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Conceptual Strategies in the Art of Guillermo Núñez: Object, Document, Testimony & Nation

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CONCEPTUAL STRATEGIES IN THE ART OF GUILLERMO NÚÑEZ: OBJECT, DOCUMENT, TESTIMONY & NATION

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Decades before a bloody *coup d'état* in Chile deposed President Salvador Allende Gossens and instated seventeen years of totalitarian military dictatorship, Chilean artist Guillermo Núñez began incorporating the topic of violence into his paintings. Bearing witness to global events such as the aftermath of World War II, the Vietnam War, and decades of government-led massacres of students and workers in Chile inspired Núñez to introduce aspects of political protest and testimony into his work. Prior to the Chilean coup, Núñez painted figures reminiscent of disconnected body parts, joints and pieces of bone over panels of grey, black and white. Splatters of blood-red paint and black scrawls of ink produced an abstract style of painting that was hauntingly visceral. Critic Georges Raillard astutely observed that Núñez “works on violence, works with violence, and works in violence.”¹

Intuitively, Núñez’s paintings foreshadowed the climate of human rights violations by the state that would ensue in Chile and influence Núñez personally. When Núñez’s role as conscientious observer changed to survivor of political imprisonment and systematic psychological and physical torture, his artwork began to address the topic of violence through conceptual strategies. First, Núñez departed from painting and began working with the ready-made, arranging quotidian objects into new contexts to create new meanings. Next, he worked using a serial process, beginning with the same preliminary image or object and transforming it in different ways. Then, he integrated text and fragments of bureaucratic documents into his work to explore the relationship between the image and language, and emphasize the challenges of verbal testimony in cases of trauma. Adopting conceptual strategies in a testimonial work resulted in art that defied attempts of censorship and erasure, as well as communicated and denounced the experience of state-enacted violence. These conceptual works later became critical sites for the recuperation of memory in the process of national healing and cultural reawakening.

During the 1960s, Núñez traveled throughout the United States and Europe, gaining awareness of international artistic trends. During this period, Núñez did not consider himself a conceptual artist and, in

fact, criticized North American and European artists for creating a kind of artwork void of political commitment. As a part of a portfolio of writings and works of contemporary Chilean artists, in 1966, Margaret Rigg, the U.S. art director for the journal *motive* published Núñez’s views. “Art in the U.S., even though it is powerful, is signaling toward the emptiness,” Núñez said, adding, “Pollock, Kline and de Kooning were an excellent start; however they have not been superseded in ‘meaning’ by the following generations of artists.” Núñez rejected what he considered to be the evasive nature of an art “without content” and the seeming lack of political message in Andy Warhol’s “Campbell Soup paintings.”² Núñez expressed these opinions visually by creating paintings that mimicked the pop-art aesthetic, but instead featured representations of U.S. soldiers in Vietnam. Upon his return to Chile, his art continued to address social change and he became active as a member of the Ramona Parra Muralist Art Brigade. As a supporter of socialist presidential candidate Allende, who was elected in 1970, Núñez also became director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chile and exhibitions focusing on bringing art to the people.

Rising social and political unrest in Chile escalated with the military coup to oust Allende and install a military dictatorship on September 11, 1973. The suspension of civil rights abruptly ended the production of openly political art. Following the takeover, the combined forces of the military and police began the process of detaining, interrogating and executing political opponents and anyone associated with their cause.³ After completing mass executions in the days following the coup, the military detained rumored militants and leftist activists in a system of secret holding centers, prisons and concentration camps. According to the official Truth and Reconciliation Report by the Chilean Government released to the public in 1991, there were over 2,279 confirmed deaths for political reasons from the period of 1973-1990.⁴ A later report, *The National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture* released in 2005, found 38,254 cases of imprisonment and torture for political reasons, and the number of confirmed cases continues to rise today.⁵



Guillermo Núñez, *Summa Arqueológica: Libertad Condicional*, 1979. Serigraph and Drawing. 65 x 50 cms.

Although Núñez was associated with the leftist government and produced political art, he was never considered a militant, so in the initial months following the coup he was not in immediate danger of arrest. However, despite the threat involving any association with leftist activists, Núñez agreed to provide a safe haven for an anonymous individual seeking to escape arrest through an underground network. Núñez claims that he did not know that the individual's true identity was that of Victor Toro, a leader of the Revolutionary Populist Movement, a group related to the Revolutionary Left Movement. After Toro's subsequent arrest and interrogation in several of the government's torture centers, Toro identified Núñez as one of the people who had come to his aid.⁶

This information resulted in Núñez's arrest on May 3, 1974 and internment in the Air Force Academy. Soldiers ransacked his house, damaged his belongings and destroyed his artwork. In the academy, he was questioned about his history as an artist and was required to provide police sketches of acquaintances related to leftist movements. Núñez described his imprisonment and repeated interrogations as an assault on his identity as a citizen, and as if he had been erased as a human being. He recalls: "We had a cardboard sign with a number on it stuck onto our clothes. We had lost our names, our condition as human beings. We were now only a number..."⁷ Núñez was blindfolded for all but 20 to 30 minutes per day. He and the other prisoners were watched at all times, and forced to sit or stand in silence from 6:00 in the morning until 22:00 at night. In his testimony about the experience, Núñez remembers being forced into stress positions and enduring unending, aggressive interrogations.⁸ He recounts that one of the most terrifying aspects the four months and ten days that he spent incarcerated was the psychological impact of living in a constant state of fear, forced to listen to the cries and howls of other prisoners being tortured:

The nervous tension was permanent, an atmosphere contaminated by the smoke of hundreds of cigarettes, a rarefied air, obligated silence, inactivity, the absence of time, repeated days, one the same as another, the fear of torture, from which one was never sure of being saved. We saw, constantly, other comrades arriving after interrogations, many of the times [they were] savagely tortured or beaten. They left them dumped on the floor like rags or weeds, human forms that took two or more days to be able to move again.⁹

Núñez's captors were unable to produce any incriminating evidence and his international notoriety as an artist saved him from execution or becoming one of the "disappeared." From outside, Núñez's partner Soledad Bianchi¹⁰ worked to secure his release. Faced with petitions of hundreds of supporters from both Chile and abroad, the military agreed to release him under the status of "libertad condicional" [conditional liberty]. The state required him to present himself once a week at the Ministry of Defense and he was strictly prohibited from leaving Santiago or the country.¹¹

The military coup and Núñez's struggles as political prisoner influenced the kind of artwork he then began to create in the months that followed when he turned to art as a way to process his experiences. Instead of returning to the medium of painting, however, he began working in a serial process, collecting everyday objects from markets and arranging them in different contexts. In an article written about her husband, "Pintor sin caballete" [Painter Without an Easel], Bianchi recalls this time period:

He didn't wait at all, and began to work, almost obsessively. His commitment pushed him. He didn't want to silence the abuses he witnessed in spite of his blindfold, he felt responsible for those that still remained, imprisoned... [Each object] became unique upon being invaded by other objects.¹²

Núñez faced the task of communicating the psychological trauma of torture, and the problem of how to speak about this subject under circumstances of repression, as the series symbolized the search for language to express the unspeakable.

While the artwork that Núñez created included different thematic cycles, the most provocative objects that he selected were birdcages. By recontextualizing a prefabricated object, he followed the Duchampian concept of the ready-made, drawing on well-known theories and techniques developed by the Surrealists in the 1920s and 1930s. Yet, under the context of dictatorship, the birdcage expressed an idea loaded with meaning. Art historian Mari Carmen Ramírez has described the conceptual use of a found object as "displacement," for how it produces disorientation when the original object is converted into something that it is not: "Each montage presents itself as a semantic field of forces where the artist's role consists of setting up the individual elements in order to entice the viewer to decode their meaning."¹³ For this reason, the birdcages became powerful concepts that delivered a conceptual political message without the use of words themselves.

He included these in his exhibition *Printuras y Exculturas*,¹⁴ which took place on March 19, 1975. While few artists dared to create public exhibitions at this moment in the dictatorship, and despite having been only recently released from prison, Núñez sought support for *Printuras y Exculturas*, contacting acquaintances and friends and forming a group of supporters interested in exhibiting his work. The group befriended the French Cultural Attaché, Roland Husson, and others "who offered to document and subdivide four exhibitions, almost without interruption."¹⁵ Not surprisingly, given that the state already had the artist under surveillance, the first exhibition of *Printuras y Exculturas* was shut down the same day that it opened. Following that censure, all other curators were threatened with prison if they continued to exhibit Núñez's work.¹⁶

According to a 1977 article published in Mexico, the first exhibition of *Printuras y Exculturas* contained some 25 objects:

[B]ird cages, mesh, grills, roses, mouse traps, reproductions of paintings: Delacroix guiding the people, torn carcasses, blue hands, the Mona Lisa

and Violeta Parra forever smiling, old shoes, mirrors in which to reflect and lose yourself, false portraits, tied loaves of bread, tied cages, and a red, white and blue striped necktie purchased in New York, knotted and hung upside down over a steel surface, the tie in which the DINA¹⁷ saw the Chilean flag like a noose, mirroring their own unconscious.¹⁸

While nothing that Núñez wrote, or included in the exhibit, explicitly denounced the government or described his torture, it was the image of the *Mona Lisa* that he placed inside of one of the birdcages and titled, “¿Qué hacemos con Leonardo?” [“What do we do with Leonardo?”] that brought the authorities to close the exhibition. For among other allusions to imprisonment, this symbolism was too accusatory, too direct, and too easily deciphered by the military.

The critical reception of the works in the exhibition viewed them more as concepts than as objects. Jacques Leenhardt described them as object-metaphors that invented their own language: “The cages started talking for themselves with the unique force of symbolism.”¹⁹ Raquel Olea regarded Núñez’s objects as his own system of signs to communicate an implicit, provocative message.²⁰ For his part, Núñez disingenuously claimed that *Printuras y Exculturas* was only inflammatory because of the political context, arguing that the police interpreted his arrangement of objects as accusative because they projected their own guilt onto his work, while creating the same exhibition in France or the United States would not have created the same effect.²¹ In such a response, Núñez obfuscates acknowledgement of his intentional confrontation with the political situation, but is wise enough to know that he aimed to incite this response.

Even though the birdcage with a picture of the *Mona Lisa* in it was central to *Printuras y Exculturas*, the act of documentation also became an unintended component. As a strategy of the treacherous war it waged, the government attempted to erase all traces of evidence implicating it in the murder, torture, and disappearances of thousands of citizens. Yet, closing the doors to the exhibition and destroying its objects failed to silence its testimonial effect. By censoring the exhibition, the state implicated itself, performatively drawing attention to its repressive policies and confirming that it had something to hide. Though the government tried to erase the exhibition, its archive survived, as the state also failed to eradicate newspaper articles written about the event and its subsequent closure, or destroy photographs of the exhibit and personal published accounts of those who witnessed it. The state’s performance of repression served both to foreground its totalitarian actions and align this event with other censored conceptual exhibitions, such as the 1968 exhibition “Experiencias” by Roberto Plate at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in Argentina.²² Furthermore, in the physical absence of the exhibition objects, it underscored the disappearance not only of Núñez’s art, but also of thousands of Chilean citizens: the concept of the missing artwork became the most powerful artistic message.

Concerned about the repercussions, Husson spoke with the Chilean officials to ensure that Núñez would not be arrested after the closure of his exhibition.²³ Nonetheless, the following afternoon, members of the Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA) [National Intelligence Directorate]²⁴ awaited Núñez at his home in order to detain him again, while Bianchi sought aid for his release. Núñez was held in three different prison camps and torture centers: Tres Alamos, Cuarto Alamos, and Puchuncaví. For interrogations, he was taken on trips to Villa Grimaldi, a major torture center.²⁵ Unlike many of the prisoners who were not officially recognized as being held in the centers and later made to disappear, the government did release information about where Núñez was being held and Bianchi was able to visit him.²⁶ On July 11, 1975, just short of four months after his arrest, Núñez was released from prison under the condition that he went into exile, since the state viewed him as a danger to national security. Taken directly to the airport from the prison, Núñez was sent to France, where remained, not return to Chile until 1987.

While in Paris, Núñez continued to make art, but struggled with his identity as a political prisoner forced into exile, describing himself as, “The Chilean painter, Guillermo Núñez, who-has-been-in-prison, who-has-been-tortured-and-now-lives-exiled-in-France-surrounded-by-solidarity.”²⁷ Returning to the abstract style of painting in which he worked before he created *Printuras y Exculturas*, Núñez painted figures, often using the colors red, black, gray and white. *El silencio no se inscribe*, 1975, [*Silence is Not Inscribed*] is an example of this style. It depicts a vaguely human form swathed in mummy-like bandages with shades of red seeping from the cracks. A violent spike-like line intersects a portion of the form that resembles a head. A large red triangle emerges from the bottom of the painting. Yet, he found that the European reception of these paintings was troublesome. He recounts:

In Munster, a group of German students in the upper grades of high school visit the exhibit in the Gallery L’Hippopotame. One girl says to another, “How horrific, it is a butchering, it’s hanging meat.” Moments later the gathered kids interrogate the artist, and the second or third person to intervene is the girl: ‘I would like you to explain these paintings to me.’ And the artist replies, ‘There are no more explanations, you yourself said it upon entering, they are butcherings.’²⁸

In Europe, he felt that the view of his work had become one-dimensional: a torture victim from Chile. Writing to a “compañera” in Chile, he explained how he was unable to escape such labels as “tortured,” “exiled” or “political prisoner.” “I am afraid that instead of seeing an interior silent pain,” he wrote, “people will only see a problem that is easy to label: torture in Chile.”²⁹ By creating bloody representations of the body he realized that this approach to his work was contributing to being reduced to the status of a political prisoner, explicitly an inhuman object, a piece of meat. In response, Núñez returned to the conceptual artistic strategies he used in *Printuras y Exculturas* in order to communicate detainment, torture,

and the subsequent trauma, while avoiding having his art relegated only to such experiences.

Drawing on the artistic strategies that had led to the recontextualization of objects in the *Printuras y Exculturas* series, he began printing serigraphs combined with texts and fragments of official documents. "This summer," he wrote, "I have started printing serigraphs over which my intervention makes guilty the blandness or innocence of the document from which it is born."³⁰ Núñez explains that, inspired by repetition in Gertrude Stein's poetry, he began with a concept—a picture, a phrase, or a fragment of a document—and then altered it.³¹ In this new series, titled *Libertad Condicional*, Núñez staged montages in which print, photograph, text and document interact with, deface, and interrupt one another. In each serigraph, the background is comprised of a certificate, written in French, with notary stamps and signatures that prove its legality and demonstrate it as an official government form. Negative images of a man's faceless torso are printed over the form, with words written in French inscribed over the man's chest. Thus, in Paris, Núñez's own photographic identification and the textual and visual evidence of his relationship with the state became the material of a highly conceptual new approach to his art.

In "Summa Arqueológica," a poem written during the creation of this series, Núñez addresses his destructive impulses and describes his goal: "To degrade / To torture the image/ To horrify it / To darken it of light."³² His process of visual destruction renders objects unrecognizable: a photograph no longer appears to be an object, and writing does nothing to illuminate its context. Approaching his work conceptually, Núñez harnessed violence, dividing images, fragmenting them, defacing them to produce an index of his pain. Text over form becomes aggressive and intrusive, and this violent visual context illuminates the violation of his identity in the harm achieved by the "official" photographs and government forms. Like *Printuras y Exculturas*, this series emphasized the importance of the artistic process in achieving the conceptual power of the final art object. Argentinean conceptual artist Juan Pablo Renzi recognizes the artist's emphasis on process when he declares, "The process should have more impact than the particular object produced."³³

Attending to the documentation of his torture and exile, Núñez brings the idea of the official discourse of the dictatorship into his work. He presents the complex relationship between individual identity and manifestations of the nation in the ways in which he deploys his documents as the conceptual agents of his imprisonment, status as a parolee, and later his exile. He destabilizes notions of the state as a totalizing authority by altering its documentation while simultaneously reconstructing and rendering his own identity as altered by the state. With visual signifiers scrawled over bodies, documents and identity compete for prominence. On one hand, the documents possess power in the context of the nation; yet, on the other hand, individual identity is shown to be spectral, transient, and tenuous. By defacing his own identity in his art, Núñez defied the state, exposing its tattered remains of power.

The repetition of the photograph, the document, and the stamp throughout *Libertad Condicional* may, at first, suggest Sigmund Freud's compulsion to repeat a traumatic event.³⁴ While this understanding of Núñez's work is important, Leenhardt has argued that *Libertad Condicional* demonstrates a movement that begins with repetition and moves toward a process of transformation. In other words, the repetition is not aimless; the repeated objects generate new meanings. In this way, Núñez's art assumes the function of testimony and furthermore, signals toward a formal accusation of the perpetrators. Instead of permitting the state to obliterate all other images in the work, Núñez's conceptual method exposes and denounces its authority and grasp. Writing about Chile in *Trauma and Healing Under State Terrorism*, Inger Agger and Søren Buus Jensen explain that, "the trauma of torture [cannot be] separated...from the political, ideological context in which the person had become traumatized, and they emphasize the importance of contextualizing state-enacted human rights violations as external to the victim and belonging to the responsibility of the perpetrator, the Chilean military government."³⁵ In addition to transforming victimhood into witnessing and testimony, Núñez indicted his perpetrators in *Libertad Condicional*. According to Macarena Gómez-Barris, he expressed "the experience of torture...relived daily, as the literature on trauma would suggest, but [also] produced an impossibility of reattachment to national projects," as his work became "a form of cultural memory that unearths what is missed by the project of national reconstruction and institutional processes of accountability."³⁶

Núñez returned to Chile in 1987, three years before the transition to democracy in 1990. The new democratic government set up a Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1991 with the intention of collecting testimonies about human rights violations, executions, and disappearances, which individuals like Núñez endured during the dictatorship. However, due to an amnesty law instated by the Pinochet government prior to ceding power, the commission only investigated and confirmed the testimonies of victims, without identifying the perpetrators.³⁷ The testimonies collected as a part of the report on torture in 2005 were all sealed for fifty years to ensure that all persons involved would no longer be living when the records would be released.³⁸

Once reestablished in his native Chile, Núñez continued to produce series influenced by conceptual art as a critical means to address human rights abuses from a global perspective. *La Quinta del Sordo* [*Deaf Man's Estate*], exhibited in 2003, involves six serigraphs incorporating text and appropriated images of Holocaust concentration camps, human casualties of war, and terrorists undergoing psychological torture in places like Abu Ghraib. The texts accompanying the images offer famous quotes by political figures, as well as Núñez's own poetic texts, urging viewers to fight political apathy and indifference to images of suffering that have become a "habitual mythology of the everyday." He discusses the difficulty of communicating silent screams, how to adequately represent pain, and how to explain fear to his viewers.³⁹ These collections

underline the tenuous relationship between the image and text, exposing how both forms of expression support and deconstruct one another. However conceptual, his work constantly reminds viewers of the failure of language to signal adequately the content of a traumatic past, and how his art strives to fill in this gap.

In 2010, the Chilean government, now headed by torture survivor and Socialist President Michelle Bachelet, created a national Museum of Memory and Human Rights, finally recognizing and educating the public in a comprehensive and official capacity about the country's past. The museum invited Núñez to re-create *Printuras y Exculturas* as their first major exhibition. Using surviving photographs, Núñez began to reassemble the once-destroyed objects. Because the birdcages were no longer produced in Chile, he had to have them manufactured specially for the exhibit. Symbolically, the recreation of *Printuras y Exculturas* demonstrates a recuperation of the past and an act of public remembrance that addresses his once censored artistic statement. Like the method of their creation, the process becomes as important as the product. The re-opening of the exhibit served as a public forum for others to reflect on their own private experience. While the reproduction of the objects that Núñez created no longer speak from the context of dictatorship, they adopt new meanings in a post-dictatorial environment where Chileans still negotiate incomplete reparation. Furthermore, internationally, as suspected terrorists are still held without trial in Guantanamo Bay, citizens are massacred in Aleppo, and artists and musicians are imprisoned for political messages in Russia and China, *Printuras y Exculturas* becomes a conceptual reminder exhibiting the continued relevance of the fight for human rights today. The message proclaimed by Núñez's objects no longer picture only Chile or the Southern Cone under dictatorship, but all sites where rights are violated on a daily basis.

Printuras y Exculturas evinces Núñez's refusal to remain silent about torture. His adaptation of conceptual strategies emphasizes how language and concepts point to process, which generates meaning, and how a work of art can outlive its repression. *Libertad Condicional* demands that his testimony of torture be contextualized, politicized, and collectivized. By introducing state documentation as a conceptual strategy in art, this series implicated the nation in its responsibility for the human rights abuses, destabilizing its discourses. Furthermore, both *Printuras y Exculturas* and *Libertad Condicional* insist on acknowledging the context and complex relationships between the individual, the collective body of victims, and the state apparatus. Object, document, photograph, and serigraph render violent portraits of a state that not only abused and failed to protect its citizens, but also to make amends for its violent history. In a struggle to establish meaningful recuperations of memory and battle an ongoing climate of historical amnesia, Núñez's work demands that Chile contemplate its history, and extend consideration to human rights violations for citizens throughout the world.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Georges Raillard, "Imágenes para hoy e, incluso mañana. El juego de la transformación de Guillermo Núñez," in *Retrato Hablado*, ed. Daniela Serani (Santiago, Editorial Antártica, 1993), 32.
- ² Guillermo Núñez, "Chilean Art and Art in the U.S.A.," in *motive* 26:6 (1966): 26-27.
- ³ The United States Government supported the Chilean military government and soldiers were instructed in tactics of torture and repression at the School of the Americas. These strategies were part of the U.S.-led campaign called Operation Condor, which supported "dirty wars" in other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and later Bolivia and Brazil.
- ⁴ National Corporation of Reparation and Reconciliation, *Report of the Qualification of Victims of Human Rights Violations and Political Violence* (Santiago: Andros Impresores, 1996): n.p. http://www.ddhh.gov.cl/informes_cnrr.html. Known informally as "The Rettig Report."
- ⁵ Also referred to as "The Valech Report."
- ⁶ Catalina May, "El regreso de Guillermo Núñez, Premio Nacional de Artes 2007: El artista que por hacer jaulas terminó enjaulado," *The Clinic* (July 26, 2009): <http://www.theclinic.cl/2009/07/26/el-regreso-de-guillermo-nunez-premio-nacional-de-artes-2007-el-artista-que-por-hacer-jaulas-termino-enjaulado>.
- ⁷ Guillermo Núñez, "Mirar por detrás de un espejo algo sucio. ¿Autorretrato?," in Daniela Serani, ed., *Retrato Hablado*, (Santiago: Editorial Antártica, 1993), 94.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Bianchi is a well-known Chilean literary critic.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 96.
- ¹² Bianchi, "Pintor sin caballete," in *Retrato Hablado*, 39.
- ¹³ Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Reinstalling the Echo Chamber of the Past," in Beverly Adams and Mari Carmen Ramírez, eds., *Encounters/displacements* (Austin: Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, College of Fine Arts, the University of Texas at Austin, 1992), 18-19.
- ¹⁴ "Pintura" combines the Spanish word for "painting," "pintura" with the English word for "prints." "Exculturas" plays with the Spanish word for writing, "escritura" and for sculpture, "escultura" changing it to "ex-cultura" or "ex-culture."
- ¹⁵ Bianchi, 39.
- ¹⁶ Lazlo Moussong, "Guillermo Núñez," In *Plural, Universidad Nacional Autónoma De México* 75 (1977): 46.
- ¹⁷ Dirección de Inteligencia Nacional (DINA), or National Intelligence Directorate, Chilean secret police from 1973-1977.
- ¹⁸ Moussong, 46.
- ¹⁹ Jacques Leenhardt, "Libertad Condicional Para Guillermo Núñez," in *Retrato Hablado*, 36.
- ²⁰ Raquel Olea, "Textura del diálogo en la obra de Guillermo Núñez," in *Retrato Hablado*, 63.
- ²¹ Núñez, 108.
- ²² Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007): 62.
- ²³ Moussong, 47.
- ²⁴ The Secret police force in Chile that investigated, detained, tortured and disappeared political opponents from 1973-1977.
- ²⁵ Bianchi, 40.
- ²⁶ Due to Núñez's fame as an artist and his support by the French ambassador, he was spared the fate of many other detained individuals.
- ²⁷ Núñez, "Seeing Behind the Mirror," 117.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 110.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.
- ³¹ Guillermo Núñez in discussion with the author, August, 2012.
- ³² Núñez, 120.
- ³³ Juan Pablo Renzi quoted in Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, 101.
- ³⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (New York: Norton, 1961): 12-13.
- ³⁵ Inger Agger and Søren Buus Jensen, *Trauma and Healing Under State Terrorism* (London: Zed Books, 1996), 69-70.
- ³⁶ Macarena Gómez-Barris, *Where Memory Dwells* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 101.
- ³⁷ The government decided to grant amnesty to all perpetrators of human rights violations enforced by the state. A few cases have made it through courts in special circumstances, but most cannot be brought to trial.
- ³⁸ According to Agger and Jensen, after collecting, confirming, and analyzing testimony, the commission identified five concrete steps necessary for Chile to undertake a process of social reparation: (1) The truth about human rights abuses must be made public knowledge. (2) Perpetrators must face trial for their crimes. (3) Survivors must receive compensation. (4) Reconciliation should take place between former supporters of the dictatorship and individuals that had been persecuted. (5) Human rights must become a part of public education. Notwithstanding, former supporters of the dictatorship continue to maintain political influence in Chilean legislative bodies, making it difficult to pass new legislation that would end the amnesty provided to former perpetrators and take them to trial. In addition, the Supreme Court is comprised of many members that were appointed by Pinochet during the dictatorship and their terms are for life. All former presidents, including Pinochet himself (up until his death in 2006) are also life-long members of the senate. Due, in part, to the amnesty laws, and also because of widespread denial and amnesia about the human rights violations, Chile has struggled to make substantial progress regarding processes of reparation and healing on the statutory level.
- ³⁹ Guillermo Núñez, *Mandala* (Concepción: Ediciones Universidad Bio-Bio, 2008): n.p.



Habacuc Guillermo Vargas. *Exposition #1* (detail dog), (2007).