

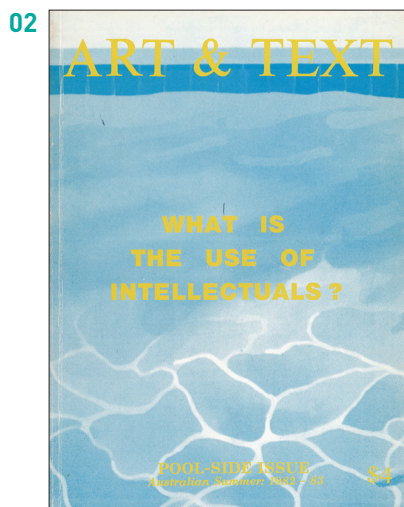
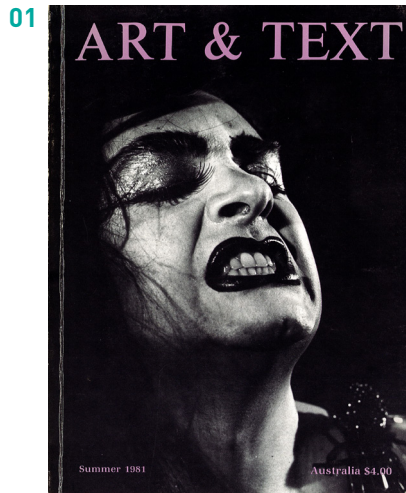
Third Text Online, 2022

**Southern Atlas:
Art Criticism in/out of Chile and
Australia during the Pinochet
Regime**

Verónica Tello and Sebastián Valenzuela-Valdivia

ATLAS #1

Art & Text's Collaborations with Chilean art workers

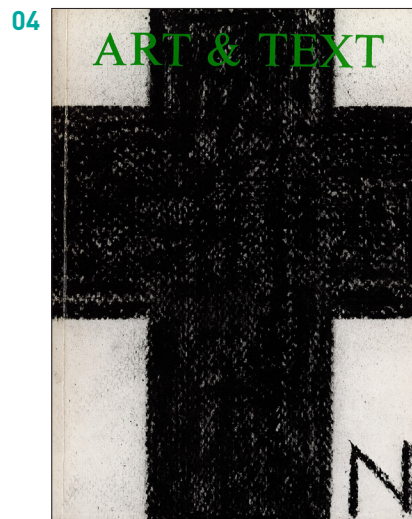
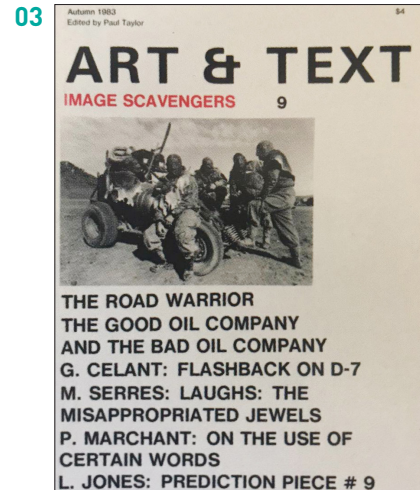


[01] Juan Dávila, 'Spider Woman in Australia' and 'Spider Woman in *Playing With Fire!*', issue 4, 1981

These two texts represent Dávila's first contribution to *Art & Text*, and his first publications in Australian art journals. 'Spider Woman in Australia' is a short essay, while 'Spider Woman in *Playing With Fire!*' is an accompanying comic strip. Dávila's essay and comic reference queer Argentinian novelist Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1976), wherein two cell mates, a transwoman (Molina) and a political prisoner (Valentin), form a bond by immersing themselves in the plots and images (actual and fictional) of films that Molina recounts for Valentin. Echoing Puig, Dávila experiments with the signifying capacities of the body and art. He critiques the disembodied nature of the Australian art world, and dressed in drag, inserts himself into Australia 'as a transgression'.

[02] Juan Dávila and Nelly Richard, 'What is the Use of Intellectuals? Pool-side/interview issue', issue 8, 1982-83

This interview focuses on Chile's participation in the 1982 Paris Biennial, for which Richard was Chilean Commissioner. It discusses the ways in which European audiences expected Richard to present art that invoked Chilean trauma post-1973 as a sign of 'Chilean' authenticity. However, Richard and the artists she selected worked in highly codified forms, appropriating Euro-American conceptual and avant-garde strategies and refusing to perform their 'identity' or Latin Americanness. In the interview, Richard recounts how French art critics argued that artworks she selected were passé and how this experience advanced her understanding of the criticality of remaining illegible and marginal on international platforms as opposed to buying into the inequity of the centre-periphery binary.



[03] Patricio Marchant, 'On the Use of Certain Words', trans. Ron Keightly, issue 9, 1983

In this essay Marchant analyses *Biblia/Pieta* (1982), a performance by Carlos Leppe, Juan Dávila and Nelly Richard at the Chilean-French Cultural Institute, Santiago. In the opening passages of his essay, he addresses the *Art & Text* audience, acknowledging the distance between the Santiago scene that he writes from, and where the performance took place, Melbourne and Sydney, where Dávila most frequently exhibited. Marchant analyses the incommensurability of these scenes, despite their connectedness via Dávila.

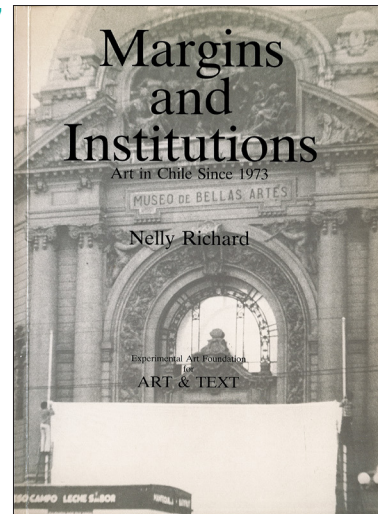
[04] Nelly Richard, 'Body without Soul: On the Mechanism of Quotation in the Pictorial Mechanism of Juan Dávila', trans. Ron Keightly, issue 12/13, 1983

Richard theorises Dávila's use of quotation across his paintings, comics, photographs, videos and performances, arguing (in classic postmodern style) that it dispels notions of authenticity, and brings to bear his migratory, queer, sexualised and gendered body. Richard later developed this essay for Dávila's first monograph, *Hysterical Tears* (1984), edited by Paul Taylor, re-titling it 'Love in Quotes: On the Paintings of Juan Davila' (translated by Dávila and Foss).

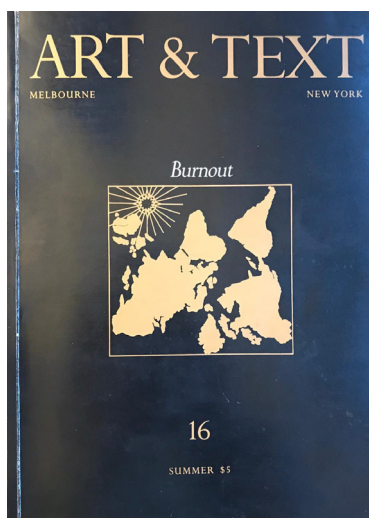
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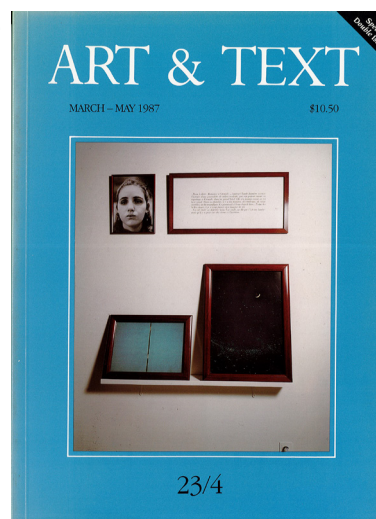
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[05] Juan Dávila, 'Pieta', special issue, 'Double Trouble', ZG in collaboration with Art & Text, issue 15, 1984

Dávila presents a two-page artist's spread focused on a key trope of his practice: the appropriation of Michelangelo's *Pieta* (1498–99). The spread, featuring Dávila as the Virgin Mary and one of his lovers as Jesus, is accompanied by the fragmented sentence: 'quotations and remake; mediation as a condition of the image. The procedure of remaking as a second-hand cultural form.'

[06] Nelly Richard, 'Notes Towards a (Critical) Re-Evaluation of the Critique of the Avant-garde', trans. Ron Keightly (with the assistance of Jose Borghino and Juan Dávila), issue 16, 1984

In this essay, Richard critiques the neoavant-garde's obsession with the loss of history, and a sense of future. She argues against its fetishisation of the avant-garde on a stylistic level, and instead dwells on its capacity to elicit rupture and expand the social imaginary. The essay does not refer to any specific artists; while written in the context of Santiago it is oddly illustrated with images by Joseph Kosuth, Bruce McLean and David Salle.

[07] Nelly Richard, *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile Since 1973*, issue 21, trans. Juan Dávila and Paul Foss, with a preface by Dávila and Foss and acknowledgement by Louise Daouth, 1986

This special issue was the culmination of a five-year collaboration between Dávila and *Art & Text* and was entirely devoted to the writings of Richard and her theorisation of the *escena de avanzada*. The issue accompanied an exhibition, *Art in Chile: Margins and Institutions: An Audiovisual Documentation* (1986), co-curated by Richard, Dávila and Louise Daouth, then Director of the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide. The show, largely forgotten in Australia and barely known about in Chile, toured to prominent art spaces, including the Experimental Art Foundation, as part of the 1986 Adelaide Biennial; Artspace (Sydney); Chameleon (Hobart); George Paton Gallery (Melbourne); the Institute of Modern Art (Brisbane); and Praxis (Perth).

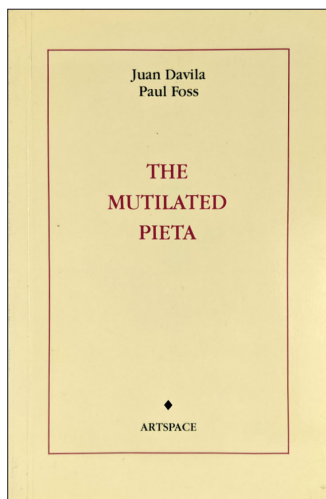
[08] Juan Dávila, 'Aboriginality: A Lugubrious Game?', issue 23/4, 1987

In this essay, Dávila critiques the appropriation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and art by artists of European descent, including Imants Tillers, Tim Johnson and James Simon. He argues that such artists, in spite of their rhetoric, only offer symbolic rather than material forms of reconciliation. In his words, 'painting is being used as a sublime venture to reconquer the white man's imaginary landscape, to endorse the "art of white aborigines". But nothing has changed, for it is still only looting from the dream it censors.'

ATLAS #2

The Art & Criticism Monograph Series's and collaborations with Chilean art workers

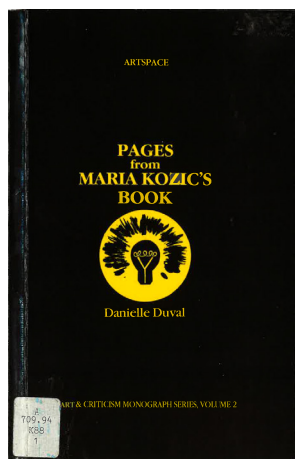
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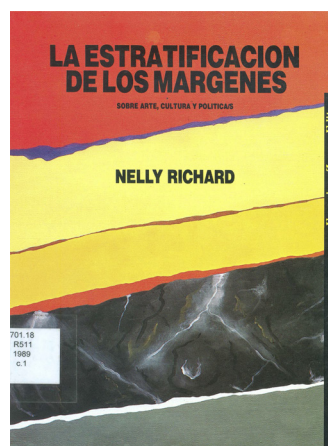
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[01] Paul Foss and Juan Dávila, *The Mutilated Pieta*, 1985

This was the first book published in the Art & Criticism Monograph Series. The starting point of Foss's essay is the critical reception of the 1973 censorship of posters of Michelangelo's *David* (1501–04) in a Melbourne bookstore, contrasted with the reception of Dávila's first Australian exhibition in 1977 at Tolarno Galleries (Melbourne) and his participation in the 1982 Biennale of Sydney. In his first exhibition, critics attacked Dávila for presenting mutilated bodies, and in the Biennale critics attacked him for using the religious reference of piety via Michelangelo. Foss teases out the multiple readings that the pieta artworks elicit and castigates critics for these reductionist readings of Dávila's work.

[02] Danielle Duval, *Pages from Maria Kozic's Book*, 1987

The second book in the Art & Criticism Monograph Series was authored by 'Danielle Duval', the pseudonym of Dávila and Foss, and focuses on the art of Maria Kozic, an artist who was intimately connected with the *Art & Text* crew and its exploration of appropriation. Duval analyses Kozic's art and its relation to printed matter, Warhol, the museum, the museumification of Pop Art, and the various significations her work manifests.

[03] Gustavo Buntinx, Carlos Pérez and Nelly Richard, *El Fulgor de lo obscuro*, 1988

According to our research, *El Fulgor de lo obscuro* was the first publication that the Art & Criticism Monograph Series produced in Chile. This book was designed by Francisco Zegers and contains three essays that focused on Dávila paintings. In 'Vi(r)ajes del historiador y crítico peruano', the Peruvian art historian and curator Gustavo Buntinx positions travel, mobility and itinerancy as transversal axes in Dávila's work, and analyses his fragmentation of migrant subjectivity. In 'De la pintada promiscuidad', the Chilean philosopher Carlos Pérez Villalobos reads Dávila's work through the pictorial concept of the veil, arguing that Dávila's paintings open or draw a veil that prompts the public to confront otherwise marginal social realities. In the last essay, 'Love or the infected quote', Richard focuses on Dávila's *Love* (1988), a painting that quotes Robert Indiana's work of the same name from 1976 but substitutes the word 'LOVE' for 'SIDA' (AIDS) within the body of the painting.

[04] Nelly Richard, *La estratificación de los márgenes*, 1989

Designed by Francisco Zegers, this book is a compilation of then-recent catalogue essays and lectures by Richard that had been presented or published abroad, thus putting these ideas into circulation within Chile for the first time. The book reflects Richard's longstanding concerns with the relationship between power and language, and her emerging focus on Latin American identity, feminist theory and sexual dissent, as well as her 'turn' toward cultural studies, all of which would deeply shape her next project, *Revista de Crítica Cultural* (1990–2007).

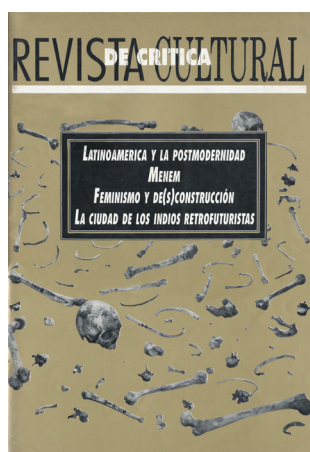
ATLAS #3

Art & Text and Art & Criticism Monograph Series's collaborations with *Revista de Crítica Cultural*

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[01–07] At the end of 1989, Richard began talks with Dávila to create and publish *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, distributing its first issue in May 1990, two months after the end of the Pinochet dictatorship and at the very beginning of the democratic period. The first seven issues of *Revista de Crítica Cultural* were co-published with *Art & Text* and the Art & Criticism Monograph Series; however, from issue eight onwards, only Dávila is mentioned in the front matter (as a member of the editorial board). He continued in this role until issues 29–30 of November 2004, three years before the final closure of the magazine. Building on Richard's *La estratificación de los márgenes*, *Revista de Crítica Cultural* was shaped by the then-emergent field of cultural studies, taking an interdisciplinary approach to culture, echoing magazines such as *Art & Text*, *ZG*, *CAL* and *La Separata*. *Revista de Crítica Cultural* produced criticism on art, theatre, music and film; theoretical texts spanning anthropology, sociology, history, literature, philosophy; and political proposals that engaged with feminist, decolonial, queer and gender theories as well as memory and human rights discourses.

The heterogeneity of *Revista de Crítica Cultural* is reflective of Richard's attempts to grapple with the emergence of democracy in Chile, which is why it created a structure for heterogeneous voices and participated in the production of a heterogeneous media, all the while maintaining an allegiance to the criticality of marginality that had fuelled the *escena de avanzada*. Further, a critical approach to democracy, and memories of the dictatorship, would not only reflect the thematic and ideological interests of the magazine but also inform its content. While the editorial board, and first issues of the magazine, included key figures

from the *escena de avanzada* such as Dávila, Carlos Leppe, Diamela Eltit, Eugenio Dittborn and Lotty Rosenfeld, *Revista de Crítica Cultural* would go on to include a broad range of writers and cultural producers, massifying and internationalising the dialogues and production of 'Chilean' art and cultural criticism.

Undoubtedly, *Revista de Crítica Cultural* was one of the most vital cultural spaces in Chile during the post-dictatorship era, contributing to the reinvention of a cultural scene through the diversification of topics addressed, the activation and the circulation of new authors and the translation of texts and interviews, as well as the enhancement of emergent voices from theory, criticism and philosophy in Santiago and beyond. These included contributions by Nestor Perlonguer, Nestor García Canclini, Beatriz Sarlo, Carlos Monsiváis, Ticio Escobar, Ernesto Laclau and Leonor Arfuch; as well as translations of Jean Louis Deotte, Guy Brett, Roland Barthes, Félix Guattari, Pierre Bourdieu, Andreas Huyssen, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler, Antonio Negri and Slavoj Žižek.

[01] Issue # 1

[02] Issue # 2

[03] Issue # 3

[04] Issue # 4

[05] Issue # 5

[06] Issue # 6

[07] Issue # 7

ATLAS #4

A Partial History of 1970s Art Criticism in Santiago de Chile, post-1973

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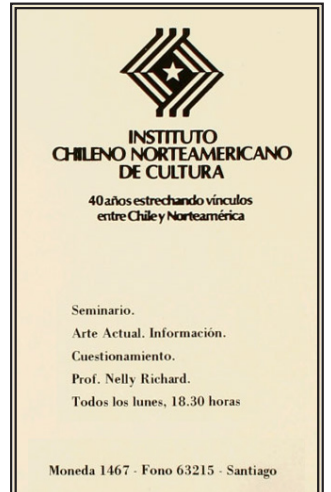
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[01] *Manuscritos*, 1975

Manuscritos was one of the most important magazines of local art criticism post-1973, published through the Department of Humanities at the University of Chile, edited by the renowned German essayist, poet and artist Ronald Kay, and illustrated by the artist Catalina Parra. Kay treated the magazine as a mechanism for publishing art in line with New York magazines such as *Avalanche* (1970–76), which, like *Manuscritos*, also used a square format for its design. This first, and only, volume of *Manuscritos* contained a satirical collage by Enrique Lihn, Alejandro Jodorowsky and Nicanor Parra, *El Quebrantabuesos* (1952); although originally exhibited in Santiago during the 1950s, its reappearance in *Manuscritos* shaped the art of Eugenio Dittborn and Carlos Altamirano during the late 1970s and early 1980s. *Manuscritos* also included some of the first poems and visual work by renowned artist Raúl Zurita, which self-reflexively dealt with the work of editing and the use of the blank page.

[02] *V.I.S.U.A.L.*, 1976-77

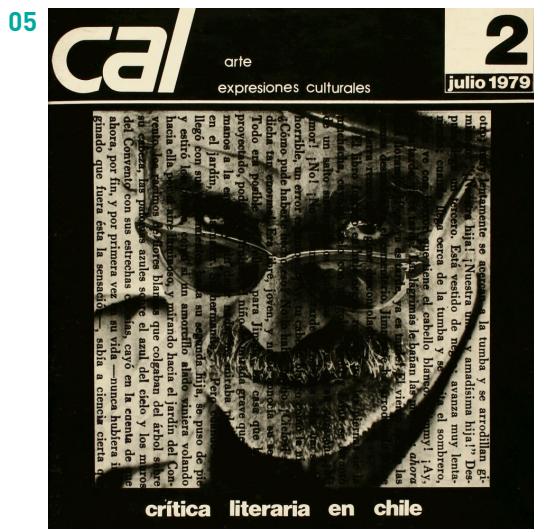
Following *Manuscritos*, the editorial collective V.I.S.U.A.L. (1976), led by Kay and including Dittborn and Parra, began publishing artisan catalogues and artist books. In 1976, V.I.S.U.A.L. published the first text by Nelly Richard, *Dos textos de Nelly Richard y Ronald Kay sobre 9 dibujos de Dittborn*, inserting her into the Santiago art scene. This text, with contributions by Kay, took a radical approach to art criticism. Both authors used montage/cutting/pasting (informed by Kay's engagement with the writings of Walter Benjamin and Richard's engagement with deconstructivism) to disrupt Dittborn's montage-based works, which appeared alongside the text. Richard argued that if the history of art criticism had been characterised by little more than subservient descriptions of art, its future entailed recognising that criticism was itself a form of cultural production determined by its own internal logics and needs. She argued for creating a space for criticism that sat side-by-side with art making: a parallel rather than a parasitical practice. In 1977, V.I.S.U.A.L. began managing Galería Época, moving its editorial project there.

[03] Galería Cromo, 1977

In 1977, the same year that V.I.S.U.A.L. moved to Galería Época, Richard became director of Galería Cromo, where she developed an editorial project to accompany the shows she curated. Carlos Leppe, a prominent artist and long-term collaborator of Richard and Dávila, designed the publications. One of the first catalogues published by Richard at Galería Cromo was *Cinco expresiones de la figuración en Chile: 1 Dávila, 2 Lira, 3 Yrarrazabal, 4 Bru, 5 Smythe* (1977), to accompany the exhibition of the same name. This text contains handwritten transcriptions of correspondence between Juan Dávila (Melbourne) and Richard (Santiago).

[04] Instituto chileno norteamericano de cultura, 1979

Between April and June 1979, Richard delivered the 'Seminario Arte Actual Información Cuestionamiento' at the Instituto chileno norteamericano de cultura. This seminar theorised the production of contemporary art in Santiago (despite it being continuously referred to by various authors as a national art). In these seminars Richard deploys the term *escena* ('scene') for the first time to frame local contemporary art, and contextualises the transition from modernism and the avant-garde to the 'neo-avantgarde' in Santiago (thus, the seminars precede her later theorisation of the *escena de avanzada*). Due to the absence of democratic academic spaces, international institutes (such as the Instituto chileno norteamericano de cultura) played a significant role in hosting otherwise unsupported discourse. Richard's seminars, each attended by over a hundred students from different institutions as well as arts workers from different sectors and professions, acted as an alternative to the artistic education available at the time. These seminars were widely received as instituting an otherwise unavailable theoretically robust education in the arts.



[05] CAL, 1979, issue 2

In June 1979, Richard began her collaboration with *CAL*, a recently launched magazine that pitched itself as one of the first local 'alternative' magazines on culture and the arts. In issue 2, published in July 1979, Richard presents the essay 'El arte en Chile: una historia que se recita, otra que se construye, en el aborda principalmente el "nuevo arte chileno"'. Building on her aforementioned seminars, she argues that it is possible to insert Chilean art into an international art history, especially that of the avant-garde and its politics of rupture, by considering the historical-political contexts of art production rather than just stylistic factors. Significantly, by simultaneously writing through metaphors and engaging with semiotics, Richard is able to discuss the context of writing and making under the dictatorship without mentioning it.

[06] CAL, 1979, issue 3

This issue was edited by Richard and entitled 'La Critica de Arte' ('Art Criticism'), focusing on the Chilean context. It presents contributions from a range of artists, theorists, critics and historians, including Richard, Enrique Solanich, Gaspar Galaz, Sonia Quintana, Irene Bronfman, Francisco Brugnoli, Alias Adasme, Carlos Leppe, Victor Carvacho and Thomas Daskam, who reflect on the politics of authoritarianism, officialdom and marginality that pervades Chilean life and art production (ideas which would become crystallised in Richard's later *Margins and Institutions*).

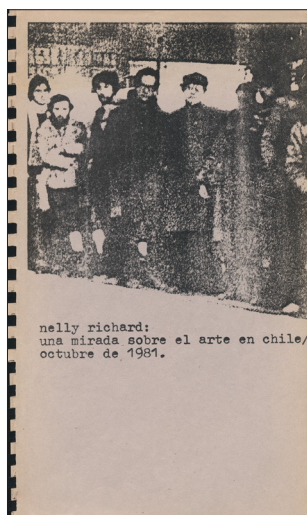
[07-08] CAL, 1979, issue 4

Issue 4 (1979) was the last issue of the magazine and was edited by Richard. She gives several pages to Dávila to develop a visual essay entitled 'The nude in contemporary art', which initiates a dialogue with the concept of the nude and the presence of the body in art, referencing artwork by Marcel Duchamp, Francis Picabia, Man Ray, Andy Warhol, Hans Bellmer, Richard Linder and Valerio Adami, along with writings by Susan Sontag, Severo Sarduy and Jean-François Lyotard. Art critic Adriana Valdés contributed a text on the philosophical work of Walter Benjamin and a translation of an excerpt from Susan Sontag's *On Photography* (1978). Reflecting on *CAL*'s discourse, in Letters to the Editor, artist Carmen Aldunate reflects on the ways in which the magazine tends to give many of its pages to foreign influences from Europe and the US, through its translations as well as by the theoretical frameworks it deploys, implying that Richard's editorial decisions in turn negate the value of local, Chilean, discourse. Yet, as the letter notes, in issue 3 of *CAL* (focussed on Art Criticism), Richard repeatedly frames Chilean contemporary art discourse as shaped by the 'official' and the 'marginal' (the author notes that Richard uses the term 'made official' eight times and across thirteen lines). The author wonders if the excessive theorisation and use of complex terms by *CAL* creates a distance between the foreign and the local, reinscribing a relation between official and marginal art discourses, thus undoing its own critique of these very terms.

ATLAS #5

Art Criticism in Santiago de Chile post-1973: the 1980s

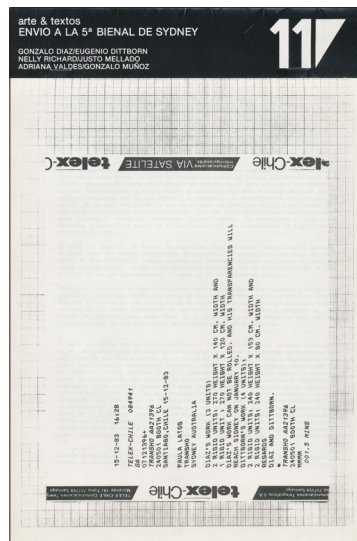
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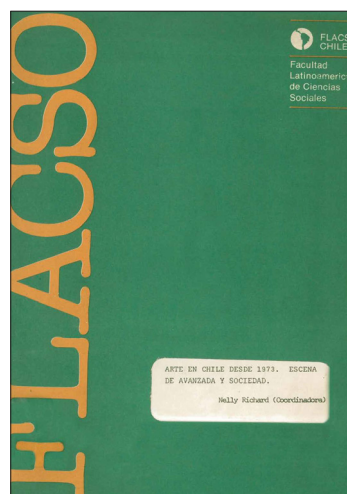
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[01] Nelly Richard, *Una mirada sobre el arte en Chile*, 1981

This (xeroxed, DIY) book can be thought of as the first draft of *Margins and Institutions* as it includes many of the same artists and a similar hypothesis. One of the main differences between the two texts is the former's reflections and critical analysis of then contemporary works, such as those by artist Marcela Serrano, which were later excluded in *Margins and Institutions*, and which by implication were subsequently treated as minor works compared to those by Diamela Eltit and Raúl Zurita, whose practice remained central to Richard's criticism between 1981 and 1986 and beyond.

[02] *La Separata*, 1981-83

Between 1981 and 1983, Richard collaborated with Fernando Balcells, a sociologist and member of the art collective CADA, and the artist Carlos Altamirano, to create the broadsheet *La Separata*. Published under the eaves of Galería Sur, the broadsheet, which ran for four issues, included texts and reviews of exhibitions, publications and other artistic-cultural events in Santiago.

[03] *Arte & Textos*, 1983

In May 1983, Galería Sur initiated the publishing project, *Arte & Textos*. There were eleven issues overall, containing works by Sammy Benmayor, Gonzalo Diaz, Eugenio Dittborn, Arturo Duclos, and texts by Richard, Adriana Valdés, Pablo Oyarzún and Justo Pastor Mellado. Its final issue, published in December 1983, focused on Chile's contribution to the 1984 Biennale of Sydney, for which Richard was the commissioner, presenting works by Diaz and Dittborn, alongside Juan Dávila, at the invitation of the biennale's artistic director, Leon Paroissien. For the 11th issue of *Arte & Textos*, Richard wrote the essay

'Culturas latinoamericanas: ¿Culturas de la repetición o culturas de la diferencia?' ('Latin American Cultures: Mimicry or Difference?'). The essay, like Richard's interview with Dávila in *Art & Text* (issue 12/13), reflects on Chile's participation in the 1982 Paris Biennale, arguing: 'For those of us from Latin American countries, simply showing up in the international arena is challenging; it involves the historical struggle for our own legitimacy within a framework that tends to subordinate any sort of ancillary [marginal or peripheral] activity to the [artistic] forms promoted as paradigms by the international hegemony of the center.' Richard would extend and reprint this essay as part of her contribution to the 1984 Biennale of Sydney catalogue, thus offering a critical insight into the politics of the periphery within the Australian context.

[04] "Arte en Chile desde 1973: Escena de avanzada y sociedad", 1986

A few months after the publication of *Margins and Institutions* in Australia, FLACSO, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences) invited Richard to coordinate the seminar 'Art in Chile after 1973'. The seminar was divided into three sections, with the first comprising a paper presented by Richard, 'The Advanced Scene and Society', summarising the hypothesis she developed in *Margins and Institutions*. The second part entailed presentations by renowned writers, critics and philosophers such as Norbert Lechner, Rodrigo Cánovas, Bernardo Subercaseaux, Diamela Eltit, Pablo Oyarzún, Gonzalo Muñoz, José Joaquín Brunner, Francisco Brugnoli and Adriana Valdés. The third part offered responses to the seminar by Martín Hopenhayn and Eugenio Dittborn. With this seminar, FLACSO, one of the most renowned critical spaces in Chile, legitimated Richard's hypothesis within the academy.