

Magic Block / Contemporary Art from Chile

Artists / Works

Gonzalo Díaz

Gonzalo Díaz (born in Santiago, Chile, 1947) is an artist whose work encompasses different mediums such as painting, installation and photography. In the 80s, his work took a twist from painting to installation in public spaces and local galleries. Among the issues he had been tackling since that time include a constant reflection on the canons of art, such as genres, historical emblems, power and morality that mingle with mass media, advertisement billboards, legends and objects popularly known to be associated to the particular history of Chile. He is currently professor at the School of Arts in the Universidad de Chile.

Magic Block, 1985

Magic Block was the catalogue of the exhibition “Kilometre 104” of artist Gonzalo Díaz, produced in 1985 in Santiago. The catalogue is made out of silk-screen printing, using the four-color impression technique, separating the four sections of colors (cyan, magenta, yellow and black) into different layouts of text, diagrams and images. In the first two pages, the catalogue visually reproduces the artifact that Freud illustrated as a metaphor of the layers of memory. In the first page, Díaz transfers an image, depicting a figure of first aid from a boy scouts manual, over a vegetal and transparent paper, which could be perceived through the contact of the second page of deep purple. The overlapping effect between one page and the other remits to the metaphor of memory, an image that is visualized in a conscious mind. Inside the catalogue, texts have been written by art critic Justo Mellado, which gives account of the biographical memory of Díaz, of the relationship between his works and the artistic context of the 80s, combining with his own thoughts and diary records. This catalogue is shown for the first time, after having been kept out of sight for the last thirty years.

Juan Downey

The work of Juan Downey (Santiago de Chile, 1940 – New York, 1993) covers a wide range of practices and mediums: drawing, installation, video, and painting. At the beginning of the 60s, Downey started to work with video art techniques, being a pioneer with Nam June Paik. Likewise, the work addresses a series of complex issues, very current at the time, about the use of new technologies in art and the implications within the mass culture, identity or the production of meaning in a context that went far beyond the museum and gallery exhibition space. In 1973 Downey initiated the *Video Trans Americas*, a series of video essays recuperating the cultures of the American continent based on an anthropological frame, exchanging cultural information, multiplying its own identity, breaking down the assimilation of a particular culture, recuperating instead its energetic universe and its expressive communication and vitality of moments.

The Laughing Alligator, 1979 (33 min.)

Merging the subjective and the objective, the autobiographical and the anthropological, *The Laughing Alligator* is a highly personal observation of an indigenous South American culture. Recorded while he and his family were living among the Yanomami of Venezuela, this compelling work distills Downey's search for his own cultural identity and heritage through the encounter between the Western family and the so-called 'primitive' tribe. Challenging the anthropological view of the Yanomami as violent cannibals, Downey focuses on the tribe's myths, rituals and ceremonies, documenting funerary rites in which tribal members eat the pulverized ashes of their dead to ensure their immortality. Subverting conventional modes of ethnographic documentary, Downey participates as an active presence, 'shooting' with his video camera as a means of creating an iterative dialogue between artist and subject and addressing his own 'yearning for a purer existence'.

(Text by Hjorlefur Johnson)

Voluspa Jarpa

Voluspa Jarpa works with declassified archives of the United States of Latin American countries that were produced during the last half of the 20th century and that have been released since the beginning of the 21st century. Stemming from her research project *History and Histeria*, she has conceived installations that deal with archives and documents and how they occupy a fine line between public and an unofficial visibility.

Among her current exhibitions are *Imaginary Construction* at the National Library of Perú, *Salpêtrière* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Valdivia and *L'Effect Charcot*, at the Maison de l'Amérique Latine, Paris, 2010; *The Library of No-History* in the 8th Mercosur Biennial, Porto Alegre (Brazil), the 12th Biennial of Istanbul (Turkey) in 2011, and the exhibition *Secret/Sensitive, Only Eyes*, in the Mor-Charpentier Gallery, Paris, 2013.

***Three Forms of Secrets*, 2014**

In *Three Forms of Secrets*, Jarpa interrogates the classification systems of information through the bureaucratic nomenclature that appears stamped in the documents (SECRET, TOP SECRET, UNCLASSIFIED, NODIS, CONFIDENTIAL, ONLY EYES, etc.), which are opposed visually, and conceptually to the redactions, or the censorship erasures that paradoxically enables the declassification of information and its delivery to the public.

Jarpa asserts that one of the reasons that this information has been indifferent to its reception to the understanding of the history of the American continent is the chaotic condition between text and the abstract figure of the erased text. The documents are a hybrid outcome that cannot be understood as an image (erasure), neither as a text holder of information. This condition perpetuates the Secret effect or trauma, generating a state of doubt and instability onto the official notions about history.

Claudia Missana

Claudia Missana was born in Santiago de Chile in 1964. She works with drawing, photography, digital design and video, exploring relationships between the production of images, conditions of visibility, perception and memory. Her solo projects and shows include a residency at the Museo del Barro in Paraguay (2006), during which time she registered files of the Horror Archive in Asunción; and "Graphic Crossing" (2004), a photography project based on ephemeral urban interventions in Santiago, Chile. She has been part of group projects and exhibitions that include "Project of a Boundary", a series of site specific installations between 1999 and 2005 (Museum of Contemporary Art of Valdivia, Chile; Fuller Museum of Art, Brockton, MA, USA; Latincollector Art Center, New York, USA; and ArtSpace, Sydney, Australia); and the project "Human Rights, Copy Rights, Visual Archives in the Age of Declassification", curated by Cristián Gómez-Moya (Museum of Contemporary Art, Santiago, 2011). Currently, she is working on the collective project "Outside the Edge", a series of shows in Museo Regional de Punta Arenas, Chile; Espacio de Arte Contemporáneo, Montevideo, Uruguay; mARTadero, Cochabamba, Bolivia; La Curtiduría, Oaxaca, Mexico; and Casa E, Valparaíso, Chile (2012-13). She lives and works in Santiago, Chile.

***The Siren (Smoke and Shadow)*, 2014**

Missana plays with the double meaning of the word siren as a sign of alarm and in its figurative sense as a mythic sea nymph. Her work presents a warning image of those enigmatic traces that inhabit the mindscape, immersed in the imagination, in the collective history and in personal records. In these overlapping diagrams of five silhouettes, private and public memory appear in provisional moments. This temporal and connective shape brings light and shadows to the wall, which are generated from the bottom electrical system. It reflects an empowerment of memory and also its fragility.

- Please use your camera / mobile phone's camera with flash on, to discover the hidden silhouettes

Michelle-Marie Letelier

Michelle-Marie Letelier (Rancagua, Chile 1977) currently lives and works in Berlin, Germany. In 2000 she obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts, at the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Her solo exhibitions have taken place in Calama, Valparaíso, Santiago (Chile) and Padua (Italy). She has participated in group exhibitions in Calama, Santiago, Torino, Padua, Weimar, Berlin, Shanghai and London. Her videos have been exhibited in various screenings and festivals across the world, among them: World One Minute Festival (Beijing and Lisbon), Citypulse (Santiago), ALBIAC (Valencia) and Next Festival (Vilnius). In 2005

she participated in the Mercosur Biennial (Porto Alegre, Brazil). She has recently been awarded a first edition of ORA prize (Italy).

***The Prediction of Tarapacá*, 2014**

Possibly the biggest and oldest anthropomorphic geoglyph in the world, The Giant of Tarapacá is an approx. 115m-high human figure created on the west slope of an isolated hill in the middle of the Atacama Desert, in Chile. The exact origin and representation of this creation is still unknown, but it is believed to be *Tunupa*, an ancient deity known for arranging the upper and lower worlds and to have power to fertilize the arid land. It is also estimated to be an early astronomical calendar that indicated the rainy seasons. In one way or the other, this figure—as all of the many Andean geoglyphs—was created to sacralise the landscape on which caravan rituality took place, from the Andes Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, before the European invasion.

Situated in a land where copper exploitation stemmed since before the influence of the Incan empire, the figure of the Giant of Tarapacá will be honoured here by using its geometric paths to carry a burst of electricity generated by a solar-engine circuit. By placing a compass in its hand, the circuit, when triggered will slightly and momentarily deviate the magnetic field of the compass. Copper will be then orchestrating a re-enacted rituality in time and space. (Thanks to Carlo Crovato for technical assistance.)

Catalina Bauer

Catalina Bauer was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1976. She studied Fine Arts in the Universidad Finis Terrae, Chile obtaining a bachelor's degree in 1998, after which she attended the Universidad de Chile, pursuing a master's in Fine Art. Since then her work has been shown internationally in both solo and group exhibitions. Catalina Bauer lives and work in Santiago de Chile where, along with her own practice, she manages Taller BLOC, an artist-run space founded with four other Chilean artists in 2009.

***PANACEA*, 2012**

Panacea (Latin) (3 min.), suggests amongst other meanings a supposed remedy that would cure all diseases and prolong life indefinitely. There was also a belief that Panacea was a substance that would enable the transmutation of common metals into gold. This video work alludes to these ideas and others through a sequence of movements led by the act of kneading an invisible mass, focusing on the power and capacity of the hands to transform materials into something else.

Rainer Krause

Rainer Krause was born in Hoyerhagen, Germany, in 1957. Since 1987 he lives and works in Santiago de Chile as a visual and sound artist. He has a Visual Arts master's degree from Universidad de Chile, where he currently has a teaching position. Krause has had solo exhibitions since 1985 in Germany, Chile, Spain, and Canada; and has exhibited in group shows in Europe and Latin America. Since 2005 he has also worked in curating exhibitions, events and sound art projects.

***Local language 1: reduction / shift*, 2014 (sound installation, text, breeze)**

In Chile there are two languages in imminent danger of extinction: both belonging to nomadic coastal peoples, the Qawasqar and the Yamana, who were decimated during the 19th and 20th centuries by European colonization, genocide, deprivation and fatal diseases. Very few survivors remain in the south of the country. When they die their language will die with them due to the fact that since they do not live in their original cultural context, they cannot pass the languages down to succeeding generations.

Local language 1: reduction / shift only serves to demonstrate the impossibility of an adequate translation from a language in danger of extinction. Every "documentation" of extinct or endangered languages is the modification of the original through selection, technical procedures and abstraction from the original context. Any transposition to an expository context is therefore only meaningful as a model for reflection on how such languages relate to dominant cultures. The installation is based on texts and vocal recordings of the language of the Qawasqar people and the different means of aesthetic interpretation and appropriation.

Enrique Ramírez

Enrique Ramírez. Born in 1979 in Santiago, Chile. He has a master's degree in contemporary art and new media from Studio National of art contemporain Le Fresnoy, France. Enrique Ramirez's work could be described as poetic incursions towards the humanization of contemporary dystopias. His film-installations and photography deal with the politics of exodus and exile and the discontinuity of memory, but for Ramirez this always means an arduous search through subjective imaginary. The vast landscapes that often appear in his works are conceived as geo-poetic spaces for imagination, territories open for vision and deambulation. The mood of the images is a contemplative one; the landscape, the breeze, the water, the sand, they all seem to work together in an effort to place a subjective view.

Breezes, 2008 (film 35mm, 13 min.)

I was born in 1979, six years after the military coup in Chile. I grew under the dictatorship, in my mother's arms. She told me that, paradoxically, it was the happiest period of her life. She lived through the dictatorship behind a wall, protected from it all.

As soon as I'd grown up, my mother realized that there had never been such a harmful time for Chile.

I am a piece of this history, full of contradictions. After democracy returned, during the government of president Ricardo Lagos Escobar, the Presidential Palace building was repainted in its original color, an off-white, and the pedestrian entrance was reopened in time for the 30th anniversary of the coup d'état. For the very first time people could walk through its halls.

This was an initial symbol of the changes afoot. Henceforth, after 19 years of democracy, the population can only enter the Government House by way of a route running North-South, that is, from the Plaza de La Constitución to the Plaza de La Ciudadanía. Going in the opposite direction is forbidden. It is indeed a sign that the doors of the Presidential Palace have been opened; but at the same time it symbolically implies that one should not go back in history, that one should look only forwards.

Eugenio Téllez

Eugenio Téllez (Santiago, Chile, 1939). Between 1957 and 1959 he studied at the School of Fine Arts at the Universidad de Chile in Santiago. Between 1960 and 1966 he worked with Stanley William Hayter in Atelier 17 in Paris, becoming the Associate Director in 1962 and 1966. From 1966 to 1968 he was visiting professor in the Faculty of Painting at the University of Illinois. Between 1970 and 1994 he was professor of Fine Arts at the University of York, Toronto where is currently, Professor Emeritus.

Using multiple conceptual procedures, his work considers questions of cultural identity, the Latin American experience and the complexity of humankind. One of many themes in his work is the discovery and conquest of America. He explores geographically diverse areas, investigating their identity from their geology to their cultures and their mythical figures (for example, Nosferatu in ex-Czechoslovakia). He mixes personal experiences with universal history in pictograms which incorporate a particular repertory of identifiable icons. The worlds he creates break up, they are battlefields full of explosions which echo civil, regional and world conflicts.

The memory, 1981 (60min.)

The memory is a video recorded by Téllez between 1979 and 1981 in his first visit to Santiago after leaving the country in the 60s. Conformed by four interviews, conversations and stories of his friends, the poet Raúl Zurita, and the writer Jorge Edwards, each author of the Chilean literature represents a period and journey in the life of Téllez, and more over, a landmark of a particular thinking which in its combination, point out its relation with Chile. The obsession of Téllez departures from the track of the re-counting of each author about memory issues, the ways it works in their writing experiences, in the processes with the materials or in the intersections between reality and fiction. Similarly to a telescope gaze, the camera sounds out the physical gestures of the writer's bodies. Each conversation is followed by images of the sea edge, a landscape that in the 80s started to take on a sort of resonance and evocation of what Zurita recalled as the history of the landscapes of Chile: the large cemeteries.

Sandra Vásquez de la Horra

Sandra Vásquez de la Horra was born in Viña del Mar, Chile in 1967. Between 1989 and 1994 she studied visual communication at the University for Design, Viña del Mar, Chile. She received her post-graduate degree at the Kunsthochschule für Medien in Cologne, Germany, in 2003. She currently lives and works in

Berlin. She has had solo exhibitions in New York, London, Germany and Chile. Her group exhibitions include: The end of the line: attitudes in drawing, Southbank Centre, The Hayward Touring, Great Britain, 2009; Anatomie | les peaux du dessin - collection Florence et Daniel Guerlain, FRAC - Picardie, Amiens, France, 2008; Memories for Tomorrow: Works from The UBS Art Collection, Shanghai Art Museum Beijing Biennale 2008; Drawings from the UBS Art Collection, Tate Modern, London, 2007; Materia, Reflección y sueños, Collection Santa Cruz-Yaconi, Museo de Artes Visuales (MAVI), Santiago de Chile, 2003.

The video *Hemispheres* (2008) (20 min.), and the group of drawings (2013) done by Sandra Vásquez de la Horra combine a fantastic world of fictional narratives with intimate experiences driven by her personal life. Her compositions, usually monochrome graphite over wax papers, draws attention to intuitive processes that refer to myths, dreams, popular tales that also connects to religion, philosophy and literature. In the video *Hemispheres*, the artist recalls personal memories, depicting historical facts, judgments and political slogans of the Chilean and Latin American episodes over a large book, failing to precisely show in her mirroring-handwriting an equal or similar story between left and right; instead her body remains divided, unbalanced and words hover within an opaque visibility.