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Like the rest of society, the artistic world goes through different stages under a dictatorship. I believe that the golden moment of artistic expression in Chile was two or three years after the onset of the dictatorship, when there was practically no other form of expression possible. And because the political experience had been very traumatic, politicized people found themselves in a double situation: one, in the defense of identity, the only thing that remained – identity of the left, identity of Christian Democrats, identity of the Popular Unity – with a keenly critical vision because it was that social, political, and cultural world that had ended in the dictatorship; and two, in an almost pure moment of artistic creation dedicated to the very minimally ideologized struggle against that dictatorship. It is a period of “university cultural action” and “the student movement,” which had always been politicized, but was now strictly cultural, where theatre festivals, poetry festivals, even song festivals were what was important within the student world.

During that period, “university cultural action” also functioned through academic workshops, created to provide meeting spaces for the different artistic expressions when there was no other possibility to meet. And the idea of “multi-art” was obvious. If you were going to organize a theater festival, you had to take advantage of inviting the painters and playing music; if you were organizing literature festivals, you had to invite intellectuals to comment on them. The different artistic expressions converged within the context of the times, a phenomenon that has been difficult to find since.

And there was the world of the *poblaciones* as well.

I would say that from 1974 on, one of the principle artistic expressions was music. At the end of 1973 there was a song by the Mexican singer Alberto Cortés called *Callejero* [Street Man]—“*Era callejero por derecho propio y su filosofía fue la libertad.*” [He was a street person by his own choosing, and his philosophy was freedom]. I heard that song every morning in my car on the way to the office. Then one day it stopped playing, and I didn’t hear it again for two years. Later, there

was a song that became a hymn, *El Negro José*, sung by Illapu. It has no political connotation, yet the only people who sang it were those opposed to Pinochet.

Initially, music was meaningful not because of its content but because of who sang it, and very rapidly three songs became fundamental hymns: Violeta Parra's *Gracias a la vida* [Thanks to Life], in a permanent way, *El Negro José*, and *Libertad* [Freedom], with lyrics by Paul Éluard and music by Gian Franco Pagliaro. Éluard was one of the great French poets of the time of the resistance. He wrote that poem in 1942, precisely during the Second World War and the occupation of France. Later, in the early 80s, came *Cambia, todo cambia* [It Changes, It All Changes]. And then the songs from the 1988 plebiscite, *La alegría ya viene* [Joy Is on the Way].

There were always songs, there was always music, there were always groups who expressed the current state of affairs. They were valuable in and of themselves, but they also expressed the spirit of society, especially of the opposition. Those songs were symbols. And they represented a great deal of creativity. In terms of memory, there is no question that music was part of the recuperation and maintenance of identities and of groups.

Yet dictatorships are not defeated with songs, dictatorships are not defeated with art exhibits, dictatorships are not defeated with theater or with street demonstrations. They are defeated finally with weapons, which was impossible in Chile, or by the ballot. I'm not talking about single-person dictatorships like Somoza, which is much closer to a revolutionary system, but about military dictatorships with modern armies, where it is impossible to arm a parallel army. Those military regimes finally end politically.

Art was very good for denouncing, for understanding, for attempting to appreciate the individual and collective situation. But it was impotent for ending the dictatorship.

Nevertheless, my impression is that there is no political change if there is no form of social and cultural pressure. And generally that social pressure has an indispensable artistic component. The Chilean opposition to the dictatorship was not pure art. But it is unthinkable without the artistic

world. Obviously this has its problems because it can generate ways for one sector to utilize the other. But here, it was a necessary symbiosis. It was a society that expressed itself by very different means in its fight against the dictatorship. And I think that art—some expressions more than others—played a fundamental role.

When the expressivity of society is eliminated—even a channel of expression that one may not like, such as consumerism—when political channels are eliminated, when the economic product decreases, in some way the worst repressive period, is when the creativity of society tends to be seen fundamentally in the artistic sphere, in the purist artistic sphere, less mixed with politics. It is a time when the political arena can only be expressed in the artistic arena. So, it was a period that was more strictly artistic, precisely because there were no other fields, where art and culture were the most political because politics did not have many other platforms. It had the Church and art.

The Church in Chile became important only when the political parties were outlawed. Before, the Church acted through the Conservative Party, and later through the Christian Democrat Party. But when the parties could no longer function on the public scene, the Church, under Cardinal Raúl Silva Henríquez, acted on its own.

In 1978 the Vicariate of Solidarity held a contest for artists to draw images of the thirty human rights articles for the 30th anniversary of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

That same year, a play by Guillermo de la Parra, Jorge Vega, Jorge Pardo and ACU [La Agrupación Cultural Universitaria / University Cultural Association] was staged at the University of Chile's school of medicine, where all three were students and from which Marco Antonio de la Parra had graduated. The play, *Baño a baño* [From Bath to Bath], is a metaphor for an authoritative society, in this case, a Turkish bath. My impression is that this kind of metaphor also occurred in painting and in audio-visual works. It is from that artistic expression that policies were made.

And although not much was being produced in the literary field, except in poetry, the clearest example of this is José Donoso's novel, *Casa de campo* (1978), a marvelous, non-ideological, but very creative, very artistic metaphor of Chilean society. Donoso always said the novel does not talk about the dictatorship, because he did not like committed literature, but it is not true. *Casa de campo* does talk about the dictatorship.

A minimal political space begins to open with the 1980 plebiscite, with the economic model and patronage for the arts among large private corporations. There is a very minor attempt from the State, with not very good results, to create some incentives for the arts. And there is the Church's continued support of all kind of artistic work.

With the new economic model, new fields appear, and two things happen: one, art stops being the only creative expression, and two, that expression is contaminated by the new fields. For example, when the new economic model appeared, businesses realized that they needed to become legitimate beyond selling the pure product. So corporations and large banks financed artistic contests, especially in sculpture and painting. One of them was the Colocadora Nacional de Valores.¹ Different economic groups, headed by Vial, Cruzat, Larráin, begin to build large conglomerates, buy banks, and begin programs that support the arts, which will greatly enhance artistic development. So there is a surge in the visual arts in spite of who is financing it.

Private support was not common in Chile. It was new and accompanied a moment of great economic concentration, a moment of almost wild primitive accumulation of the most savage capitalism – and it was precisely those sectors that began to finance works of art.

Strangely, everybody who won corporate art contests, except perhaps Carmen Aldunate, was of the left. Their work was first class and had social content. The famous hand sculpture by Mario Irarrázaval, for example, at the entrance of several of the corporations that held contests. Mario

¹ Colocadora Nacional de Valores was a Chilean bank created in 1976 by businessman Manuel Cruzat. When the 1982 economic recession hit, the military government took it over. It disappeared in 1986 when it merged with the Banco de Santiago.

made one for Colocadora, which he called “La esquina de la democracia” [The Corner of Democracy].

Until 1981-1982 artistic expression is basically one of historic memory and of protest, a mixture of trying to reconstruct an historic memory and recognize personal anguish. During that period all kinds of—though I hate the word, I’ll use it to be understood—post-modern ideas appear, new forms of artistic expression, such as art actions. Poetry groups come together with groups of visual artists, such as Raúl Zurita with CADA, visual artists whose work is less about paintings and more about crosses in the street, like Lotty Rosenfeld.

And there are other expressions that are more than attempts at intervening spaces that seem to be closed. There is a proliferation of opposition magazines, which are more about analysis than art. These developments result in producing a double movement, from 1982-83 on: the creation of a dense artistic-cultural space and a large demand for the artistic-cultural world to take on the task political criticism.

An example is in Lotty Rosenfeld’s book, *Desacato*, published in 1986, where one could ask her, “How do you interpret those crosses?” The crosses are the dead and the disappeared. The cross is also what you make when you vote. The second interpretation is the one I gave when we launched the book. Perhaps that was the moment when a capacity in society surged to take the strictly aesthetic message of the artistic world and give it a political interpretation, which goes beyond . . .

I would call this period the peak of the collective creation, when collective work went beyond the usual mixture of artistic creation, artistic performance, and created ways of expressing themes of repression. In some of the dramatic collective creations, like *Linda esquina con vista al mar* [Beautiful Corner Room with Ocean View] by Ictus, the theme of the disappeared is there, clearly, if metaphorically.

Fundamentally, it is a period of art as creativity, as innovation, as aesthetic development, but at the same time, as catharsis. Its weakest point, perhaps, lies in its lesser capacity to make us understand society. It does crystallize the basic emotions of a life under dictatorship and things that happen to people in daily life, a daily life that begins to change, not only from the effect of the dictatorship in and of itself, but also from the effect of the change in the economic model. People need to concern themselves with privatization programs such as the AFPs [Administradores de Fondos de Pensiones/Pension Funds Administrators] and health programs, when they are no longer supported by the State.

Parallel to a movement where art is expressed by criticism or denouncement in society, there is the development of an individualist culture.

From the mid-1980s, our society lives in the world of the market, of instrumentality, of a very individualistic cultural model. And at the same time it lives in the world of critical vision against the dictatorship, in the expression of disenchantment... The most important novel published in 1987 is José Donoso's *La desesperanza* [Despair], written in 1986, which basically is the demonstration of a society that has run out of ways to change what is in place and has not been able to do it. There was practically no formula that was not tried. Politically, that was expressed with the failed attempt by the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front to liquidate Pinochet. I think it was a society that began to lose hope and to doubt its own capacity for ending the dictatorship.

Art, then, instead of its usual testimonial position of denouncement, which was more emotional and cathartic than rational, began to introduce elements of rationalization and to think in terms of a certain instrumentality with the objective of bringing down the dictatorship. The song *Cambia, todo cambia*, sung by Mercedes Sosa, was written by a Chilean, Julio Numhauser, one of the first members of the Quilapayún. The basic Chilean music groups were Illapu and Santiago del Nuevo Extremo. But there's another very important factor: The country wasn't totally isolated. There came a time when the opening was basically rock music, and a group that was fundamental

was Los Prisioneros. The case of Los Prisioneros was a phenomenon similar to the appearance of people like Ramón Griffero in theater. It was much less ideologized than the Quilapayún or Illapu, much more anarchic, more combatively anarchic, much more iconoclast.

Griffero and Los Prisioneros were about the misery of everyday life, the dreadful life of society, even the consumer society. Los Prisioneros sang a song called, *El baile de los que sobran* [The Dance of Those Left Behind] – which is how the group referred to themselves. Griffero's *Cinema-Utopía* is a little like that. It is not an authoritarian universe; it is also the insecurity of the city. And Griffero's innovative techniques in multimedia began to generate spaces of new understanding.

The same thing happened with art installations. You can interpret the installations many ways. It is artistic innovation but it is also something that happens at a time of intense social criticism. So it is not purely anti-dictatorship or anti-poverty, it stops being purely political, in the more precise meaning of political. It is artistic and at the same time political. That is one of the advantages in the struggle against the dictatorship: that in the end all criticism of society is a criticism of Pinochet, and in the end Pinochet is to blame for everything. All criticism of society is a criticism of the dictatorship.

But I would say that the main concern of the dictatorship was not so much to eliminate the artistic work itself, but to eliminate its audience. If someone gave a talk for thirty people, there was no problem, but they couldn't appear on television or they couldn't write for newspapers. There were black lists for television. Several massive performances were curtailed, like the festivals that Sello Alerce² organized – and the tent of Vadell and Salcedo was burned down.³ So the concern was

² An independent recording company formed in 1975 by Ricardo García with two basic objectives: to rerecord the music that was prohibited by the military dictatorship and to support artists who continued to defend folk music and urban song. Sello Alerce began organizing New Chilean Song festivals in 1969 and continued them into the first years of the dictatorship.

³ The tent where La Feria was presenting the play, *Hojas de Parra* [Parra's Pages], was firebombed in 1977, two weeks into its run, late at night after the audience and performers had left the premises.

art's connection with the audience, or the fear of what that connection could produce. For example, they never bothered me at FLACSO,⁴ but I had to jump over iron gates to talk to university students, where there was a strict "no entrance" order. Any creative connection in the intellectual and societal world was suspect. The military pursued the creators as well, but I don't think they were the main target.

Finally, the artistic world was able to position itself as an instrument to bring down the dictatorship in relation to the 1988 plebiscite through a series of television segments for the NO Campaign. The opposition had become so strong that it was impossible for the military to oppose those segments. Still, I wouldn't say there were great artistic works for the NO Campaign. The NO Campaign had another function.

The plebiscite, which the dictatorship itself had proposed for 1988, would have been possible for the opposition to win, even without the television spots. The spots were not the decisive thing. But would it have been possible to win without the Human Rights exhibit in 1978, without the Human Rights cantata? Would it have been possible to win without the collective creations of Ictus?

What happened was that the military overvalued the importance of that television campaign. And in believing that it would have so much importance, they took their negative attack on the NO to the extreme and elevated something that only supported an idea. What a television campaign does is reaffirm things to people, make them lose their fear, realize that you believe the same as I, because yes, we're going to vote NO, I'm not going to change my vote because of what I see on television. The only thing I'm going to do is confirm what I already believe: "Ah, it's OK for me to think that way. . ." That's what it was all about.

⁴ FLACSO (La Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales/Latin American School of Social Sciences) is an international NGO founded in 1957 in Santiago de Chile as an initiative of UNESCO and some governments of the Latin American region whose principal objective is to promote research, teaching, scientific dissemination and technical cooperation in the field of social sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean. After the military coup in 1973, many of the academic social scientists who had been expelled from universities were integrated into FLACSO-Chile, turning it into one of the principal centers critical of the dictatorship.

But the government reacted to the NO Campaign as though it would be the thing that would defeat it. When you are losing, when something isn't going well, you don't become low profile, but you don't start a negative attack in your own television campaign, either, especially when your adversary isn't doing it.

Let us accept for a moment that the dictatorship had a double meaning. On one hand, it was a negative, contradictory culmination against what our society had been from 1925 on. On the other hand, it was an attempt to reorganize and generate another kind of society, fundamentally based on the forces of international markets, not on the traditional role of social actors and the State.

We are still in the process of dissolving the political society we had had for some fifty years prior to the dictatorship. Chilean society consisted of the working class, the middle class, the CUT⁵, student organizations, peasant organizations, but above all the State, in a democratic regime, which managed everything. The synthesis of the relationship between the State and the organization of collective action (unions, peasants, students, the middle class) was always political.

In Chile the backbone of society was the political parties. Our [second] Nobel Prize winner in poetry was a former senator and a member of the Communist Party. You cannot separate Neruda from politics. You cannot separate anything in Chile from politics.

Pinochet is a model for reaction against this kind of politicized society. And he tries to reorganize society (not knowing how to do it very well), not on the basis of collective movements and the State, but on the individual strategies of the market and of everything being controlled by the State – not the State in the role of agent for development or for distributing assets. No. The State as all-controlling, the coercive aspect of the State and the market.

This practice did not create a new type of society; but it did dismantle the previous society. That was done under the dictatorship, but it was not manipulated entirely by Pinochet. The

⁵ Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Chile [Central Chilean Workers' Confederation], the national organization of trade unions founded in 1953.

transition to civilian rule took place under the institutional framework created by the dictatorship. And with that, a price was paid, a price that I call authoritarian enclaves (institutional and ethical, like human rights), that is, elements that belonged to the military regime and continue in the democratic regime.

Today, people in the international community share two schizophrenic visions of Chile: “How well Chile has done in economics” and “Such a ridiculous country, such a *nouveau riche* country.” They say *nouveau riche* in the negative sense. In the positive sense, it’s great. The country is richer, it’s growing. But it contains all the bad elements of *nouveau riche*, especially the smugness. The idea that this is a country unique in the world, that it organized the best transition, has the best economic model, the best everything, is not true. This element of smugness, together with other constraints, generates a climate of *tupido velo*, of “cover-up,” so it won’t be discussed. There’s a character in Donoso’s novel *Casa de campo* who, whenever there is a problem, says, “*Tejamos un tupido velo.*” “Let’s cover it up.” That’s the situation here: not discussing what is under a heavy veil.

That is the big problem. Let’s take the example of the national television channel, Channel 7, which was absolutely devastated and manipulated by the military regime. At the start of the democracy the problem was how to build a pluralist channel, where privatization and the idea of private vs. public were very present. Those who were grappling with it said, “Let’s not have a State channel like the BBC, but a public one. It will be managed by a pluralist council, with two people from the right, two from the center and two from the left.” But nobody cared about the technical capacities of the council. And there was no policy in place for a public channel. The State cannot finance a public channel, so it must be self-financed. And it must compete with the other channels, which have a very practical method of measuring success: the ratings. So the public channel must have the same rating as the others. But political issues are not discussed.

With 300 private cable channels of trans-nationalization, of creating a cultural desert, why not reserve a vocation for the public channel that is different from that of the cable channels? Why have a public channel if it does the same thing? That was not discussed. And every time there has been a conflict about the pros and cons of a public channel, they have been conflicts about political issues, not about the meaning of a public channel.

There is also the problem of defining the economic model. The term “market economy” doesn’t mean anything. How to insert your system into the world market is another of these postponed debates. Take the university, for example. It has expanded enormously, but there is no control on quality. The time will come—it has already come in other countries—when university degrees will mean nothing. Here, the subject of the university hasn’t been broached because it would mean giving more resources to state universities. The Right doesn’t accept that. Taking up the subject of universities would mean placing more regulations on the private universities.

Between December of 1989 and March of 1990 thirty new universities were created. In 1973 Chile had eight universities. Today it has seventy [in 1998]. I’m not saying that there have to be only eight. It’s that such remarkable growth has not been controlled, regulated, or subject to debate. And there is the question of diversity among universities. They all do the same thing. There are thirty-nine schools of psychology, there are eleven thousand journalism students. That subject is not discussed. Nor are the subjects of expansion and growth.

Today, the arts are also considered activities that have to compete in the market. In film, the North American industry sells a class “A” picture to any country on the condition that five shit-class films are bought along with it. So the problem of quality is not in play; it’s a problem of market structure which you cannot enter, which you’ve already lost. Who will take responsibility? It can’t be the market, because the market will only favor the industry already in place. Different markets have to be created, markets have to be intervened, regulated.

This country doesn't have a film industry because it doesn't have screenwriters. And where do you get screenwriters? You're not going to create a university-level screenwriters school because there won't be a market for them. It's not worth it for the universities. The only possibility is setting up a system of scholarships to send people to study abroad, or setting up a two-year school to train fifty, sixty, eighty screenwriters, and then they'll enter the market.

But who is going to do that? Not a private company. Not the film community, the directors, because they don't have a dime. It can't be self-financed because it is a public service. There are thousands of things like that which only the government can do.

If cultural activity is seen as one more economic activity to be governed by the same laws of supply and demand, it means that large sectors of art and culture will be left by the wayside and many people will be left out. It's obvious that there is a market for a couple of very famous painters. It's also obvious that popular art is left out. Yet the idea is that any activity can be developed through the market, with no differentiation among activities.

That question is well studied and debated in the field of economics. Some say that you need not establish an industrial policy; rather, that industries need to be developed within the realm of comparative advantages and market opportunities. That's impossible, because certain things can be developed only with large initial investment on which there is no return. Basic research is an example. A corporation will not finance research in physics because it isn't interested. It is interested in other kinds of research, where it trains forty or fifty people who, in turn, go on to train others who will enter the market. They have to be trained in universities, and for that, universities are not going to find their own financing. They have to be financed by the State. The point is that on one hand the market compartmentalizes, that is, it doesn't allow some people to access cultural goods, and on the other hand, it develops selected activities and leaves out many others.

So it is necessary to form a unified institution able to generate cultural policies, with social participation, in the form of a Ministry of Culture or a National Cultural Council, as little

authoritarian as possible, simply to generate spaces of development for different activities, which could not develop otherwise.⁶

To reduce the possibility of smaller, more experimental, cultural organizations not being financed in the market climate, the State has to finance experimentation. Why does the State have money to develop science through CONICYT,⁷ and it doesn't have money, or has minimal money, to develop cultural experimentation. FONDART is doing well, but it provides limited funds for one year only. It really should finance a group for four or five years, like an endowment...

A cultural policy has to come from some kind of institution. French cultural policy exists because it has thirty years of study behind it. The most important department of the French Ministry of Culture is its department of studies, where they say, "If you do things this way, this is going to happen, or that is going to happen. Here are the alternatives to study..." The French government invests, at least, in studying its cultural policy.

Here in Chile, no. Here, I think that the whole idea is closed...

⁶ At the time of this interview, several cultural commissions had been named to discuss the institutionalization of cultural policy in Chile. The first, a group of twenty-two artists and social scientists, headed by Garretón, was named under the Aylwin government in December 1990 by Ricardo Lagos, who was then Minister of Education. A second commission was named in 1996 under the Frei government. It was only in 2004, under President Ricardo Lagos, that a National Cultural Council was established, whose director would have the status of Minister.

⁷ Comisión Nacional de Investigación Científica y Tecnológica [National Commission of Scientific and Technological Research]. It was created in 1967 under the Ministry of Education as an advisory organism of the Presidency on matters of scientific development. Today, its two main objectives are fostering the training of human capital and strengthening the scientific and technological base of the country. Both are encouraged through scientific information and international connections.