated the classic structures of proletarian consciousness.” Mulian contrasts Chile to other peripheral countries in which neoliberal adjustments have been the cause of popular rebellion. In Chile, as society enters more advanced phases of capitalist development, the notion of ‘class struggle’ paradoxically disappears from the “political vocabulary.” Thus, while levels of social disintegration are on the rise, the state of political affairs remains ostensibly calm, subject merely to occasional ‘inter-elite’ disputes. A veritable “silencing” of the worker is also attributed to the what Hanna Arendt has dubbed the “recomposition of labor,” a mechanization of social relations that has, as Mulian illustrates, totally subjected the worker to capital, thereby diminishing his capacity to negotiate. Like many before him, Mulian criticizes the Fordian ‘assembly line’ work process, which is devoid of craftsmanship and governed by systems and series, following ‘the rhythm of the machine.’ The philosophical contributions of Jürgen Habermas and his theory of rationality are also relevant here; a member of the Frankfurt School, Habermas presents throughout his work a critique of industrial democracies built on the Western model, “for their reduction of the human world to some form of economic efficiency,” and the effective displacement of rationality (or the ability to think logically, analytically and critically). It appears that in Chile under the cultural logic of neoliberal capitalism, rationality is merely a “strategic calculation of how to achieve some chosen end,” and not, as Habermas argues it should be, “a communicative action,” whose intended effect is to achieve agreement with others.

With regard to the production of meaning in connection with social experience, it appears that critical reflection and participation are stifled within the neoliberal economic model,

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56 Tomas Mulian, El consumo me consume, page 55.
57 “Esos efectos, denominados en la época ‘aburguesamiento’ de la clase obrera, debilitaron las formas clásicas de la conciencia proletaria.” (Tomas Mulian, El consumo me consume, page 38.)
58 This depreciation of the traditional notion of ‘work ethic’ has apparently been replaced by the overevaluation of consumption, which is presented as an ‘escape’ from the newly monotonous nature of work. (Tomas Mulian, El consumo me consume, page 49.)
as in the case of authoritative rule. Regardless of the fact that “free time for contemplation has [apparently] disappeared,”\textsuperscript{60} many have argued that critical senses are dulled on account of the ‘daily deluge’ of representations alone – “30-second spots of every type,”\textsuperscript{61} which increasingly prompt us to mindlessly process messages. As Luciano San Martín argues, there is a particular ‘loss of culture’ (‘perdida de cultura’) by way of the mass media, which serve only to \emph{preach the sermons of good and evil}, to produce a ‘consensus’ that derives from the act of keeping silent, and to ensure that people “\emph{no longer think for themselves}.”\textsuperscript{62} As Aldous Huxley declares in his book, \textit{Brave New World}, ‘People will come to love their oppression, to \emph{adore the technologies that undo their capacities to think}.’\textsuperscript{63}

This is reminiscent of the sort of ‘hedonistic consumer’ that \textbf{Tomas Mulian} believes capitalism strives to produce with its dangerous implication that happiness is superficial. Within ‘the economy of waste,’ according to \textbf{Mulian}, money is fetischized as a producer of power and identity and therefore charged with strong symbolism, as objects are perceived as constituents of the self. In our interview, \textbf{Diamaela Eltit} echoed these assessments on the subjectivity of the individual in a consumer society: “\emph{The market designs a new subject – one that is hyper-materialistic, where the object or commodity reaches a paradoxically exaggerated dimension, and is therefore depoliticized... because effectively it is tied to the notion of indebtedness due to constant necessity, and life ends up being a question of major or minor debt. This also happens a lot in the US, with the dependence on credit cards. But actually it’s the body that is chained to a debt. It’s not ingenious or free, right? Because part of the energy of the subject character is connected to the debt. Pay the card, pay the card, pay the card...}”

Not only, then, is one’s identity inadequately formulated on the basis of material goods, but the individual in a credit-driven consumer society is unavoidably subjected to the monotonous patterns that dictate social behavior, at the expense of critical response and participation. On this note, \textbf{Eltit} confirms the symbolic connections forged by \textbf{Mulian} between the new economic model in Chile and the paradigm of authoritarian rule; there is, according to \textbf{Eltit}, a present day version of despotism, masquerading under the guise of neoliberal democracy. In an interview with \textbf{Robert Neudstat} for his book on the CADA\textsuperscript{64}, \textbf{Eltit} asserts that “there was greater creativity before the emergence of the free market, due to the lack of commercial pressures (...) the greatest problem today is the normativity of the market.” Later she adds, “There’s a certain dictatorship today that still effectively represses memory.”\textsuperscript{65} In the words of \textbf{Nelly Richard}, “the footprints of the past are once again suffering operations of erasure [as] the end-of-the-century globalization dissipates the value of historicity, painfully codified in the experience of the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{60} Juan Pablo Vicuña, “1968-1983 Dieciseis Años,” 1984. \\
\textsuperscript{61} Herbert W. Simons, \textit{Persuasion in Society}, pages 296-7. \\
\textsuperscript{62} Luciano San Martín, “El triunfo de la imagen y la derrota de la espesura.” \\
\textsuperscript{64} Robert Neudstat interview with \textbf{Diamaela Eltit}, \textit{CADA DÍA}, page 102. \\
\textsuperscript{65} In response to the ‘new dictatorship of today,’ \textbf{Eltit} believes that new collective art groups are bound to emerge in the near future, returning to the idea of intervention. According to \textbf{Eltit} “there is still a lot to intervene.” (Robert Neudstat interview with \textbf{Diamaela Eltit}, \textit{CADA DÍA}, 102.)}
dictatorship,” and, as a result “that which we believe to be indelible is becomes increasingly vague.”

It appears, as many have argued, that capitalist principles have indeed spawned negative effects similar to those engendered by the authoritarian model of the dictatorship; Chileans have apparently witnessed the transition towards that which has been dubbed ‘capitalist realism,’ namely the commodifying force of consumer culture (wherein practically everything can be bought for a price), which generates a dangerous “dependence on store-bought things” instead of ourselves, a “devaluing of what enriches society but doesn’t lend itself to mass marketing,” “excessive materialism” tagged with the phrase ‘you are what you own,’ and a hazardously “narcissistic society, given over to selfish pleasures.” As Mulian maintains, the installation of neoliberalism in Chile and Latin America, be it the product of a dictatorial process or a ‘peaceful’ one, has induced widespread retreat from political and social commitments. That is to say, in addition to ‘ahistoricization’ and ‘depoliticization,’ hedonistic consumption is inherently tied to the “syndrome of individualism,” which begets an air of competitive egoism, driven merely by self-interest. Expansion of consumption comes before all else in the neoliberal economic model, steered by an obsession with acquisition and the greatest possible gain and not by logic or necessity. Consequently, other desires and values, such as those connected to the collective social consciousness, are displaced, as society begins to take the form of the Darwinian model of the survival of the fittest. As Professor Luciano San Martin aptly states in his essay “El triunfo de la imagen y la derrota de la espesura” (“The triumph of the image and the demise of profundity”), it is the time of the “I” over the “we” (‘el tiempo del ‘yo’ por sobre ‘nosotros.’)

In this article, San Martin asserts that the globalization of culture (via television and internet) has caused a certain estrangement from ‘authentic’ Chilean traditions and values. As Henry Giroux indicates in his book, Disturbing Pleasures, “representations in the [globalized] postmodern world reach deeply into daily life, contributing to the increasing fragmentation and centering of individual and collective subjects.” According to San Martin, the clash of the competitive model with cultural traditions and the idea of community is an inevitable outcome of the ‘imperialism of neoliberalism,’ and the Chilean imitation of the Western capitalist model; “Our country is subjected, like so many others, to a transculturation that distances it, day by day, from its authentic cultural being.” (“Nuestro país está sometido, como tantos otros, a una transculturación que lo aleja día a día de su auténtico ser cultural.”)

Applicable here are certain aspects of poststructuralist theory, namely its critique of essentialism, foundationalism and Western logocentrism, which it perceives less as a civilizing discourse than as a “colonizing practice that represses differences and the

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68 Ibid.
69 Tomas Mulian, El consumo me consume, page 63.
71 Ibid, page 35.
72 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, page 23.
recognition of multiple identities.\textsuperscript{73} Judith Butler, for example, raises serious questions about foundationalism as “an insidious cultural imperialism [which] legislates itself under the sign of the universal,”\textsuperscript{74} promoting “recognition rather than engagement.” Butler’s insight lies at the heart of Justo Pastor Mellado’s hypothesis on ‘transference’ in connection with Chilean culture – namely the imitation of or dependency on paradigmatic foreign models; the mindless transfer of ideas and practices. Richard explains:

“It in Chile mimicry has a hollow sound, because ours is a history of colonization and the deliberate suppression of our identity. Quoting from tradition is equivalent to quoting a lie, combining different international movements is equivalent to merely collecting signs of our dispossession, playing with references is equivalent to working through the means of their colonial transfer, indexing the past is equivalent to simply cataloguing the travesties of our deprived or substitute history. The history of Chile is one of endless alienation and as such it is not conductive to any playing with simulation, let alone the creation of a framework for critically analyzing or contesting it.”\textsuperscript{75}

It is precisely the question of cultural dispossession to which Richard refers that constitutes Mellado’s thesis. In our interview, he drew on colonial painting as an example “In Chile there was never any great colonial painting,” he claims; instead, there existed a transference of colonial painting, one which came from “indigenous painters fashioned by Bavarian Jesuits that came from Cuzco, and established themselves in Calera de Tango.” That is, the ‘San Francisco series’ that is considered today to be an example of Chilean colonial painting, was not, according to Mellado, “even painted on the national territory,” but rather arrived in complete form from Peru. Interestingly, Mellado’s assessments on cultural transference – much like those on consumerism, capitalist ideology and Pinochet’s authoritative rule – draw serious conclusions about Chilean identity and the capacity for critical thought.

Irrespective of the ideological conditioning implanted within educational institutions during the time of the dictatorship, it is argued that the active operation of the Chilean University “as a vehicle for modernization” far preceded the decade of the1970’s,\textsuperscript{76} in its effective conveyance and socialization of the “analytical bric-a-brac accumulated by European criticism over the last century.”\textsuperscript{77} As Nelly Richard implies in Margins and Institutions, this habitual collection of foreign material, together with the absence of any critical discernment in the selection and placement of this material, has effectively rendered Chilean and Latin American cultures dependent on imitation or substitution. As

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid, page 114.

\textsuperscript{74} Judith Butler, “Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of Postmodernism,” in Feminists Theorize the Political, page 8. (Cited by Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, page 114, note 12.)

\textsuperscript{75} Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 101.

\textsuperscript{76} Guillermo Machuca interview: “There was a longing for modernity; when Chile gained independence from Spain, it began to look towards France, of course, and to republican institutions. And the phenomena of the enlightenment and of illustration arrived here… along with the development of universities, medicine, the judiciary and political systems, and – of course – the Bellas Artes. And in Chile, unlike in other Latin American countries, there was never a baroque or splendid period, or a pre-Colombian art. So there was a wide opening, a void. Within this void, as if to be avant-garde in a sense, a school of visual arts was established – a copy of the French Academy – in order for Chile to enter into modernity.

\textsuperscript{77} Bernardo Subercaseaux, Transformaciones de la critica literaria en Chile, 1960-1982. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, page 49, note 2.)
a result, Chileans have had great difficulty in relating presumably ‘universal’ truths to the context of their local movements. Devoid of any established historical framework for discussing their own indigenous cultural rights, they lack the critical categories necessary to interpret the past and free their culture from the model of domination (imperial, dictatorial or otherwise). In this regard, Richard acknowledges the awkward nature of the importation of information or knowledge from overseas; “the risks involved in transferring such data to a context that is usually refractive to it, locates the objects of analysis entirely in a series of displacements which reformulate their origins and compound their validity.” With respect to the University, there is a significant lack of the critical academic apparatus required to process imported information, rendering a great majority of intellectual texts “inaccessible” to the Chilean student. Richard, like her contemporaries, acknowledges the “tardy introduction of overly formalized international languages to quite precarious conditions.”

Likewise, the realm of art production in Chile is equally subjected to the awkward imposition of prevailing international standards. It has been argued that the foundations of Chilean art have forever been governed by the ‘international standards of the Academy,’ which ‘pervaded ideals of social representation in European art,’ the ‘history of Chilean art,’ therefore, is effectively assembled around expropriations of national or popular ideals (or, as Richard claims, around the notion of the ‘European double or copy.’) With respect to the concept of transference, Mellado asserts that in place of a historically existent “material avant-garde in Chile,” there are instead merely traces of “copied transferences of information;” “There are moments when these derived transferences are more consistent, and others when they are more diffuse. And... in those moments of consistency, important formal accelerations occur. Period.” Similarly, the model of Chilean history constructed by Guillermo Machuca to inform an understanding of Chilean art focuses on local events as a ‘direct result of foreign influences.’ He places great emphasis, for example, on Cezanne as the marker of “Chile’s second stage of modernization.”

According to Richard, the works produced by the major players of the Avanzada were “informed by the dialectics of a culture historically divided between the local and the foreign, and traversed by competing languages and cultures.” She also traces similar patterns the ‘experimental’ work produced before the dictatorship (such as Francisco Brugnoli’s treatment of ‘pop art’), which, she affirms, tried to give new meaning to the

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78 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 86.
79 Ibid, page 49.
80 Francisco Brugnoli Interview: “A student once came to me and said, ‘We aren’t even capable of reading Nelly’s texts, because we don’t have the instruments of formation to be able to understand what they’re about.’ ...They could only laugh about ‘semiotics.’
81 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 86.
82 Ibid, page 85.
83 Guillermo Machuca refers here to a notion of “Cezannian rupture,” noting that “Cezanne’s appearance in Chile made possible a more constructive type of painting, and hence a transition towards conceptual art.”
84 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 88. (For example, Richard describes Eugenio Dittborn’s use of combined supports as an illustration of the “lack of coordination between the various techniques for building social identity in a hybrid culture.”)
“burden of images coming from overseas.” With regard to Chilean art as a whole, in addition to this ‘burdensome’ dependency on foreign models, Richard recognizes that many works appear to have to been motivated by an apparently incomplete or historically deficient notion of identity: “The works of the Avanzada existed at the crossroads of two histories: one dominated by foreign influence, the other arising from a process of discontinuous cultural references. And as such, they necessarily depended on a divided and fragmentary awareness of what is one’s own.”

Indeed, “in contrast to European Countries, where national identities were shaped by centuries of social and cultural traditions, Chilean identity was formed as the result of the state’s effort to bring Chile into the modern world.” Indeed, the expropriation of signs of national or popular identity has, as Richard illustrates, effectively suppressed collective memory and obscured the past, “The memory of the past is made up of remnants of other histories; it consciously constructs its own identity by borrowing from, and remaining indebted to, what it pretends to imitate.” The notion of Chilean identity (or ‘lo chileno’) is often characterized as ‘feeble’ or dubious, due in part to the cultural and historical oversight of specific local contexts on the part of global values. Both Mellado and Richard, among others, blame international essentialism for the reduction of the Chilean condition to simple images of primitivism, the feticshized and exotic ‘other,’ driven by intentions of capitalizing on the politics of differentiation. According to Richard, Chileans can’t escape this categorization without a real understanding of what is their own. The problem lies therein; there does not exist any real notion of the Chilean invention, (except perhaps, as Mellado states, in the recognition of the dubious origins of the representation of Chilean identity.)

“Once the Chilean subject was severed from that earlier reality, once the codes were scattered and the ability to interpret signs broken down, the only recourse was to seek alternative ways to recover the meaning of that history, which had been replaced by the Grand History of the Victors.” Artistic movements such as the CADA and the Escena Avanzada attempted do just that – to conceive of an unorthodox approach to the recovery of meaning in their past, unconventional ways to ‘salvage’ the notion of Chilean identity, which has been continuously rendered problematic or dubious.

Chile is plagued by a genuine lack of critical reflection – whether tied to the cultural deficiencies associated with globalization and transference, or to the despotism of Pinochet’s dictatorship. In 1979, the magazine CAL published an issue entitled “La crítica en el arte,” in which Francisco Brugnoli writes:

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85 Ibid, page 86.
86 Ibid.
88 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 85.
89 “Dónde está la invención chilena? En el reconocimiento del origen dudoso de la representación de una identidad, verificadas en una política del rostro y del paisaje.” (Justo Pastor Mellado, “De como el arte chileno es visto por los otros.”)
90 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, page 17.
“This period has been characterized by a rupture in the institutionality of democracy and
the university, and by the apparent lack of freedom of expression. (...) There has been a
lack of ‘cultural space,’ ...a devaluation of criticism, due to regrettable ‘absences,’ to
marginalized names, and to the caution imposed by self-censorship.”

What is at stake in the new intersection of politics, commerce, advertising, and
consumption is the very definition and daily life of critical public cultures – those spheres
of daily life where people can debate the meaning and consequences of public truths,
inject a notion of ethical responsibility into representational practices, and collectively
struggle to change relations of power and dominance. It is within these spheres that the
cultural workers featured throughout ‘REPASOS’ practiced, participated and performed.

As an alternative to the strategic means-to-an-end version of rationality91 limited by
Western-based capitalist models to the realm of economic efficiency, Jürgen Habermas,
of the Frankfurt School, prescribes a form of rationality driven by the intention of
reaching agreement with others – a “communicative action” – within which language
should strive to achieve what he dubs an “ideal speech situation,” wherein “citizens put
forward moral and political claims, and defend themselves on the basis of rationality or
critical thought.92” The experimental language of transgressive art in Chile under
Pinochet is certainly directed towards such an ideal, effectively serving to expose the
absence of a critical apparatus that could assess the breaks made by such works. The
various ‘players’ involved in this study ultimately proposed a ‘pedagogy of
representation not unlike that of Habermas, or the one set forth by Giroux in Disturbing
Pleasures – “one which firmly addresses the ethical imperative of providing a normative
grounding for constructing relationships between ourselves and others.” Indeed, they
cleverly turned to critical theory in their desire to address the effects of marginality on
identity, mentality, and the collective conscience. They address, for one, the powerful
poststructuralist argument that the self is constructed within and against language, and that
identity, like language, is always contingent, shifting, and deferred,93 94,95 in recognition
of the fact that no subject or identity is fashioned outside of its own history and
contingency. It is precisely their intense commitment to historical context and
contingency, and to logic and rationality, which serves as the tie that binds the artistic and
academic productions of these ‘cultural workers’ – cultural productions which, in their
attempt to unfetter the intellectual creativity and critical expression suppressed in the
Chilean consciousness and silenced by the restrictions imposed on language and
representation by the regime, propose a bid to honor and recover the element of
“REASON” set forth in their nation’s coat-of-arms,95 the open debate and discussion
necessary, in theory, for any community to flourish.

91 “Rationality” defined as “the ability to think logically, analytically and critically.”
93 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, page 113.
94 “Disturbing Pleasures,” interview: “I think identity is very ‘mobile’ term. You can’t just say, ‘this is my identity,
and it will stay like this forever.’ I think it’s not possible to say once and for all what identity is. I think
that is identity constructed ...it is under construction ...in permanent flux.”
95 The motto inscribed in the Chilean coat-of-arms reads “Por la razón o la fuerza” (“By Reason or by
Force.”)
The C.A.D.A. (“Collectivo Acciones de Arte” or “The Art Actions Collective”) and the Escena Avanzada are only two of the many components, ‘groupings’ or denominations associated with the domain of unofficial, counter-institutional artwork produced in Chile in the last decades of the 20th century. The major players involved illustrate the intersection of art and academia, of theory and practice; together, they are a conglomeration of visual and performance artists, poets, writers, theorists, sociologists and professors, all of whom exhibit a wide range of aesthetic diversity and bring to bear on the situation a variety of generational differences, historical backgrounds, artistic and academic experiences, visual languages, and political agendas. In light of this, it is difficult to present the body of cultural production produced under the Pinochet regime in Chile without homogenizing or reductionist consequences; as many of my interviewees have warned me, it is problematic to pigeon-hole these diverse practices within one particular frame or heading, as one block or whole, or to assume an interpretation of their combined cultural and artistic production that is explained solely by the mere existence of the dictatorship. The diversity of antecedents and collective experiences that influence this body of work must be understood within a wider historical context – one reflective of the years that came before, during and after the military regime in Chile.

It can be said, however, that a connecting thread exists among the artists and intellectuals depicted in ‘REPASOS;’ one that illuminates the myriad ways of perceiving connections, establishing relationships, and interweaving correspondences; for them, art and thought, emotion channeled through reason, are not separate but intertwined. Their combined artistic production reflects a notion of art used as a vehicle for criticism and reflection, exceeding a merely illustrative function (often characterized by the subordination of language to ideology.) For them, human agency and cultural production must necessarily be placed within the “struggle over language and meaning,” in order to interpret culture at large in political, ideological and historical terms.” Together, they turn to theory and established postmodern and post-structuralist critiques of authorship, aura, and self-referentiality, to construct a multi-faceted critical practice that intends to disrupt, rupture and expose the material and ideological functions of power, and the ways in which it works on and through the organization, presentation, and circulation of images, identities, and social relations; they produce, in effect, what Walter Benjamin has dubbed the ‘dreamwork of dialectical images,’ creating grounds for counter-narratives.

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1 “Reason is the connecting thread by which the artists, in their artistic production, leap from a theoretical social utopia to an analytical utopia.” (Gaspar Galaz, Remarks on a Decade, Recovering Histories catalogue.)
2 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 122.
3 Ibid, Page 98
4 Ibid, Page 105
Faced with the “ongoing exigencies of daily life as manifested differently in the tensions, suffering, and hope between the diverse margins and centers of power that have come to characterize a postmodern/postcolonial world,” they pay close attention to the creation, mediation, distribution and display of practices and symbolic expressions that constitute social imaginaries—various forms of image, text, gesture and speech. Within this setting, the subjects of this project reflect a commitment to the exposure and dismantling of hegemonic ideologies and institutional structures; they go to great lengths to deconstruct the dominant concept of the aesthetic employed by the discourses of “high culture,” marking important transitions with regard to the notion of ‘politically or socially engaging’ artistic production.

In order to more fully understand the types of transitions marked by these artists and intellectuals in Chile under Pinochet, it is necessary to first consider the type of ‘political art’ that existed prior to the military coup of 1973. It is relevant, for example to consider the work of Ramona Parra and the Brigadas Muralistas (“Mural Artists Brigade”), an organization of artists tied to the ‘popular struggle’ of the Allende days, associated with the political program of the Unidad Popular (“Popular Unity movement”). Emergent in a world filled with “possible utopias,” in a country led by the only democratically-elected socialist president of his time, it has been said that their murals emerged as a direct consequence of the “euphoria of triumph,” ‘bringing art to the streets’—generated for the ‘masses,’ from the people… for the people. Indeed, the Brigadas Muralistas aimed to speak to the social necessities of the average Chilean, alluding to issues including education, hunger, factory work, and state responsibilities, among others. In addition, they spoke of greater social and cultural concerns such as human rights and social justice, imperialism and social persecution. Strongly influenced by Mexican and Cuban mural campaigns for their use of muralist art as a form of opposition, ‘to incorporate the people’ and to foster and sustain a ‘cultural conscience’ that emphasized the needs of the majority over those of the ruling elite, the technique and methodology of Ramona Parra and his contemporaries intended to ‘politically, culturally and aesthetically educate the people’—to transform the walls and streets of Santiago into “vital and alert combative barricades.” Here, art was clearly

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5 Ibid, Page 150
6 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 100.
7 In light of this, Henry Giroux’s own analysis of Paolo Freire’s work is remarkably applicable here: “What makes Freire’s work important is that it doesn’t stand still. It is not a text for but against cultural monumentalism, one that offers itself up to different readings, audiences, and contexts. (...) Freire’s work represents a textual borderland where poetry slips into politics, and solidarity becomes a song sung for the present begun in the past while waiting to be heard in the future.” (Ibid, Page 151.)
8 Guillermo Machuca Interview (On the international context of the time…): “…North America invades Santo Domingo, there is the Cuban Revolution of ’59, there is the Vietnam war, the Student reform and revolution, the ‘hippy’ movement, etc. … It was a very interesting world at the time – a world of possible utopias… Above all in Latin America, where Allende was the only democratically elected socialist president at that time.”
9 (“BRIGADAS MURALISTAS,” Anales de la Universidad de Chile, abril-julio de 1971.)
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
committed to the social process and served both to establish an important dialogue with the city (“reclaiming the urban landscape as a primary medium of communication and social awareness”), and to foster an element of revolutionary conscience, “elevating the immediate and everyday existence to artistic motivation.” In 1966, at the exhibit “Vietnam Agresión” (a collective art show), José Balmes declared: We have been feeling the need for a synthetical, monumental language… There are a million responsibilities to take for what happens in reality… A form of expression in this context cannot express itself in a small gallery, it has to be for the great masses, seeing as it is all about an art for the masses.

The connections between the art of the muralistas, and that of the ‘transgressive movement’ of the Pinochet years are many; both maintain a spirit of demystification and disclosure; both seek to intervene within the city and use it as a backdrop for their collective performances; both display a retreat from pictorial traditions and challenge the individualistic and fetishized type of pictorial gesture symptomatic of the capitalist impulse. There is, however, a great incongruity between these two movements and artistic periods; the former was characteristically propagandistic, explicitly illustrative of a particular political agenda, remaining within a tradition of realism by making the image subservient to an ideological message. As stated by Nelly Richard, “they treated the painted wall as a monument portraying the saga of the popular movement, by means of pre-coded figures that addressed the program of political representation. Here the function of art continued to express a pre-fabricated reality by illustrating its discourse or by dressing up its stated aims.” What is missing, then, from the work of an artist like Ramona Parra (from the critical perspective of a theorist like Nelly Richard), is the active attempt to reformulate the urban experience, to modify causal perception.

According to Richard, the artistic practices that immediately followed the military takeover of 1973 maintained – to a degree – the characteristics of the Brigadas Muralistas. Though necessarily devoid of popular political iconography, the artwork produced between the years of 1973 and 1977 functioned merely as a substitution for banned politics – a stage for the reconstruction of the collective conscience, and a provider of the symbolic basis for identity and representation; Nelly reiterated this point in our interview: “Right after the military coup, what first occurred came from within the sector of the ‘unorthodox’ political left … the sector of confrontational art. In the face of prohibited politics, politics under intervention, art adopted an alternate

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12 (Osvaldo Aguilo, Plástica Neovanguardista, Editorial CENECA, enero 1983.)
13 (José Balmes, “El desafío de la pintura política,” Aconcagua No. 1, Pages 106 –141. España 1978.)
(Cited by Osvaldo Aguilo, Plástica Neovanguardista, Editorial CENECA, enero 1983.)
14 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 53.
15 Ibid.
function ...an alternate structure, in order to be able to say what couldn’t be said in politics... surrounded by the task of recovering the silenced and marginal voices.”

According to the online magazine *Crimes of War*, students during the period immediately following the dictatorship organized themselves not according to union or university demands, but to an artistic credo, which served as a kind of safety valve, an outlet for emotional expression. *Constable and Valenzuela* cite Marco Antonio de la Parra’s *The Raw, The Cooked and The Rotten*, for example, which they say “created a surreal authoritarian microcosm whose characters, waiters in an empty restaurant, were obsessed with order and death”; in this way, theatre emerged – the co-writers assert – “as a powerful if elite source of protest.”

Nelly Richard claims, however, that within cultural production of this sort (in the early years of dictatorship) demonstrated little preoccupation with the notion of critical thought with respect to language or spectator involvement; “*This first attempt to use art to repair the damage done to the Social Sphere was based on traditional forms and the need preserve the meaning of the past. It’s symbolic use of testimony or denunciation to secure a national or popular consensus took precedence over any formal analysis of language.***”

It is important to acknowledge that the cultural movement of the opposition reacted quite differently to the various ‘stages’ of the dictatorship. As Richard explained to me in our interview, one cannot compare the art produced immediately following the coup with that of the Escena Avanzada or the CADA (or, for that matter, with the art that emerged after the dissolution of these movements), due to the fact that the structure of artistic production is necessarily determined by its relationship to existing affairs of social and political (re)construction (which did not remain consistent throughout the period of dictatorial rule in Chile).

According to Richard, 1977 marked the beginning of the era of the “Escena Avanzada” – a name she herself gave to the body of work produced between 1977 and 1982, characterized by an “attempt to shatter the norms of the sort of political thinking that subordinates culture to the demands of its own social discourse.” Indeed, the artists of the Avanzada refused to use majority symbols, emotional testimony or denunciation to contest the regime (as the artists of the ‘first stage’ had presumably done), focusing not on the representation of reality but on the capabilities of intervention made possible by a reformulation of artistic production; “*These artists dared to gamble on a form of creativity able to disrupt the order imposed on language by the figures of authority and their grammar of power.***” The relationship they forged between art and politics went far beyond any mechanical correspondence or illustrative function …but tried to counteract the privileged and idealistic separation between the aesthetic sphere and the repressive social sphere, a separation which absolves the former from any critique of its own effects of dominance.” In other words, the Avanzada did not aim to explicitly illustrate their discourse against violence and repression, but rather questioned the systems that produce meaning.

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19 Ibid, Page 17.
Their inherent critique of political institutions necessarily positioned the Avanzada outside of the traditional positions of political discourse and party structures. As a result, they were brought into conflict with the cultural aims of the political left, who apparently only took from the Avanzada “those works which best illustrated its discourse,” i.e. “the utopian and socio-political aesthetic of the everyday.” As Nelly remembers it, the rest of the Avanzada works were “overlooked” by leftist intellectuals due to the fact that they “made little reference to the ‘power of mass culture’ or to the political means proposed by the left for a return to democracy.” According to Richard, the forms developed by the Escena Avanzada – with their aim to disrupt the prevailing systems, to infringe the norms and disciplinary techniques controlling meaning, and to make an act of dissent – were “more autopian than utopian.” In contrast, however, in our interview Richard described the work of the CADA as “heroic, utopian, messianic…” having a certain element of “monumentality.” Justo Pastor Mellado has written that the work of the CADA brought to the art scene “the call of socialism and its historical program”; perhaps it is the natural draw of leftist intellectuals to the ‘art actions’ of the CADA and their so-called “interventions in everyday life,” that allowed Richard to draw such a distinction.

It is difficult, however, to fully differentiate between the two, as the CADA is a group considered to fall under the general umbrella denominated by Richard as the Escena Avanzada; Kevin Donnelly describes the CADA as “one of the most important contributors to the Escena Avanzada.” The group, originally comprised of five members (artists Lotty Rosenfeld and Juan Castillo, sociologist Fernando Balcells, poet Raúl Zurita and novelist Diamela Elit), incorporated strategies of theatricality and performance as an essential element to all of its works or ‘art actions’ (while not specifically a theatre or performance group). Acknowledging the work of the Brigadas Muralists as their “closest antecedent,” the CADA’s works, committed to the foundation of an

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20 “The texts of every-day life, when constituted as objects of social knowledge, provide the possibility for combining textual, historical, and ideological analyses that transcend the narrow limits of discipline-based inquiry and also serve to challenge the disciplinary function of canonical texts.” (…) The emphasis on these texts, Giroux explains, can be used to promote “new subject positions and practices that encourage civic courage and radical, democratic citizenship in a postmodern, global world.” (Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 121.)

21 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 106.

22 Ibid, Page 18.

23 Justo Pastor Mellado, Ensayo de interpretación, op.cit cited M&I 113.

24 Note that in her interview with Robert Neudstat, Diemela Elit clearly states that the ties between the CADA have nothing to do with “great social change” or emblematic iconography, or with the Lefist position, which she describes as “monolithic, hegemonic and inflexible.” (Interview with Diemela Elit, Robert Neudstat, CADA DIA, 101.)

25 Arturo Duclos Interview: “The ‘Escena Avanzada’ is a general designation that includes groups of artists like the CADA, among others.”

26 CADA editorial in Ruptura, 1982 (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 62, Note 2.)

25
open and spontaneous practice of spectatorship, publicly and aggressively asserted themselves within the social sphere. “Our intentions are manifested in publicizing the work ‘for whoever,’ hypothetically ‘for everyone,’ …just as much for the regular consumer of art as for the every day ‘passerby,’ or the motorist who is involuntarily confronts the work openly presented in the street, and at the same time intervenes in it, transforming it with the mere act of having altered its ‘spectacle.’”

Disdainful of standard circuits of artistic diffusion, and critical of traditional mechanisms of art production, the CADA, like the Brigadas Muralistas, sought to free art from the confines of the gallery or the museum; their inherent critique of these artistic institutions reflects a desire to contest the “private ownership of salon work,” or the increasingly ritual nature of its contemplation in those privileged areas described by the CADA as ‘concealed bombs.’ In an interview with Maria Eugenio Brito, contrasting the “dead time” of the museum or gallery to the “living time of an art that works with vital experiences,” CADA members remarked, “We think of Chile as whole to be our gallery – that is the real spectacle to contemplate. Our objective is to intervene and trespass our every life situations, and to transform them.”

Once again, however, it is important to acknowledge the significant disparities that exist between the art actions of the CADA and the political murals of the Brigadas Muralistas; While the spectator of political murals is presumably a passive one (who merely ‘sees the ornamented walls as a space for graffiti or political propaganda’), the CADA’s spectator is also seen as a participant, actively involved in the creative process and part of the material of the work through his own interaction with it. Above all, however, the work of the CADA intended to interrupt and alter the normalized routines of the daily urban life of the citizen, by means of a semiotic subversion that decontextualizes and semantically restructures urban behaviors, locations and signs. That is to say, the relationship between their work and the spectator no

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30 “The institution of the Museum is based on material structures which ideologically condition the value of artworks, in particular those which endorse their ahistoricity and give them the illusion of eternity, placing them outside time by neutralizing all trace of the concrete historical circumstances under which they were produced.” (…) “These were the sort of structures the CADA’s ‘art actions’ tried to dismantle, by reasserting the subject’s actual physical participation in the construction of the artwork.” (…) “Thus for these works, to question the Museum meant that they also had to question the rituals of perception consecrated by it in the ceremonial hanging of the works, as well as the effect of confinement imposed on them by its institutional apparatus.” (Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 57.)
32 (CADA members, responding to an interview conducted by Maria Eugenio Brito, “Cuando el arte cae del cielo,” Apsi No. 105, Agosto, 1981.)
33 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 54.
longer took the form of a painted narrative of popular events; rather, “the group redefined the conditions of their creative participation in the behavior and discourses of everyday life.” In this respect, the CADA shared the Avanzada’s “experiments in language and its unorthodox transgressions in media intended to reconceptualize the ties between criticism and ideology; between art forms and social representations; between margins, power and institutions.”

What these artists and intellectuals under Pinochet share, in effect, is the blurring of boundaries that separate art and life. Creativity is conceived as something that overcomes and even eradicates boundaries between art (“or the thought behind the work”) and life (“the material of that work”). For them, these spheres formed an inseparable “binomial union,” serving to nurture one another in avoiding the pressures of both the commercial market and censorship. According to Richard, while the artist ‘works with experience’ (and is denied any individual gain), his work ‘reforms life’ by aesthetically transforming and socializing everyday experience; thus, it appears that “art and life are interchanged” and reconciled on the same continuous plane, without divisions or compartmentalization of values. As stated by members of the CADA in an interview with the magazine La Tercera de la Hora, “Our aim is to dissolve art through everyday creativity. We do not want any opposition between art and life. The future we desire for art is life itself, the creation of a different society as a great work of art. The evident synthesis of these two realms is manifest in many aspects of the body of work produced during the years of the regime (or the so-called ‘second stage’); its amalgamation of various media and supports, for example, is seen as a metaphor for the desire to remodel the whole social field and its domination – an attempt to exceed the boundaries prescribed by the ideology of creative production, including the boundaries between art and life itself.

It should be said, however, that the fusion of art and life is necessarily associated with the intense connection forged between art and politics; in fact, it is perhaps the latter which necessarily begets the former, and not the other way around. In addressing the prevailing symptoms of depoliticization and indifference – the lack of critical response to either political or social concerns – their attention to the representation of politics (and to the

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35 Isabel Aninat, Interview: On the CADA. “Despite the fact that they have a stance… it has more to do with art. It is not propagandistic. …In general, they were more or less of the left, but theirs is an art that transcended the merely political …unlike Lenin’s or Hitler’s, which was very political and propagandistic. (…) The CADA, in spite of the fact that they had a clear political position, did not use [art] in a propagandistic way… they went far beyond that.

36 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 53.


38 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 78.


40 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 78.


42 Interview with CADA, La Tercera de la Hora, 1982. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 82.)

43 It should be said, however, that While Richard limits her analysis to the ‘era of the Avanzada’ during the period of dictatorship, Guillermo Machuca acknowledges earlier examples of this fusion between art and life in the work of artists like Brugnoli, Balmes, and Langois from the 1960’s and 70’s.

44 More on the use of media and supports can be found in Chapter 3: “The Relevance of Form.”

45 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 75.
politics of representation) served to provide “an enunciative energy, a dialectic of
negotiation and translation,” with which to aid in the nourishment (and establishment)
of a collective imaginary or conscience, and brought to the forefront the issue of political
contingency. As Nelly Richard aptly states, “the new poetics of word and image allow the
discourse of the imaginary to collide with the discourse of political contingency.”

Indeed, the subjects of this project remained true to their commitment to social and
historical context in their bid to dissolve the borders between art and life, and between
politics and art; “At a time when complete areas of our collective experience were in
danger of being lost, buried under the disciplinary demands of a fatal conformism, our art
actions constructed and option not merely of art, but of life.”

It was precisely the interdisciplinary composition and approach of these movements – the
convergence of theory and practice, of artists and intellectuals – that enabled a
construction of this sort. That is, as the boundaries between art, life and politics were
severed, so were the divisions between visual, theoretical and textual practices.

According to Richard, the ‘new art’ emerging in Chile at the time, founded on the restructuring of artistic practice,
demanded the constitution of a new model of critical writing as of yet absent in Chile; new ‘producers of texts’
were needed, most of whom ultimately came from within the realm of literature, as they offered a greater familiarity
with linguistics – “a paradigm of scientificity absent in the visual arts” – deemed important not as a “canonical body
of knowledge,” but as a “contested site of historical, aesthetic, and sociological categories that transcend conventional modes of disciplinary
structure.” This explains the indisputable, necessary and fundamental relationship
forged between artistic and linguistic realms – between the texts and theoretical

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46 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 96.
47 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 56.
48 The angel of history has become a symbolic figure for the contradiction-laden alignment of life, art,
and politics to which left-wing intellectuals have tended to aspire, an alignment that in turn fascinates
left-wing academics analyzing such aspirations. It embodies the political and conceptual short-circuit
between "modern" culture and revolutionary rhetoric encapsulated by the catchword ‘avant-garde.’
(O. K. Werckmeister, Walter Benjamin's Angel of History, or the Transfiguration of the Revolutionary
into the Historian, http://www.uchicago.edu/research/jnl-crit-inq/v22/v22n2.werckmeister.html.)
50 More on the ‘displacement of supports in Chapter 3.’
51 “In Chile, due to the lack of an established market for painting, the only investment the art scene can
make is a discursive one. What cannot be speculated within the picture is transacted through the word.”
(Gonzalo Diaz and Justo Pastor Mellado, Protocolo, 1, 1984.)
52 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 45.
53 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 124.
54 Arturo Duclos Interview: “…It wasn’t a very big group, but everyone aligned themselves in the setting
of conceptual art practices; there were participating poets, and sociologists … and some film-makers,
and video artists, etc. So it was kind of a conglomeration at the end of the seventies and the beginning
of the eighties that lasted until 84 or 85, in which all of these people congregated in this type of
production.” (…) “I would say that in some way there was also a strong relationship with theoretical
aspects, as I have said. Many theorists, sociologists and philosophers also aligned themselves with
productions of writers like Nelly Richard, Justo Pastor Mellado or Fernando Balcells, and artistic work of those who chose to stay in Chile during the Pinochet years. As is explained by the pamphlet which accompanied the “Chile: 100 Años” exhibit at the Bellas Artes in 2000, “Catalogues and artists’ texts were emerging – in tandem with academic writing – as an important form of documentary.” Needless to say, however, the texts in question, though unavoidably complicit in the writing of Chilean art history, were committed to a significant critical practice that far exceeded the boundaries of art history. As the University was dismantled, along with the space it provided for the earlier model of the critical essay, the writers and theorists presented in this project filled empty spaces left by those authors who had fled – turning to new modes of analysis, references derived from French post-structuralism, they effectively rendered the Chilean tradition of aesthetic commentary obsolete, along with the hierarchy of values or interpretive schemas traditionally used in art discourse before their time.

Henry Giroux’s essay, “The Turn Towards Theory,” though written outside the context of the present discussion, provides insight into how and why Poststructuralist methods of analysis were applied to the situation of artists in Chile under Pinochet. As Giroux illustrates, this “cross over the disciplinary divide” – the exploration of new theoretical territories – underscores the importance of theory as both a political and pedagogical practice. Theory made it possible to “broaden the capacity of ‘cultural workers,’ to both understand and transform related conditions of knowledge power, collective agency and struggle,” to deconstruct the complex ways in which “truth is produced to uphold relations of domination,” “to reveal how cultural hegemony is secured and contested,”

these artists, such as Nelly Richard, Justo Pastor Mellado, and Fernando Balcells, who worked participated in the CADA.”

56 Justo Pastor Mellado Interview: “…But in a country with no consistent history of art, I have found that assembling exhibitions has been a way of working with history. So... I have gotten myself into this mess... but I enjoy confronting it; it is the paradoxical situation of putting together a curatorialship in the present... whose object is ultimately to continue constructing history. It is a re-reading of the history of art in Chile; and this re-reading isn’t one that I myself invented, it is a re-reading of other texts, by other people.” [Note on the “texts of Justo Pastor Mellado”: With his texts, Mellado makes a contribution to the necessity of documenting history, and converts curatorship into a form of writing the history of art.” (Carpeta: Chile 100 Años, “Version diagramatica de la escritua del arte chileno contemporaneo,” 92)]
57 “The new focus for the problem of culture under the regime resulted in a number of studies, providing many lines of thought. Where they converge is, so to speak, in their gravitation, explicit or otherwise, towards a sort of post-marxist critique (…) One could speculate about the influence, either received directly or through the strange twists and turns of intellectual thought, of Raymond Williams, Pierre Bourdieu, Louis Althusser, the various currents or schools of thought on semiology, [etc.]…” (Jose Joaquin Brunner, Cultura autoritaria y cultura escolar, Ediciones Flacso, 1984. Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 113)
58 Arturo Duclos Interview: It was a far more camouflaged, disguised, and codified system... and greatly influenced by semiotic codes. … So there was a strong influence on the part of French structuralism and the French semiotic school of thought, with regard to the systems of production of meaning and significance within the works.
59 Justo Pastor Mellado: “It is possible to believe that, prior to 1975, writing on art was a sort of impressionistic essay, a second-hand literature, a journalistic commentary. Since 1975, ‘science of writing about art would be postulated in Chile.” (‘Ensayo de interpretacion de la coyuntura plastica” (“On the Interpretation of the Situation in Art”), lecture given at the Taller de Artes Visuales, 1983.)
60 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 45.
and to focus on “the expanding power of representations, texts and images in producing identities and shaping the relationship between the self and society in an increasingly commodified world.” These diverse viewpoints about mankind woven throughout this new theoretical approach characterized the end-of-the-century postmodern atmosphere within which these artists and intellectuals were emerging. (According to Gaspar Galaz, it was an atmosphere they were “unable to escape from.”) Though accused by some to represent a form of ‘disciplinary elitism,’ or the “tardy introduction of overly formalized international languages to quite precarious conditions,” these new modes of analysis provided attractive and valuable tools with which tools writers, theorists and intellectuals could interconnect the problems of art with the area of socio-cultural thought in which they played a critical role, enabling the ‘scene of writing’ to become “one of the most recalcitrant forms of criticism against the language of the establishment, in spite of the major challenges it faced. Strategies such as that of deconstruction, as Ernesto Laclau points out, ‘accomplish the function of increasing our awareness of the socially constructed character of our world.”

In general, Poststructuralist thought sees 'reality' as being fragmented, diverse, tenuous and culture-specific; it affords great attention to specific histories, to details and local contextualizations, to the arena of cultural practice, to the structure of ideology, to the role of language and textuality in our construction of reality and identity, and places emphasis on the body – the actual immersion of the human into the texture of time and history. The applicability of these theoretical viewpoints to the body of work produced in Chile under Pinochet is undeniable; Judith Butler’s critique of foundationalism and its claims of universal status, for example, can be applied to Nelly Richard’s analysis of the essentialist social norms set forth by the regime in its design for cultural policy; likewise, Michel Foucault’s discourse on power, and his assertion that “power and authority are secured in the languages through which individuals speak and are spoken,” is relevant to the claims made by both Richard and Brugnoli regarding the regime’s control of power and language by means of restrictions imposed on speech and the production of meaning. (These concepts are addressed more fully in Chapter 1.)

Moreover, several of my interviewees stressed the importance of Walter Benjamin’s theoretical work and its impact on Chilean intellectual discourse; Carlos Altamirano, for example, referred to the text “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction” as their ‘bible’ at the time. Throughout that essay, Benjamin explores, among other things, what is implied by the ‘reproducible’ nature of art – the notion of authenticity with regard to the original vs. the copy, the separation of art from ritual, and the deterioration of ‘aura’ (or the detachment from the domain of tradition.) Both Richard and Brugnoli called attention to the significance of this text throughout our interviews – while Nelly discussed its relevance with regard to

63 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 86.
the departure from painting and traditional modes of artistic production, Brugnoli focused on the concept of aura and the **deterioration of the copy**.\(^6\)

In addition, Nelly further analyzes Benjamin’s work from the perspective of ‘historical analysis’ (which Giroux maintains is “inseparable from critical practice”\(^6\)); she placed great emphasis on Benjamin’s notion of **historicity**\(^9\), describing it as “essential to the artists’ thoughts on Chile’s ruptured past, culture and identity.”\(^7\)

According to John Lye, a professor at Brock University, ‘**history**,’ as a term, suggests an objectively existing, cognitively available reality, while ‘**historicity**’ implies that what we conceive of as history is tentative, situated, contingent.\(^7\) In her book **Margins and Institutions**, Richard explains, “the Avanzada artists worked with a particular historical time which was not only deprived of heroism but also impossible to express: a time disrupted and scattered by different voices and stories, by contradictory symbols and interpretations, by a clash of memories and counter-memories threatened with oblivion and struggling to piece together the meaning of a shattered nation.”\(^2\) Indeed, artistic production in Chile at the end of the 20\(^{th}\) century sought to interweave the fragments of an irregularly written, fractured history. For artists under Pinochet, neither the repressive ‘**official**’ history of the regime, nor the negative ‘**unofficial**’ history of its victims, could provide any logical coherence or interpretation; as a result they proposed, as Richard describes it, a ‘**new topology of the real**’ – an attempt to demystify the transcendental and accumulative use of historical time, and to oppose it with their own “mobile and anti-

\(^{6}\) **Francisco Brugnoli** Interview: “The idea of the copy and the deterioration of the copy is a very present phenomenon in Chile, precisely because all of Chile’s urban referents are merely photographic reproductions of images […] I learned the entire history of European art, for example, by means of a book… in which the textures were all identical, and so on… I could touch the images of these paintings, and therefore desecrated them, etc. I think that this topic still necessitates further discussion, due to the fact that (re)producing an artwork an the basis of a photographic image represents a loss, a deterioration… and from this deterioration, an entirely new thing arises.”


\(^{9}\) On the Benjaminian notion of ‘**historicity**’: “Benjamin's suggestive visual allegory has become a meditative image--an *Andachtsbild*--for a dissident mentality vacillating between historical abstraction and political projection, between despondency and defiance, between assault and retreat. The image …allows [such a mentality] to stay put within the politically disenfranchised, and hence ideologically overcharged, realm of culture. (…) The complications of the attendant exegetical history, which has never shied away from the paradox, resulted from the effort to wrest a positive meaning from the seemingly absolute verdict, pronounced in the **thesis, about the catastrophic course of history and the powerlessness of its witnesses.**” (O. K. Werckmeister, Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History, or the Transfiguration of the Revolutionary into the Historian, http://www.uchicago.edu/research/jnl-crit-inq/v22/v22n2.werckmeister.html.)

\(^{7}\) **Nelly Richard** Interview: “What happens with history here is exactly what happens in [Walter] Benjamin’s dialogue, which very much influenced the distancing from … the ‘art of memory,’ … the ‘art of identity,’ … ‘the art of the people.’ …There existed a notion of history that was much more transcendental, epic… a ‘monumental’ history about the defeated, which took on a symbolic form that was just as extensive and complete as the ‘official’ history. Meanwhile, the Avanzada saw history as a discontinuity… as a ‘jump’, as a ‘rupture,’ as an allegory, as a metaphor… in a very ‘Benjaminian’ way, I would say.”


\(^{2}\) **Nelly Richard**, Margins and Institutions, Page 112
The “aesthetic of the ephemeral” created by their works, from Brugnoli’s installations to the CADA’s art actions, can be ascribed to this so-called ‘mobile and anti-accumulative tempo” – defying marketability, as Gaspar Galaz explains, because they are “meant to last only as long as the life of the exhibition.”

Carlos Altamirano, the first of the artists that I interviewed, spoke to me of a piece he did entitled, “Revisión Crítica de la Historia del Arte Chileno como Trabajo de Arte” (“A Critical Revision of the History of Chilean Art as a Work of Art”), describing his desire to work with ideas of identity, nationality, originality, national roots, etc.

Ernesto Saúl, in his book Artes Visuales 20 Años, describes Altamirano’s work in this piece, drawing a distinction between Chilean art History, and the history of Chilean art. With regard to the former, “History” (capitalized) has a certain idealist, totalizing or globalizing element, while the latter (‘history’) is ‘absolutely personal and private.’ (On the one hand, “History presents itself as a harmonic vision in which things both restrain and complement one another other,” while “history is not a harmonic vision but an encounter, a permanent contradiction.”) According to Saúl, what Altamirano criticizes with respect to art history is precisely the way it is depicted as The History; it’s writers ought to say “I am speaking from right where I am, based on my own particular educational experience, associated with (or having been associated with) one class or another. That is to say, I am one person, and I speak from the position of who I am and of what I think, of what I know, see and live.”

In the words of CADA member Raúl Zurita, “Art no longer illustrates history as a reference, but tries to integrate the diverse concrete historical developments in the work’s mode of production or in a moment in its structure” – that is, art here reflects the shifting terrain of personal history, identity and place, and the artist’s individual challenge to the inheritance of a past. In this sense, there is a ‘politics of recuperation’ implied – one which provides the basis for dialectical exchange between the self and

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73 Ibid, Page 18.
74 Gaspar Galaz, Remarks on a Decade, Recovering Histories catalogue.
76 “La Historia se plantea como una visión armónica donde las cosas se encadenan y complementan unas a otras. La historia no es armonía; es encuentro, contradicción permanente.” (Ernesto Saul, Artes Visuales 20 Años, “Carlos Altamirano: Dos Historias en Pugna,” Page160.)
77 When asked by Saúl about his own version of Chilean history, Altamirano replied, “I think – and this is a position that transcends art in a way, having more to do with politics – that there are many different histories... there are as many histories as there are individuals. And these are in accordance with whatever vision one might have of things, with what it is they do and do not recognize; they pass through one’s own personal biography.” (Ernesto Saul, Artes Visuales 20 Años, “Carlos Altamirano: Dos Historias en Pugna,” 160.) This assessment is reiterated in my own interview with Altamirano: “Everything has to do with reviewing my own life, my biography; I took it all in again and reformulated everything that had happened in the past. I live in this world, and therefore everything of mine – my memories, everything – is related to what’s happened in the past.”
78 Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 95.
social criticism; while it may be a matter of recovering or exposing lost histories (as I will further explain in a moment), it is also a matter of “asserting the need for a pedagogical practice that addresses the issue of how forms of cultural identity are learned in relation to the ordering and structuring of dominant practices of representation.” The artistic production of Virginia Errazuriz, for example, as Nelly Richard describes it, confronts the setting of “the grandiloquent rhetoric of a monumental history,” as she works with “interrupted meanings… minute fictions of fragile lexicons that direct attention to areas not visciated by explanatory discourse.” The suggestion here is not merely limited to the demystification of hegemonic representations and codes, but to historical, semiotic and relational analyses which serve to foreground, rather than erase, the material economies of cultural and social production. In their fusion of art, politics and life, the artists and intellectuals depicted throughout this project initiated a “vital and urgent restructuring of every form of historical participation” in order to protect and achieve “the future needs of the present.” A propos of Miguel de Unamuno’s question, “Is not the present the striving for the past for the sake of building the future?” in the case of artists under Pinochet, is not perceived as a search for the founding moment that will explain the present or the future, but is rather seen as a text itself, which necessarily requires a re-interpretation and a rewrite, as an act of cultural recovery.

This cultural recovery also inevitably implies the resurrection of a silenced or hidden past – the reclaiming, retrieving, healing, remembering, and regaining of private and public, individual and collective histories, elements of the “pressing need to take possession of the expressions of twenty years of the Chilean Soul.” The acts of resurrection or exposure can be seen as substitutions for the forbidden present; “Because the present is so restricted, the past becomes one of the most eloquent metaphorical sources.” In light of this, the works the Avanzada reveal various mechanisms by which the representation of national or popular histories and identities have been curtailed or excluded from the ‘official history’ of Chilean Art; in their various references to the history of Chilean painting, for example, Eugenio Dittborn, Carlos Altamirano, and Gonzalo Diaz all “try to force the genre to yield up its secrets by confronting it with objects or situations hitherto repressed or censored, thus unmasking the national body’s foreign disguise.” At issue here is the act of returning the ‘repressed’ (the national, popular body) to the ‘repressor’ (official culture or the Academy), as evidence of its censorship and to “unblock the trauma of history.”

In an interview with Juan Andres Piña in 1983 (which took place just before the release of her book Lumpérica), Diamela Eltit responded to an inquiry about her work with

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79 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 103.
81 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 90.
82 Miguel de Unamuno, Ultima Lección, Obras selectas, 1965. (Cited by Ana Maria Palma, Foreword, Recovering Histories catalogue, Page 18.)
83 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 113.
84 Ana Maria Palma, Recovering Histories catalogue, “Foreword” Page 18.
85 Ana Maria Palma, Recovering Histories catalogue, “Foreword” Page 18
86 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 31.
87 Ibid, Page 95.
88 Ibid, Page 95.
prostitutes, asserting that one has to illuminate such marginal spaces in order to see what they really are. It appears that the element of exposure is a connecting thread throughout all of the CADA’s works and ‘art actions,’ many of which serve to expose the hunger, poverty and struggle of Santiago’s marginalized neighborhoods; indeed, their work, as Diamela Eltit asserts in her essay “CADA 20 AÑOS” (written in 1999), never ceased to “make passionately explicit the unease, the criticism, the open dissidence…” Similarly, in describing his 1996 piece Retratos, Carlos Altamirano explained his decision to work with the ‘reality’ of the disappeared prisoners—“to expose them and give evidence of them”—in order to address the shame he felt about Chile’s widespread success, and the people’s “intentions of forgetting.”

In a 1980 issue of the magazine Hoy, Eugenio Dittborn declared, “As in psychoanalysis, in order to understand the present one must explore and acknowledge those moments which are collectively repressed or forgotten.” In light of this statement, the theoretical contributions of Sigmund Freud are undoubtedly relevant; his psychoanalytic essay, “Mourning and Melancholia,” for example, is useful to inform an understanding that the need for resurrection or exposure is an intrinsic part of the mourning process. Here Freud explains that “exclusive devotion” is symptomatic of both mourning and melancholia; that is, the object of grief is continuously kept present in the subject, and there is an apparent “turning away from every active effort that is not connected with the thought of the dead.” In addition, he warns us of the dangers of interfering with the process of melancholia, which, if left alone, will eventually be overcome. In Chile under Pinochet the melancholic process was not merely stifled or interfered with—any representation of it at all was strictly and fatally prohibited. In other words, the ‘presence’ of the disappeared was firmly denied, thus rendering it impossible for the melancholic processes to be overcome.

The symbolic references to the disappeared, therefore, served, to some extent, the psychoanalytic function of evoking the presence of those individuals whose lives had been denied, obliterated from Chile’s superficial reality; Virginia Errazuriz, in our interview, explained the efforts of her peers to “gather up and call attention to these people,” referring to her ‘missing’ friends and associates. It was apparently the “recuperation of memory” – the attempt to “call up some sort of reminder, a sort of morbid memento” – which, according to Arturo Duclos, connected the artists of Errazuriz’ generation with those of his own.

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92 Arturo Duclos Interview: “Well, I think what we share in common …is a recuperation of memory. I think during the 80’s, for me and for many others, all the works were based on this recuperation of memory. And still today, many continue to work with this. In the end, this idea of recuperation has to do with the metaphor of amnesia, a product of the whole ideological system that existed during the period of the dictatorship; there always existed this tendency to forget – a desire to forget or erase – as
Of particular relevance is Duclos’ piece “La Lección de Anatomía,” an installation of painted human bones done at the Sur gallery in 1985. Duclos recalls, “…They were painted human bones …like in the ‘incarnation’ painting process …where you have to paint the human body with flesh tones, etc. It was sort of a way to dress the bones with flesh again… a kind of symbolic form of bringing life back into those inert bodies.” Duclos’ testimony evokes a poignant statement made by Ana Maria Palma in the “Foreward” to the Recovering Histories catalogue: “These artists have “cautiously, sometimes silently, sometimes violently, penetrated the recesses of the human soul and taken the breath from the men and women of Chile, who seemed inert and asleep.” In the words of the poet Pablo Neruda, on the subject of Chile’s creative people,

“All they have gathered the wisps, the strands,
The tattered events
And little by little the rose gardens
The broad tack of the railways
The surfaces of pain.”

Eugenio Dittborn and Carlos Altamirano both use photographic portraiture to evoke the memory of the disappeared. (Dittborn takes it a step further, in layering the photographs with his own handwriting, which, according to Mellado, is used to invert the cultural hierarchy, serving to recover “the history of the ignored people.”) Likewise, the use of ‘carnets’ (national identity cards) in a work of art – such as that of Juan Pablo Langois, described to me by Isabel Aninat in our interview – “reactualizes the signs by which this obliterated past can be read, by symbolically rescuing a collective memory on the verge of drowning.” According to Richard, the resurrection of official documents such as these effectively symbolizes in the form of unearthing what was censored in the news, transferring it to the present as an act of confrontation – giving voice to the silenced and restructuring its language, inverting it as an accusation.

In conversation, Errazuriz recounted to me how a gringo had once asked her, “How were you all able to ‘create such ‘pretty’ things amid such violent circumstances?’” To this she

if to ‘clean up’ certain aspects of reality. And ultimately, many of the artists that you’ve mentioned were constantly trying to call up some sort of reminder, a sort of morbid memento – like a constant announcement about the memory of death and oppression. I think this is a common characteristic of many of these works.”

95 (More on the implications of photography and form can be found in Chapter 3.)
96 Justo Pastor Mellado on Ditborn’s work, cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 88.
97 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 41
responded, “One had to invert language in some way… in order to be able to speak.” Indeed, as Richard maintains, the language of creativity was necessarily restructured so that artwork could again become a force for opposing authority and its norms of meaning; “at a time when the real is forbidden, there is a demand for the symbolic.”

In our interview, Nelly explained the process by which a speaker or visual communicator becomes ‘hypersensitive to the maneuvering of signs, “What self-censorship does is make every operator of signs – every writer, every artist, every poet – establish a much more intense relationship with language; as a result of self-censorship one must think about the materiality of language and the risks involved. …They must think about the language and its communicative substance… about the perversion of codes, the reversal of signs, etc… So, really this refers to the critical powers of language” (...) “With regard to the Escena Avanzada one can’t ever speak about a lack of critical thought. I would say that this scene represents an exacerbation of critical thought… precisely an attitude of permanent dismantling and deconstruction … of the systems of signs, of language, of codes, of mediums, of techniques, etc”

Once again, within Nelly’s discourse and that of her contemporaries, one perceives a decisive turn towards the critical theories of poststructuralism, which in this case argue that ‘reality’ (like history) must be read as a text, reasserting the importance of language as a mode of representation that constitutes rather than merely expresses what counts as realist. The poststructuralist discussion on the inherent critical functions of language was especially attractive to artists and intellectuals in Chile under Pinochet, who found that it was possible to use the power of creativity to undermine the language of dominance. Due to the fact that language was such “treacherous ground to tread,” theirs was a counter-attack built on syntactical constructions, cryptic references, and such “elusive techniques as ellipsis and metaphor.” According to Richard, the tools that they took from poststructuralism – quotations cut ups, montage, collage, etc. – allowed “a combinatory and redistributive use of the text of the culture.”

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98 Ibid, Page 68.
99 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 112.
100 “What is a chair? The object, its image or its definition? This operation isn’t intended to have any aesthetic effect, but merely defines the artistic activity that departed from traditional formulas based on an interrogative attitude in the face of art. The fundamental characteristic of this tendency is its detachment from the object, free from artistic manipulation…” (…) “A displacement in the center of gravity occurs, shifting from the task of the artist towards the rules of the process itself. The thinking and acting subject is substituted by the system of signs that used, privileging their signifiers. Some art theorists have defined this displacement as an epistemological rupture, which consequently determines artistic practice to be the subject of this process.” (Gaspar Galaz, “La Pintura en Chile,” Chapter 7, Page 351.)
101 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 19
102 “The artist turns to mass media to select certain images related to situations, events, or factual points that routinely correspond to one’s daily life in their urban surroundings; then, he subjects the images and its information to a rigorous analysis of its basic components, establishing different levels of reading in order to reorganize them in accordance with a new structure, one with its own process of communication and its own informative standpoint. In this way, [the artist] alters or transforms the conventional mechanism through which the original information is carried.” (Gaspar Galaz, “La Pintura en Chile,” Chapter 7, Page 346.)
Relevant here is the Derridean concept of *différance*, which is links up with Freudian suppositions and Marxist ideas to highlight concepts of repression, displacement, condensation, substitution and so forth; here Derrida essentially illustrates the idea that meaning is capable of disguising itself, and can be deconstructed or revealed by following metaphoric or metonymic links; what is 'meant' is different from what appears to be meant.\(^\text{103}\)

In my first days of researching this project, I walked into the *Galería Animal* in Santiago to ask its director, Tomas Andreu, a few questions regarding the nature of artistic production in Chile under the regime; Andreu made a poignant connection between Chilean artists of the eighties and *Capoeira* dancers in Brazil\(^\text{104}\), with their use of alternative modes of expression to communicate their past and preserve their traditions. Later, when meeting with my interviews, I often asked them to comment on this metaphor\(^\text{105}\); *Carlos Altamirano*, for example, seemed quite satisfied with the comparison, explaining that art produced from within Chile under Pinochet was distinguished by the obscurity of meaning, the superimposition of codes and signs… the way the artists “are accustomed to saying things that aren’t what they seem.” He referred to the artist Alfredo Jaar, who had left Chile for a period of time, to illustrate his point:

> “Alfredo Jaar is obviously a Chilean artist... but in spite of the fact that he uses Chilean themes and is a good artist, I consider him a North American artist – because he’s direct. Rather, he’ll say, “A plus B equals C,” and nothing more than that. ...On the contrary, here in Chile we are accustomed to saying things that aren’t what they seem; we use tricks... they bounce off every surface, like billiard balls. ... Things came in many layers, with many hidden meanings. Though sometimes a piece’s initial meaning appeared insignificant, it was just a mask...and that, in general, was characteristic of all of the artists at the time.”

Similarly, *Arturo Duclos* made reference to an Uruguayan artist by the name of Carl Nicher, who’s work, like Jaar’s, openly and unambiguously relays it message; he, too, is direct, in his explicit portrayal of onerous images – images that were, according to Duclos, “swept under the rug” in Chile under Pinochet, replaced by “a far more camouflaged, disguised and codified system,”\(^\text{106}\) “[The Chilean artist] is the 'swindler,' always sort of in a dual position – deceiving one the one hand, and at the same time attempting to call up reality.”

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104 “*Capoeira*” is a Brazilian Indian “art form” that blends elements of dance, music, rituals, acrobatics, and fighting. ([www.capoeira.htmlplanet.com](http://www.capoeira.htmlplanet.com))

105 *Arturo Duclos* Interview: Well… It’s a pretty far-off comparison but I suppose it’s a good one. It is distant in that in the case of the slaves there was a sense – I would say – of happiness and animation in their expressions. Here, perhaps, there wasn’t the same effective tone – I would say that it was far more sad. It was far more grey, clouded – without this happiness of expression, this transformation of oppression into happiness… In Chile happiness was not what was being transmitted. What was being transmitted was rather different -- it was a certain psychological and I would say spiritual state.”

106 *Arturo Duclos* Interview: “The works contradicted the hegemonic position of the dictatorship…More than just reactionary, it was a gesture of defiance and opposition towards the repression of
The poststructuralist assumptions to which Duclos and his earlier contemporaries turned propose that “reality” in a “linguistic” universe is only mediated reality, and what is mediated is governed by the intricate workings discourse, ideology and language, none of which are transparent, yet all of which structure our sense of being and meaning. It is the study of the ways in which language works, by difference for instance, that allows an artist like Duclos to “speak between the lines” – to overcome the difficulty of having to reference ‘reality’ while effectively maintaining a level of deception.

In “Hoy Como Ayer,” written for La Revista de Critica Cultural in 1999, Fernando Balcells asserts, “twenty years ago the meaning of art was the loss, the absences, that which could not be stated or presented.” This is precisely the poststructuralist theory of displacement in language, namely the reading or definition of a text based on that which is lacking – the absence of meaning or, in the words of Raúl Zurita, “the appearance of the unsaid as the ordering access of language.” As Richard explains, this ‘unsaid’ functions as “the magnetic pole of a reading that becomes clandestine, namely it assumes the form of an investigation sorting through all the hidden signs of its meaning – a reading that undercodes in the hidden what the message generates as the reverse of its official decoding.” A deconstruction of this sort necessarily requires that a distinction be made between verbal and non-verbal language; one must acknowledge, as Justo Pastor Mellado affirms that he does, “the value of loss or absence … the value of constructing things based on what is missing or not present.” Indeed, in the words of Pierre Machery, “What is important in a work is what it does not say. This is not the same as the careless notation ‘what it refuses to say,’ although that would in itself be interesting: a method might be built on it, with the task of measuring silences, whether acknowledged or unacknowledged. But, rather this, what the work cannot say is important, because the elaboration of the utterance is carried out in a sort of journey to silence.” Eventually, through the careful employment of duplicitous and ambiguous figures, “what is omitted from the work is so evident that the omission itself is a trace or symptom of the orientation of reading.”

...The great difference here in Chile was the existence of a sophistication of linguistic codes. To reiterate Nelly Richard’s main points, it was a far better production in terms of metaphor and ellipsis – a sort of ‘circular’ work, at the linguistic level, about the messages that were being transmitted. That is to say, it was a far more camouflaged, disguised, and codified system... and greatly influenced by semiotic codes.

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108 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 31
109 Raul Zurita, Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 31.
110 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 31.
111 Francisco Brugnoli Interview: “I am very interested in the notion of silence ...I think it is important to distinguish between visual and verbal language as two different things. If not, one and the other wouldn’t exist. If I can say ‘this,’ it is not necessary to do ‘that.’ ...I produce a piece in the sense that I can’t say it. ...There are some necessities of language that can only be settled by means of metaphor or metonymy; it is in these where the work appears.”
113 Bernado Subercaseaux, Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 27.
The tactical use of ‘silence,’ non-verbal communication, and omittance in the ‘game of signs’ employed by artists in Chile under Pinochet – the “aesthetics of the wink” – both enabled them to survive authoritarianism, and ultimately strengthened their position in the face of adversity, as the element of ‘secrecy’ could presumably be eliminated. Indeed, Nelly Richard assumes the position that the works of the Avanzada need not be clandestine; “their response to authority wanted to be seen and tested in the places sanctioned by authority… they sought to gain visibility and to that end used every available exhibition space.” While Richard’s claim is necessarily a subject of dispute (ignoring the works that insistently remained outside of institutional spaces, such as those of the CADA, and disregarding artists like Francisco Brugnoli who were unable to publicly show their work), it raises important questions about the notion of superficially succumbing to the constructs of ‘official discourse’ – giving voice to the repressed within the repressive language itself – in order to ‘express the inexpressible’ (‘decir lo indecible.’)

According to Richard, artistic production in the later years of dictatorship was intent to oppose the rules, to dissent, to dismantle the discourse of authority… but from the inside – an endeavor that inevitably necessitates a ‘fake’ submission to the official spectacle of the real, both that of the regime’s established discourse, and that of the ‘authority on international art’; At issue here are “the celebrated postmodern devices of parody and imitation,” which, according to Richard, are particularly applicable to the persecution of censored voices; “Repressed by and annexed to the dominant mode of signification, these stifled tongues filter to the surface, aping its ruling codes only better to subvert them, copying its figures and their memory through acts of counter-memory, becoming its repressed but transgressive double, its opaque inverse, its disguised other.” In other words, to filter the message, one need not merely mask that which is forbidden, but can also appropriate and invert the official culture’s established system of codes and signs, and thus effectively pervert its patriotic rhetoric. Here the work speaks the language of official culture – it talks the talk and pretends to walk the walk, so to speak – in order to

114 Bernardo Subercaseaux, cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 32.
116 (The clandestineness of this body of artistic production is certainly an issue of debate; as was explored in Chapter 1, many of Nelly’s contemporaries assert that the discourse of movements such as the CADA and the Escena Avanzada were in fact limited to enclosed, perhaps exclusive circuits.)
117 Arturo Duclos interview: “What happened was that everything was circulated privately, not in a public way; the work wasn’t hung on the walls of the museum for thousands of people to come and see, but rather it was something that occurred within a very closed circuit. That was the great change, with regard to how the artwork comes out and communicates with the public – it was now a closed public. And, therefore, when works are produced within such a closed circle, all of the codes are kept therein.”
118 Francisco Brugnoli interview: “The irony is that after 1973 I had nowhere to show my work. For me it was absolutely impossible, and the Escena Avanzada managed to create exhibition spaces that showed works of considerable importance.”
protect itself; but, as Richard affirms, it codes that form of speech or gesture in such a way that will eventually reveal “the truth of its negative.”

When applied to the body of work produced during what Nelly refers to as the ‘second stage of dictatorship,’ the words of Rodrigo Canovas ring true: “Poetic writing appropriates the emblematic repertoire manipulated by the official culture, giving it a different meaning. To the extent that it uses the same lexicon as the hegemonic discourse, it avoids censorship; and to the extent that it inscribes this lexicon into an ideological constellation of different signs, it produces self-censorship through the hegemonic discourse. (…) What is censored is allowed to speak only to the extent that it utilizes the same system of ideological representations as does censorship.” That is to say, the apparent absence of referents related to resistance, rupture or critique (which results from the misappropriation of the hegemonic ‘lexicon’), effectively put Pinochet’s men at ease, permitting them to accept the types of work produced by the transgressive scene as merely playful or pleasurable art. The irony here is multifaceted; while the artists in this movement staunchly rejected the notion of the ‘art of the pleasurable’ and went to great pains to restructure a voice of dissent, many of their works were acknowledged and even awarded by official institutions, who felt they were showing off their ‘good taste’ in bringing themselves ‘up-to-date’ on matters of art. Among the artists awarded or otherwise consecrated by official institutions were Eugenio Dittborn, Carlos Leppe, Carlos Altamriano, Lotty Rosenfeld, Diament Eltit and Raúl Zurita; “these were the artists committed to the work of dismantling the discourse of authority, but then forced to negotiate from within the work”; their work paradoxically retained their official acceptance while providing a key for the Avanzada, the CADA, and various other sectors of the opposition.

To illustrate this point, one could look at 1979 Lotty Rosenfeld’s ‘art action’ entitled “Una mila de cruces sobre el pavimento” (“A mile of crosses on the pavement”), in which she continuously traced crosses at right angles to the traffic lines on the roads of Santiago as a way of defiantly altering the codes of urban movement – the patterns that regulate the social landscape and govern behavior – thus necessarily engaging both an act of civil disobedience and, according to Diament Eltit, “a struggle for change.” Near the time of the 1988 plebiscite, Rosenfeld performed her ‘art action’ outside of the Diego Portales building in Santiago, where Pinochet held his official

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119 Ibid, Page 32.
120 Rodrigo Canovas, op.cit. (Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 33.)
121 (Recall from Chapter 1, that the regime felt “more threatened by such genres as theatre and music (which were considered more “capable of bringing about greater ideological consensus or popular unity”) than by more abstract movements such as the CADA and the Escena Avanzada in the scene of visual arts.)
122 Arturo Duclos Interview: “because everything was functioning underground, it was impossible for any major danger to occur. There was never a very real risk situation, because we were not exposing ourselves in the streets…”
123 (More on the so-called “art of the pleasurable” in Chapter 3.)
124 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 27.
functions. When brusquely questioned by one of the guards, she explained that her gesture of transforming the (–) sign into a (+) sign was a symbolic ‘yes’ vote for Pinochet. (The ballots for the plebiscite were designed with two horizontal lines for either the ‘yes’ or the ‘no’ – voters were asked to mark them with a vertical line to cast their vote.) Not only did the guards allow Rosenfeld to carry on, but they cleared the space so as to encourage spectator involvement.

It must be noted that the acceptance of these works on an official level in some way lessens their impact by re-inserting them into the very discourse of aesthetic tradition that they so firmly wish to intervene; like all other areas of cultural production, official criticism “forcibly accommodates the works to a grid of interpretation excluding any element that is contrary to the commentary’s task of ideological persuasion.” Thus, the artist’s already difficult position (described by Duclos as the twofold task of maintaining deception while also ‘attempting to call up reality’) is then doubly confounded by the risk of being tailored to the needs of the authorities – the struggle against total immersion and fatal conformism.

However, “fully aware that neither their marginal position nor their ability to twist meaning saves them from official coercion,” the Avanzada artist’s transformation of the systems of artistic creativity – his skillful use of and experimentation with language – generates a type of work that is altogether irrelative to any order and its logic of functioning. Whether or not they are clandestine or overtly subversive in actuality, it can be said that these works presuppose, as Richard maintains, a kind of subversive or clandestine reading. The artists in Chile in the latter half of the 20th century, as Altamirano explained, were accustomed to saying things that aren’t what they seem; the restrictions imposed on language by the regime only exacerbated this tendency. While the few existing outlets for non-official criticism (limited to the narrow distribution of various catalogues, pamphlets and magazines) were burdened with the tasks of both ‘rescuing’ the works from the circuit of commercial competition (in which “the price tag system envelops them”), and challenging the hegemony of meaning in official criticism, the artists – in an attempt to avoid the “narrow and tricky margins” of censorship and self-censorship – obligatorily made use of various elusive or disruptive devices, overloading their works with proliferated signifiers, symbols, metaphors and implied

128 A similar narrative is told in the article, “Como se hizo el apagón” (‘How the blackout heppened’): As the writer Isabel Allende was walking down the street, she was stopped by an officer for failing to ask permission to walk with her ‘citroneta pintada.’ ...Allende’s friend came up with the idea to say that they were “advertising a new product.” This satisfied (even pleased) the officer and he allowed them to pass. (“Como se hizo el apagón,” Page 148.)
129 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 27.
130 Fernando Balcells, “Collectivo Acciones de Arte,” 1980. (The issues of immersion and “fatal conformism” are further explored in Chapter 1.)
131 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 27.
132 (More on the distribution of ‘non-official’ publications in Chapter 1.)
133 Carlos Ochsensius, Agrupaciones culturales populares, Ediciones Ceneca, 1983.
meanings, offering many possible readings through the use of multiple, fluctuating referents.¹³⁴

Francisco Brugnoli appropriately illustrated this last point when I asked him to explain the frequent use of light bulbs as a medium in his work: “I have worked with light bulbs positioned in that way for quite some time. ... [With these] I worked mostly with [the issue of] the marginality of the ‘other.’ ...Now, what you see there you might find in a circus – in ‘poor’ circuses or in ‘poor’ theaters – used to illuminate the stage, fashioned exactly the way they are right there. ...Or you could also find lights like that mounted in ‘poor’ churches, for religious public services and rituals – exactly the way they are there. ...But, then again, they are also like the lights on the make-up mirror of an actor or a movie star. They are all of these things ... you see?”

It goes without saying that the fragmentation and assemblage necessarily employed by artists in the later years of the regime – the re-conjugation of diverse sources of information and sporadic frameworks of reference¹³⁵ – necessitate dynamic involvement on the part of the spectator to decode their cryptic references and symbolic gestures. That is, the reader effectively becomes complicit in unearthing the work’s hidden implications – he must contribute to and complement its utterances, or otherwise aid in the realization of its meaning; already conditioned to perform this kind of interpretive gesture, spectators now find that it is particularly necessary to be “constantly alert to the subtleties of what they are viewing.”¹³⁶ As Gaspar Galaz poignantly illustrates, theirs is an art form that indisputably relies on the notion of “concept as a prerequisite to practice in the process of creation” – one in which art and thought are interlaced; “We are in a purely speculative realm, where art as the creation, discovery, and tension of the spirit, becomes both the support and the realm for abstract thinking. In short, it is making visible an intellectual operation.”¹³⁷

Indeed, texts of the poststructuralist sort are by nature marked by a “surplus of meaning”¹³⁸ (a veritable density¹³⁹), due to the intensification of artistic language intended to delay any totalizing finality of reading. It is precisely the inherent rejection of essentialism and foundationalism – the apparent transmittal of totalizing “universal truths” – that necessarily characterizes poststructuralist discourse to be one of invention

¹³⁴ Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 19.
¹³⁶ Ibid, Page 32.
¹³⁷ Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” Recovering Histories catalogue.
¹³⁹ Justo Pastor Mellado Interview: “It was very important for me to use the words ‘transference’ and ‘density’ [in the title of the 2000 Bellas Artes exhibition], because I of greatest density within the greater period that I touched upon was that of the 1980’s. And that is why I furnished the 8 rooms of the exhibit as a function on this hypothesis of density; this means to say that there is, between 1973 and 2000, a moment of greater material/artistic density that defines the period as a whole.” (Note: “Density” defined by Mellado as “the way in which a particular amalgamation, full of complex elements, articulates itself and produces more consistent effects than in other stages and periods of the same history.”)
and construction rather one of recognition. That is, poststructuralists suggest that discourse should engage the reader, and encourage individuals to produce rather than merely receive meanings.

Given that theoretical underpinning and the actual political circumstances, the body of work produced in Chile under Pinochet was characteristically incomplete, ‘open structures,’ designed to solicit viewer-intervention. Here, the Benjamian notion of ‘readers as writers,’ comes into play; in the words of Tony Bennett, “The concept of reading formation… is an attempt to think of context as a set of discursive and intertextual determinations, operating on material and institutional supports, which bear in upon a text not just externally, from the outside in, but internally, shaping it – in the historically concrete forms in which it is available as a text-to-be-read from the inside out.”

This notion of reading a work from “the inside out” is central to each of the various forms of contemporary creative production in Chile; installation work, for example, (such as that of Virginia Errazuriz or Francisco Brugnoli) literally forces the spectator “to enter into the piece,” as do the urban interventions and ‘art actions’ of the CADA, which, as we have seen, insist upon the involuntary confrontation, intervention and transformation of their work on the part of the spectator (be they a random “motorist” or an “every-day passer-by”). Likewise, in literary terms, “the reader is one that works with the text, and incorporates his own devices and his own energy into what the French call an ‘escrilector,’ which means more or less that the text is both read and rewritten. ...So, the reader is more than just a reader who receives something predefined in the text, but rather the text defines itself with the help of the reader.”

Eltit’s account here gives conspicuous evidence of postucturalism’s theoretical influence; the discourse of Roland Barthes, for example, maintains that “[a work] is not perceived or received, it is read, connected, more or less consciously …to a [particular] stock of signs.” Granted, every individual necessarily involves their own personal background, accumulation of experiences, and set of interests in the practice of reading. The reader, in other words, does not merely accept a work at face-value, but is rather “invited to dream [in its] ideological space,” – invited to intervene in it and to transform it “with the mere act of having altered its ‘spectacle.’” As Lutz and Collins indicate in their

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140 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 142.
141 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 54.
142 Walter Benjamin, Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.
143 Tony Bennett, Cited by Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 20.
144 (FOOTNOTE # 23) (CADA editorial in Ruptura, 1982.)
145 Arturo Duclós interview, “I think we all have a foundation – an image base, a visual culture – which is more sophisticated in some cases than others. …In any case, there is a connection made [to the work]. …Based on the presence of existing commonalities between the work and that which the viewer has [previously] been exposed to. …The entrance to the works is wide open, and this is what interests me.”
146 Tagg, cited by Lutz and Collins, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes”
147 CADA editorial in Ruptura, 1982 (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 62, Note 2.)
essay, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes,” the reader’s gaze “has a history and a future,” unavoidably “structured by the mental work of inference and imagination.”

Gaspar Galaz, in his essay, “Remarks on a Decade,” alludes to the enduring significance of spectator-involvement as a fundamental element of contemporary Chilean art, a propos of Carlos Altamirano’s 1996 exhibition Retratos: “Altamirano’s multi-panel work seduces the viewer, while it denies him the traditional relationship between the picture and the painting. The viewer is enticed and amazed at not finding the conventional margins provided by the demarcations of a frame. The viewer’s eye is playfully and bluntly challenged by a new pictorial concept, by the multiple systems and by the exhausting complexity of meanings. Altamirano’s work engages the viewer in a textual reading that is difficult to decode.

While ‘un-official’ commentaries of this sort (supplied by Gaspar Galaz and other “art historians” of his time) indeed serve to illuminate the significant commonalities, collective aims and shared theoretical assumptions manifest in the combined body of work produced in Chile at the end of the 20th century, it is important to remember significant differences therein – its many layers of contextual dissimilarities, disparate aesthetic principles, personal viewpoints, and accumulated experiences – so as not to fall victim to an idealist or totalizing supposition of art History.

Nearly all of my interviewees forewarned me of the homogenizing effect of ‘labeling’ their incongruent assortment of works under one solitary denomination; the notion of the ‘Escena Avanzada,’ for example, conceived of by Nelly Richard, tends to falsely depict these works as a singular uniform mass; in the words of Carlos Altamirano, “the Escena Avanzada is a myth” – an after-the-fact construction, which ultimately has the effect of “trying to enclose this body of work within a frame that doesn’t exist.” According to Justo Pastor Mellado, the entire notion of the Avanzada was constructed by Richard as a way of ‘unifying’ a body of disparate, often antagonistic works under one convenient heading, so as to not to have to use the symbolically charged expression ‘avant-garde.’ On this issue, however, it is most interesting to hear from Nelly Richard herself, as it was indeed her own discourse that developed and delineated the shared principles, characteristics, and objectives of the Avanzada. She herself warned me, in our interview, “not to conceive of the Avanzada as a block or a whole,” and acknowledged its inclusion of “dissimilar works …that do not

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148 Lutz and Collins, “The Photograph as an Intersection of Gazes”
149 Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade.” Recovering Histories.
150 Justo Pastor Mellado interview: “In my view, the very notion of artistic avant-garde is tied to the notion of the political avant-garde within the discussion of humanities and political science in the 50’s, 60’s, and 70’s... Between us, there already existed a huge criticism of the Marxist nature of the political party, and the notion of the political avant-garde. ...So in 1975 and 76, in our conversations with Nelly, she couldn’t really use the word “avant-garde,” because she herself was doubting its efficacy, its existence and its necessity.”
necessarily share the same assumptions;” later, she confessed that it is in fact her book, *Margins and Institutions*, which ultimately “institutionalizes” the Avanzada in “presenting it as a referent” – “it articulates the objectification of a group of diverse & scattered practices, and thus makes them appear to be a whole.”

While Richard creditably acknowledges her complicity in generating false totalities with regard to the concept of the Escena Avanzada, she does not, as does Mellado, make reference to the fact that her discourse necessarily “assumes a certain point of view – one in which Chilean art is explained by way of the dictatorship.” That is, Richard puts forth the assumption that prior to the military coup of 1973, “art was previously conventional... but the dictatorship, due to the restrictive conditions it imposed, forced artists to advance in linguistic re-accommodations.” According to Mellado, this is a “rather Marxist” presumption, on account of its totalizing depiction of artistic production in Chile under Pinochet as one homogeneous entirety; drawing on the work of Eugenio Dittborn as an example, Mellado emphasizes the dangerous implications of such a portrayal, “Dittborn’s work it is very specific. You could literally organize the entire history of the last forty years around Dittborn’s work alone, and you’d see that Dittborn cannot be explained by the mere existence of dictatorship; he existed before, during and after it.”

Truth be told, *Margins and Institutions* was indeed the first book I read on the subject, followed by the catalogue written for the *Recovering Histories* exhibition that toured the U.S. in 1991. While undoubtedly compelling, both of these texts assume a similar position (that which is denounced by Mellado) – which inevitably structured and perhaps obscured my general understanding of contemporary Chilean artists of the late 20th century. Having learned from Nelly’s discourse, for example, that the artists of the Escena Avanzada were staunchly opposed to the use of popular iconography, I was confused by the conspicuous use of popular international icons throughout Duclos’ canvases151. Like wise, I made false general assumptions about artists like Duclos and Brugnoli, on account of their deceptive presentation alongside one another in the *Recovering Histories* exhibition.

To this Justo Pastor Mellado boldly responds: “And why do you think they were? ...Because of last-minute political ‘arrangements... that’s why.’ ” Apparently, according to Mellado, “this is one of the inherent problems of the transition.” In 1985, Richard included Brugnoli in an exhibition entitled ‘Fuera de Serie,’ implying his inclusion within the Escena Avanzada. In our interview, Mellado sarcastically mimics this gesture: “At long last we are part of the Escena!” Shaking his head in disagreement, he declares, “No way (...) Up until today Brugnoli ...has dedicated himself to the critique of Nelly’s discourse... Therefore, we

151 (More on Duclos’ use of popular iconography in Chapter 3.)
can’t really consider his work (or Virginia’s) as forming part of the Escena Avanzada. On the contrary, they were its principal opponents. ...Gonzalo Díaz wasn’t an initial member of the Avanzada either, yet he was also invited to participate in the exhibit in 1985. So... the Escena Avanzada is like a train... people get on and off of at depot stations everywhere.”

Indeed, it is easy to draw dangerous conclusions based on the inclusion of various artists within one exhibition catalogue or another, without an understanding of what falls beneath the general dominion of the Escena Avanzada or what separations, if any, existed between its members and other various groups like the CADA. Without a clear delineation of general differences or contextual dissimilarities, one cannot understand that the artists of the Brugnoli-Errazuriz generation in fact served as important antecedents to artistic production in the generations that followed, and reflected distinct personal agendas, formulated within the context of the 1960’s and 70’s as opposed to that of the 1980’s. Brugnoli himself is hardly modest in offering an explanation of his own seminal significance – alluding to the ‘deep reflections’ manifest throughout his earlier work and that of Virginia “with respect to spaces of circulation …to the appropriation of artwork, etc.” Condemning Richard’s discourse on the Avanzada for its failure to acknowledge these significant precursors, Brugnoli insists that many of the Avanzada’s main ‘players’ were undeniably either students or classmates of his (some of which even emerged from his own workshop, Taller de Artes Visuales); like himself, they were unquestionably influenced by artistic practices and polemics that existed prior to the coup; “I think that in order to talk about rupture or contemporary art in Chile, you have to consider – at the very least – the 1950’s onward.”

Gaspar Galaz, in “La Pintura in Chile,” does acknowledge the latter part of 1960’s as the era when art began to be seen and defined a new and different ways. It was then, affirms Galaz, that new expressive forms based on conceptual elements emerged, and there began a search for a “new way of seeing” – one that valued materials for their provocative or demystifying effects and not their aesthetic potential. According to Galaz, many of the artists of the 60’s used “diverse languages,” which carried with them “multiple mixed

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152 “As for Brugnoli and Errazuriz, I don’t personally think that they sustained the same gesture as did [Carlos] Leppe at the time …And Leppe’s gestures wasn’t the same as Dittborn’s either; Leppe carried out and articulated his actions through performance, Dittborn was thinking of altering the space of the frame. …Moreover, Leppe and Altamirano weren’t the same either…” (Diamela Eltit, interviewed by Robert Neudstat, CADA D DÍA, Page 91.)

153 I asked Diamela Eltit to comment on whatever separations may have existed; in her opinion, ‘separations’ is “too harsh of a word.” What did exist, according to Eltit, more clearly resembled various ‘differences of options’ – any commonalities or disparities that might have existed were largely conceptual in nature (i.e. the partiality working within or outside the confines of the gallery or museum.)

154 Isabel Aninat Interview: “The thing about Arturo Duclos is that he is much younger… he uses today’s language. He didn’t see the 80’s like the others did… he was just beginning to work then.”

155 Machuca agrees on this point (highlighting artists like Balmes and Brugnoli as important antecedents), but insists on going even further back in time… to the days of Cezanne and Duchamp… to the beginnings of academia itself.)
operations,” which brought the artistic element to a new, non-traditional context. Richard’s apparent oversight of such claims provokes a negative reaction in several of her contemporaries. While Richard does admittedly make reference to early examples of experimental photographic work in the mid-1960’s (alluding to artists like Balmes, Barrios, and Burgnoli, and their informal use of photographs depicting social and political events, and the everyday context of mass media), she emphatically maintains that “the use of photographic data in Chilean art only acquired real importance in 1977,” when artists like Altamirano and Dittborn first initiated the significant critical debate on photography’s inherent functions, effects and symbolic implications.157 Guillermo Machuca158 explains, “[Brugnoli and Balmes] would say that they were the first to position photography, to work with the urban landscape, to relate art and politics; but according to Nelly, these modernizing elements’ were never accompanied by text, or the a modernization of art theory which necessarily requires a recognition of structuralism and semiotics, of psychoanalysis and post-Marxism…. Nelly clearly maintains the position that ‘these readings are required in order to be able to speak about the works.’159”

Evidently, conceptual inconsistencies among various artists and intellectuals160 effectively provoked various fluctuations in rivalry and comradeship – polemics, tensions and accords; “At some times we were all great friends and met every day to work... and

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157 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 36. (More on the use of the photographic image can be found in Chapter 3.)
158 A discussion of Machuca’s own ‘thesis’ is of interest to the project, because is departs from Nelly’s and others’ in its trajectory; as I told him in our interview, “I have spoken with several of the artists themselves, but to speak with a historian (and not someone who was directly involved) allows me to take a step back and gain a more complete structural or historical understanding of the relationships between my subjects.” – Machuca’s hypothesis highlights the ‘desire for modernity in Chile’ as a recurring and important theme, noting that it begins much earlier than the time of the Escena Avanzada (as Nelly would argue that it does), but goes as far back as the beginning of academia itself, in 1849, with establishment of the School of Visual Arts (“a copy of the French Academy”), put in place “as if to be avant-garde in a sense,” to fill the “void” that existed within the arts in Chile. (See the section in Chapter 1, “Dependence of foreign models.”)
159 (This is also her position with regard to the younger generation emerging from the art schools and universities in the 80’s, whom she regarded as ‘illiterate,’ due to their lack of formal theoretical study. For more on this topic, see Chapter 4.)
160 Diemela Eltit / Robert Neudstat interview: On the ideological differences between the CADA and the group comprised of Richard, Altamirano, and Leppe: “Nelly and Leppe were in one place, Brugnoli in another, and then us in another. We still maintained similarities despite our differences; there were conceptual coincidences. We were, for example, groups marked by a decision not to be affiliated with any for of officialdom; our practices were dislocated with respect to normative traditions of art and this was not only an anti-dictatorial battle, but one also which, to some extent, the paralyzed and ceremonial tradition of the left. We were all radical – we had that in common. In spite of the fact that Brugnoli was a traditional leftist artist, he still maintained a sort of ‘underground’ element. His gesture was more transgressive, to open his space, the Taller de Artes Visuales.” (Robert Neudstat, CADA DÍA, Page 91.)
then two months later we’d be fighting, hitting each other... irreconcilable enemies.\(^{161}\)

Richard herself addresses this important point in *Margins and Institutions*, “In a kind of unconscious mimicry of the military discourse,” which portrays “any statement read as an official edit or struggle for position,”\(^{162}\) those discourses “which in theory should address one and the same fight, in fact attack each other. (...) These squabbles are almost always blind, burdened by a politics of confinement which nullifies the coefficient of their intercourse; they lose all sense of proportion with regard to the role of the scene at large.\(^{163}\)

My interviews, when read in conjunction with one another, provide a rare and intimate glimpse into the tensions and disputes that went on at the time; both Brugnoli and Machuca, for example, give great attention to Brugnoli’s controversial 1990 exhibition *Cadaver Exquisito*. To accompany the exhibition, Nelly Richard (and two others) wrote a catalogue on Brugnoli’s behalf – a text that spawned a ‘violent’ debate with Justo Pastor Mellado and Gonzalo Diaz. Machuca excitedly rehashes with me some of the content of this debate; he explains how Nelly, in her text, created an association between Diaz and Balmes, criticizing the ‘profundity’ of their work and their ‘gestures of narrative,’ in order to legitimize Brugnoli and emphasize his position on a level of critical art. Here Nelly seems to make Brugnoli appear more avant-garde\(^{164}\).

In response to this text, Justo Pastor, in his text “*No todo lo que se dice que brilla es oro sobre su cadaver*” (prefaced by Gonzalo Diaz), “whips out the writing revolver” in a theoretical showdown. Here, Diaz assures readers that Mellado is surely the “smartest and the fastest in the Western world;” he refers to Richard’s text as ‘clever, repetitive, short-sighted nonsense,” and recalls his grandmother’s warning that in addition to waste and rubbish (which were part of Brugnoli’s exhibition), the world is full of ‘swindlers,’ ‘pickpockets,’ …predatory writers. (“Predators who survive on cadavers,” Machuca eagerly adds…)

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\(^{161}\) Here Altamirano adds, “*There was in fact a discussion in the beginning with those artists of the left that stayed here in Chile – a heated, enraged discussion…. with Brugnoli and with the Visual Arts Workshop [Taller de Artes Visuales], a group of artists that formed around him [Brugnoli.] They were, at the beginning our biggest critics.*”


\(^{163}\) Nelly Richard, *Margins and Institutions*, Page 47.

\(^{164}\) Applicable here is Mellado’s remark regarding Richard’s seemingly arbitrary and inconsistent inclusion of various artists from the general dominion of the Escena Avanzada (“*the Escena Avanzada is like a train… people get on and off of at depot stations everywhere.*” SEE ABOVE); though she previously associated Brugnoli with the ‘official’ discourses of social science, for example, and with the ‘radical’ discourses of the left (linked, in her view, to ontological and hegemonic accounts), she later, as Machuca explains, praises Brugnoli for his critical practice in his 1990 exhibition, *Cadaver Exquisito*, contrasting him to José Balmes and Gonzalo Diaz, who she criticized for their apparent mysticism and profound gestures of narrative. (Recall that she did however, include both Brugnoli and Diaz in the in the 1985 exhibition, *Fuera de Serie.*)
It is no surprise that many of the period’s most controversial disputes revolved around the implications of Richard’s own discourse, while recognized as one of the most important critics of the Latin American world and acknowledged for her fundamental contributions with regard to the scene of ‘unofficial’ culture. Richard is accused of naivete or oversight by several of her various contemporaries, who perceive a totalizing element in her discourse and therefore label her as “dogmatic” and inflexible. Arturo Duclos, for example, openly admits that he found Richard’s doctrine to be ideologically controlling, likening her discourse and that of other ‘intellectual groups’ to ‘little Pinochets,’ who ‘ran around’ “determining and telling you how art was to be.” (…) “It was, in that way, a very restrictive feeling – like being in a straightjacket.”

Still, in spite of everything, “personal issues aside” – Diamela Eltit explains, “we never broke off our discourse.” Richard herself asserts, “during those years – due to the political conditions – [artists] were obliged to emphasize their commonalities and leave aside their differences, in order to protect and fortify what was being articulated.” In view of Richard’s statement, one can see how she and Brugnoli would have united in the mutual participation of something like the Taller de Artes Visuales. In Brugnoli’s words, “… I think the best thing we could do in opposition to the dictatorship, with respect to critical thought, was to create a reflective space that would influence subsequent criticism. And

165 “All the groups thought they had ‘The Truth’ …I still think that the CADA was the most radical of its time… we acted politically by way of the concrete social body, the population, popular subjects, etc… and that’s what Nelly criticized. She saw it as a ‘totalizing’ ("totalizante") gesture. She was all about symbolic gestures and we were all for actions that dealt with the real.” (Neudstat / Eltit interview: (CADA DÍA, pg. 91)

166 On the subject of the Escena Avanzada and Nelly Richard’s analysis, Guillermo Machuca carefully explains the importance of ‘placing’ it, with respect to others of the time. Hers is different, for example, from the ‘oral’ discourse of Brugnoli and Balmes… hers cannot be found within the officialdom of academia, nor within can it be placed within the realm of social sciences, sociology, or the ‘triumphant’ left. In this way, Machuca explains, she is placed within the margins.

167 Francisco Brugnoli interview: “I think the Escena Avanzada identified itself with a heroic concept that contradicted the content, the very operation of its work. A deconstructive operation isn’t heroic at all; it is an anti-avant-garde operation in a way.”

168 Arturo Duclos interview: “The truth is that there is a bit of cliché surrounding all this about he Escena Avanzada – how it was all a clandestine movement, an opposition… there’s a tendency to mythalize all that.”

169 Guillermo Machuca, for example, criticizes her analysis for her failure to address the subject of sculpture – at the theoretical level. Machuca applauds her reference to great semiotic thinkers (such as Gilles Deleuze, Michael Foucault, Lacan, Levi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Walter Benjamin, etc.), but condemns her exclusion of sculpture at the level of visual arts. With regard to the circumstances at hand, according to Machuca, “the work with the corporal and with the urban space can also been seen from the perspective of sculpture.” (This topic is further explored in Chapter 3.)

170 Justo Pastor Mellado interview: “Listen, it would be much simpler for you to dedicate yourself to Nelly Richard. And why? …Because she is much more dogmatic. …And everything that is more dogmatic is more approachable from a student’s point of view.”

171 In Richard’s defense, she does mention in her chapter on the “Scene of Writing” that the “lack of potential debaters [symptomatic of the historical and cultural context of the time] gives the word uttered by the text, in spite of itself, a tone of authority, as there are no opportunities for comparison with other dissenting voices. (Margins and Institutions, Page 47.)
the best thing that post-dictatorship art produced wasn’t so much the art itself, even with regard to its international importance ...but its unique theoretical discourse, which had tremendous originality and impact. This is what inspired Ronald Kay and Nelly Richard... but ultimately it is Nelly who really who permanently sustains it.”

Brugnoli said it himself – the artists and intellectuals in Chile under Pinochet, in spite of their inherent disjunctions and divisive polemics, necessarily came together to generate ‘reflective spaces’ for epistemological discussion, united by a common aim to disrupt, rupture and expose how power works to promote relations of domination. Forming what Duclos refers to as a “common front” their combined intellectual body of work is aligned in a significant critical practice that destabilizes not only dominant regimes of representation, but also “the ideological edifice and technological apparatuses that provide the context, content, and positioning of the radical gaze or event of criticism itself.” What’s more, as Brugnoli rightfully affirms, it is Richard’s discourse that serves to ‘permanently sustain’ the originality and impact of this critical practice – thus, while she may appear ‘dogmatic’ or ‘shortsighted’ to some of her contemporaries, her lasting significance is undeniable. In our interview, she unassumingly stated,

“Perhaps there was a need for ‘an articulator,’ so that the various scattered practices could appear above a common denominator, in spite of their existing differences.”

Her efforts as an ‘articulator’ are clearly of great import; her analysis, and that of her contemporaries, illuminates the myriad ways that the conditions under which these works were produced – the polemics of modernity – are necessarily inscribed in each of them. What’s more, as Sol Serrano aptly states in the Recovering Histories catalogue, the critical practice cultivated by Nelly Richard and her peers confirms that art in Chile under Pinochet did more than merely challenge the establishment; they, too, played a role in recovering democracy, “not simply as creators of politically engaging art, but rather as autonomous actors in a political process that was intrinsically cultural.”

172 Arturo Duclos Interview: “There existed a rather intellectual body of work that formed, above all a common front... against the dictatorship. (...) More than just reactionary, it was a gesture of defiance.”
173 Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 95.
CHAPTER 3 – THE RELEVANCE OF FORM: A DEMAND FOR THE SYMBOLIC

The body of ‘unofficial’ work produced in Chile under Pinochet (including, though not exclusive to, movements such as the CADA and the Escena Avanzada), was undoubtedly driven by a refusal to conform to hegemonic ideology, and thus rejected dominant aesthetic standards, modes of art-making, and forms of representation. As a result, these works inherently criticized traditional media, methods, and supports, as well as institutional standards of commercial exchange and commission. “It was a time… when painting lost its preeminence, as [their] discourse was being articulated through art actions, performance art, innovative printmaking, and texts, all of which attempted to define and empower marginal art practices thereby providing a new understanding for art.” The urban interventions of CADA members and their peers, for example, with their use of the social landscape and the corporeal as a medium or support, show signs of a decisive turn towards the artistic trends of ‘land art’ or ‘body art’ that gained widespread popularity in the 1970’s. Their international prominence notwithstanding, artists and intellectuals were primarily attracted to such movements during the years of military rule for their local significance and relevance; “Art practices in fashion ten years ago (…) are close to our reality today; irrespective of the international standards, because they echo the drama of our daily life. (…) Recent developments in art do not define our scene, but rather our exposure to poverty and pain, to the loneliness of individual lives.” The same could be said of the great influence of Walter Benjamin and other postmodern and poststructuralist theorists – it was their applicability to local struggles and polemics that attracted the attention of Chileans at the end of the 20th century. Benjamin’s discourse, and that of his peers, undoubtedly motivated many of the artists depicted throughout this project as they departed from traditional aesthetic forms and embarked on an exploration of photography, video and the serial image. Guided by logic and modern critical theory, these ‘cultural workers’ marked a transition from an art of the ‘pleasurable’ to an art of the ephemeral – not intended for purchase or exchange, but to be experienced. Inspired, perhaps, by the words of Claes Oldenburg (who was made internationally known for his performance and installation art in the 1960’s), they too were “for an art that is political-erotic-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum.”

1 “At a time when the real is forbidden, there is a demand for the symbolic.” (Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 68.)
3 A proposal by the CADA, Ruptura, 1982. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 92, Note 4.)
4 “The aesthetic diversity of these artists notwithstanding, having selected them and included them in this exhibition provides a unifying thread. That thread is their use of logic as a compass with which to orient themselves in the world.” (Gaspar Galaz, Remarks on a Decade, Recovering Histories catalogue.)
5 Term taken from Nelly Richard’s chapter, titled ‘A Return to the Pleasurable,’ Margins and Institutions.
6 Quote taken from the Brown University Resource Scholars and Artists Program flyer.
In her preface to Ernesto Saúl’s book, “Artes Visuales 20 Años,” Luisa Lorenzini mimics Oldenburg’s personification of contemporary art; in reference to Chilean art of the 1980’s and 90’s, she proclaims, “Art jumps from the museum to the street … from the street to the wall, to the tarp, to whatever corner. Enough with sophistications! Art is for everyone.” While Lorenzini may have said it with great flair, it is important to acknowledge that it was not exclusively the pretentious sophistication of dominant aesthetic standards and the utopian ideal of creating an art for ‘everyone,’ which motivated artists and intellectuals in Chile under Pinochet to free themselves from the confines of the gallery or the museum. That is, Lorenzini’s statement fails to acknowledge the impact of “the violently repressive social and political institutions, and the culture they endorse,” which, as Nelly Richard Maintains, “demands an art that is always on guard, which struggles against complacency and mere entertainment.”

In response to a timid inquiry vis-à-vis the subject of contemporary Chilean art, my first “interviewee” (Tomas Andreu, director of the Galería Animal), plainly stated in casual conversation, “Arte que no tiene vida no es arte.” (Essentially, “Art without life is not art,” or perhaps, “Art that doesn’t contain an element of life is not really art.”) Indeed, both artists and intellectuals in Chile under Pinochet focused sharply on an analysis of contextual ‘reality,’ as it structures and conditions artistic production; “To some extent I think that if there is no tie with reality and with a reflection about this reality, [art] is very difficult to accept. It is instead simply ‘art for pleasure,’ to hang… and nothing more” (Arturo Duclos). Although partially dismissed by Richard for being representative of a later generation unaffected by the years of struggle against dictatorship and indifferent to explain the ‘real situation,’ Duclos admitted, to some extent, her own dialogue on the denunciation of the ‘art of the pleasurable.’ In the introduction of Margins and Institutions, she proclaims, “In a country like Chile, where the institutions are not only guardians of order, but also agents of destruction, it is difficult to accept the type of art that merely gives pleasure and no longer questions its complicity with such institutions.”

In August of 1979 Carlos Altamirano put out a survey labeled “El arte necesita que usted responda” (“Art requires a response.”) Imprinted on the cover were the words “Este documento debe entenderse como producto de arte” (“This document should be considered as a work of art.”) Nothing more than a blank page with black lines, the piece asked readers to write down their responses to a statement about Chile’s cultural dependency on foreign models. (An envelope, printed with the address to Altamirano’s studio, was enclosed.) In an interview conducted by the CAL that same year, Altamirano expanded on the notion of visuality in art; “The value of a

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7 Luisa Ulibarri Lorenzini, Preface to Ernesto Saul’s Artes Visuales 20 Años.
8 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 101.
9 Apparently, according to Isabel Aninat, “there is nothing more obvious than that.”
10 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 102. (More on this “newer generation” in Chapter 4.)
11 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 20.
contemporary artwork is not found in its physical or visual attributes or in its particularities of form and color, because these are only elements of language and do not have anything to do with the meaning of the work as art.”

It is for this reason that Altamirano, as he explained to me in our interview, “tried to work in the least aesthetic way possible.” The CAL gallery both printed Altamirano’s survey in its magazine and hosted his exhibition, “Revision Critica de la Historia del Arte Chileno Como Trabajo de Arte” (“A Critical Revision of the History of Chilean Art”) – a show comprised of people’s responses to the questionnaire; “It was a very sociological piece, one that used a lot of sociological rhetoric. Formally, it was not a very visual piece.”

With regard to the tradition of iconography in art, Altamirano explains to the CAL, “This is an idea that art has conventionally sustained, and therefore it is one of the most difficult to overcome. (…) Contemporary art completely negates this idea, in proposing a notion of art as a product of the mental process… as an investigation of oneself and of the ways in which the self operates within a given context… freeing oneself, in passing, of such long-gone ballasts as the aesthetic of formalism, etc.”

Perhaps this was what Isabel Aninat meant when she said in our interview, in reference to the CADA, “They put ‘mind’ into art;” artists in Chile under Pinochet, that is, necessarily made use of analysis or criticism in their quest to alter structures of social regulation, to contest the various discourses of power, to escape the machinery of automatism and submission to order.

Compelled perhaps, by moral and ethical imperatives, the artists depicted herein were less concerned with the aesthetic materiality of the work, than with surrounding social and cultural exigencies. Consequently, the result of their actions “has no value has an object of art, but rather as an expression of concept.” Thereby denouncing the ‘art of the pleasurable,’ or ‘art for art’s sake,’ art actions such as those of the CADA and the Escena Avanzada were not meant for purchase and consumption in the art-market; they were experienced and interacted with, not merely bought. As Julio Ortega puts it, they are ‘less consumable in the rhythm of expense and waste, signs of the free market.”

Gaspar Galaz recognizes important antecedents in the work of the 1960’s, when art integrated “analytical, revolutionary, and structural changes as utopias,” and thus called for a radical change in the artist’s relationship to the aesthetics of painting, the commercial art world, and the longevity of the work; it appears that the diverse assemblage of artists depicted herein (whether those of Brugnoli’s generation or Duclos’), largely embody what Galaz has dubbed ‘an aesthetic of the ephemeral’ – one that defies, for the most part, marketability, intended merely to last as long as the life of the exhibition itself. Exceeding a mere aesthetic function, each ‘creative act’

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12 Interview with Carlos Altamirano, Revista CAL No. 3, agosto de 1979.
13 Ibid.
14 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 20.
15 “For them, an artist is an individual who is compelled, by moral and ethical imperatives, to seek all that is hidden, veiled, and structured.” (Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” Recovering Histories catalogue.)
17 (Ortega, professor of Hispanic Studies at Brown University, is specifically referring here to Diamela Eltit’s work. Caja de Herramientos.)
represented an act of rupture from existing conventional practices, “in the face of which man finds himself deficient and confused.” Indeed, as Altamirano explained in our interview, breaking free from conventional modes of representation was in fact an indirect way of addressing political and cultural issues – it was the first bounce of the billiard ball, so to speak: “our position was that painting and traditional modes of representation were the language of the system. They represented it. And because we couldn’t go against the system, we went against its modes of representation. The enemy wasn’t Pinochet… it was painting, traditional arts, conventional modes of expression... the “direct” way of doing things.”

As Nelly Richard explains, the genre of painting only unfolds, for artists like Altamirano, the whole history of social inscription, “which they criticize in terms of the academy and the categories it lays down.” In the 1979 interview following the dissemination of his survey, CAL questioned Altamirano about his position with regard to the rejection or ‘rupture’ of traditional forms; “If we understand art in terms of language (and, as such, something invented by man to satisfy certain necessities of communication), we must understand as well that this language, in order to fully complete its function, must continuously change its forms to the extent that they no longer respond to the exigencies of their time… whether its because necessities have changed, or because new ones have arisen. Traditional art fails to accept these exigencies – merely reusing the same old forms, taking refuge in the past, negating art’s capacity to influence the development of culture…In this regard, the abandonment of traditional forms should not be seen as a negation of the past but as a vital necessity of survival.”

As Guillermo Machuca and other contemporary historians have recognized, the work of Chilean artists in the 1960’s (largely those associated with the School of Fine Arts at the University) admittedly initiated an important artistic operation outside of painting – a negation of the frame-fetish, of pictorial illusionism, and of the “transcendental, profound and metaphysical image of the painter.” Not unlike the CADA and the Escena Avanzada (as delineated by Nelly Richard), they, too, worked with the notion of displacement – in Machuca’s own words, “out of the painting, off of the pedestal, onto the street.” Indeed, according to Machuca, Nicannor Parra (a poet) was evidently “already working with collage in the 1950’s”; then later, “José Balmes was the first to take an element from the media … and put it on the canvas, rendering possible an ‘exteriority to the frame’” (“un afuera del cuadro”); and finally, Francisco Brugnoli “went even further” (…) “working not only with ‘elements’ on the surface of the canvas, but with material objects.” Nevertheless, these apparent antecedents notwithstanding, Nelly Richard firmly asserts that it wasn’t until the era of the Avanzada in the late 70’s and early 80’s that such techniques acquired “real

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19 “The act of separating the sculpture from its pedestal and from these creating two separate sculptures is in itself a creative act.” (Juan Pablo Vicuña, “1968-1983 Dieciseis Años,” 1984.)
21 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 96.
22 Interview with Carlos Altamirano, Revista CAL No. 3, agosto de 1979.
23 Aguilo, Plastica Neovanguardista
24 Text marked red taken from Guillermo Machuca Interview.
importance,” employing an unprecedented critical apparatus; as opposed to the ‘informal style’ in the works of earlier generations, Avanzada art marked a radical attempt to demystify the “transcendental space of the picture and its tradition of contemplation” and “attack the fetishism of the artworks… by inventing forms of creativity that could topple painting from its position as the only legitimate voice for art.” Theirs was not, in other words, a mere act of working afuera del cuadro, but rather critically functioned, according to Richard, to actually reformulate the signs that pertained to art, literally revising every device of verification – every artifice of representation serving tradition and its ‘slight of hand’ – to contest and deconstruct a seemingly definitive notion of convention.

It appears, however, that the artists initially perceived by Richard to contradict or ‘be at odds with’ her discourse on the Escena Avanzada, ultimately employed, in fact, a critical practice not unlike her own; (recall Mellado’s remark, “the Escena Avanzada is like a train… people get on and off of at depot stations everywhere.”) In a textual accompaniment to their Paisaje exhibition at the “Sur” gallery in 1983, Brugnoli and Errazuriz echoed Richard’s avowal that emphasis should not be placed on manual skills, “What interests us is drawing as a concept, and not as the gymnastics of the hand.” Both Brugnoli and Errazuriz, though often formerly described as the Avanzada’s ‘principal opponents,’ and dismissed by Richard for their supposed failure to recognize important theoretical concepts (i.e those of “structuralism and semiotics, psychoanalysis and post-Marxism”), in fact reflect many of the characteristics associated with the ‘transgressive’ body of ‘unofficial’ work adopted by Richard’s discourse. That is, they, too, reflect a desire to dismantle dominant practices; they, too, construct a notion of artistic practice and representation in recognition of that which mediates reality and impedes one’s perception of things; they, too, reject the notion of authorship and seek to escape the machinery of economic transaction; they, too, emphasize the importance of language, initiate operations ‘outside the codes of dominant discourse,’ and construct a notion of the ‘other’ rooted in “silence and blankness.”

Likewise, artists like Altamirano, Dittborn, and Duclos (among others), while rejecting (as Richard suggests) the essentialist conventions of painting, did not forgo painting as a medium altogether; instead, they initiated a reformulation of painting – one that admittedly reflects the critical practices of Richard’s discourse, though is in some cases described by her as having “clashed with the Avanzada position.” With regard to Altamirano and Duclos, Guillermo Machuca explains that theirs is a form of painting in...

25 Guillermo Machuca, Interview: “[Brugnoli and Balmes] would say that they were the first to position photography, to work with the urban landscape, to relate art and politics; but according to Nelly, these modernizing elements’ were never accompanied by text, or the a modernization of art theory which necessarily requires a recognition of structuralism and semiotics, of psychoanalysis and post-Marxism… These readings are required in order to be able to speak about the works. That is, she is saying that the discourse of Brugnoli and Balmes up until 1973 was an oral discourse (basically a university discourse); the strong discourse up until 1973 was of the social sciences or sociology, influenced by the ‘general utopias’ symptomatic of the time.”
26 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 96.
27 Ibid, Page 18.
28 Paisaje/Brugnoli/Errazuriz, MARCOS TEORICOS, Galería Sur, September 1983
29 Ibid.
30 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 96. (Richard is specifically referring to Davila and Dittborn’s work here.)
which a certain *displacement* is implied; “they are not artists that deny painting; let’s just say they de-construct painting through representation.” Tied not to formalistic or illusionistic tradition, theirs is a “subversive and transgressive form of painting” that “demyystifies the picture” – one which, in the words of Fernando Balcells, “comprises a spectacular vindication of the power of painting to subvert.”

Often employing conceptual devices such as fragmentation and assemblage, artists like Dittborn and Dulcos turned to conventional imagery taken from the mass-media, recombining its codes to dismantle the picture through a random or decentered narrative, notwithstanding Richard’s affirmation that Avanzada artists were staunchly opposed to the use of popular iconography. Duclos’ work indeed places emphasis on the potential that a limited use of signs has for creating new orders out of old meanings; employing such popular icons as the star, crossed swords, the hammer and the sickle, the cross, ancient alphabets, and crossed bones, among others, he rearranges these multiple iconographies within his painting, wherein, according to Gaspar Galaz, “they intersect into a system of painting.” In response to an inquiry regarding the signs and symbols manifest in his work, Duclos explained in our interview, “[It has to do] with the collective conscience, with the idea of certain archetypal visual cultures with which everyone is able to look at a piece. What interested me was the creation of certain simulacra, simulations of things that could be a ticket or a banner or an emblem that contains these symbolic codes. It was much easier for people to be drawn to the works if they had some kind of recognizable structure – a structure of familiarity. In this case it has much more to do with semiotics – the notion that people gravitate towards certain signals.” Duclos, then, in taking up such techniques as displacement and recodification, discernibly exhibits strong elements of critical practice and theoretical methodology not unlike Richard’s, in spite of his conspicuous use of conventional symbols. Akin to such artists as Altamirano or Dittborn (among others), he devises a strategy with which to create a semiotic system to act upon the painting, and echoes the fusion of theory and practice symptomatic of his time (‘the era of the Avanzada’), in questioning the pictorial painting relationship “from the perspectives of sociology, semiotics, anthropology, psychology and history – disciplines in which he is well versed.”

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31 Osvaldo Aguilo, Plastica Neovanguardista, op. cit. (Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 103.)
32 Balcells, “Davila: la ofensiva liberalidad,” La Bicicleta, 6, 1980. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 103.)
33 Arturo Duclos Interview: “With regard to language… I work with certain references or paradoxes that translate into a certain irony. For example, when I mention “Mr. Gorbachov,” there is an irony about the alliance between…. Or rather, it is how the artistic vanguard ultimately joins the political vanguard, but only for their funeral, their diminishment, their extinction.”
34 Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” Recovering Histories catalogue.
35 Ibid.
Indeed, Duclos explains, “My painting ... wasn’t simply about a return to painting [as Richard claims], but rather had, at the time, a number of strong influences that came from texts, poetry, and the ‘codified’ languages we were speaking about before. In other words, I did an investigation of the types of painting that develop a sort of semantic expression – a sort of identity containing various cultural and textual citations, with many references belonging to diverse disciplinary spheres – sociology, politics, religion, etc. So... you could say that my painting became hypertextual.” The element of hypertextuality to which Duclos refers is manifest in all of the works depicted herein (be they the ‘art actions’ of the CADA, the works of the Avanzada, or the installations of Brugnoli and Errazuriz), in the sense that his viewers, like theirs, are required to actively participate in or otherwise intersect the reading of the work.

In many ways, Duclos’ painting (and that of his contemporaries) deconstructs the traditional aesthetic of painting – simultaneously affirming and rejecting the very concept of painting, thereby composing what Galaz refers to as a “parody of painting”; “For the most part, such approaches relegate the conventional construction of painting to secondary consideration. In its place, the artists employ varied graphic, photographic, and printmaking techniques, including silkscreen, together with appropriations from art history, as well as objects and texts on diverse supports.” As Machuca poetically puts it, they are painters who “cool” otherwise “hot painting” – the way “Dittborn ‘cools’ painting through the use of photography” and combined media, for example.

The combined use of supports – whether those of painting, photography, printmaking, writing, sculpture, or bodily gesture – illustrates many of the of the key critical concepts characteristic of ‘art in Chile under Pinochet.’ In tune with their efforts steer clear of conformity, artists in Chile at the end of the 20th century sought to “expand the format of art,” a task which necessarily implied, according to Richard, “the destruction of the compartmentalization of cultural works into different academic disciplines.” As Raúl Zurita (of the CADA) affirmed in the days of dictatorship, “it is essential at present to eradicate the boundaries subdividing creativity.” (Richard herself dedicates an entire chapter of Margins and Institutions to the subject – “The displacement of supports and the Eradication of the Boundaries between Genres.”) Granted, there is a discernable connection between the desire to fuse art and life, and the desire to intermingle various media and artistic techniques – or, as per Diamela Eltit, to “commit incest” between creative genres. She herself admits, “I do not clearly differentiate between my visual and

36 (More on the so-called ‘return to painting’ in Chapter 4.)
37 Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade”, Recovering Histories catalogue.
38 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 75.
39 Raúl Zurita, Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 75.
40 Diamela Eltit (Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 75.)
literary practices …I would say they are both part of the same practice, and reiterates this point in our interview, “I worked with the CADA from a literary perspective, as a writer. It is true, though, that there were boundaries that were diffuse, and one often worked with other types of productions.”

According to Richard, the uninhibited movement back and forth between various forms of artistic representation – “from film to video, from video to photography, from photography to the body, from the body to writing, from writing to film” – appropriately illustrates the synthesis of diverse languages and systems of representation used by Avanzada artists to postulate “a subject traversed by languages, a subject for whom the image is overloaded with the different claims of reality communicated between the competing sign systems in the culture.” While it is no doubt difficult (as Mellado and the others have warned me), to decisively determine who did and did not form part of the mythical creation of the Escena Avanzada, all of the works depicted herein appear to align in the “conceptual slippage between different fields” – be it Brugnoli’s use of objects on the surface of his canvas, Duclos’ application of paint to a collection of human bones, or even Rosenfeld’s gesture of crossing the city’s traffic lines.

It should be said, in addition, that the work of Eugenio Dittborn is critical to any discussion of the combined use of supports. (Indeed, as Mellado affirms, one could easily write an extensive dissertation on the subject of his work alone.) Throughout much of his work, Dittborn employs methods of juxtaposition and superimposition, combining various fragments of visual and graphical techniques – a process by which, according to Richard, he “stratifies” the “gaze itself… into homogeneous forms of social perception.” FRANCISCO BRUGNONI highlights the significance of Dittborn’s work in our interview, and specifically makes reference to the clever use of combined supports throughout his series of graphics on cardboard; “…He takes a photograph of a video or television screen and he turns this photograph into a silk-screen, which he then prints on cardboard. This process is very interesting because from the television or the screen (…the most advanced processes in the production of images) he recedes back to photography, and then back to the silk-screen (…another important historical ‘jump’ backwards). …Then the silk-screen is put onto cardboard, …relating [the image] to the art of painting and the pictoric, …to the treatment of surface, etc.”

In view of Brugnoli’s example, it appears that Dittborn’s use of diverse artistic practices effectively causes them, as Richard avows, “to reflect on the various historical phases of

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41 Diamela Eltit, “Desde la mujer a la androginia,” Pluma y Pincel, 1985 (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 82.)
42 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 81.
43 Carlos Altamirano Interview: “The Escena Avanzada is a myth …for a long time… during the eighties and even today, there was a sort of movement, (if it can even be called that), to make a point of saying, ‘I was part of the Escena Avanzada’ or ‘I wasn’t.’ ‘He was, I wasn’t’ …It’s as if you’re trying to enclose it in a frame that doesn’t exist.”
44 (Duclos, La Leccion de Anatomía) (Richard acknowledges the anthropological gesture implied in this piece – Margins and Institutions, Page 77.) (More on “La Lección de Anatomía” in Chapter 2.)
45 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 39.
their dissemination in Latin America. Moreover, in overlaying of various ‘bits and pieces,’ extracts from diverse creative media he demonstrates, according to Richard, that information is “cut out from its original context and inserted into a different set of national or local utterances, just like the outmoded goods or scraps of wisdom dumped by the major powers on Third world countries.” To be sure, however, a number of different readings can be inferred from Dittborn’s technique, as is intrinsically true of all the artistic and intellectual practices of the time. While Richard draws conclusions with regard to the “lack of coordination between the various techniques for building social identity in a hybrid culture,” Gaspar Galaz (using Dittborn’s overlay of the photocopy and photograph as an example) interprets his technique as an act of modifying “the original matrix” – “essentially a confrontation between photographs and photocopies of those photographs.

With regard to his own use of diverse supports, Arturo Duclos describes his use of etching and other various printmaking techniques (such as laser transfer or silkscreen), which he manipulates to print on top of the canvas and to mechanically reproduce different types of photographic images. Duclos’ transference of these techniques onto the canvas (or any other material) illustrates a particular mode of displacement – one that makes reference to Walter Benjamin’s discourse on the subject of serialization and the relationship between the ‘original’ and the ‘copy,’ as defined in his celebrated text, “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” (a text consecrated by Altamirano as “the bible of our time.”) As many of the period’s notable commentators acknowledge, the social implications of the photographic image and its serialized reproduction are many; “nowadays, our perception is unavoidably molded and affected by mechanical reproduction; the great majority of the multiple stimuli that surround us at all times are artificial in nature.” In a country like Chile, where it has been argued that the history of visual arts is simply the “history of their deferred reproduction,” steered by a model of academia whose only role appears to “canonically repeat the past” – the fundamental issues raised by Benjamin in his text resonate all the more profoundly. Particularly relevant are his ideas with regard to the concept of ‘aura,’ the detachment from the domain of tradition, the ‘crisis’ of painting, the separation of art from ritual, and its shift in basis to the political realm – all on account of mechanical reproduction.

Francisco Brugnoli explains, “The concept of ‘aura’ is a concept that we discussed at length; I think it’s a concept that we should still continue to talk about. (...) The idea of the copy and the deterioration of the copy is a very present phenomenon in Chile, precisely because all of Chile’s urban referents are merely photographic reproductions

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 39.
50 Richard references the “problem of serialization” and the question of the original vs. the copy in Margins and Institutions, Page 75. (The reference here is to Benjamin’s “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”)
52 Justo Pastor Mellado, “De como el arte chileno es visto por los otros”
53 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 75.
of images (…) I learned the entire history of European art, for example, by means of a book… in which the textures were all identical, and so on… I could touch the images of these paintings, and therefore desecrated them, etc.”

What’s more, the emergence of photographic technology in Chile inherently “clashed with the backward state of Latin America” – having arrived in a country built largely on transfers or copies of foreign models, without any tradition of painting of its own. Richard explains, “in Latin America, photography was substituted for painting before the latter could even found the basis of its own iconographic discourse,” later citing Ronald Kay and his assertion that “photography in the New World stole from painting (…) any possibility of forming a tradition.”

Within this cultural and historical context, the reference of photography as a model of representation was particularly appealing to artists of the so-called ‘age of the Avanzada,’ who saw its potential to be manipulated – extended, metaphorized and inverted – in “the production of a [social, national] imaginary.” According to Mellado, “it is but a simple model of technological reference, which affected the means of production of ideas and images, and could be brandished as the critical program of a dubious origin.” Indeed, as Richard explains, photography’s apparent depiction of ‘reality,’ as adapted to a “format of homologous images by means of those visual or graphical techniques which dominate all mass media societies,” effectively emphasizes the fact that “art is a critical tool for social participation.”

Contrasting the works produced after 1977 with those of the 1960’s, Richard maintains that while earlier generations were committed to the ideal of ‘art for the masses’ (basing the notion of the ‘collective gaze’ at the level of distribution), Avanzada artists focused instead on the “everyday networks of messages and information in the print medium by the use of the photographic signifier.” Enrique Lihn, in his 1978 essay “Mirar por el ojo del rodillo,” (“Looking through the Eye of the Ink Roller”), explains that the camera …is a metaphor and correlation of society as a machine that exhaustively produces and reproduces its subjects and allocates the different social roles (…) Society

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54 Ronald Kay, Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 40.
55 Machuca Interview: “This is what Oyarzun deals with [in the ‘Fuera de Serie’ catalogue] He approaches a very important issue in his analysis of Rauschenberg’s exhibit in the Bellas Artes museum. …Rauschenberg brought with him a tremendous ‘pop’ apparatus, …which was quite impressive (…) At that moment in Chile there was an ongoing reflection about techniques, about photography, etc., and the impact of Rauschenberg’s almost imperial technological development left the Chileans feeling like mere artisans, which angered them greatly.”
56 More on “cultural transference” in Chapter I.
57 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 41.
58 Justo Pastor Mellado, “De como el arte chileno es visto por los otros.”
59 Ibid
60 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 38.
as Camera is a stereotyping machine.\textsuperscript{61} Highlighting the social implications of “Society as Camera,” Richard affirms that the artists of the Escena Avanzada and their contemporaries effectively “proposed new social alternatives for the image;” “here photography is understood as an apparatus for the visual manipulation of objective reality, as a technique for reproducing and serializing the image, as a standard for popular aesthetics, as an instrument for social perception… as an ideology of vision.”\textsuperscript{62}

Undoubtedly implicit in the photographic form were the notions of objectivity, legitimacy, or accuracy, which attracted these artists to the photographic image as a form capable of referencing controversial issues relating to the socio-political atmosphere in a more “explicit or actively critical way.”\textsuperscript{63} As Galaz explains, the mechanically reproduced image effectively serves “as a screen to neutralize the expressivity that can emanate”\textsuperscript{64} from a material form like painting – an important consideration for artists in Chile under military rule, who obligated to reconsider the implied meanings of their practice in the expression of a rational, critical voice.

In the words of Roland Barthes, “the photograph captures an unrepeatable moment of life.”\textsuperscript{65} As Richard explains, photographic information is both attractive to the artists she describes and generally privileged, because it enables a work to present a concrete relationship to its context, on account of its “automatic mechanism of perception,” its “technical neutrality,” and its apparent “ability to certify a presence as a witness” – to be a “guardian of memory,” to turn all “signs of reality into evidence or proof of its accusations.”\textsuperscript{66} Altimrano confirms Richard’s assertions in our interview, stating, “With a photo something is documented, registered. The concept of objectivity, [though a d]mittedly debatable\textsuperscript{67}, was something that we referenced a lot at the time… in those days it worked. The photograph was obviously more objective than the painting, which was far more emotional and subjective. At the time, the subjectivity of the artists didn’t interest any of us – what was important was to work with reality.”

It appears then, that the apparent ‘objectivity’ of the photograph was favored over the personal sentiments and notions of handicraft associated painting; according to Tibor Kalman, it is an intrinsic tendency for the postmodern individual to “cling” to the idea

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\item[62] Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 35, 37.
\item[63] Ibid, Page 35.
\item[64] Gaspar Galaz, La Pintura en Chile, Page 345.
\item[65] Roland Barthes (Cited by Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” Recovering Histories catalogue, Page 79.)
\item[66] Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 35.
\item[67] The notion (or “myth”) of photographic objectivity (based on the transparency of a code that ‘naturalizes’ the image) is indeed an issue of debate; as Henry Giroux explains, it is important to conceive of the photographic image as an ‘event’ itself. Richard continuously affirms that one must pay attention to and expose both the conventions that mediate perception, and to the inevitable interventionism of the individual’s particular gaze. An image, therefore, should not be referenced simply as a factual record, but as an “intervention in the narrativization of the past.” We must avoid the “naïve” view that the indexical character of the photograph functions as a “proof-text,” rather than merely “confirming the real,” photography also serves to “ratify and affirm the complex ideological web that is the taken-for-granted-frame with which one perceives reality.” (Henry Giroux, Disturbing Pleasures, Page 94.)
\end{itemize}
that the photograph is an inherently ‘real’ or honest image and as such is always on a different plane from an obviously subjective form of visual communication, such as painting. As Altamirano plainly stated, the subjectivity of the artist was of no interest at the time – what was important was to work with reality; in referencing mechanisms of photographic reproduction to support their denunciation of established aesthetic traditions, artists of the Avanzada, the CADA and their contemporaries were indeed working with available referents from the ‘reality’ of the Chilean situation at the end of the 20th century. As Fernando Balcells shrewdly argues, in a statement made by the CADA in 1980, “ever since ‘futurism’ and ‘dada,’ … up until the current movements of ‘performance art’ and ‘body art’), actions have necessarily responded to urgent cultural necessities. The challenge of modernity implies an adaptation of the processes of art production to modern economic and technological conditions of social production.”

Based upon this very supposition, Balcells affirms (one year later, in a lecture given at the Taller de Artes Visuales,) that, “therefore, artistic criticism of the tradition of pictorial handicraft favors mechanisms which produce and reproduce visual images.” Indeed, Walter Benjamin himself confirms (in “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”) that the very nature of photography and video makes them the most “serviceable exemplifications of art’s new function.” Thus, in spite of the fact that the use of so-called ‘elite materials’ may have appeared (to the members of the left, for example) as a hypocritical endorsement of bourgeois conventions, artists like Diemela Eltit realistically consider that “new technologies exist in order to be used” (it is in fact a necessary part of “working with ‘reality.’”) “What counts,” Eltit affirms, “is what you choose to do with those technologies.” As Carlos Altamirano explained to me (with regard to his own critical practice and that of his peers), “photography was fundamental because it was clearly the most apparent and direct way to challenge painting; painting represented the single object and craftsmanship while photography represented the reproducible object and the machine.”

In their application of photography and its implied effects to the to the criticism of pictorial representation, artists in Chile in the latter half of the 20th century judiciously made use of ‘those technologies’ in a significant way. Based on the perception of their work schemas and formal processes of reflection, Justo Pastor Mellado (firmly grounded in his theory on theoretical transference) classifies these artists as “artists of the

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68 Tibor Kalman, “Photography, Morality, and Benetton.”
69 (Fernando Balcells, “Collectivo Acciones de Arte,” 1980.)
70 Fernando Balcells, “Control de lectura” (The control of Reading), Lecture at the Taller de Artes Visuales, December 1981.”
71 “In the early 1980’s video emerged as both an art form and a documentary tool used to accompany and intersect other texts.” (Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade” Recovering Histories catalogue.)
72 “We must not forget about the advent of video, not only as a ‘record’ of art works, but rather, as Lotty Rosenfeld explains, “as a possibility of multiplying these actions, of working on the video and converting it into a new piece.” (Ernesto Saul, “Obra Abierta a la Vida,” Revista Cauce, Septiembre 1985.)
footprint” (“artistas de la huella”) or “artists of the disposition” – defined as such, (whether by Mellado’s terms or Richard’s), these artists undeniably incorporated the ‘exigencies’ of their specific historical and cultural context throughout all of their works.

The work of Eugenio Dittborn, for example, (as described by Mellado in his pamphlet “Grabado en la memoria” or “Engraved in the Memory”), “edits the representation of the collective conscience through its remnants, that is, through the images of those forgotten men and women petrified in their poses – their sole entry into history (...) The national history, in every day life speaks from the press… Dittborn the analyst reads, listens to and restores a fragmented discourse.” That is to say, Dittborn’s work, while challenging the aesthetic conventions of painting, also effectively employs the medium of photography to symbolically reference the issue of the disappeared – to convey the ‘recovery of memory’ so central to the diverse body of work produced in the later years of military rule.

Indeed, as Duclos explains in our interview, the use of photography is innately connected to the concept of recollection, “I believe that a lot of the photographic work...has meaning from the perspective of memory; because, through a photograph, it is possible to construct a link with memory. The photograph is a document; it the only truthful account of an act that effectively occurred in a determined way. In contrast, painting does not share this characteristic. While a painting has a ‘fictional’ element, the photograph is inherently more ‘truthful.’ ...So, many of the artists used photography (and still continue to use it) on account of this phenomenon of verisimilitude. It is, in way, a

72 Walter Benjamin, “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”
73 “I will not accept the charge of being ‘elitist;’ to me this immediately appears as a fault on the part of some intellectuals. We are working with the reality that we all share.” (CADA members, responding to an interview conducted by Maria Eugenio Brito, “Cuando el arte cae del cielo,” Apsi No. 105, Agosto, 1981.)
74 Diamela Eltit Interview: “Look, I don’t have problems with the technology that each generation produces; I think new technologies liberate and tend to democratize. ...Between, the typewriter and the computer, I prefer the computer; between a letter and an email, I prefer emails. It seems faster, easier. Likewise, I think television is an extraordinary invention.... These are all cultural human creations, but the point is, how are they manipulated? And to what end? I have always thought that it is interesting to take these advanced technologies and work with them in a critical way. But I could never...that is, there were always criticisms focused on video as a medium. I thought it was a bit crazy, in the sense that this kind of thinking was too conservative. I think that technologies exist in order to be used What counts is what you choose to do with those technologies.”
75 Mellado and the notion of theoretical transference; Justo Pastor Mellado Interview: “…One can speak of analytical or psychoanalytical transference. I try to give the notion of transference of ideas and pictorial practices an analytical connotation as well.”
76 Justo Pastor Mellado, La Novela Chilena del Grabado. [“Disposition,” in this context, is defined as “an act of disposing; a bestowal or transfer to another.” (Dictionary.com)]
78 The driving force behind Eugenio Dittborn’s work is, according to Galaz, the photographic register, not only as a jumping-off-point, but also as a material of the technological and artistic process, incorporating it as an essential component of the final work. (Gaspar Galaz, “La Pintura en Chile,” Chapter 7, page 352.)
form of testimonial – a way to both document a memory, and to establish a bond with that memory.” Duclos’ testimony here echoes the Benjaminian notion of photography’s “cult of rememberance” – drawing examples from Atger’s work from the turn of the century, Benjamin traces the various uses of the photograph as “standard evidence” for historical occurrences, and as a “realization of hidden political significances.”

While Duclos, like the others, may erroneously adhere to the notion that a photograph is inherently ‘real,’ he makes a strong point with regard to the issues of exposure and verification, with which many Chileans undoubtedly struggled. As was explored more fully in Chapter 2, artists in Chile at the end of the 20th century (including Dittborn and Altamirano, among others), would use photographic portraiture to evoke the memory of the disappeared – those people seemingly long-forgotten, “swept under the rug,” buried under the grandiose spectacle of a booming economy successfully underway in its transition to the First World. Indeed, as Altamirano explained in our interview, it was precisely this “widespread success,” and “everyone’s intentions of forgetting,” which inspired him to work with the ‘reality’ of the disappeared prisoners in his 1996 exhibition “Retratos” (“Portraits”) – an exhibit closely examined by Jean Louis Déotte, in his article “El arte en la época de la desaparición” (“Art in the Age of Disappearance”), written for Richard’s Revista de Crítica Cultural in 1999. Here, Déotte reiterates much of the prevailing discourse regarding the role of photography and its significant applicability for artists in Chile under Pinochet – namely its allegation of an existing referent (that which enables it to function as a substitution for the scene it documents), its close examination of “existence held against uncertainty,” and its supposed confirmation that something actually took place. Above all, however, Déotte’s article illustrates the actual “sensation of suffocation” – the conspicuous awareness that “there is no exteriority” – effectively

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79 What’s more, as was mentioned briefly in Chapter 2, Dittborn inflates the symbolism of his practice by layering the photographs with his own handwriting – a process by which, according to Mellado, he effectively inverts the cultural hierarchy aiding in the recovery of “the history of the ignored people.” (Justo Pastor Mellado on Ditborn’s work, cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 88.) (More on the use of handwriting in Chapter 2.)

80 Walter Benjamin, “Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”

81 Arturo Duclos interview.

82 (More on Altamirano’s desire to work with the theme of the ‘disappeared’ in Chapter 2.)

83 Nelly Richard is both the founder and director of the Revista de Crítica Cultural – an analytical publication in print since 1990.

84 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 36.

produced by Altamirano’s assortment of digitally reproduced images and “different iconic mediums assembled in fragmented continuity,” regularly interrupted by stark, monochromatic photographs of the disappeared.\(^6\)

While many of his contemporaries (such as those involved with the CADA) were steadfastly opposed to the ‘official’ institutions of the gallery or museum, it is important to note that with ‘Retratos,’ (as with his 1979 exhibit “Revisión Crítica de la Historia del Arte Chileno”), Altamirano’s deliberate decision to exhibit his work within the confines of these spaces was, in fact, a significant part of his artistic and critical action. A distinction must be made here, between the endorsement of “the bourgeois ideological space” (dismissed by the CADA for its arbitrary delegation of ‘elitism’ to artworks, and for its separation of ‘‘art’ from ‘reality’’\(^7\)), and the judicious exploitation of canonically accepted ‘cultural’ institutions. In an interview with CAL magazine (conducted in 1979), Altamirano explains, “with regard to contemporary art, the space in which a work is shown or carried out is absolutely fundamental, to the extent that it plays a large role in determining the work’s meaning and significance (…) On a separate note, it is true that the ‘Gallery’ is defined and thereby accepted by everyone as a cultural space or as a place where culture is delivered, with all that that implies. In this regard, if the particular needs of a work require a location previously established as ‘cultural,’ (as is the case in my own), the Gallery then becomes necessary.”\(^8\)

Be it a gesture of exhibiting the critical responses of the public at large, or the conspicuous and flagrant display of images of the disappeared, Altamirano’s work (in both cases) explicitly intends to stake its claim right “on the very walls of the museum” or the gallery – to expose itself, to make itself known, to be blatantly seen and tested …in the very places sanctioned by authority.\(^9\)

Not all of Altamirano’s work functioned in this way, however – many of his works did not at all require the gesture of public exhibition within officially endorsed ‘cultural institutions.’ In 1985\(^9\), for example, he engaged in a series of ‘art actions’ and ‘installations’ drawing referents from so-called ‘Chilean masterpieces,’ displacing and transferring them to the sidewalk or the street (supports, according to Richard, “overlooked by aesthetic conventions”\(^10\)). Altamirano explains, “I worked a lot with the museum’s permanent collection of paintings, (...) which I moved from place to place. Obviously, I didn’t physically move them, but rather projected the images in various different settings… as if to actually ‘bring’ the museum to the streets.”

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\(^6\) Ibid
\(^7\) Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 56.
\(^8\) Interview with Carlos Altamirano, Revista CAL No. 3, agosto de 1979.
\(^9\) (More on exposure in ‘official’ spaces in Chapter 2.)
\(^9\) The art actions of 1985 marked an apparent break from Altamirano’s ‘hiatus of the 1980’s’ – As he stated in our interview, “…the truth is that during the 80’s” he “barely produced any work at all,” on account of his personal sentiments of anger and resentment.
\(^10\) Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 77.
In his book, *Artes Visuales 20 Años; Ernesto Saúl* poignantly describes the effect of this particular work (or ‘art action’) in a segment entitled, (“Carlos Altamirano: Dos historias en pugna” or “Carlos Altamirano: Two Histories in Conflict”) 92; he states, “Altamirano sets forth painting as a language” 93 – as a form of work in the face of other more ‘multimedia’ techniques, techniques far more modern than painting in the traditional sense. In an attempt to desecrate the latter, he removes it from the gallery or the museum and compels the spectator to literally walk on top of a blank canvas, as he simultaneously imprints (paints) its surface with the tracks made by his shoes, and treads over paintings, represented by their titles and the signatures of their authors. 94, 

**Altamirano**’s gesture here is arguably characteristic of all the works produced within the unofficial or transgressive ‘scene’ to which he himself belonged – it exemplifies, for example, the attempt to “exceed the spatial limits of art” in moving away from the aesthetic conventions of painting, towards the use of the landscape (or the social body) “as a support for ‘artistic creativity;’” in this way, **Altamirano**’s gesture embodies that which **Richard** has dubbed “one of the most dynamic transformations of Chilean art over the last 20 years.” 95 It is here where one perceives the discernable influence of ‘Land Art’ (widely popular on the international scene in the 1970’s); using the natural landscape as a support “to be manipulated and transformed in various ways,” it is obviously an art form that evades the limits of the gallery or museum, and, more importantly, one that cannot be understood outside of its location. 96 Likewise, ‘art actions’ in Chile under Pinochet, (those of **Altamirano** and the various members of the CADA, among others), operated in a space alternative to that of the institution – turning instead to the city and the social landscape as a support for their ‘art.’ 97

In her text “Sobre las acciones de arte: un nuevo espacio crítico” 98 (1980), **Diamela Eltit** declares, “We are witnessing the construction of an ‘art gallery’ in the street – or, inversely, the destruction of the very concept [of the gallery], through the use of open and public spaces as indicators or receivers of the artwork, whose ultimate aim is not personal profit, but rather to remain in the eye and memory of the passerby, who travels everyday through the open landscape. (…) The landscape is thus transformed into a creative space – one that forces the passerby to change his point of view, and obliges him, by and large, to question his surroundings and the conditions of his own becoming.” 99 The use of the landscape as an artistic medium, as **Eltit** aptly affirms, is conspicuously linked to the theoretical foundations of the period’s prevailing ‘unofficial’ discourse (largely that described by **Nelly Richard**). The city, here, is not merely perceived as a ‘backdrop’ or a ‘stage’ upon which artists may perform – it is a “cultural

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92 Saul’s reference to “two histories in conflict” is developed more fully in Chapter 2.
93 Altamirano’s proposition of painting as a language is akin to Duclos’ aforementioned construction of a system of painting.
95 **Nelly Richard**, *Margins and Institutions*, Page 53.
97 **Nelly Richard**, *Margins and Institutions*, Page 56.
98 (“Art actions: a new critical space”)
battlefield, a work of art, a medium, and a passion – fraught with heavy symbolism and metaphoric referents, as the CADA’s various works appositely illustrate.

The 1981 collective art action, “¡Ay, Sudamérica!”, for example, not only raised important questions pertaining to the relevance of form, but also served a critical function with regard to Chile’s social and cultural exigencies; symbolically using the sky – “a place eternally hackneyed by the gaze and by human dreams” – as their “canvas” or support, the CADA group (with the help of cooperating pilots) flew a set of planes above the city, dropping flyers. Evoking the familiar image of flight-bombers, the flyers (referred to by CADA members as “documents of art”) presented the citizens of Santiago with a so-called “creative life proposition” – an invitation to become artists, and to refrain from thinking of art as existing outside of their everyday. As interpreted by Kevin Donnelly, (an affiliate of New York University), the CADA’s message in ¡Ay, Sudamérica! essentially proposed that the general public was capable of instating an entirely new concept of art – one that could overcome traditional, elite boundaries and become part of public life. In interrupting canonically accepted ‘routine’ patterns and structures of everyday life, the CADA’s gesture in ¡Ay, Sudamérica! discernably reiterates the critical practices employed throughout many of its various other works; in addition, however, the effect of its message – in outlining new artistic social requisites – also serves to incite an important reevaluation of the collective affairs and interactions of the community at the ‘popular’ level.

Relevant here is Guillermo Machuca’s avowal that the art actions of the CADA (and those of its contemporaries) can very well be read from a sculptural perspective – an approach dismissed by Richard, according to Mellado, on account of her apparent oversight of sculpture as a relevant and significant material form. While it may be true that Richard does not focus on the issue of sculpture as a material form within her critical practice, it should be said that she does in fact address the metaphorical concept of “social sculpture.” As stated by the CADA in an issue of La Bicicleta (1979), “We understand by social sculpture a work or art action that tries to organize, by means of

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100 Diálogos, CADA 20 AÑOS, Revista de Crítica Cultural, No. 19, 1999.
101 Neustadt Interview with Diamela Eltit, CADA DÍA, 19.
102 Eltit On ‘Ay Sudamérica…’ “We wanted to cite and activate the memory of the bombers with these planes. It was a weak metaphor, but it was what we could do at the time.” (…) “Obtaining permission was part of the piece, because it seemed impossible that the Chilean Air Force would give us permission to take out six planes that would throw flyers over the city of Santiago with an anti-dictatorial proclamation. It was unthinkable! This was a tough dictatorship, not a parody of dictatorship. …So this, in itself, was a work of art. When those planes flew it was a miracle.” (…) “Out of all the things we did that was the most insolent.” Interview with Robert Neustadt, CADA DÍA, 98.
103 (“Cuando el arte cae del cielo,” Maria Eugenio Brito, Apsi, No. 105, Agosto, 1981.)
104 (CADA members, responding to an interview conducted by Maria Eugenio Brito, “Cuando el arte cae del cielo,” Apsi No. 105, Agosto, 1981.)
105 Ibid
106 Ibid
107 “Dictatorial Discourse vs. The New and Underground,”
http://hemi.ps.tsoa.nyu.edu/archive/bib/donnellygautier/vanguardia.shtml
intervention, the time and space in which we live… first to make it more visible, and then to make it more livable. In other words, their work is, on the one hand, sculptural, to the extent that it “organizes the material of art in terms of volume,” and also social, in so far as this material is essentially drawn from Chile’s collective reality. Whether dropping pamphlets from a plane, crossing traffic lines with tape, or projecting images of paintings onto the city streets, many artists in Chile under Pinochet (inspired, perhaps, by the murals of the 1960’s) renounced established aesthetic traditions and ‘official’ cultural institutions, and proposed a bid to use the fertile grounds of ‘the city’ and the ‘social landscape’ as material forms or supports for their work. Intent to modify the socially prescribed conventions manipulated by the ‘official canon’ to regulate or control human behavior, these artists – united in their effort to ‘rescue’ the “latent creativity” and social capabilities of their environs – effectively provide “an essential basis” for experiencing and reassessing that which has so often in the past been ‘covered up’ or overlooked.

In applying critical values to the realm of ‘everyday’ urban experience and social participation, these artists effectively initiated an active recognition of the exigency of intervention; the great significance of their gesture, however, cannot fully be appreciated without a critical assessment of the elements of physicality and corporeality necessarily implicated in their ‘art actions.’ Indeed, the substantial connection forged between “Art” and “City” (or “Art” and “Landscape”) is in fact fundamentally incomplete without a critical consideration of the “Body” as a medium itself.

No doubt influenced by the so-called ‘Body-Art’ trend of the 1970’s, artists in Chile in the early 80’s saw the body as the ultimate ‘terrain of experience,’ and subsequently utilized it as a medium or support. To be sure, the critique of aesthetic conventions of production and representation reached a new level with advent of body as form; essentially, as Galaz argues, the actual material of the artwork is abolished altogether, and replaced by the direct presence of the artist – inserted into the scene as a provisional medium in a theoretical and practical process.

The ‘Body’ (just like any other medium or support), is seen for its potential as a producer of signs – a place on which to draw that important methodical correspondence between an artwork and its social context (of which the work itself is a “metonymic fragment.”)

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109 Ibid
110 (More on Lotty Rosenfeld’s “Cruces” in Chapter 2.)
111 The gradual shift in creative thinking from traditional formats and supports to the use of the social landscape was anticipated, it must be said, in the work of Francisco Brugnoli, or that of his students at the University of Chile, as well as in the work of the Brigadas Muralistas (“Mural Arts Brigade”). (Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 53.)
112 Fernando Balcells, “Acciones de Arte Hoy en Chile” La Bicicleta, 8, 1980 (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 62.)
113 ‘Body Art,’ as a movement, emerged, according to Galaz, through various isolated actions carried out in the U.S., Italy, and France in the 1970’s; one such action was that of “Fluxus” – an “art happening” founded in 1962 by George Maciunas, including, among others, John Cage, Nam June Paik, Wolf Vostell and Joseph Bueys. (Gaspar Galaz, “La Pintura en Chile,” Chapter 7, page 342.)
115 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 32.
Given that prohibitions and societal restrictions in Chile under Pinochet had shifted from the public sphere to the private or individual sphere, manifested in the widespread epidemics of self-censorship and “micro-repression” that plagued the “zones encompassing the body and its social landscape,” it was precisely within these zones that artists found a “new source for the signification of desire or rebellion.” In fact, Richard resolutely declares that the body is the “site par excellence” for that which social discourse prescribes as normality and dictates with regard to the constraint of meaning. The phenomenon of self-censorship, as we have seen, indeed operates on an individual level, in keeping the very act of speech itself in check. On account of the restrictions imposed on language by regime, the body then becomes an alternative “vehicle for artistic language;” put another way, Richard argues that the body becomes the “other” (or inverse) of language, effectively bringing about “a dissolution of the word,” as the communicative function of the sign is replaced by non-linguistic, bodily gestures.

Language, as a form, had undeniably become extremely thin ice on which to skate. Elusive symbolism (linguistic, gestural or otherwise) was therefore indispensable for anyone who wished to express the inexpressible – to articulate, in some way, that which could not be explicitly be said or written. Francisco Brugnoli, in our interview, emphasized the importance of distinguishing between visual and verbal language, explaining that his art production is a necessary response to his incapacity to verbalize the meaning of his work, “...I create an art piece in the sense that I can’t say it. ...There are some necessities of language that can only be settled by means of metaphor or metonymy; it is in these where the work appears.” The judicious use of metaphor and metonymy to which Brugnoli refers is arguably analogous to the use of gesticulation in ‘Body Art’ or ‘art actions,’ to the extent that both are employed to satisfy exigent “necessities of language” – both syntactical constructions and bodily gestures necessarily became, to use a Richardian expression, “the domain of the ‘unsayable.’” Raul Zurita (a former CADA member) illustrates the latter in a statement he makes regarding his gesture of self-inflicting pain in his ‘art actions,’ “I wished to distinguish between what cannot be written and what has already begun to be written, between what can be talked about and what cannot be talked about. Faced with a personal experience that is extremely violent or painful, the wish to express it, even by going to far as to burn one’s face, is already a sign…” Zurita’s self-inflicted wounds illustrate a significant correspondence between the presence of his own physical pain and the suppression of a painful past; in this sense,

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117 Ibid, Page 65.
118 According to Richard, self-censorship differs from administrative censorship (the erasure or suppression of materials of communication) as it operates at the individual level “by structuring speech acts” – “what is forbidden is speech itself, under a regime of intimidation that overwhelmingly controls access to the verbalization of areas of experience.” (Margins and Institutions, 19.) (Chapter 1.)
119 Ibid, Page 69.
120 Ibid, Page 72
121 Ibid, Page 69. (Here, Richard is specifically referring to the work of Eltit and Leppe.)
Zurita’s work exploits ‘the body’ as a symbolic link between himself and his community – the private and the public. Nelly Richard allots a chapter of her book to this issue, entitled “The Rhetoric of the Body.” Here she literally describes the body as the meeting place between the individual (or one’s biography and subconscious) and the collective (or the programming of the roles of identity according to the norms of social discipline), in this sense, not only is the body (as per Richard) the “domain of the unsayable,” but it actually “lies at the frontier of the ‘sayable.’” Richard’s critical construction, when applied to Zurita’s artistic gesture, illustrates the artist’s appropriate consideration of existing social and cultural exigencies – namely that of individualism (and the collective conscience). Within this context, Richard also draws upon the work of Diamela Eltit (also a CADA member, she was formerly involved, both professionally and intimately, with Zurita); as Eltit herself explains, “The very notion of the wounded body refers to that of the community; all the tearing of flesh is a token of the broken texture of a whole collectivity.” Eltit, like Zurita, makes use of the body as a place of pain and sacrifice, of resignation and self-denial – In 1980 she both cut and burned herself before reading a selection from a novel [Lumpérica] in front of a brothel in Santiago. According to Richard, there is an element of sacrifice or martyrdom in Eltit’s work, as in Zurita’s; their acts of pain both serve to evoke “collective identification, sharing in one’s own flesh the same signs of social disadvantage as the other unfortunates… as if pain and its subject could unite in the same scar.”

When asked by Robert Neudstat if she considered the reading of her text within a brothel to be an ‘art action,’ she replied: “Yes, …it was an art action in the city. I never gave a thought to galleries because to me they made no sense. What did make sense was to sort of follow the CADA’s lead, which was the relation between Art, Body and City.” (Here, now, one can fully see how the formulaic correlation between “Art” and “City” is impotent without “Body” as an existing variable.)

I, too, asked Eltit about the use of prostitution as a referent in her performative work, (specifically referring both to a photo I had seen depicting her washing the pavement outside of a brothel, and her ‘video performance’ “El Beso,” in which she kissed a homeless person in the street); in

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123 “[The division between the public and the private] is necessarily strategic in countries like Chile where authoritarianism penetrates the everyday (for example, in the familial myths surrounding the woman) because it abolishes the distinction between the political and the apolitical and disguises the fact that the distinction itself is inherently political.” Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 65.
124 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 65.
125 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 66.
126 (More on the notions of individualism and collective conscience in Chapter 1.)
127 Diamela Eltit, cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 32.
128 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 66.
129 Ibid, Page 68.
response, Eltit reminded me of the importance of considering the social, historical and cultural context of the time; ‘one can’t think without taking context into account. Effectively, the entire country – or a large part of the country – was in a very repressive situation... under severe oppression. So, the idea was to work with different social situations, different situations of oppression and ‘otherness.’ (...) So, my work with the beggar in “The Kiss” ...was a bid to work with an unexpected, fleeting encounter...the city as a surprise.”

Eltit works with similar social issues in her literature, which, to be sure, makes use of similar critical values and theoretical applications. Julio Ortega, a professor of Hispanic Studies at Brown University, expands on Eltit’s literary work in his book Caja de herramientos. Drawing from examples her novel Los Vigilantes, Ortega illustrates how Eltit’s writing is simultaneously a very “postmodern, and very current piece” (postmodern, in the sense that it critically deconstructs the “inexorable Occident,” and current (at the time that it was written) in its critical approach to Chile’s ‘crisis’).

As per Ortega’s reading, the novel’s main character (a mother) represents the most vulnerable body – divided between spaces enclosed by control, watched by everyone and everything, and forced to surrender her integrity to this relentless vigilance. According to Ortega, she can only turn to language to elucidate her situation, though ultimately it is inadequate for her to confront the sequence within which she is trapped; her language, like her psyche, can’t oppose the disorder naturalized by the controlling gaze and the degrading suspicion; this ‘gaze of vigilance’ has ‘emptied the world of content’ and has converted a society of control into an apparatus of exclusions – an instrument of hegemony that erases all differences. Moreover, he adds, the subject in Eltit’s novel is essentially synonymous to the censored language of society; the forces of control and repression seek to occupy and invade every available interior space with its watchful eye. The symbolism rampant throughout Eltit’s novel, as illustrated in Ortega’s insightful reading, no doubt draws poignant parallels – through the use of “a polyvalent, multi-signifying register” – to the societal demands, constraints and controversies that are inherent to the context of the work, in compliance with the requisites of Avanzadian critical practice.

Moreover, it can be argued that literature (or the literary form) is redefined as a medium or support – as an ‘art action’ in and of itself. Eltit affirms, for example, that her novel Lumpérica is more of a performance than a book. In an interview with Juan Andres Piña, she explains that in Lumpérica there is an attempt to “call up all possible forms of language: objective language, subjective language, forms from the Golden Age, the Baroque, etc.” This is, in her words, an alternative “option of writing,” as opposed to that of the linear model or the classical narrative form prescribed by Chile’s literary tradition. Language, for Eltit, is not merely a “vehicle” through which to tell a story; nor is it a means to convey history or anecdote. Instead, as she explains, language

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130 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 81.
131 Eltit uses Don Quijote as an example - the ‘great novel of the Spanish language.’
becomes “the protagonist and stage” of her gesture, aiming not to replicate the ‘traditional’ model, but to reformulate that model as an artistic act.\(^{152}\)

Just as Altamirano and Duclos, among others, reformulate the conventions of painting, so too does Eltit reformulate the conventions of literature. The critical practices that serve as the foundations of artistic production in Chile under Pinochet are unmistakably manifested in the gestures of their rhetoric and chosen forms. In 1979, when asked about the concept of ‘rupture’ in art, Carlos Altamirano replied, “we in a state of crisis in Chile at the moment… and for art to appropriately respond, it must necessarily modify its structures [techniques, and representations] … this is what we refer to when we speak about ‘rupture.’”\(^{133}\) Like his contemporaries, he necessarily associates art with a critical process (not a commercial one), in order to sufficiently respond to urgent cultural necessities of his own personal place and time.\(^{134}\) As Gaspar Galaz poignantly states, “reason is the connecting thread by which these artists (...) regardless of their generational differences of their visual languages.\(^{135}\) Whether on canvas, on pavement, on paper, or sky, artists in Chile at the end of the 20\(^\text{th}\) century engaged in myriad diverse ‘creative acts,’\(^{136}\) cleverly responding to the situation at hand – knowing full well that “at a time when the real is forbidden, there is a demand for the symbolic.”\(^{137}\)

\(^{152}\) Richard explains the ways in which Eltit goes to great lengths to demonstrate this point, combining three external elements – the biographical (expressed in self-inflicted wounds), the social (illustrated in reading at the brothel), and the interdisciplinary (in her use of film and video – “the ‘others’ of literature” – to record the reading). Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 81.

\(^{133}\) Interview with Carlos Altamirano, Revista CAL No. 3, agosto de 1979.

\(^{134}\) “The self is the axis which invisibly intersects all the works.” (Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” Recovering Histories catalogue.)

\(^{135}\) Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” Recovering Histories catalogue.

\(^{136}\) The act of separating a sculpture from its pedestal and from these creating two separate sculpture is in itself a creative act.” (Vicuña, “1968-1983 Dieciseis Annos,” 1984.)

\(^{137}\) Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 68.
CHAPTER 4 - “EL TERCER PERIODO”: THE NEXT GENERATION

It has been said that in 1982, the so-called “third period” of dictatorship commenced – an era that bore witness to the alleged “collapse” of the Escena Avanzada, due in part to the reemergence of artists like Francisco Brugnoli (initially one of the Avanzada’s principle opponents), the return of exiles and their acquired techniques from abroad, and the emergence of a new generation of painters, beginning to grow tired of Avanzadian ideological doctrine. In stark contrast to the flourishing first-world spectacle of the early Pinochet years, Chile, at the outset of the 80’s, appeared to be “in shambles.”

In the face of a failing economy, the economic endorsement of cultural and artistic production (inherent to the model of “art industry” set forth by the regime in its second or “foundational stage”) decreased substantially, according to Richard. In its endeavor to quell prevailing ‘post-boom’ anxieties, the regime actually lifted certain censorship laws at first – creating, at least, the illusion of a more “permissible” cultural environment, and thus rekindling, for some, the dream of democracy and visions of popular struggle. While the critical players associated with the ‘alternative’ or ‘transgressive’ scene were caught up in divisive debates and ‘futile squabbling,’ younger groups began to grow tired of their ideological precepts and discursive practices – consequently, according to Richard, priorities were reordered, as artists moved away from the “relatively restricted sphere of the Avanzada, towards forms of expression with greater social appeal.” As the decade of the 1980’s progressed, the notions of “social conflict” and “aesthetic ‘commitment’” made a discernible ‘come-back’ in artistic production (respectively), both notions frowned upon by Richard as transparently idealistic.

Richard and other cultural critics of her time have argued that the CADA’s interventionist practices in the late seventies set a precedent for the type of ‘popular art’ – those “forms of expression with greater social appeal” – that characterized the first years of the ‘third period.’ Their art action “Para no morir de hambre en el arte” (“Not to die of hunger in art”), for example, was straightforwardly dubbed by Richard as “the primary model for the new Chilean art after 1979;” a performance intended to address issues of economic

1 “The banking system had collapsed, agriculture and industry had drawn to a halt, and the foreign debt had reached nearly 19 billion dollars.” (Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” Recovering Histories catalogue.)
2 (More on the ‘stages’ of the regime in Chapter 1.)
3 The number of corporate scholarships for artists, for example, fell from 51 to 34 from 1982 to 1983. (Hoy magazine, January 1983. (Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, 105.)
4 Ibid.
5 (More on the divisions and debates in Chapter 2.)
6 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, 106.
7 “The Avanzada’s restructuring of language was carried out in order to reflect on the material codes of signification in art, an endeavor that was completely opposed to the transparent idealism behind the notion of art as a form of expression, whether of social conflict or of aesthetic ‘commitment.’” (Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 109.)
8 Ibid. Page 54.
deprivation, hunger and poverty, “Para no morir...” made use of milk as a metaphor to represent ‘unrepresentable’ political problems – “to diagnose the wants of the national body.” The ‘art action’ consisted of distributing milk to people in Santiago’s slums, parading milk trucks through the city’s streets, printing full-page ads in periodicals, enacting the group’s message in front of the local United Nations building and altering the façade of city’s museum with a large white sheet. As Diamela Eltit explained in her article, “CADA 20 AÑOS,” (written for the Revista de Crítica Cultural in 1999), milk was used as a signifier – a symbol of demand – that effectively “materialized the hunger of the city,” or, in the words of Fernando Balcells, “exposed the imperial emptiness of hunger.” Moreover, the incorporation of the Bellas Artes illustrated, as Richard argues, a denouncement of ‘official institutionalism of the museum; in “Trama urbana y fugas utopicas,”” (printed in the same issue) she adds that the museum serves as an “allegory of the holy tradition of art of the past, and at the same time, as a symbol of the official culture of dictatorship.”

In 1980, at the time of the performance, Balcells affirmed that milk operated in “Para no morir...” as a relative signifier for all the material and intellectual concerns that condition Chilean life; “For the first time in Chile, an artwork intervened directly in the landscape and in concrete life situations, using a prime form of sustenance as a vehicle for communication.” What’s more, the CADA purposefully affirmed that the inclusion of a print ad in the performance transformed “a mode of mass information” into a mode of “mass-art.” In light of this, the later art actions performed by the CADA (towards the end of the ‘era of the Avanzada’), appeared to signal the idealism of ‘art for the masses,’ reminiscent of the illustrative work

9 Ibid.
of the Allende days.

Exactly ten years after the military take-over, the CADA embarked on an art-action that covered city walls with the slogan “No +,” an action that simply encouraged its spectator to fill in the missing word (i.e. “No more hunger,” “No more pain,” etc.). Richard and her contemporaries saw this radical performance as an example that illustrated a renewed connection between artistic practice and popular struggle;“The walls, whose use was forbidden throughout the regime, were reconquered by the CADA artists as places for a popularly committed art.16” In “Ahora Chile,” (printed in 1983 in Cuadernos de/para analysis, co-written by Nelly Richard), Justo Pastor Mellado states, “If prior to 1973 the arts illustrated and decorated the programs of the popularly elected government, in 1983 the same arts illustrate and decorate the program for the return of democracy. This has been the customary way of relating politics and culture in the left. Thus the left shows that it is a tool of the state and that it knowingly confuses propaganda with creativity.17,

In response to this sort of criticism, Eltit resolutely declared that while “No+” may have played an active role in accompanying the end of the dictatorship, the performance was not, as Mellado and Richard assume, a decisive return to illustrative forms and popular propaganda18; the CADA never sought to explicitly change the course of the dictatorship, but rather remained true to their critical values, their recognition of pressing cultural exigencies, and their use of the city as a platform for artistic intervention. In their text “Contigencia,” published the same year as “No+,” the CADA condemned, as per Richard herself, the “self-referentiality of the gallery space” and the art produced therein.19 The originally stated ideals of the CADA were, therefore, essentially at play in “No+”; considered by Eltit to be the most important of the CADA’s interventions, the art action, to a certain extent, represented the ultimate fulfillment of their interests, with regard to the fusion of politics, art and life.

“It was in this piece that the group passionately worked with the question of authorship, maintaining at the same time a fictional component. ‘No+’ is the action in which specificity is lost. The truth is lost... the borders (between art and life) are completely dissolved. We launched ‘No+’ as a sign to be filled by the citizenship. ... We left it that way and waged our bets to see what was going to happen... It wasn’t as enclosed as with the milk, the trucks, or the planes. (...) The signs began to grow and grow in an amazing way. The people began

16 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 57.
17 (Justo Pastor Mellado, “Ahora Chile” Cuadernos de/para analysis, 1983.)
18 (…which inherently clashed with the Avanzada’s resolute decision to “abandon any thematic approach to the popular.”) (Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, 109.)
19 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 57.
to demonstrate, in filling in the words... ‘No more hunger,’ [no more] ‘dictatorship,’ [no more] ‘political pressures,’ [no more] ‘torture,’ etc... and then the political parties began to use these signals too. [As a slogan] it is interesting on a number of levels – theoretically, politically... and in the sense of the citizen, who represents the participation of the ‘other.’”

The apparent theoretical underpinnings of the CADA’s art action notwithstanding, Richard continues to see “No+” as a primary example of art as a cultural platform for popular and political struggle – art that responded to the call for [social] solidarity.20 This ultimately links the CADA, Richard (falsely) presumes, with the cultural aims of the left, and eradicates any critical differences between the CADA’s artistic interventions and the popular murals of Ramona Parra and the ‘muralistas’ brigade.21

It appears that, according to Richard’s historical account, the so-called “bid to re-democratize the country came to an abrupt halt” with the regime’s reinstatement of repressive measures after 1984. That year, then, marked the beginning of what might be called (for the purposes of the present discussion) “part two” of the so-called third stage: “The Return of the Pleasurable”22 – a story of the Avanzada’s ultimate dissolution, of the “retreat of artists to their studios,”23 of the renaissance of painting and the revival of the gallery circuit. As story, then, set (for the most part24) in Santiago’s galleries and museums, thereby relocating the scene of art production from the “the public” to “the private, or the subjective of pictorial imaginary.”25

For many Avanzada artists, the decade of the 80’s, which appeared to blatantly ignore the painful truth of recent years – to sweep the memory of torture and disappearance “under the rug,”26 so to speak – provoked feelings of anger, resentment and frustration; Carlos Altamirano explains, “I had a very rebellious relationship towards everything that was going on; it was my own process of disillusionment with something very euphoric that existed at one time – a euphoria which disappeared and left me hanging.” The euphoric struggle for change (implicit in Nelly’s Avanzadian discourse) had fizzled – ultimately incapable of altering the hegemony of dominant structure – exhausted, perhaps, by the “epistemological vacuum”27 of critical theory. This turn of events engendered, as Altamirano’s testament affirms, feelings of emotion, not criticism, and thereby fundamentally clashed with one of the Avanzada’s principle foundations – namely, its rejection of emotional testimony; “If you ask me about what happened during the 80’s...

20 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 111.
21 (More on Ramona Parra and the Brigadas Muralistas in Chapter 2.)
22 (More on the “Return to the Pleasurable “ in Chapter 3.)
24 (Thereafter only a few works served as an exception to this phenomenon (Paisaije, for example concerned social space) – “these works attempted to metaphorically redefine the conventions of the gallery, either by parodying its architecture or by calling its visual topology a “landscape.” Apparently, Lotty Rosenfeld is also an exception to the phenomenon. According to Richard, she has “insistently remained outside the protected spaces of the institution” and “continues to desecrate the cult of art and its market fetish by utilizing the streets.” (Cruces) Margins and Institutions, Page 57.
25 Ibid.
26 Arturo Duclos Interview: “It was like someone pushing all the dust under the rug, everyone was under it; as soon as someone were to lift it up, you would find yourself surrounded by the dust and the bodies...”
more than criticism I felt resentment. This was more my relationship with art than anything else. I looked more than with a critical eye, more than opposing myself to what was happening in theoretical terms -- I was opposing myself in emotional terms.” Thus conflicted, Altamirano deliberately refrained from producing art for the duration of the 1980’s – a period which he himself describes as having “skipped over.” In contrast, younger artists reacted to their own feelings of disenchantment (both with the precepts of their artistic-intellectual elders and with the Pinochet regime) with a renewal in creative processes – an entirely new body of artistic work. According to Galaz, there was “a rebellion among the younger artists to codify in a different manner, to explore other subtleties, to rid themselves of a terrifying legacy of death and of unresolved situations for which they have no solutions; they yearned to breathe more freely in a kind of inner space which painting provides, thus consciously moving away from their afflicted surroundings.”

Arturo Duclos (younger than his Avanzadian contemporaries) confirmed, to a certain extent, Galaz’ assertions in our interview, explaining his decision to work with more “agreeable themes” in later years – interested in other artistic forms “more related to pleasure,” and, to a certain extent, a detachment from reality. Allegedly, the direction that Duclos and the ‘new generation of artists’ were to take was revealed in the 1983 exhibition, “Provincia senalada” (“This Wonderful Land”), at the Sur gallery in Santiago; here, a return to the pictorial was affirmed, affecting, according to Richard, “a renewed celebration of the imaginary rather than conceptual or analytical approach to art;” as Caludio Donoso frankly states, “here it was clear that the earlier conceptual art, which was a reaction to the dictatorship, had been left far behind.”

The next generation of artists (from Richard’s point of view and that of other Avanzadians), literally appeared to be unaffected by the ten years of struggle against dictatorship, caring little to explain the “real situation or to express solidarity with its victims, preferring instead to offer a pleasurable situation.”

Duclos’ testimony, however, suggests that it was neither a desire to ‘leave behind’ or neglect the issue of the disappeared, nor an outright dismissal of a conceptual approach to art, but the expiring appeal of Richard’s discourse itself that motivated the ‘new art’ associated with the younger generation; “I got a bit bored of [the Avanzada’s discourse] (...) I think there began to be a certain militancy at the root of these ideas that was beginning to wear out...” “(...) “...In the early nineties [I tried] to liberate myself a bit from the sort of oppressive burden of that period of the Escena Avanzada and the military dictatorship. There are many factors involved, because there existed great ideological control, not only from the dictatorship, but from all the major intellectual groups as well. So you might say that these intellectual groups transformed themselves into our little dictatorships... determining and telling you how art was to be; ultimately it had the feeling of wearing a straightjacket...a very restrictive feeling.”

28 Gaspar Galaz, Remarks on a Decade, Recovering Histories catalogue.
30 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 99.
31 Claudio Donoso, “Pintura Joven,” Apsi, 158, 1985. (Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page103.)
32 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 102.
33 Carlos Altamirano Interview: “it was of interest to nobody, it was a nuisance.”
Duclos’ new pictorial approach was, then, an act of liberation – “a proclamation of independence from all the ideological dependencies that existed during the 80’s,” (whether that of Richard’s discourse or of Pinochet’s); this was precisely the motivation behind his conspicuous use of Soviet iconography throughout his work. Referencing the collapse of the U.S.S.R.’s “experiment with communism” and its “entire block of ideologies” at the end of the Cold War, Duclos sought to illustrate the dying appeal of previous ideological projects. In response to a prevailing atmosphere of disenchantment (not unlike Altamirano’s), Duclos took action in an apparent return to the ‘pictorial’ form – seemingly clashing with Avanzadian ideals, though admittedly exhibiting the strong theoretical influence of his elders. Indeed, while his extensive use of popular iconography in and of itself confirms that Duclos is the product of a different time and generation than the Avanzada artists, the critical practice of his work as “a fundamental operator of the politics of displacement” is discernibly influenced by the Avanzada’s discourse (as was explored more fully in Chapter 2); when interviewed in 1992 by Julia Hertzberg for the Recovering Histories catalogue, Duclos disclosed that his early works “done at the end of his undergraduate studies in 1982,” (mainly installations assembled from recycled materials or found objects, and “art interventions in public spaces”), were motivated by Francisco Brugnoli, Lotty Rosenfeld, the CADA group, and Carlos Altamirano, among others. While these predecessors may not have been ‘cut from the same cloth,’ as it were, they undoubtedly, as Duclos confirms, had a profound effect on his development and artistic formation. Bound both to the passing ‘era of the Avanzada’ and to the ensuing generation of young painters, Duclos embodies the transitional quality that characterized his country at the time; he ‘straddles the fence,’ so to speak, between the second and third stages of the dictatorship – between, as he himself puts it, “the politically compromised” and the “politically correct.”

Duclos (having emerged, as Guillermo Machuca explains, from a certain critical workshop at the Católica) was arguably among the last few to have been trained within the realm of Avanzadian intellectualism; in the later days of dictatorship, as Francisco Brugnoli explains, “…Everything represented by the Escena Avanzada, by the movement generated by Nelly, and by our work in the Taller de Artes Visuales …was ignored within the art schools. …A student once came to me and said, ‘We aren’t even capable of reading Nelly’s texts, because we don’t have the instruments of formation to be able to understand what they’re about.’”(…) “The truth is, it was another school of teaching altogether, and ultimately the art academies were defending precisely what Nelly was attacking, which was the handmade value of painting.” This new “school of teaching” to which Brugnoli attests is carefully evaluated within the discursive practices

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34 Julia Hertzberg, Recovering Histories catalogue, Page 62.
35 Julia Hertzberg, based on an interview with Arturo Duclos (September 15, 1992) (Cited in the Recovering Histories catalogue, Page 61, Note 49.)
36 (The implication here is that Duclos’ predecessors, belonging to a different generation, were necessarily endowed with a different set of accumulated experiences, values and understandings. – More on generational differences in Chapter 2.)
of Nelly Richard, Justo Pastor Mellado, and others; these critics argue that their discourse (already expelled from ‘official’ academic environments in the latter stages of dictatorship), ends up yet further marginalized when students are deprived of the analytical apparatus necessary to understand its convoluted messages, (as is illustrated in Brugnoli’s recollection). Given these conditions, Richard and the others accused the emergent generation of young artists (from the so-called “new school”) of “illiteracy.” To be sure, the existing academic environment, from the position of a critical theorist, appeared quite ‘rudimentary,’ stressing technical skills to the detriment of theory and critical thought and their transformative capabilities; Brugnoli continues, “...To understand painting in terms of craftsmanship implied a failure to take charge of the fact that artists must necessarily relate to, challenge or incorporate the technical means of production of their time. That is, when an artist works in handicraft, it can be read in two ways; the guy either is doing it to respond to or confront the technical modes of production of his time, or he is acting in absolute ignorance... living on another planet.”

With the exception of Gonzalo Diaz (who was, according to Machuca, “really the only important avant-garde professor [who continued to teach] during the dictatorship”), “liberal” teachers (like Brugnoli) were prohibited from “official” academia from the time of the coup until the last legs of dictatorship – effecting a dangerous ten-year “gap” at the educational level, from Richard and Mellado’s point of view, among others. According to Mellado, the only “event that filled this gap” was Richard’s seminar on contemporary art (“Arte Actual”) at the North-American/Chilean Institute of Culture in 1979. In an issue of La Bicicleta that same year, Carlos Gallardo conceded that the seminar on ‘Arte Actual’ was the first time he had “encountered relevant information on the state of [Chilean] art, since [he] was never taught to systematically address the field when... at university”; later, in the same issue, Victor Hugo Codocedo declared, “the seminar confirmed the present regressive state of university art schools (which perhaps extends to the whole area of knowledge), where the teachers gradually destroy any critical or analytical faculties in the student.” Indeed, existing academic practices were denounced by Richard and the like, for their ignorant oversight of important postmodern and poststructuralist critical theories; as Justo Pastor Mellado proclaimed in 1984, “There are no avant-garde texts in the university libraries,” a fact he directly associated with “the spontaneous generation of painters who are systematically churned out as illiterates from art schools. Up until now the teaching of theory has been an enormous enterprise on the part of a few... The discussion of it is limited to that of obscure forces.”

Henry Giroux, in his exploration of the relationship between theory and pedagogy, maintains that a pedagogical space should be defined wherein “students become agents

37 Justo Pastor Mellado, “Ensayo de interpretacion de la coyuntura plastica,” Lecture given at the Taller de Artes Visuales, 1983. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, 103.)
38 Carlos Gallardo, “Situacion seminario 1979: una perspectiva de hoy en Chile,” La Bicicleta, 4, (September 1979.)
39 Victor Hugo Codocedo, La Bicicleta, 4, 1979. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 103.)
40 Justo Pastor Mellado, Protocolo, 5, 1984. (Cited in Margins and Institutions, Page 103.)
by *doing* theory;” that is, “students should be engaged in critical discussions and ‘poststructuralist inquiries’ …in order to summon the *intellectual responsibility* of continually clarifying questions of consciousness, desire, self and social identity,”42 to become what Maria-Regina Kecht refers to as “socially and historically inscribed subjects who can be agents of social transformation.”43 The ‘open dialogue’ and ‘oppositional rhetoric’ that effectively emerge, as per Giroux, from the intersection of literary theory and pedagogy were precisely what the Pinochet regime aimed to stifle in suppressing insurgencies of any kind; consequently, as Richard and her comrades presume, the generation of painters that emerged from university in the latter stage of dictatorship were effectively *uneducated*, devoid of the *concrete practice* of “critical pedagogy,” as described by *Giroux* to “both inform the disciplinary structure of the curriculum and the conditions for empowering students.”44 In *Margins and Institutions*, Richard explicitly illustrates her view that the so-called new school’ of teaching (put forth by the Pinochet regime to effectively *mold* the next generation of cultural producers) clearly has no regard for the issue of cultural domination and, by nature, impedes the possibility for any “*social message*” in art, *playing down* any national role that it might have, “handing it over to gratuitous or merely subjective impulses”45 instead. Accordingly, the generation of artists produced by this ‘new school,’ appears content to both participate in and exploit commercial markets. Having escaped (unlike their elders) exposure to the ‘failure of democracy,’ the morbidity of *disappearance*, and the repressive phenomenon of self-censorship, these artists were, as Richard states, able to accommodate the ‘official’ artistic institutions of the gallery or the museum, “whose benefits they are able to enjoy.”46 These official institutions, in turn, saw the potential to profit from the newer artists and their “gratuitous” forms by exploiting “their power to amuse …to divert attention away from more critical activities” – effectively generating the notion of *art as a luxury*, in a country “completely drained of energy because of its struggle against authority and its grip on representation.”47

It was as if, as Francisco Brugnoli asserts, the significant critical practices of previous years were suddenly “forgotten” after 1983; “*The language of the Chilean avant-garde was determined thereafter by what was permissible in the largest art galleries… and painting appeared to be on the ‘come-back.’*” Duclos’ work, however, demonstrates that Avanzadian language was not abruptly “forgotten” altogether, but rather modified and reevaluated to adjust to changing conditions. While his predecessors denounced the commercial “art market” for its apparent vapidity and lack of critical thought, Arturo Duclos – a forerunner of the ‘new generation of painters’ – maintains that his return to the art “market” or “industry” (and to the ‘pictorial’ form) was not an indication of ignorance, but of a desire to achieve a level of self-sufficiency; “*My position [in the 80’s and early 90’s] was to liberate myself (ideologically, conceptually, socially, and economically) – not simply to propose an autonomous type of work, but also a financially independent work system;* that is, I turned to other forms of art production – not as a

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.

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Indeed, though he may have exhibited a willful separation from Richardian ideology, Duclos' renewed interest in painting is, as has previously been argued,48 the result of a critical reassessment of the conventions of pictorial form (not unlike that of his immediate predecessors – Altamirano, Dittborn and Diaz, among others); like them, he cannot merely be denoted by the blind pursuit of prevailing “universal” international trends, which Richard determinedly associates with the “return of painting,” “the return of the pleasurable,” or that which she has dubbed the “neo-pictorial scene.”

That is not to say, however, that Duclos was unaffected by the foreign models initiated (“somewhat belatedly”50) by exiles returning from abroad – international trends that were, as Richard argues, explicitly reproduced by the ‘new generation of painters.’ In point of fact, Duclos is by nature temporally linked to this ‘new generation,’ despite his evident Avanzadian heritage; he is indeed, as has previously been argued, one of few to have experienced what might be called ‘life on the hyphen.’ His unique artistic formation, (necessarily conditioned by personal contingency, and thereby different from that of his predecessors), was unavoidably traversed by contemporaneous historical, social, and cultural factors outside of his control (i.e. the return of exiles, the atmosphere of ‘transition,’ and the appearance of various new international models). It is, then, no surprise that Duclos’ work (like that of other ‘new painters’) would show signs of foreign trends brought to Chile in the 80’s – both by popular international art catalogues and magazines51, and by repatriated artists, inexorably influenced by their experiences overseas. Gonzalo Diaz, for example (having returned from Italy at the end of the 1970’s a so-called “transformed transvanguardist,” 52) arguably triggered the conceptual ‘re-evaluation’ of pictorial form 53 that subsequently characterized the ‘new generation’ of young painters in the 80’s; in this regard, Diaz’ critical spin on the Italian school of transvanguardism exerted a profound effect on the artistic formation of Duclos and other ‘young artists’ of his day.

Originated in Italy by the art critic and historian Achille Bonito Olivo, “transvanguardia” flourished on the international scene from the late 1970’s to the mid-80’s – it was a “big deal,” (according to Art Forum writer Brook Adams), at a time of great interest in “things-non-New-York.”54 Minimally and misleadingly dubbed the so-called catchall

”dummy,” or an “illiterate,” or an “endangered intellectual.”
word for the return to figurative painting, the tenets of transvanguardia (largely centered on the concepts of nomadism, eclecticism, irony and the polychrome) propose the recovery of painting as ‘mental stimulation’ through the presentation of ‘multitudinous resources, drawn from discordant textures, bright colors, indefinite outlines, and rapid brushstrokes.’ The movement, according to Bonito Olivo, was conceived (inspired by 15th-century Mannerism) to supersede or transcend the ideological constraints of conceptualism or poor art (the internationally endorsed

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56 “nomadism” (noun): a person who continually moves from place to place; wanderer” (The Collins English Dictionary © 2000 HarperCollins)

57 “eclecticism” (noun): An eclectic system or method. “eclectic” (adj.): (1) Selecting or employing individual elements from a variety of sources, systems, or styles; (2) Made up of or combining elements from a variety of sources. (The Collins English Dictionary © 2000 HarperCollins)

58 “irony” (noun): (1) the humorous or mildly sarcastic use of words to imply the opposite of what they normally mean; 2/an instance of this, used to draw attention to some incongruity or irrationality; 3 incongruity between what is expected to be and what actually is, or a situation or result showing such incongruity. (The Collins English Dictionary © 2000 HarperCollins)

59 “polychrome” (adjective) (1) having various or changing colors; polychromatic, (2) made with or decorated in various colors; (noun) (3) a work of art or artifact in many colors. (The Collins English Dictionary © 2000 HarperCollins)

60 “Transvanguardia,” as defined by Francesco Bognini (citing Bonito Olivo), at the inauguration of the exhibition “La Transavanguardia italiana,” (recently on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Santiago, October 7 – November 9, 2003.) http://www.uchile.cl/undin2/actuales/noti3396.shtml

61 When asked what ‘key moment’ inspired his formation of Transvanguardia, Bonito Olivo responds: “For me, the key moment was theoretical – when I discovered similarities between the period of Mannerism in the 15th century …and that of the 1970’s. [With the former], there was a geographical, political, and historical situation of dramatic revelation: the discovery of America seriously altered the perception of the world (…) Philosophy maintains that anxiety is the basic structure of the human spirit; the artist, then, is faced with the necessity of representing a world in crisis. Previously (in the days of the Renaissance) the artist was ‘safe’ …[he could ‘fall back’ on] perspective, on the construction of an optical space, …on symmetry, and on the use of Euclidean geometry. The new Mannerist, on the other hand, didn’t see such a bright future – he saw himself in an anxious world; whereas the Renaissance artists used invention, Mannerist used memory, a reference to his great past.” (…) “Thus, while I was conducting a study of Mannerism in the 70’s, it occurred to me that there was sort of a 20th century “Neomanerrism” going on at the time – when the ‘avant-garde’ was in crisis, the economy was caught up in the oil crisis and the Arab-Israeli war, and ideology was in the crisis of Marxism. There was no confidence in the human spirit. What followed, then, was a recovery of painting and sculpture, of memory, of style, of the past… but in an eclectic fashion. (Achille Bonito Olivo, in an interview with Cecilia Valdés Urrutia, “La Transavanguardia liberó el arte de la esclavitud,” El Mercurio, October 10, 2003.)

62 “CONCEPTUAL ART” (“Arte Conceptual”) refers to an artistic movement that appeared the end of the 60’s. Its defining characteristic is the physical disintegration of the artistic object – the reduction or destruction of techniques and materials led to the amplification of the function [or role] of the artist. For these artists, the traditional object is displaced by thought (or the conception of thought itself); in focusing on theoretical principles, they come value the process of formation and construction more than the final product itself. Art is perceived as an “idea” and not a physical object. (Translated and paraphrased from http://www.arteuna.com/panel/diccionario.htm)

63 “POOR ART” (“Arte Pobre”) denotes art that is opposed to "art for art’s sake,” or to art that merely produces aesthetic pleasure, or empathy through color and form. According to some, “poor art” is constructed with “poor” materials, items discarded or “thrown out” in a “technologically rich world.” “Poor art” is poor in technological terms, but “rich” in anthropological terms. (As defined by Germano Celant in 1966.) (Translated and paraphrased from http://www.arteuna.com/panel/diccionario.htm)
model of the ‘avant-garde’ that had dominated the art world in previous years – to “free art from enslavement” – to show that being an artist and being happy need not be mutually exclusive… that conditions need not be so black and white. Incidentally, for Bonito Olivo, craftwork (“manualidad”) is not independent of or contrary to the mental process or conceptual analysis; in his words, “Transvanguardia is a marriage between Picasso (the memory of painting) and Duchamp, with his conceptual, mental posture.”

Given its conceptual groundwork, it is of no surprise that a movement of this sort would appeal to artists in Chile in the 1980’s; driven by a “desire to renounce the earlier intellectualism [of previous years], the dialectical analysis of power with its unavoidable play of contradiction and differences,” new painters like Duclos were undoubtedly attracted by the transvanguardian critique of ‘utopian ideals’ and ‘linguistic hegemony’ – ideological presuppositions reminiscent of Avanzadian discourse. Thus, the “reaffirmation of the personal, unconscious, instinctual or desiring self” (denounced by Richard and her earlier contemporaries), was arguably an honest effort on the part of young artists in the 1980’s to reclaim an element of individuality – to oppose the ideological domination of postmodern semiotic discourse.

While Mellado, Richard and the like might perceive the actions of “new painters” as “copies of subjectivist movements” or mere additions to their “collection of international styles” – yet another instance of Chile’s time-honored practice of transference – the impact of an international movement like transvanguardism must be noted for its local relevance and applicability; here the words of Gaspar Galaz (previously cited in Chapter 3) ring true, once again: “Art practices in fashion ten years ago (...) are close to our reality today; irrespective of the international standards, because they echo the drama of our daily life.”

As Bonito Olivo maintains, transvanguardia is not a global movement, but a “glocal” one (simultaneously “global” and “local”). On account of its capacity and drive to situate artistic practice within the ‘immediacies’ of subjectivity and identity, transvanguardia is “a universal language capable of harboring an anthropological dimension. (...) It [does not intend to be] a tribal answer to globalization, but rather a bid to open up, with the universality of art, the problem of the subject’s struggle, who wants

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64 Specifically, Olivo wished to distance himself from the ideological connotations of this internationally endorsed model of the ‘avant-garde,’ namely for its devaluation of the artwork as an object, and its dismissal of the artist’s interests. (Adriana Laurenzi, “La Transvanguardia Italiana,” Sitearte 2003-09.) (http://www.sitearte.com/criticas/transv_cuerpo.html)

65 “The avant-garde always assumes displeasure and never happiness.” (Ibid.)

66 (Achille Bonito Olivo, in an interview with Cecilia Valdés Urrutia, “La Transvanguardia liberó el arte de la esclavitud,” El Mercurio, October 10, 2003.)

67 “The ideal of Mannerism is based on a conceptual notion of painting. As Leonardo [da Vinci] says, ‘painting is a mental thing.’” (Ibid)

68 “Transvanguardia, like the ready made, approaches previous artistic styles in a contemporary way.”

69 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, 99.

70 Ibid.

71 More on ‘cultural transference’ and the dependency on foreign models in Chapter 1.

72 (A proposal by CADA, Ruptura, 1982.) (Cited by Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 92.)

only to speak in his native tongue.”74 The subjectivity of the artist, that is, is inherently tied to their geographic [territorial] identity – their capacity to re-appropriate ‘universal patrimony’ in accordance with their own sensibilities and interests. According to Olivo, this is the “great novelty” of transvanguardia – in contrast to models of art hegemonized by US language, it recuperates the geographic and cultural specificity of the artist (the “genus loci,” as it were). In light of this, it would appear that Olivo’s discourse resides not in a totalizing sphere of internationalism, but precisely in the realm of civil liberty and ecology (the study of the relationships between living organisms and their environment75) that Richard and Mellado inhabit themselves.

Regardless, Richard and her contemporaries insist that the conspicuous influence of such international trends only further substantiates the claim that new artists in the 80’s, (characterized by a “new visual hedonism”76), “give little sign of being critical of their context.”77 For Richard, Mellado and like, the ‘return to pictorial form,’ (an act of “revenge,” as per Richard, on the part of “painters alienated by the Avanzada”)78, both failed to acknowledge or oppose hegemonic structures and undermined the pain suffered by Chileans in previous years, “absolved of making any analysis of the social and historical circumstances surrounding the production of their work”79 – dangerous consequences of their supposed educational deficit.

It appears, however, that theirs was not an act of ignorance but of generational and ideological rebellion – artistic evolution. Richard’s critical practice urges artists and intellectuals to both acknowledge and actively intercede cultural and social exigencies – the ‘crisis’ of their time. By nature, however, cultural exigencies are not stagnant but ever-changing. While Richard’s discourse was tethered to the cultural “crisis” of critical and artistic impotency in the face political hegemony and neo-liberal economic ideology,80 the “crisis” that characterized ‘new painting’ in the 1980’s was arguably related to the evolution and proliferation of artistic discourse itself – the “linguistic Darwinianism”81 and the suffocating multiplicity of “semiotic perfectionism,”82 which, in their view, only served to stifle creativity, intuition, the element of subjectivity and surprise. The ‘poetry’ - the emotional capacities of artwork seemed, to them, to have been displaced by the incessant intellectualization of semiotics. Bonito Olivo says that the semiotic critic today lacks “eroticism” – they are anorexic, impersonal, objective and imperialist; “The critic should not only be seductive, but allow himself to be seduced by

74 Ibid.
75 The Collins English Dictionary © 2000 HarperCollins
76 Nelly Richard, Margins and Institutions, Page 99.
77 Ibid, Page 102.
78 Ibid.
80 (More on the ‘neo-liberal economic ideology’ in Chapter 1.)
82 Ibid.
the work as well; the semiotician, in contrast, is immersed in dissection and surgical procedure.\(^{83}\)

It appears that in her meticulous and systematic approach to the “crisis” of critical expression, Richard herself becomes part of the problem. Moreover, while condemned for so long to remain within the confines of her own discursive margins (outside of ‘official’ academia or culture\(^{84}\)), Richard has arguably become an accomplice to that abominable idealist, totalizing or globalizing\(^{85}\) notion of “History” that she so avidly opposed, having successfully preserved her Avanzadian ideology on the pages of her books, in the words of her essays, in the articles of her cultural magazine. Today, her textual production has a permanent place, alongside other great Chilean historiographers, on the shelves of the Bellas Artes museum and in the stacks of Santiago’s university libraries – readily available to anyone in search of information, as I was, on the general subject of “Art in Chile under Pinochet.” It is “official,” and unavoidably so.\(^{86}\) In this regard, it appears that Richard in fact embodies, to some extent, precisely that which she so vehemently criticizes – resorting to and becoming complicit with the very essentialist “norms” that she so firmly denounces in her critical deconstruction.\(^{87}\) As she herself confirmed in our interview, her critical discourse ultimately institutionalized the notion of the Escena Avanzada, assembling the ‘diverse and scattered practices’ of a variety of artists under one deceptive heading – a referent –the misleading insinuation of a ‘block’ or a whole.\(^{88}\) Such a classification unavoidably prompts ‘false boundaries’ and generalizations – ficticious features that, in serving to “make art more accessible,” provoke accusations of dogmatism.\(^{89}\)

As Isabel Aninat avows, ‘oversimplified outlines’ tend to impoverish a body of work as diverse and extensive as that of contemporary Chilean art, by preventing the inclusion of significant artists and artworks that may not be classified or reduced to such specific

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\(^{84}\) In fact, as I was surprised to learn in attending her lecture at the Universidad Católica in Santiago, she was never formally invited to speak and share her discourse within an academic institution until November of 2002; as she disclosed in the preface of her speech, it was the first time that she, Nelly Richard, was asked to generate open dialogue pertaining to the marginalized practices of the Avanzada in a university auditorium. It had been nearly 20 years, however, since the critical intricacies of the Avanzada had been ‘officially’ displaced from academia.

\(^{85}\) (More on the ‘totalizing notion of ‘History’” in Chapter 2.)

\(^{86}\) It is precisely for this reason that Mellado, among others, regards Richard as ‘dogmatic.’

\(^{87}\) As Rosa María Rodríguez Magda affirms, “the philosophical problem par-excellence today consists in finding out if it is possible to keep the epistemological rules of social space (definition of agents and change), of knowledge (interpretation and transformation of reality), ethics (endurance of values and the moral dimension) and of aesthetics (criteria) without resorting to a strong foundation.” Indeed, is it possible to maintain Avanzadian guidelines of this sort, (which by nature denounce History’s essentialism and foundationalism), without resorting to “essentialist” foundations or “universal truths”? (Rosa María Rodríguez Magda, “On the Need for Duty After the Crisis of Modernity”) (http://www.valenciatercermilenio.org/ingles/congre/human10.html)

\(^{88}\) (More on common misconceptions about the Escena Avanzada in Chapter 2.)

\(^{89}\) Justo Pastor Mellado interview, “…she is much more dogmatic …and everything that is more dogmatic is more approachable from a student’s point of view.”
For this reason, Aninat consciously rejected the use of classifications (chronological, stylistic or otherwise) in assembling her volume on contemporary Chilean painting – as she states clearly in the preface, “My history of Chilean Painting is linked by no connections at all. Why and for what reason should there be a consistent association?”

...Although it is commonly believed that classifications promote a better understanding of art, or that taxonomic denominations help a specific work of art to acquire a special seriousness and the distinctive seal of academic actions, I wonder whether it is not precisely an excess of academic approaches, links and forced classifications that have made art drift away from people (or made people drift away from art.)

While chronology is no doubt crucial in understanding the artistic production in Chile under Pinochet, as is the primary focus of the present discussion, it is understandable that artists of the ‘new generation’ found themselves stripped of individuality, specificity and subjectivity when critiqued in light of Richard’s Avanzadian doctrine, confined to the structure and temporality of dictatorship and hegemony. While the existence of dictatorship was unquestionably a salient feature of their artistic formation, it was not the only determining factor in the production of their work. In light of this, ‘new painters’ were not, as Brugnoli avows, “living on another planet,” but rather reupholding the dogma of their predecessors, and underline the individuality of their artistic practices.

While Richard’s insightful analysis undoubtedly left an important and indelible mark on Chilean artistic and intellectual discourse – building strong conceptual foundations with regard to ‘art as a vehicle for criticism and expression’ – the relevance of her espousal was bound to pass with time. As Richard herself upholds, (as has been argued from the start), artistic and cultural production must necessarily adjust to its ever-changing context – the emergence of ‘newer’ generations, ‘newer’ opinions, and ‘newer’ ideological constructions is unavoidable. As Chile transitioned into a fully developed country, galleries and other various commercial spaces for artistic diffusion (other than the very few accepted and inhabited by the Avanzada) were sure to pop up around Chile’s urban centers.

The significance of Richard’s argument notwithstanding, the particular linguistic deconstructions essential to Avanzadian conceptualism, while a necessary element in the marginal and transgressive endeavor to ‘say the unsayable,’ were not as vital to the

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90 Isabel Aninat, Pintura Chilena Contemporánea, Page 14.
91 Ibid.
92 (Mellado) makes reference to these limitations, citing Eugenio Dittborn in particular: “Dittborn’s work is very specific. You could literally organize the entire history of the last forty years around Dittborn’s work alone... and you’d see that Dittborn cannot be explained by the existence of the dictatorship; he existed before, during and after it.”
93 Isabel Aninat interview: “I proposed (and still propose today) that a return to a more pictorial art was justified … in a country like Latin America, especially the South. ...We are a more emotional people. In truth we are not very rational, and I feel that our art does not fall on the side of concept – it falls more on the side of emotion. But in that time [conceptualism] was justified much more than it is today ...because it was a form of expression that one had to cleverly use in order to say what one couldn’t say. And yet today it’s become sort of a ‘fad’ in many cases (with some exceptions...) when you create an installation or a conceptual piece today, it is more of a fashion statement than anything else.” On the contrary, at the
objectives of the ‘newer generation’ and their modus operandi. Their ‘re-evaluation of the pictorial,’ as it were, took *experimentation* in countless new directions – amassing an assorted array of methodologies and techniques, fraught with ironic and eclectic combinations of strong contrasts, and textual diversity. For them, pictorial practice had been redefined – perceiving the canvas as an *instrument* and not a finality.\(^\text{94}\)

Described by *Aninat* as the members of an “apocalyptic” era (not in the ‘end-of-the-world’ sense of the word, but in that of “*revelation, materialization and fullness of meaning*”), the art of the so-called ‘third period’ “accepted all possible languages,” deliberately “placing in juxtaposition all that preceded it,” aware of their ambiguous origins “*neither here nor there*” (“*ni de allá ni de acá*”).\(^\text{95}\)

If anything, the categorical tie that binds their work is that of aesthetic plurality or mutability: “figurative and abstract, mental and organic, explicit and allusive elements,”\(^\text{96}\) were knotted together in the collective practice of these heterogeneous artists. Receptive to change and adaptation, they proposed a dynamic and *transversal*\(^\text{97}\) practice of pictorial ‘experimentalism’ that, in the vein of their *Avanzadian* elders, underscored *concept* (not as a *prerequisite* to practice,\(^\text{98}\) but as its equal); hence, the artists of the so-called “tercer periodo” demarcated a *new* horizon for critical reflection, “without committing to outmoded projects, but without forgetting them either.”\(^\text{99}\)

time... It was an absolutely transgressive and marginal thing. So I think it was justified at the time, and very important.”


\(^\text{97}\) “Being transversal makes it possible to feel at home anywhere.” Ibid.

\(^\text{98}\) (“As Gaspar Galaz poignantly illustrates, theirs is an art form that indisputably relies on the notion of *concept* as a *prerequisite to practice* in the process of creation” – one in which art and thought are *interlaced.*) (Gaspar Galaz, “Remarks on a Decade,” *Recovering Histories* catalogue.)
