Films Premiere at
THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
May 4–7, 1990

Children of the Cold War by Gonzalo Justiniano
Latent Image by Pablo Perelman
Lizards’ Tales by Juan Carlos Bustamante
October Country by Daniel de la Vega
Angels by Tatiana Gaviola
Yesterday’s Dream by Rodrigo Ortúzar

11 West 53rd Street, New York 212 708 9490

Videos Premiere at
EXIT ART
May 11–12, 1990

Three Women by Leopoldo Correa
Interview Story by Nestor Olhagaray
The Appointment by Marcela Poch and Nestor Olhagaray
Carriers of Fantasy by Francisco Arévalo
On the Road by Pablo Lavin
No by Juan Downey
Pacifist Warriors by Gonzalo Justiniano

578 Broadway, New York 212 966 7745
INTERNAL EXILE: NEW FILMS AND VIDEOS FROM CHILE, a program curated by Coco Fusco and presented by Third World Newsreel is the first exhibition of media art produced by directors living and working inside Pinochet's Chile to tour the United States. The program features fiction films and experimental video that examine the long term psychological and social impact of the seventeen-year dictatorship that ended in 1990. INTERNAL EXILE highlights the Chilean cultural resurgence of the 1980's that prefigured the country's transition to democracy this year.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENTS</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements/Agradecimientos</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Exile: An Introduction by Coco Fusco</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalo Justiniano on Children of the Cold War</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pablo Perelman on Latent Image</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juan Carlos Bustamante on Lizards’ Tales</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel de la Vega on October Country</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatiana Gaviola on Angels</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodrigo Ortuzar on Yesterday’s Dream</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Audio Visual Battle of Chile by J. Carlos Altamirano</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film Information</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Information</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the fall of 1986, I attended a screening of Gonzalo Justiniano’s “Children of the Cold War” in Toronto, and have followed the development of independent media in Chile with avid interest ever since. I was therefore excited to see that in 1988, an earnest and extraordinarily heterogeneous group of producers from Chile arrived at the Havana Film Festival and set up their own booth in the market, without the assistance of any government film institute. A new Chilean cinema was emerging as the Pinochet regime waned. Countless films and videos were garnering critical acclaim in Latin America and Europe. It was then that I decided that it was time for North Americans to have a glimpse of this powerfully moving effort.

I am astounded and humbled by the number of people who have extended their support for this project on faith. None of works in the program were previously available in the United States, and few if any Americans had arrived in Chile in the 1980’s to organize a media program. In Chile, I would like to thank Gonzalo Justiniano for all his advice and encouragement, Nestor Olhagaray for his curatorial assistance in the video program, Manuel Hubner of the Office of Chilean Cinema for his administrative assistance, and Silvia Camposano for her infinite generosity.

In the United States, I would like to thank Janet Sternburg and the Rockefeller Foundation, the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. I would also like to thank the Film Department of the Museum of Modern Art, particularly Adrienne Mancia and Jytte Jensen, and Jeanette Ingberman and Papo Collo of Exit Art.

Finally, I offer my gratitude to the staff of Third World Newsreel, for their consistent enthusiasm and support. It practically goes without saying that without Ada Griffin’s work and trust, this program would not have been possible.

This program is dedicated to all the children of the Cold War in Latin America, to their displaced cousins around the world, and to the memory of those whose lives were taken by it.

Coco Fusco

New York, March, 1990

AGRADECIMIENTOS

En otoño del 1986, asistí a una presentación de “Hijos de la Guerra Fria” de Gonzalo Justiniano en Toronto y desde entonces, he seguido el desarrollo del cine y video independiente en Chile con mucho interés. Por lo tanto, me sentí muy entusiasmada cuando vi, en 1988, que un grupo de realizadores serios y extraordinariamente heterogéneos llegó de Chile al festival de la Habana y estableció su propio stand en el mercado, sin ayuda de un instituto estatal de cine. Un nuevo cine chileno estaba surgiendo mientras el régimen de Pinochet estaba menguando. Innumerables películas y videos estaban recibiendo mucha aclamación crítica en América Latina y Europa. Fue en ese momento que decidí que ya era tiempo para que los norteamericanos tuvieran un vislumbre de este esfuerzo poderosamente conmovedor.

Me siento asombrada y humilde frente al número de gente que me ha extendido su apoyo como acto de fe. Ninguna de las obras en este programa estaban disponibles anteriormente en los Estados Unidos, y pocos norteamericanos habían llegado a Chile en los 80 para organizar una muestra de cine y video. En Chile, me gustaría agradecer a Gonzalo Justiniano por todo sus consejos y amistad, Nestor Olhagaray por su asistencia en la selección de videos, Manuel Hubner de OFICINE por su ayuda administrativa, y Silvia Camposano, por su generosidad infinita.

En los Estados Unidos, me gustaría dar las gracias a Janet Sternburg y la Fundación Rockefeller, el Consejo de Arte del Estado de Nueva York, y el Consejo Nacional de Arte. También quiero agradecer al Departamento de Cine del Museo de Arte Moderno, particularmente a Adrienne Mancia y Jytte Jensen, y a Jeanette Ingberman y Papo Colo de Exit Art.

Finalmente, ofrezco mis gracias al personal de Third World Newsreel, por su entusiasmo y apoyo constante. Prácticamente va sin decir que sin el trabajo y la confianza de Ada Griffin, este programa no habría sido posible.

Este programa está dedicado a todos los hijos de la Guerra Fria en Latinoamérica, a sus primos desplazados por todas partes del mundo, y a la memoria de aquellos cuyas vidas fueron robadas por ella.
INTERNAL EXILE: An Introduction
by Coco Fusco

Little media reached the United States from Chile during General Augusto Pinochet’s rule. Sporadic, highly selective accounts have been the status quo here since the shock waves after the 1973 coup subsided. For a surprising number of people, the U.S. government’s role in the forced removal and death of Salvador Allende remains a point of contention. It has been in the interest of many not to dwell on either America’s culpability or on Pinochet’s reordering of political and economic life in Chile to suit multinational corporate objectives. Official and oppositional discourses have remained polarized, both here and there.

Since the 1973 coup, the voices of human rights and progressive religious organizations, and of a vast floating population of Chilean exiles spread through Europe, North America and a few Latin American countries have risen regularly to denounce innumerable instances of repression in Chile. But little else is generally known about the internal workings of a country that once had one of Latin America’s strongest labor movements, a firmly entrenched parliamentary governmental system, and that long ago was the site of some of the fiercest indigenous resistance to Spanish colonization on the continent.

The Pinochet dictatorship’s plan for culture was to decapitate it first, and then privatize most of it. Scores of artists and intellectuals fled Chile in the 1970’s, and among them were the majority of the country’s media producers, forced into exile by their association with Allende’s Popular Unity government. The best known films from the Allende years, works such as Patricio Guzmán’s The Battle of Chile, were completed abroad. A decade later, it would become commonplace in film circles to note that Chilean cinema had the unique legacy of having been constituted in exile. But as the years passed and the dictatorship did not lose its hold on the country, the information demanded of and produced by the sectors of the exile community that remained focussed on Chile did not substantially change. The images of the Chile remembered and reconstructed outside the country became a standardized version of the regime’s repressed underside: Allende, Pinochet’s human rights violations and evidence of organized resistance.

Not everyone left after the coup, nor were all those who remained supporters of the regime. Some were too young to leave at first, and others chose or were placed in various forms of internal exile. Many would leave for short periods to study abroad and return as the thawing process began in the early eighties. These Chileans matured in a completely different world - the technocratic, socially and politically conservative, militarized Chile of the 1970’s,

where economic policies supported a consumer culture bombardment from the U.S. that helped to fill the empty space left by the banned progressive national culture of the ’60’s and early ’70’s.

Whatever the desire may have been to make films during the early Pinochet years, the real possibilities of alternative media production were all but crushed. The country’s leading filmmakers and their works were forbidden to enter the country. Many actors were blacklisted. Chile Films was dismantled, and a powerful governmental censorship apparatus was in place. The “free market” economy instituted by the dictatorship did not allow for subsidies for non-commercial media ventures. In no time at all, virtually no infrastructure for alternative media was left.

This panorama began to change in the late seventies, as legislation was put into effect to encourage the development of advertising, which in turn, it was hoped, would support the consumer-oriented “economic boom” that was heralded as the Pinochet’s crowning achievement. By the early eighties, the burgeoning advertising industry in Chile was providing income to film and video professionals, a training ground to new directors and technicians, and equipment and post-production facilities that could easily be used for non-commercial projects. By this period, the government, having effectively suppressed most oppositional activity, could allow economic benefits to outweigh political risk and permit some “unofficial” media production to take place - as long as “sensitive” issues were not directly addressed.

By 1983, the Pinochet’s economic “miracle” was on a downswing, and news of the first large-scale protests against the regime reverberated internationally. Chilean and foreign media producers documented the resurgence of political activity extensively, and often covertly. As local support for the regime began to weaken and international pressure mounted against it, conditions began to permit more progressive media to come out from underground. Whether or not the economy had suffered, the infrastructure for feature film and video production was firmly in place. And as more news of possible change travelled, financial and technical support for independent media came from several European television stations and the National Film Board of Canada, as well as international religious agencies, and human rights organizations.

Independent media in Chile in the 1980’s quickly diversified into educational, informational, and artistically oriented formats. For many film and video artists who lived in Chile for at least part of the dictatorship, the story of public political resistance had already been told, and overtly didactic strategies all too closely resembled the commercials they made for a living. They were interested in the impact of the dictatorship as a formative experience on the collective psyche, on individual behavior, and creative expression.
Using fiction and non-conventional documentary, recondite extended metaphors, and an irreverent mix of experimental and pop cultural representational strategies, these media producers have sought to express what lay beneath the surface of Pinochet’s “capitalist paradise”, as well as what goes on beyond the intermittent skirmishes in the streets of Santiago and the “poblaciones” that ring the city.

In choosing the films and videos for this program, I did not want to create an encyclopedic overview, preferring rather to concentrate a few solid examples of the variety of tendencies in aesthetic experimentation. I was especially interested in how these makers’ methods of conveying the highly codified, even rarified nature of “alternative” communication within a sophisticatedly repressive state. Their focus, however, should not be reduced to purely political concerns. These artists consistently interrelate political with psychological and sociological issues. Their media is not a pretext for or simple means of communicating “truth”. On the contrary, the regime’s use of entertainment and information-oriented film and television as ideological support has perhaps heightened the artists’ sensitivity to the subtleties of audio-visual media’s potential complicity with reactionary political interests.

Gonzalo Justiniano’s sense of the “truth” about Chile changed quite rapidly when he returned there in 1983 after eight years of studying and making films in Paris. What struck him first, he recalled in an interview we held in 1986, was how resistance to or implication in the dictatorship was far less manifest than he had expected. His video documentary Pacifist Warriors (1984) shows young adults expressing, or actually sublimating their rebellious desires by dressing up on weekends as tame versions of punk rockers and going to local clubs. Rather than rejecting foreign cultural influence, these youths adapt the iconography to their own needs, reinscribing them within a Chilean context.

Justiniano’s debut feature Children of the Cold War (1985), the first feature to be shot in Chile since the mid-seventies, is a comic but nonetheless critical look at middle-class complicity with the dictatorship’s proscribed morality. It is the story of two mid-level office workers in Santiago, Gaspar and Rebeca, who in proper accordance with melodramatic convention, meet, fall in love, and get married. Their cliché-ridden world shields them from any realization of the fragility of their circumstances, and of the darker implications of their society’s supposed stability. Things seem almost too perfect — until Gaspar loses his job and plunges into despair.

But before this crisis, Justiniano had already begun to subvert his fairy-tale narrative, slowly and carefully. His lovers are engaging, but obviously mediocre types, who repeat themselves constantly and adapt themselves awkwardly to the social roles they take on. Both loners, they appear to be rather cut off socially and influenced by the endless stream of consumer-oriented information that pours in via radio and television. At the same time, throughout the film are scattered references to on-screen happenings that are never clearly described or shown: sounds of hovering planes, the occasional appearance of a uniformed official, hints about an impending economic collapse, etc. All these undercurrents come together when Gaspar speaks to his companion of the Cold War that no one sees but is everywhere and in everything. The symbols adroitly describes the nature and rational of the Chilean state apparatus while connecting it to both the international context and the micropolitics of internalized repression.

Children of the Cold War ends melancholically, questioning its protagonists’ rather shallow beliefs; on the other hand, Daniel de la Vega’s characters in “October Country” (1990) are an irreverent, almost bloodless bunch of young adults in search of little more than temporary pleasures and a release from the pervasive social conservatism of the world they were raised in. De la Vega, who also studied in France before returning to Chile in the early 80’s, presents a quirky, ironic urban road movie follows two young men’s adventure through a semi-surreal Santiago and neighboring beach towns. They involve themselves with a shady cocaine deal, a taxi heist, and encounters several women who self-consciously embody a range of fantasies. Some characters seem able to reflect on their situation, and casually drop into sequences with brief philosophical musings. At other moments, they talk endlessly and almost aimlessly of their desires and fears, yet everyone seems strangely devoid of affect. Having come of age in a confusing and confining Chilean society, De la Vega’s characters are part of a generation poised between a past they had no hand in making and a new world they cannot yet fully imagine or take possession of.

October Country’s perspective is forward looking without any sense of yearning; having assisted such directors as Miguel Littin during the Allende years, Pablo Perelman returned to Chile in 1979 from a five-year stay in Mexico intent on telling the stories of the past. Latent Image (1987) confronts the troubled relationship that the regime’s survivors have with the country’s recent past. Perelman’s semi-autobiographical story focuses on a photojournalist who is investigating the circumstances surrounding the disappearance of his political activist brother years earlier. Going back over eye-witness accounts of his brother’s activities and capture, old photographs and films, the protagonist, we soon realize, is less involved in trying to find his brother than in coming to terms with a traumatic past he had been encouraged to shun. Though shot and scripted in a rather traditional political docu-drama/thriller form, the narrative ultimately turns back on itself, as the photojournalist, unable
to “find” his brother, becomes more obsessed with the process of the quest itself. For the sensitivity of the subject matter and the directness of the director’s approach, “Latent Image” has been banned in Chile to this day by the national censorship board.

Tatiana Gaviola was also treading on forbidden ground with her short piece, _Angels_ (1988), but managed to pass censorship. Gaviola stayed in the country during the dictatorship, working in theatre and video, and then became the first Chilean woman to make a film inside Chile. Here the taboo was broken by visualizing the Popular Unity period in a positive light. It is affectionately recalled in the film, as a time when youthful enthusiasm and a utopian communion of progressive art and politics were the order of the day. Her characters, a group of university students and cultural activists, struggle with personal conflicts, romance and political aspirations as the government falls, the military moves in, and many of the youths disappear. Gaviola’s presentation is an attractive blend of black and white verite style “documentary” portraits of group activities and the protagonists’ earnest opinions, with color dramatic sequences that show moments of their private lives. Though well-crafted, the film gives the sense of being made up of fragments, as if the maker were grasping at submerged memories that were too far away to always come together.

Juan Carlos Bustamante’s feature, _Lizards Tales_ (1988), and Rodrigo Ortúzar’s short, _Yesterday’s Dream_ (1989), take us in a completely different direction stylistically, although they too deal with suppressed memory and internalized repression. Both films are set in the Chilean countryside, and use the sparse and scarcely populated landscape as a backdrop that reflects the subjective states of mind of their characters. Bustamante spent nine years during the dictatorship painting in areas of Chile far from the capital, and has focused his documentaries and fiction films to date on rural life. _Lizards Tales_ is divided into three stories, each of which forms an extended metaphor for Bustamante’s sense of his country’s recent history’s impact on individual behavior and social bonds. In the first tale, a young man tries to keep his wounded friend alive as they escape from one place and travel to another, both of which are never named in the film. In the second, the paradigm of the prodigal son’s return becomes a way of representing the difficult reunion of a obviously pained, exiled man with his ailing, aged father. The last tale juxtaposes a frustrated older man’s sexual aggression against a woman with his and another man’s wanton cruelty against animals, depicting both as desperate responses to degradation.

Ortúzar’s first film since his return from study in France, _Yesterday’s Dream_, is more obliquely connected to contemporary events. A young woman appears in an large empty house in the countryside, and is trying to recall her childhood. Her journey through the house and neighboring surroundings grows increasingly unreal as she imagines herself witness to her conception, her gestation and birth, and then at eerie festivities held in the house. At the same time, she is followed by an older man who films as an open act of voyeurism. Repeated references to a wound that are woven into her recollections would seem to suggest that the film touches on a larger frustrated desire to connect with the past and to understand trauma, or perhaps to abandon direct confrontation with collective past, taking the opposite, refuge in deeply personal memory.

The videos in the Internal Exile program explore these issues on a smaller scale. Erotic fantasy and its relationship to personal and political frustration is at the heart of the absurdist narrative of Pablo Lavin’s _On the Road_ (1987). Francisco Arenal’s _Carriers of Fantasy_ (1988) addresses the commodification Chilean culture, and the commercialization of desire in advertising, the most pervasive most powerful visual discourse in Santiago. Leopoldo Correa’s _Three Women_ (1988) and Juan Downey’s _No_ (1988) infuse the commercial music video format with political content: Correa’s piece sets Sting’s song about the disappeared to images of the widows of the “Degollados” (radical members of the Chilean opposition whose throats were slit by Pinochet’s police in 1988), as they are hosed down violently in the street on the way to a protest march. Downey’s brief piece, produced as an advertisement for the 1988 plebiscite No campaign to terminate Pinochet’s rule, uses the rhythms of a Mapuche song to structure its visual refrain. Though Downey has lived in the U.S. since the ‘60s, his influence on Chilean video art is widely felt, and this tape was produced specifically for the Chilean context.

Nestor Olhagaray’s _Interview Story_ (1988) and _The Appointment_ (1988), which he made with Marcela Poch, combine contrasting media forms and their social functions. _Interview Story_ juxtaposes a woman’s leisurely act of listening to music on a walkman and the lyricism of its operatic soundtrack with inserted images of paramilitary manoeuvres and radio transmitted orders. In _The Appointment_, freeze frames from surveillance cameras observing a film shoot on the street are mixed with soap opera soundtracks, and cold frontal shots of anonymous human specimens. In both cases, the process of producing and receiving images is related to different forms of social control, and all the uses of the camera are beautifully reframed for contemplation.

Unlike the posture of many New Latin American Cinema directors of the previous generation, for whom the act of picking up a camera was inherently radical and revelatory, these directors create a strong sense of operating in a media-saturated world, where their productions enter a virtual battlefield of ambiguous signals and generate readings beyond their control. The works are full of references to
advertising and entertainment, and how both visual discourses are firmly embedded in the fabric of everyday life. Seemingly realistic scenarios are frequently made strange by the inadvertent appearance of an advertising figure, such as De La Vega’s Santa Claus who wanders out from behind a mountain, or an apparently wild soundtrack. This recurring social commentary becomes an indirect reference to the pervasiveness of the régime’s disinformation, underscoring the import of consumer culture role in the government’s social engineering.

Not only is the producers’ treatment of advertising and state controlled information central to understanding these works - the characters in several of the films and videos have an oddly dislocated relationship to all forms of self-expression, particularly spoken language. Justiniiano’s characters act out simplistic fantasies by speaking in cliches; Daniel de la Vega’s actors deliver their monologues flatly, though they speak on highly emotional subjects; Bustamante’s and Ortuzar’s people speak more of dreams than reality and to themselves than to anyone else. Perelman’s survivors vacillate between hiding the past and obsessively pursuing it. Even Gaviola’s bright-eyed revolutionaries do not often say what they think. Demonstrating how the apparent presence of language is no guarantor of truth or against alienation, each scenario sheds light on the how culture, interpersonal relations, and individual behaviors have been affected by the discursively manipulated Chilean environment of recent years.

In discussing these works with the makers, several mentioned that this sense of isolation was as apparent to them on a personal level as it was as a national phenomenon. De la Vega more than once summed up the meaning of his characters’ monologues as simply, “I want to speak, I want to speak”. Justiniiano likened living in Chile to being inside a hole, a special world where everything that enters is filtered. Bustamante spoke of the sense of desolation, and how many people who has stayed in Chile lived a kind of internal exile. And Perelman and Olhagoray noted that the dictatorship had succeeded in cutting the country off from the rest of Latin America, creating a sense of cultural isolation on a national scale.

It is perhaps due to that sense of being cut off from the rest of Latin America, as well as its largely European-descended population, that Chile’s main cultural references in developing alternative media are that of the various European new waves and video art practices of the last thirty years. The overwhelming majority of the film and video makers in this program studied in Europe, primarily in France. Throughout the dictatorship the French and West German embassies acted as cultural asylums, organizing video festivals, offering scholarships abroad, and regularly screening classic films. While nowhere near as widespread as the American product available in the cinemas and on television, the influence of the European “alternative”, even on the models for non-commercial television now being advocated by many Chilean media activists, remains impressive, particularly among the intelligentsia.

I do not want to imply that this represents an unhealthy or inappropriate dependency, but rather would suggest that this openness to the myriad auteurs of “international cinema” marks somewhat of a shift in attitude from previous generations of Chilean directors. National cinema is no longer an issue of either radical autonomy or “internationalism”. I could find no evidence of any debate on the need for a specifically Chilean or Latin American film language, although most agreed that national media should be encouraged and supported by the new government. Even the notion of protectionist legislation that would guarantee screen time to Chilean films was a matter that was continuously debated — although all the producers firmly supported the abolition of censorship, and many had engaged in public protests against it.

If I were to define then, what sort of sensibility was emerging with the resurgence of independent cinema and video art in Chile, I would have to take account of its political pragmatism, or even skepticism, of its openness to intercultural influence, and its maintenance of auteurist models of production. The primary political objective of the opposition, to which virtually the entire media community belongs, has been the termination of the Pinochet régime, whose measures equally affect men and women. While issues of sexuality and power are addressed by several of these makers, they are almost consistently presented as part of larger social patterns, rather than the central focus of the works themselves. Feminist theory and politics, however, are part of Chile’s cultural landscape, though the balance of access to media production is weighed heavily in favor of men. Very few women direct films in Chile, while several work in educational, documentary and experimental video.

In general, the directors in Internal Exile were uncomfortable with being prescriptive in relation to film and video production. As J. Carlos Altamirano explains in the essay that appears in this catalogue, it is strongly felt that the answer lies not in any one media form or mode of production, but in the diversification of alternatives and the democratization of access. And as Chile carries on with its political transition, it is the hope of many that the country’s vibrant independent media continues its heterogenous development and it is my hope that in the U.S., our interest in this renaissance cinema and video will be sustained beyond casual curiosity.

New York, March, 1990

Latent Image
Gonzalo Justiniano on
Children of the Cold War

Coco Fusco: What was going on in 1983 to make it the
time of the “apertura”?  

Gonzalo Justiniano: What happened in Chile, which is
what I try to explain in Children of the Cold War was a
complex political process. If there is a military government
and a person like Pinochet in that government, in my
opinion, it did not happen by pure coincidence. There is
always a mentality that backs this. There is a great sense of
conformity among Chileans, who want to avoid problems at
all costs. In a certain way, they are a people that have lost
their dignity, blow by blow.

During a period in the dictatorship there was an economic
boom that involved North American banks injecting a great
deal of money into our economy. There was a period in
which almost all Chileans were relatively wealthy. This was
Pinochet’s economic plan. This plan favored the big multi-
national companies, and, at the same time, destroyed our
national industry. The plan was to favor the consumer by
making us producers solely of “raw material”. This plan
converted Chile into a country of consumers. All of our
national industry went bankrupt. The famous “free market”
policies destroyed all the small entrepreneurs in the country.

The theory was that the only way to resolve the economic
problems of the countries in our part of the world was to open
them to the world market. There were people who said that
this would not last, that the economy would not be able to
take this for long since everything functioned through loans.
All Pinochet could say was that now every Chilean had his
own car. His speeches are historic examples of demagogy.

An economic crisis came afterwards. People started to feel
the problems. It was at this point that the first strong protest
against the regime was born. What hurts the most is that
politics had nothing to do with it.

So the protests began, led by political organizations. Even
sectors of the Right participated. It all happened very fast—
within five or six months, people were killed - then Pinochet
appointed a Minister of the Interior that had a good name
with the Right. It was then that the “apertura” process ceased.
It was at this point that I began to film Children of the
Cold War.

CF: What was your first impression of the country after
you returned? Does it have anything to do with the story
of the film?

GJ: When I returned, I started working as a correspon-
dent. This job took me to very volatile areas, places where
unrest was much more visible. The country was in a schizo-
phrenic state. There were two worlds, one in which the
fighting was more open, and another where people were
leading an ordinary quiet life. For me this combination was
Chile. What impressed me the most was the way that
Pinochet represented the Chilean mentality.

When I first decided to do a fiction film I wanted to make
it with a script that told the story of the people who fought
against the dictatorship. Then I decided that this theme had
been used too much already. What had intrigued me the
most about Chile were the hidden factors of daily life. I
wanted to decipher what was happening. Why there were
people who ignored everything. I hung onto this element
because I liked it. Maybe it was very pessimistic to do a film
about this type of people. People who newly recently started to
rebel, to worry about human rights, liberty and democracy.
These are concepts that are evident in Western societies. But
these Chileans started to worry about them when the crisis
reached their pocketbooks.

To live in a dictatorship is to live in an absurd situation. You
go to Chile and you get the feeling that you are inside a deep
hole. That its a special world where the news is filtered,
where life is lived in a frustrating manner but where noone
protests.

I was not interested in making a didactic or moralistic film.
Nor was I interested in making a film in which the good guys
won and the bad guys were bad. My film tries to say that this
is reality, this is what we are. It has a funny side, which is very
healthy. We all have the capacity to laugh in some very shitty
situations. On the other hand, the film also has a very
grotesque and ironic side. I realized that this was the only
way to talk and to communicate in a dictatorship. I am
constantly referring to the issue of censorship. I tried to create
a style of saying things without actually saying them.

CF: How did you come up with the protagonists you
created?

GJ: I wanted to do a kind of artsy love story, in which two
slightly unattractive people find themselves. I wanted to make
it such that the only moment that they were beautiful is when
they made love. I adapted this story idea to the Chilean
situation. I wanted to show everybody that the dictatorship
affects relationships, even the way we make love. I wanted
to show things at that level as well, to enter into a world in
which people feed on false values.

CF: Do you think that Children of the Cold War is acces-
sible to a foreign audience?

GJ: Maybe the film is difficult to understand at different
moments because it has a certain code. We are talking
about a country, and we are using a code that any person
who went to Chile would learn within a week in order to
communicate.

But I think that the film is accessible because the petit
bourgeois character is universal. And melodrama is part of
the illusions we all have, part of the history we have within
ourselves without any idea of where it comes from. We
shouldn’t try to deny this. It is a very beautiful part of life -
upian, fantastic love. What we can do is reuse these same
structures for different purposes, in order to take human
beings to other places. To understand what boleros, tangos,
radio theatre and soap operas are.

Translated by Michelle Burgos
Pablo Perelman on
Latent Image

Coco Fusco: You have mentioned censorship and the problem of producing a cinema with a certain degree of social consciousness. You’ve also hinted at the need to confront the problem of self-censorship. The reality of your case is that official censorship has prevented Latent Image from being distributed in Chile.

Pablo Perelman: There is something very personal about self-censorship. It is about exorcising those terrible fears that have accumulated during a process like this one. This is what we probably have to confront first. But obviously we’ll get very little out of overcoming self-censorship if we don’t succeed in overcoming official censorship. The emergence of new film productions coincides here with the rebirth of strong political activity on the part of the opposition.

CF: How does the censorship law work in Chile?

PP: What happens is pretty extraordinary. According to Chilean law, the only artistic expression subject to censorship is cinema. This does not mean that there has been no censorship in the other artistic areas through simply, arbitrary administrative moves. But film censorship is consecrated by the constitution. There is a Film Council, established by law, that reviews all the audiovisual materials produced in the country, and also foreign productions. They accept or reject the production. They also establish the required age for entry to a film. The council includes government representatives. The majority always consists of government officials.

CF: Why do you think that your film is the only Chilean feature film that has been censored?

PP: It is the only one because there haven’t been any others

CF: So the fact that it was censored does not have to do with the way you approach the theme?

PP: The film is very direct. I said I was going to make a film based on my own brother’s case. The project itself meant breaking my own self-censorship. Since the theme was so personally significant, I couldn’t limit myself to trivial details. I don’t believe that my film is elitist, or that it openly seeks to produce a certain effect. At a certain level, the fact that the film was censored reaffirms its character as a revenge act.

CF: How are the strategies of filmmaking and documentation mixed in the film? You appear to be playing with photography and the act of documenting history, with testimony, with the presence of advertising in Chile, etc. What did you want to achieve by including so many representational strategies in one single screenplay.

PP: Essentially, the main character is searching for himself. I’m not sure why I included all those different methods. Memory has to do with means of recording it, with the archive, with what it left behind. The problem of the disappeared - the system into which the drama of the disappeared is inserted - is the system of memory. This is for me the central cultural problem, represented by the dictatorship, by the coup, etc. This confrontation with the past, with memory, settling accounts with the past - this past is very painful for us. The past is for me tied to my brother’s death, and with the disappearance of many friends. Of course, in the film I attempt not only to reconstruct my brother’s story, but to show the protagonist’s own traumatic relation with that history, and with the past that his brother represents.

There is also the issue of the official record. The disappeared officially do not exist. When my parents began seriously searching for my brother, the Chilean government officially informed them through an embassy bureaucrat that my brother had never existed. That his name did not exist. Can you imagine? My parents had to search for testimonies to prove the existence of their own son.

Translated by Zaira Tellado
Juan Carlos Bustamente on
Lizards’ Tales

Coco Fusco: You started your career as a painter, which gave you another point of reference when you started making films. This is noticeable in Lizards’ Tales in that the film seems to work as a series of tableaux.

Juan Carlos Bustamente: What I perceive in the film is that it gives an account, through these three looks at the Chilean soul, of Chile during these years. It’s about a sense of erosion, about the internal exile that has taken place. I think that the sense of desolation is not only inscribed in the people who had to leave the country for the known reasons, it could also be applied to the ones who stayed. This atavistic relationship that we Chileans have with the past, with our machismo, with our violence, with skepticism - all together this creates a kind of pathology. Hence the development of this pathology, trauma and pain in the film, as well as the sense of hope, in the story of the fraternal bonding between the two young men.

CF: It seems that almost all the characters in Lizards’ Tales find themselves completely alone.

JB: I think that the grand drama of Chile is that people are alone. One starts noticing how relationships have shattered. To what point are the Chilean people to blame for this? What are the questions that arise after such violent changes?

The dictatorship was the detonator that pulled out violent roots that were buried and had no place in Chilean society for a long time. I do not want to be dogmatic, but the dictatorship caused tremendous pain.

CF: The use of the countryside as your backdrop seems so important to the film that I cannot perceive it as an urban story.

JB: I think that this stems from the contradictions that exist in the interior of Chile when it comes of modernization. I see this in part with the unconscious connection that still exists between the Chilean people with the land and their peasant roots. From here are born our virtues and defects. The sensation of excessive individualism; the animality that comes with direct contact to the land. The feeling I wanted to portray was one of abandonment. The sense of abandonment felt by these people. This I thought best achieved with the desolate scenery portrayed in the film.

This desire that I have to interpret the Latin American soul comes from the reality of our contradictions. We still cannot accept a modernization that we have not created and are still very connected to the land.

Translated by Michelle Burgos

Daniel de la Vega on
October Country

Question: What is your film about?

Daniel de la Vega: It’s the story of two young people who are part of a generation without a past. They look ahead, and travel toward the unknown.

Q. What is the film’s message?

DV: It depends on what the audience understands. Our idea basically was to tell a story about young people, so that through that, viewers would manage to interpret or identify with the theme and the characters. There is no attempt in this film to resolve any of this generation’s existential, political or sentimental problems.

Q. What genre is the film?

DV: It’s a mix of action, love, special nightmares and thriller. Because of this variety of themes and styles, it is difficult to classify the film in a specific genre, but that in itself generates a special interest.

Q. What characterizes the protagonists?

DV: The characters are young people between the ages of 20 and 24. They come from one place and are going toward another. As they are hit by reality, they respond spontaneously, which is why it is difficult to categorize them.

Q. Do you think that this film is part of a process of rebirth of Chilean cinema, together with other films that are being made?

DV: I think that our cinema is coming to life again, together with the rebirth of the country, which is particularly apparent in art and culture. People are beginning to improve their capacity to communicate, and what they used to express through video, they now want to express in film.

(Excerpts from interviews that originally appeared in the Chilean press.)

Translated by Coco Fusco
Tatiana Gaviola on Angels

Question: Are you the only woman who makes films in Chile?

Tatiana Gaviola: One of the few, I'd say. Obviously it hasn't been a very fertile territory in terms of works by women, or by anyone, really. We don't have a film industry here, there is no Film Institute. This is a country that hasn't taken care of its cinema. All we have are isolated efforts, halfway heroic salutes to the flag. Furthermore, it is assumed that directing entails a great deal of decision making, of authoritativeness. And leadership is usually given to men. We women are viewed suspiciously when we attempt to direct. So it has meant effort and constancy to gain spaces for oneself. Because making films isn't so much a problem of talent as it is of work and persistence.

Q. What are the themes you always, or even obsessively, deal with?

TG: Memory. Finding a way of visualizing all the images, sounds, smells, colors, forms, stories that emerge and form the past, collective and personal memory, ones own and everyone's fantasies. In all my work I have been concerned with exploring the most painful zones of that memory, of this country's memory. Chile does not have an image of itself. We have to invent an image of this country starting from its pain. I try to look back, not so that we stay stuck there, but rather to put things back together after the fragmentation that has taken place. We are disintegrating, as is also our country, which does not have a continuous history and is not capable of seeing itself.

I would say that I try to bring out the most painful ghosts, those that have hurt us - personally and as a nation - to be able to face them, to be able to look at this, perhaps, do an exorcism. Only recognizing these zones will we be able to advance and imagine what lies ahead.

Q. A distinctive thing about the film is its strong emotive statement about the high price to pay for being an angel.

TG: Yes. The angel here has little to do with the Guardian Angel. The film works with the idea that they were innocent victims, without a doubt. But what I like is its emotional impact. The film is more than that, but on the basis of that sensibility.

Q. You noted the importance for the community to return to its memory. It is the film the vision of a sacrificed generation?

TG: Oh no. I never thought of it that way. I don't know, though some have said that the film is about defeat. For me, it is a form of resistance, and I think that that is clear in my story, but to go from there to relating it to sacrifice, to failure, is a tremendous thing to assume, in spite of the fact that things might actually be that way.

Q. What is left for you?

TG: The feeling of having lived without the generation we were supposed to have lived with. It is strange, I felt I had to make this film, this story, it is my story. Nonetheless, we have to go on healing, help new energy to emerge and to be about to express new fantasies, new dreams, without making ourselves crazy with our pains. What is at play here is affective memory, which we have to take responsibility for and protect, while also tending to and permitting the development of cinema.

(Excerpts from interviews that originally appeared in the Chilean press.)

Translated by Coco Fusco
Rodrigo Ortúzar on
Yesterday’s Dream

Coco Fusco: For you, what is your film about?

Rodrigo Ortúzar: It is about a woman and her relationship
to her childhood memories, in that broken world that marked
her, which might even include her mother’s womb.

It is about the re-encounter with the people and the rooms
of a house that only exists as a point of reference where she
can recall her origins.

It is also about the discovery of a wound that inevitably
repeats itself. It leads her to see herself as a living part of
other lives, shared nostalgia, showing her how to under-
stand it.

CF: What is the relationship between masculine and
feminine forces?

RO: The male characters, father and uncles, open enormous
spaces where the feminine image or images converge,
creating and at the same time destroying the most profound
myths, and sustaining history at the exact point between
dream and madness.

CF: Which directors in Chile and elsewhere do you think
have influenced you?

RO: I think that thanks to my four year stay in Paris I was
able to have access to a number of films that in one way or
another shaped my cinematic language. I could mention
Raul Ruiz, with his atemporal style, W. Has with his visual
onorism, Andrei Tarkovsky with his poetry, and lastly,
Sergei Parajanov, whom I would say is the best of all, and who
makes cinema something magical.

It might seem a bit pretentious to cite the greatest filmmakers
of these times, but I think that it is through them that we can
discover the art of cinema, which has been diluted through
film “marketing”. I think that if we manage to learn just a bit
from each one of these filmmakers, we will be able to
develop, in a not so distant future, an identity that will enable
us to discover our most profound roots and through this
create a cinematic art that represents us as we are.

Translated by Coco Fusco
The Audio-Visual Battle of Chile
by J. Carlos Altamirano

This exhibition of Chilean film and video is of special significance in that it is the first to tour North America at a crucial moment in Chilean history: the end of the dictatorship and the resurgence of democratic life. To these facts it must be added that film and video, both being expressions of the collective imagination, are cultural practices that are part of the paradoxical situations we have confronted over the last few years. I am referring specifically to advertising and television as reproducers of the military regime’s authoritarian project on the one hand, and on the other film and video art as expressions of the dream of democracy. Nonetheless, to understand the last decade’s audio-visual developments, we must take a look further back in time.

Historical Profile

Chilean cinema reappeared with extraordinary vigor at the end of the 1960’s and was part of a process of significant reforms that culminated with the victory in 1970 of the first Marxist president in the world to be legitimately elected, Salvador Allende. The majority of filmmakers came together to consolidate the alliance between politics and culture, between the state and the people, between artists and workers. Thus emerged a “militant culture”, a “revolutionary” discourse, the concept of the “new man”, and film at the service of the “proletarian cause”.

The filmmakers assumed this challenge with a production, exhibition, and distribution base already in existence. There was a state television station – “Televisión Nacional” – two university channels, the Council for the Promotion of the National Cinematic Industry within the Ministry of Economy, the Department of Culture and Publications of the Ministry of Education and various experimental film departments in the universities. There existed then, a small cinematic industry, created thanks to state support and private initiative, in which was produced a good number of feature-length films and documentaries of different kinds. Among the most important efforts was the creation of the state-owned studios of Chile Film, which were created in 1940 to promote national production and exhibition.

In addition, cinematic legislation established between 1966 and 1970 created the basis for the long term development of cinema. Among several articles was a law establishing “screen quotas” (i.e. the obligation that cinemas had to exhibit nationally produced films a certain number of days per year) - and tax reductions (freeing national production from taxation and eliminating the payment of tariffs on imported film stock, equipment and accessories).

Nonetheless, starting in 1968, film as much as television, began to engage with the contradictions of a highly polarized social and political process, one that culminated with the military coup of September, 1973. Cinematic activity, being dependent on and in complicity with the state and the government, was completely dismantled by the newly installed regime.

The military regime was not conceived of as a parenthesis in the history of Chile. It contained an elaborate historical project based on principles of social and political “purification”, the imposition of the doctrine of “national security: in which any opposition to the regime was defined as “internal subversion”. It was to put new power relations into place, this time inspired by an authoritarian version of the “neoliberal” model. Economic liberty was set in opposition to political liberty, private initiative to the benefactor-state.

The effects of this politics of punishment and vigilance were dramatic in the field of culture in general and especially on art and cinema. The majority of filmmakers were forced into exile. The laws promoting cinema were abolished, the film schools were closed, and tapes, films and books with “subversive” content were destroyed and burned, blacklist of artists and directors were created that prohibited them from working or appearing on television. Afterwards, a policy of arbitrary censorship began to be applied. Recent cases come to mind: that of 100 Children Waiting for a Train by Ignacio Aguero, a film about children’s empowerment through media education, which was limited to viewers over 21 year old, and that of Pablo Perelman’s Latent Image, the exhibition of which is forbidden to this day. At the same time, the screening of the developing independent cinema on local television has been consistently impeded, and finally, Chile Films was privatized. In sum, a long process of trying to create a national cinema that impacted constructively on the cultural and social development of the country was put to an end.

Notwithstanding, the military regime dealings with culture changed over time. Coercion became more selective, until it ended concentrated in political activity and the communications media. Attempts to exterminate the oppositional pole with practices of physical and discursive repression, coincided with the reality that sectors of the population lived in “peace” and “order”, conformity and resignation.

Televised and Advertised Heterogeneity

Chileans were compelled to restrain themselves, and in many cases close themselves to public life due to different imposed “states” : the state of emergency, state of siege, curfews, etc. They returned to the private world of the home. Television quickly became the great monopolizer of free time, of entertainment and recreation. Even the most humble families acquired television sets. In working class sectors, the television became symbol of social status, above all if it is a large color set.

To illustrate television’s impact we can note that of the 440 cinemas that existed at the beginning of the 1970’s, today there are only 83 in the entire country, which is to say less that a fifth. The public that attended soccer games and athletic events at the stadiums also diminished by more than
half. Nightlife practical disappeared due to the curfew. As a result, T.V. became the principal medium of entertainment, recreation and socialization.

We must also take into account that in the 1960’s, Chilean television was conceived of according to a European-style public service model, as opposed to the North American commercial TV model. Consequently, private involvement was heavily impeded. It was assumed that state and university-subsidized television would control programming and would educate and entertain, while also respecting freedom of expression and pluralism. Starting in 1974, after the coup, these stations were obliged to finance themselves through advertising. A law was decreed overturning previous legislation that had prevented interrupting programs with commercials. The spending on advertising rose between 1975-1982 from $7.1 million (26%) to $153.3 (54.6%). In the last few years 1.4% of the gross national product has been invested in advertising. There are fewer than 15 countries that spend more than 1% of the gross national product on advertising. The country that invests most in publicity - USA - spends approximately 2% of the GNP.

At the same time, the channels increased the number of hours of airtime to be able to show more commercials. Between 1970-1988, Chilean television increased its hours of broadcast by 83% and continues to increase them. In 1985, the three French television networks emitted 30 hours total together, while in Chile, the three channels together broadcast an average of sixty hours daily of programming.

On the other hand, the economy that was organized required accelerated and permanent market growth for which it was necessary to motivate the populace by awakening a wide range of sectors to consumer desire. It was sought that the largest possible number of individuals define their strategy for living in terms of consumption. Advertising became an increasingly important tool; it did not solely operate as part of the competitive mechanism of the market, but also acted as an agent of social integration.

Such was the demand for advertising at the beginning of the ‘80’s that practically all the multinational advertising companies opened offices in Santiago in competition with the many local agencies that had been set up. This enormous enterprise absorbed a large part of the country’s artistic talent. Even the most avant-garde and oppositional members of the arts community ended up working in one way or another for advertising and television.

Many film professionals got involved in advertising after a period of scarce activity. Several production companies were established to satisfy the enormous demand. Within a short time this sector underwent vertiginous growth. Large amounts of film equipment were imported; numerous video studios and production companies were created. There was a proliferation of technicians, producers and directors. Chilean TV became the television with the highest rate of advertising in its programming, up to 25 minutes per hour.

The Effects of the New Images

The ideological and cultural void left by the negation of political pluralism, parliamentarism and the disintegration of public social life was filled, in my opinion, by a consumerist ideology and its advertising discourse; and by television and its world of glamour and entertainment. The viewer is here addressed as a free subject, an extremely attractive proposition in light of the fact that the viewer’s real public life was precisely the opposite. Television, together with advertising, while playing a role as propaganda on behalf of the regime, is also a site for the displacement of frustrated desire.

Perhaps the best example of the impact of TV and advertising on the collective imagination is the program Sábado Gigante (Giant Saturday), a veritable socio-cultural phenomenon, even in North America where an adapted version is now also shown. It is a show that maintained an average rating of 75%, reaching millions of Chileans of all sectors of society who would tune into every Saturday for seven hours, and who had no other alternative than the state channel. “Sábado Gigante” became a habit, an escape valve, the only pleasure for many thousands of Chileans.

The program was promoted as family entertainment that broke isolation, educated its public. It was also said that because “the people” could participate, the poorest would therefore benefit and that was “nice”. On the other hand, its Master of Ceremonies, Don Francisco, was according to surveys, the most admired person in Chilean society of that period. In fact, as a result of the transition to democracy that we are now experiencing, the MC and his program have decreased in relevance. In my book, That’s How Don Francisco Moves, I discuss how this variety show, which combines musical numbers, competitions, reports, forums, solidarity campaigns and comedy sketches, conversation and, above all, advertising—was more representative than any leader, doctrine, or institution that existed during those years in Chile, with the exception of the Church in its role as defender of human rights.

In my opinion, the fact that millions of Chileans identified with the program and its master of ceremonies is due principally to the engagement between the viewer and the popular and mass world constituted by Sábado Gigante. This is particularly significant given that the participation of the popular subject and the expression of popular culture was virtually absent from the media and official institutions during this period. As entertainment with a specific ideological purpose it was presented as a means of integrating the country, maintaining national identity.

Although Sábado Gigante is very significant during the military regime, approximately 65% of the programming that Chileans saw at that time was foreign. Today with the process of political transformation that the country is undergoing, this percentage has dropped radically to 40%. The foreign television packages come primarily from North America while a smaller number come from Latin America. The Sábado Gigante public was told that the charity cam-
ampaigns resolved social problems, ended poverty, and were a way of becoming politically aware, creating the sense of solidarity that so many, it was claimed, were missing. The contests were presented as another means of economic aid, since thousands were "helped" by the prizes and gifts given by Don Francisco. Also, there were education sessions to which hundreds of people brought their legal and economic problems and received counseling from specialists and which were deemed true public service. Don Francisco offered what the majority of the public desired and demanded. In other words, he acted as the representative of the popular will.

It is interesting to note that under the circumstances of an authoritarian government, the participation and expression of popular culture within the framework of a television show acquires a subliminal charge of extraordinary force. It can be said that Sábado Gigante on the one hand, replaced the dreamed of democratic state which was dismantled to advance the free market economy and militarism. On the other hand, it articulated the dreamed of ideological populism with the desire to consume television glamour.

Don Francisco also held telethons, during which practically the entire country mobilized to collect money and buy telethon products. The donations go to a beneficiary fund. This national event allowed the public to experience something akin to an electoral campaign. The staging, the forms of registering and collecting money, simulate the mechanisms of a political election. It resembles the moment when the votes are tallied, one viewer was quoted, and allows people to feel like they're participating at a national level, as in the elections that used to be held.

Don Francisco created an entire system of appeals with dramatic populist content. In the last telethon he said, "Twenty-seven hours gave us the possibility of knowing that beyond hatred and variety there is solidarity. We have managed to keep the smile; hopefully we will be able to reunite once again. Chile needs a great deal of solidarity!"

Other Chilean television programs were also relevant. The first soap opera, which emerged in 1981, soon became a national event. Practically the entire family would unite after work and school to experience the dramatically of The Stepmother. It must be taken into account that this genre was absent from television screens in Chile for several years as a result of the blacklisting of so many actors. With the reemergence of the Chilean soap opera, audiences could once again see their experiences reflected in melodrama. The success of such programs lead to television station's giving more airtime to local mass culture.

In addition, advertising in Chile is not seen as oppressive, alienating, or manipulative. On the contrary, many viewers responded favorably to it, claiming that it enabled television to exist, that it helped them make decisions, and that it was entertaining. What is usually criticized is the abundance of advertising.

The Moment of Breakthrough

The emptiness that was left by a dearth of cinematic production was supplanted beginning in the 1980's by the enormous expansion of videomaking. A total of approximately 200,000 video decks and 30,000 video cameras are now in Chile. Over 400,000 blank video cassettes are consumed annually by the home video market, and 45,000 are imported for professional use. These figures may actually be low since more cassettes may be imported directly by institutions that enjoy special privileges. The massive importation of video equipment has permitted many artists, filmmakers' groups and educational institutions to use video as an alternative means of communication to television and state controlled media.

Within five years, approximately 400 works were produced, usually made in 3/4" format with budgets between $100 and $15,000. Over 65% of these productions are self-financed. At the same time, a variety of circuits for independent exhibition and distribution were created. It has been estimated that in Santiago alone there is an audience of 200,000. Exhibitions take place in working class poblaciones, community-based organizations, and alternative cultural spaces.

Three tendencies within this video movement can be identified. A great number of alternative educational organizations and community groups produce video documentaries for teaching purposes and social work. There are the visual artists who developed video art for personal and artistic purposes, and assumed avant-garde postures via a vis dominant cultural tendencies. Finally, there is the involvement of those who are primarily connected with filmmaking, who use video to gain access to the international mass media. In this group we find the production companies and directors that focus their efforts on making documentaries and fictional pieces on such themes as human rights, exile and the democratization process.

Most of the videos show the diversity of national life, and seek to create a space for critical reflection and debate. It is an effort to play a vanguard role in the process of cultural democratization that began in 1983, after the deep economic crisis that ended the "economic boom", provoking the first widespread reaction against the Pinochet regime.

While video opted for the alternative sector, filmmaking was limited to producing commercials, with the exception of Julio Begins in July, The Lost Cabin Boy and the documentary, Don't Forget. Only after 1983-84, when the regime, pressured by mass dissent, began to loosen its hold, did the filmmakers get out of their inertia. Little by little the film union was reactivated, this time as a company independent of the state, with substantial and highly professional technical resources.

Many films have been made by the directors of commercials who use the profits generated from their work in advertising to produce them. In addition, around this time, several filmmakers in exile began to return to Chile and many films were made in co-production with Europe and

Pacifist Warriors
Canada. Some advertising companies began to produce documentaries and fiction works for multinational media production companies.

This highly dynamic process reached its culminating point in the triumph of the opposition in the 1988 plebiscite that was called for by General Pinochet to legitimize his staying in power nine years longer. For this occasion, for the first time in 15 years the government permitted that the opposition communicate their ideals and demands on television in a 60-minute mini-program. The viewer was confronted by a new phenomenon: the discourse and the imagination of the opposition - on television. It was the first space in which dissident voices and faces appeared on television. For many analysts, it was the decisive factor that set the plebiscite in favor of democracy.

Directors, film and video technicians, together with social scientists and the majority of artists from advertising and television, created the so-called “No” faction campaign. The “Yes” faction corresponded to the government. For a month, on a national channel during prime-time, both factions addressed the population that, as was already custom, turned to television eager to sublimate its desire for political participation.

Television thus became once again a protagonist in our history. Two concepts of society and power confronted each other on the screen, each with its respective symbols and modes of address. Each commercial producer brought years of accumulated rhetorical and cinematic experience to the “No” campaign, and their efforts were determinant in the reactivation of democratic will among Chileans. The government advertisers, on the other hand, were incapable of articulating their project for a “free society”. Their discourse was worn-out, antagonistic and mediocre, and ultimately unable to support the pacified and ordered reality they claimed to offer the country. What had been one of its fundamental weapons for more than 15 years - advertising and TV - was transformed into a two-edged sword.

Here we are faced with what would seem to be a paradox. Although the government had a complete monopoly on television. Spectators had been subjected to an incessant monologue that mystified reality, full of illusory promises. Despite its hold on television the government did not succeed in persuading the population. It would seem to indicate that this is a good indicator while authoritarian rule propagate distorted ideology through television, it did not achieve social consensus, nor did it strengthen its system. On the contrary, it provoked the opposite - total incredibility and the delegitimation of the discourses and the regime.

What legitimacy, I might ask, could a medium have when it did not have even a modicum of independence from the government, to the point that newsreels became propaganda programs that were explicitly in favor of the dictatorship? Ten minutes daily of images of the opposition, with hymns of hope and symbols of the sentiments of the majority, was enough to permanently disrupt the discursive hold of the regime. One could say that the power of television is like a boomerang; if well used with due respect to the principle of independence and pluralism, it can play a determinant role in creating social consensus; if on the other hand it is monopolized to further disinformation, it can promote resistance and rupture.

The End of the 80's

Twenty years after 1968, Chilean youth, intellectuals and artists, many of whom lived subjected to conformity and apathy or fear and resignation, returned to engage in political and social life. This time, they demonstrated a new critical awareness marked by less ideological polemics and more political pragmatism. With the 1988 plebiscite, another historical first occurred - for the first time a dictator gave up power because of an election and initiated a peaceful transition to democracy.

At present, a month away from the first free presidential and parliamentary election that will take place the 14th of December of 1989. Media producers are devoting themselves completely to the task of assuring the triumph of the opposition coalition, which unites the majority of Chilean political parties from the right to the left.

Faced with the imminent defeat of the candidate who represents the continuation of the current order, the military government is attempting to privatize television. In fact, private concessions will be granted to be able to take advantage of the VHF television networks in the region. We believe that some of the VHF and UHF stations will stay in the hands of those with democratic convictions. This decentralizing and privatizing measure, which might seem negative, could be the beginning of a true communications revolution in Chile, giving a new impulse to independent production of film and video in the country.

1990 marks the beginning of a new epoch. The enormous task of reconstructing culture and democracy is taking place inside television stations and a variety of national institutions. Independent producers must be capable of satisfying the needs, interests and demands of a highly heterogeneous country. This exhibition is but a small reflection of this reality, but is certainly representative and of enormous significance.

Santiago, November, 1989

Translated by Coco Fusco
INTERNAL EXILE: FILMS

_Lizards’ Tales_ (Historias de Lagartos)
Director: Juan Carlos Bustamante
1988, 80 mins., 16mm, color

_Angels_ (Ángeles)
Director: Tatiana Gaviola
1988, 45 mins., 16mm, color and b/w

_Chaos of the Cold War_ (Hijos de la Guerra Fria)
Director: Gonzalo Justiniano
1985, 75 mins., 16mm, color

_Latent Image_ (Imagen Latente)
Director: Pablo Perelman
1987, 92 mins., 35mm, color

_Yesterday’s Dream_ (Sueño de Ayer)
Director: Rodrigo Ortuzar
1989, 30 mins., 16mm, color and b/w

_October Country_ (El País de Octubre)
Director: Daniel de la Vega
1990, 80 mins., 35mm, color

INTERNAL EXILE: VIDEO

_Carriers of Fantasy_ (Cargadores de Fantasía)
Director: Francisco Arévalo
1988, 5 mins., color

_Three Women_ (Tres Mujeres)
Director: Leopoldo Correa
1988, 3 mins., color

_No_ (Sin)
Director: Juan Downey
1988, 1 mins. 35 secs., color

_Pacifist Warriors_ (Guerreros Pacifistas)
Director: Gonzalo Justiniano
1984, 15 mins., color

_On the Road_ (En El Camino)
Director: Pablo Lavin
1987, 20 mins., color

_Interview Story_ (Relato)
Director: Nestor Olhagaray
1988, 5 mins., color

_The Appointment_ (la cita)
Director: Marcelo Poch and Nestor Olhagaray
1988, 5 mins., color

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Juan Carlos Altamirano Celis, _Asi, Asi Se Mueve Don Francisco_ (Chile: Estudios Ilel, 1987)


Articles on contemporary Chilean cinema and video art are regularly published in the Chilean magazines “Enfoque” (cinema) and Ojo de Buey (video), and in the catalogues of the annual Franco-Chilean Video Festival sponsored by the French Ministry of Culture.

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