

Poetics of Dissent: Examining Bravery During a Time of Fear

- Short Essays:

1. Country Info

Before European arrival, Chile had been inhabited and ruled by the Incas in the north and the Mapuche in the central and south. In the 16th century Spanish colonists arrived taking control of the people and country. In 1810 Chile declared independence from Spain however this was not fully achieved until 1818. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries Chile went through a series of governmental changes, experienced dictators and military coups. While their political history is not as tumultuous as other South American countries, these changes affected the economy, civil rights, and daily life for the Chilean people. Today Chile is a thriving country that ranks #2 on the 2015 Human Development Index for South American and #42 worldwide.

It is important to note the political history in the late 20th century for context of the 2015 Venice Biennale Chilean Pavilion. During 1970, Salvador Allende President as a representative of the Socialist Party of Chile leading a Marxist style government. In 1973, General Augusto Pinochet overthrew Allende marking the beginning of his dictatorship rule, which lasted until 1990.

Under the regime of Pinochet parliament was suspended, political activity banned, and civil liberties violated. Thousands of Chileans were imprisoned, disappeared, tortured, killed or pushed into exile. A 2004 report estimates that 28,000 people were tortured and 3,200 people killed or missing. Opposition to his power was suppressed, he made changes to the constitution allowing him to rule longer and cut funding for education and health care, which led to a rise in disease. During this time the country went through a cultural blackout in which freedom of speech was suppressed and artists were unable to work or openly criticize their leaders.

2. Pavilion – Poetics of Dissent

Hosted in the Arsenal, centrally located, the 2015 Chile pavilion coincided with the overall theme *All the World's Futures* by reconciling the past in order to move confidently into the future. Chile is coming to terms with the horrors inflicted on its people during the Pinochet dictatorship by acknowledging the events, grieving losses and creating a space for change. Paz Errázuriz and Lotty Rosenfeld, two internationally known artists and Chilean nationals, inspire that change and hope through their work.

The National Council for Culture and the Arts of Chile selected a proposal by Nelly Richardson through a public competition to curate and plan the pavilion. Together the two artists and curator sought to broaden the idea of what it means to be Chilean and Latin American women. Each of the women lived and actively protested the regime of Augusto Pinochet, which is evident in their work and inspired many of their artistic decisions. In this show they reexamine past work focusing on themes of politics, power, control, and the perspectives of gender.

The exhibition featured a body of photographs from Errázuriz in which she took portraits of transgender, sex workers, circus performers, boxers and other people considered to be outcasts of society. These black and white photographs were displayed in frames on the walls paired with text giving background information. The walls of the room were dark grey and the only light came from the spotlights placed on each photograph. The room has a somber, contemplative mood that matches the content of the photographs.

Rosenfeld is a performance artist creating activist actions that are then documented and made into videos. A series of her videos were on display showing times where she worked in the streets of Santiago, transforming street lines into crosses paired with found footage, all with political content. These videos were cast onto the walls of dark rooms with projectors with the light spilling across corners, onto the floor and sometimes moving around. The format of the videos and their display matched the activist motions happening in the videos.

3. Pavilion Analysis

The pavilion stands as a symbol for female empowerment, power returned to the Chilean citizens, and listening to voices unheard. The origin of the exhibition, found and chosen through an open call, testifies of freedoms that were once unavailable in Chile during Pinochet's power. Artists and curators are able to openly speak out and criticize their country through their work, which is exactly what Nelly Richards does with the work of Paz Errázuriz and Lotty Rosenfeld. These three women stand boldly together after a lifetime of protests and fighting to be heard, still adamant that people need to know about the political injustices that occurred in Chile as well as other parts of the world. Their work is not finished, as there are still many issues around the world needing resolve. This is evident as Rosenfeld repeats her art action *A Mile of Crosses* in cities all over. Re-examining the past in *Poetics of Dissent* allows viewers to realize the progress and positive changes that occurred while also subtly reminding them that there is still more to do.

4a. Artist Biography: Paz Errázuriz

Paz Errázuriz is a photographer best known for her portraits dealing with issues of social life and justice in Chile. She was born in 1944 in Santiago, Chile. After studying at Universidad Católica de Chile and Cambridge Institute of Education she graduated with a degree in education and began teaching. She found that she loved photography and would often document her students. This led to becoming a self-taught photographer and eventually traveling to New York City to study at the International Center of Photography in 1993.

Errázuriz had her first show in 1980 at the Chilean North American Institute of Culture, marking the beginning of her professional career. From there she regularly displayed her work starting in Santiago and eventually internationally in Sydney, Toronto,

Buenos Aires, and Paris. She has also compiled her work into a number of published photography books including *Kawesqar: Los hijos de la mujer sol* in 2005 and *El Infarto del Alma* in 2011.

The work Errázuriz focuses on breaking rules created by the military regime that she was living under in the 1980s and 1990s. As a photographer she challenged the norms that governed women often entering spaces that were unwelcoming to her. She examined taboos in society, people who are marginalized, outcasts or hidden from Chilean daily life. These types of people included as circus performers, boxers, sex workers, magicians, transgender, the elderly, and psychiatric hospital patients. Errázuriz saw these images and her work as a form of activism.

4b. Artist Biography: Lotty Rosenfeld

Lotty Rosenfeld uses art actions, interventions and video as a means to protest the injustices she saw happening due to the dictatorship of Pinochet. She critically examines political powers, marginalized individuals, and role of Chilean women. She was born in 1943 in Santiago, Chile. She studied at the School for Applied Arts, at the Universidad de Chile graduating in 1969. In 1979 she joined Colectivo Acciones de Arte, an art actions collective where she worked along side others protesting their leaders.

At night or in the day, often in the street, Rosenfeld would perform activist actions, sometimes alone and other times with a group for help. These actions are documented via video and later transformed into works on their own. They are combined with text, audio overlays, found footage, and video editing. Ultimately the videos function as documentations of the performances as well as pieces on their own. Within the videos she used symbolism, especially the use of the + sign. It is meant to denounce oppression, demand truth from Pinochet, and as a sign of “no” when Pinochet’s reign ended.

Rosenfeld continues to live and work in Santiago, Chile. She has won numerous prizes for her work including Special Jury Prize at the First Tokyo International Video Biennial in 1985, a grant from Fundación Andes in 1993, and Ford Foundation grant in 2003. In 2007 she participated in Documenta, Kassel and was distinguished by Chile’s National Council for the Arts and Culture as Visual Artist of the Year. Additionally she has had her work collected internationally including the Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Spain, and the Tate Gallery in London.

- Additional Information

1974 Venice Biennale: Dodge’s Palace

In 1974, President of the Venice Biennale, Carlo Ripa di Meana, dedicated the entire exhibition to Chile. Titled *Freedom to Chile*, it became the largest cultural protest against Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship. Pinochet had gained power over Salvador Allende in 1970 through a military coup, which led to Allende’s death and the long-term rule of an unjust leader. Pinochet had only been in power for 4 years but had already committed terrible atrocities that were mourned around the world.

In Venice, the protests began at the inaugural ceremonies in which the unprecedented dedication was given. Murals were created, theatrical performances and concerts were held all

focused on freeing Chile from Pinochet's grasp. Hortensia Allende, the wife and widow and Salvador Allende was present at this ceremony, showing her support.

The 2015 Chile pavilion draws parallels to this exhibition, revisiting ideas of freedom and reexamining their past. Now on the other side of Pinochet's reign they can look back on progress that has been made and move forward with hope into the future.

Chile Historical Timeline

- 1520 Ferdinand Magellan becomes first European to describe Patagonia.
- 1535 Indigenous Araucanian people successfully resist first Spanish invasion of Chile.
- 1536 Battle of Reynogüelén, considered to be the first battle of the Arauco War.
- 1541 Pedro de Valdivia begins Spanish conquest and establishes Santiago.
- 1546 Uprising of Mapuche people, Santiago is destroyed. Mapuche military leader Lautaro is captured by the Spanish.
- 1552 Lautaro escapes and teaches his people military strategy, including riding horses.
- 1553 Mapuche people fight back and Pedro de Valdivia is killed in Disaster of Tucapel.
- 1567 Chiloé Archipelago is claimed by Spain. The city of Castro is founded on the main island and becomes the southernmost European settlement at that time.
- 1578 Francis Drake attacks the coast of Chile
- 1598 Mapuche ambush in the Battle of Curalaba. Governor Martín García Oñez de Loyola is killed.
- 1608 Jesuits arrive in Chile.
- 1664 The Viceroyalty of Peru estimates 30,000 to 42,000 Spaniards to have died in Chile of which. Half have died due to the Arauco War.
- 1681 The Atacama Desert is declared as the border between the Captain-Generalship of Chile and the Viceroyalty of Peru.
- 1723 After 30 years of peace, the War of Arauco resumes with a Mapuche uprising.
- 1726 Peace treaty between Spain and Mapuche is signed.
- 1778 Direct commerce between Chile and Spain is allowed.
- 1808 Francisco Antonio García de Castas is the unpopular Governor of Chile. The Spanish King Ferdinand VII is imprisoned by Napoleon.
- 1810 Junta in Santiago proclaims autonomy for Chile following the overthrow of the king of Spain by Napoleon.
- 1818 Declared independence from Spain with Bernardo O'Higgins as supreme leader.
- 1822 Chilean Constitution comes into effect.
- 1823 Ramón Freire leads a military expedition from Concepción to Santiago and forces O'Higgins to resign. Freire assumes power.
- 1826 Freire resigns, initiating an interregnum known as The Anarchy. First attempt in Chile of federal government, led by the first president of Chile Manuel Blanco Encalada.
- 1828 Francisco Antonio Pinto assumes power after the resignation of Encalada and his predecessors. Chilean Constitution of 1828.
- 1829 Chilean Civil War
- 1831 José Joaquín Prieto becomes president of Chile.
- 1833 Chilean Constitution of 1833.
- 1843 University of Chile is founded.
- 1844 Spain recognizes the independence of Chile.
- 1857 The Civil Code of Chile comes into effect.

1859 Chilean Revolution.

1861 José Joaquín Pérez of the Liberal Party elected president.

1879 The War of the Pacific begins.

1884 The War of the Pacific ends with the signing of a truce with Bolivia. Chile increases its territory by one third after the defeats of Peru and Bolivia.

1891 Chilean Civil War over constitutional dispute between president and congress ends in congressional victory, with president reduced to figurehead. The beginning of Parliamentarianism.

1924 Military coup led by Carlos Ibáñez del Campo.

1925 New constitution increases presidential powers and separates church and state.

1927 In bloodless coup, General Carlos Ibanez del Campo seizes power and establishes dictatorship.

1929 Economic crash.

1932 Constitutional Rule Restored.

1932-1952 Radical Party dominated.

1938 Massacre of Seguro Obrero, the Carabineros execute members of the fascist National Socialist Movement of Chile after an attempted coup.

1940 President Pedro Aguirre Cerda registers the first Chilean claims in Antarctica.

1948 – 1958 Communist Party banned.

1952 General Carlos Ibanez elected president with promise to strengthen law and order.

1960 The Great Chilean earthquake is the most intense earthquake ever recorded, with a magnitude of 9.5.

1964 Eduardo Frei Montalva, Christian Democrat, elected president and introduces cautious social reforms, but fails to curb inflation.

1970 Salvador Allende of the Socialist Party of Chile.

1973 Military coup, General Augusto Pinochet takes control of country.

1977 Beagle Conflict.

1980 Chilean Constitution of 1980.

1988 Pinochet loses a referendum on whether he should remain in power.

1990 Patricio Aylwin wins the election and takes office as President. Transition to democracy begins. Pinochet steps down as head of state but remains commander-in-chief of the army.

1998 Pinochet retires from the army but becomes senator for life. While in London is arrested request of Spain and his trial begin.

2000 Ricardo Lagos Escobar is elected President.

2005 Senate approves changes to the Pinochet-era constitution, restoring the president's right to dismiss military commanders.

2006 Michelle Bachelet becomes Chile's first woman president. Pinochet dies.

2015 Bachelet is reelected.