

The Blanton Winter 2005

Marking Time, 1995-2005 Contemporary Art from Chile

Exhibition Guide
January 28 - May 22, 2005





Last summer, Cecilia Brunson, the Blanton's assistant curator for Latin American art, went home to her native Chile and came back with eleven monumental, striking works of art. Although Brunson had been visiting artists' studios since the late 1990s, this trip stood out. She began to consider how the Blanton should respond to the phenomenon of contemporary Chilean art. Brunson states, "the Blanton saw a window of opportunity in acquiring these pieces of art. We wanted to be the first to present the works of artists who are making challenging new art in this dynamic Latin American country. This exhibition, *Marking Time, 1995-2005: Contemporary Art from Chile*, enhances our role as a leading institution for contemporary Latin American art in the United States."

In 1989, the Augusto Pinochet military dictatorship fell. These works were some of the first art to be produced in a democratic Chile. Although one might expect the art to be more overtly political, it seems to be responding to larger cultural issues with a personal language. In the words of Cristián Silva, one of the most influential artists and critics in Chile, many of these works examine the intersection of the political and the existential as "an attempt to portray the ambiguous, confusing, intimate and emotional side of the class struggle." For Brunson, these works explore the trauma of disappearance and disillusionment from a personal and introspective angle.

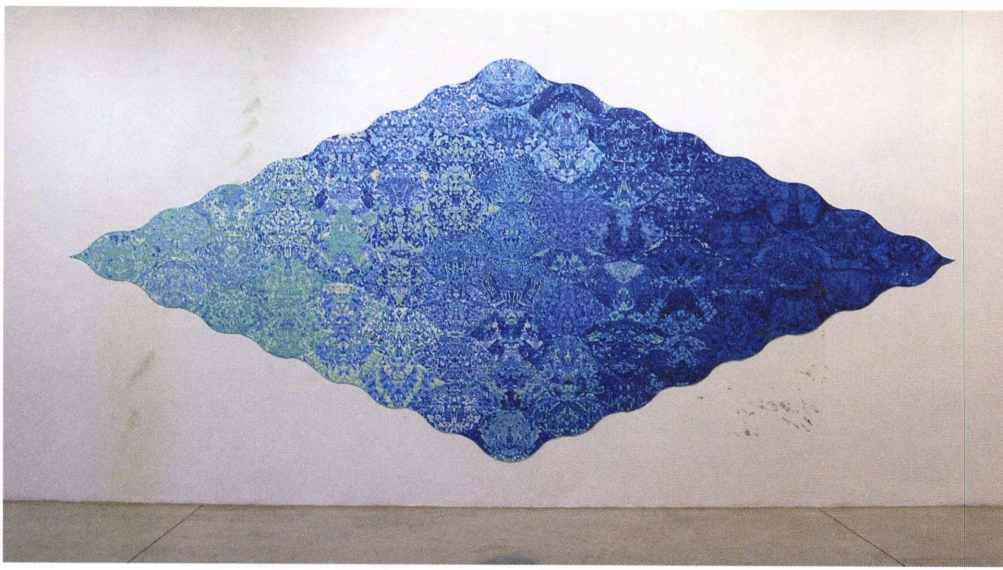
The artists in the exhibition do not speak with a single voice and yet all the works address the passage of time and the poetic endurance of daily life. Most of the artists in the show use inexpensive materials such as Plasticine, clay, thread, paste and acrylic panels. These materials are subjected to a series of complex actions, such as fixing Plasticine to the wall in obsessive matrix-like patterns, hand-making clay tablets, or letting the sun bleach areas of patterned fabric. In addition, the works embrace difficult questions, such as disappearance, extinction, and bordering the unknown, in an intentionally poetic and elusive way. In using ephemeral materials and speaking in the language of loss, distance, and disappearance, the message is one of aesthetic survival in an uncertain world.

This exhibition marks the first time these works have been shown in the U.S. and affirms the Blanton's deep commitment to collecting Latin American art and sharing it with new audiences. "Through this acquisition and exhibition," Brunson reiterates, "the Blanton reinforces its promise to preserve and study important moments in Latin American art history."



Alvaro Oyarzún
Born 1960, Santiago, Chile
(Above and detail on left)
El autodidacta [The Self-Taught], 1998
Graphite, oil on canvas, and photographs
Gift of the artist

Since 1987, Alvaro Oyarzún's work has consisted of accumulated drawings, pictures, paintings and photographs that stretch across the gallery wall. In this work Oyarzún explores traditional art historical topics such as gesture, color, narration, portraiture, drawing and photography. This work shows us the universe of the artist as a solitary and sometimes arbitrary place, as he jumps from representation to representation (from botanical illustrations to comic-like drawings). The work as a whole presents a confusing and overwhelming commentary on the difficulties of being an artist today.



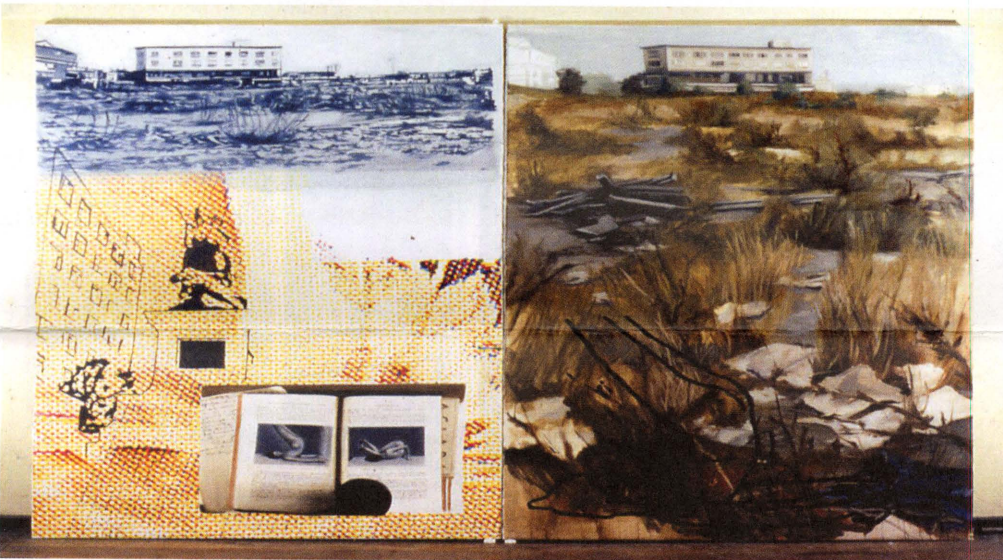
Magdalena Atria
 Born 1966, Santiago, Chile
Distancia distante [Distant Distance], 2004
 Plasticine
 Gift of the artist

Magdalena Atria has been working with Plasticine as an extension of her work in painting. The modeling clay allows her to work directly with color and material in a more physical and direct way. To create these kaleidoscopic symmetrical designs, Atria applies the modeling clay directly onto the wall, a process that can take weeks. Despite its apparently mathematical appearance, the work is charged with psychological and emotional obsession. The title, *Distant Distance*, alludes to a longing to reach something or someone.



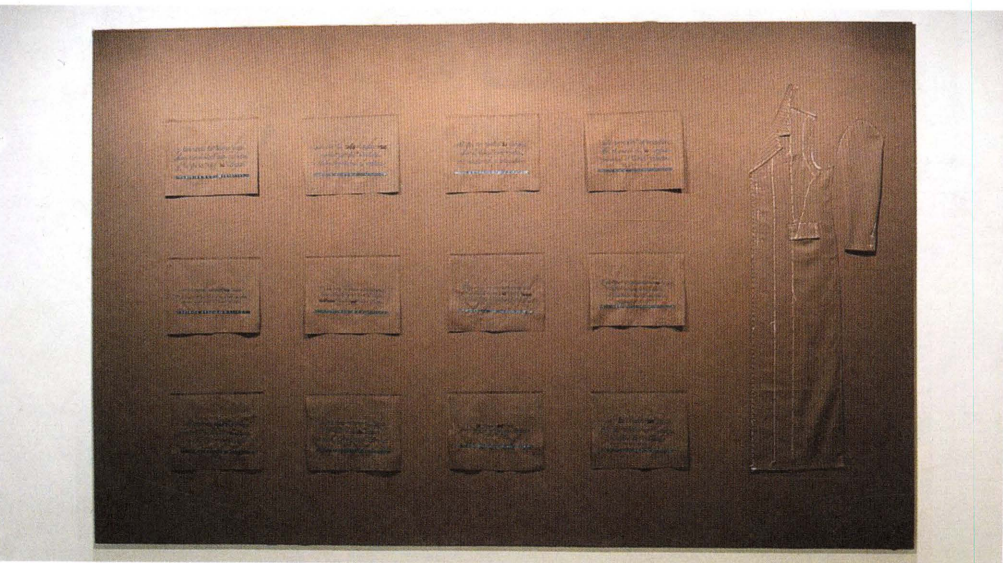
Isabel Del Río
 Born 1956, Santiago, Chile
2244 Módulos [2244 Modules], 1997
 Plaster
 Gift of the artist

In *2244 Modules*, Del Río physically registers the passage of time. Over a period of six months, the artist set herself the task of making several one-inch thick plaster tablets every day. The resulting 2244 tablets were each stamped with the date of production. The number of tablets completed each day varied according to the artist's "free" time. Although *2244 Modules* may seem like a precise Minimalist sculpture, the handmade quality of the tablets and the obsessive nature of the project suggest a more existential and personal concern.



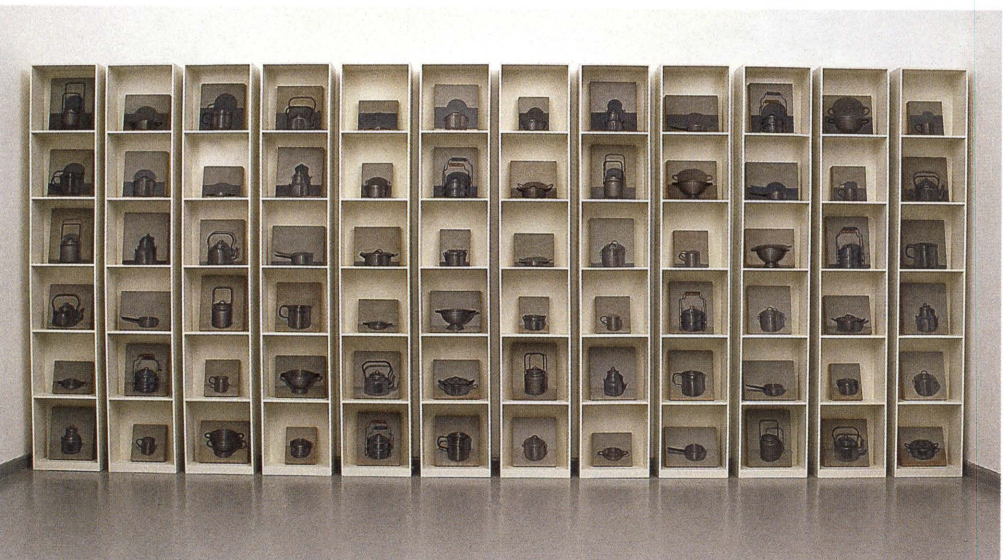
Voluspa Jarpa
 Born 1971, Santiago, Chile
De la serie el Jardín de las Delicias
 [From the series of *The Garden of Earthly Delights*], 1995
 Oil on canvas
 Gift of the artist

Voluspa Jarpa works with an unconventional subject for art: the vacant lot. The vacant lot represents emptiness, absence and abandonment. In the distance we see a white concrete house, a reference to Chile's construction boom of 1996–97 that promised the creation of a new prosperous and coherent city. This image in the painted book in the foreground is taken from a medical textbook illustration of women suffering attacks of hysteria. For Jarpa, this representation of hysteria functions as a metaphor for the vacant lot.



Nury Gonzalez
 Born 1960, Santiago, Chile
Recado a Gabriela Mistral
 [Message to Gabriela Mistral], 1995
 Embroidered cashmere
 Gift of the artist

Nury Gonzalez's work is strongly tied to personal history and to the practices of embroidery, weaving, sewing, mending and patching. The title of the piece refers to the Chilean Nobel Prize winner Gabriela Mistral, whose essays, titled "messages," discussed contemporary issues with courage and compassion. In *Message to Gabriela Mistral*, Nury Gonzalez pays homage to the poet by dedicating these texts back to her. The sewn outline of a dress alludes to the silhouette of the poet.



Josefina Guilisasti
 Born 1963, Santiago, Chile
La vigilia [The Vigil], 1995
 Oil on canvas
 Gift of the artist
 (Detail featured on newsletter cover)

A large part of Josefina Guilisasti's work relates to the tradition of still-life painting. *The Vigil* is comprised of seventy-two precisely rendered oil paintings of life-size household aluminum pots. These humble objects are removed from their daily household context and painted from twelve different angles. This installation creates a game of simulation and variation through repetition and variation. What we see is a fictitious space; there is no real object, but a series of painted representations of an object under systematic observation.

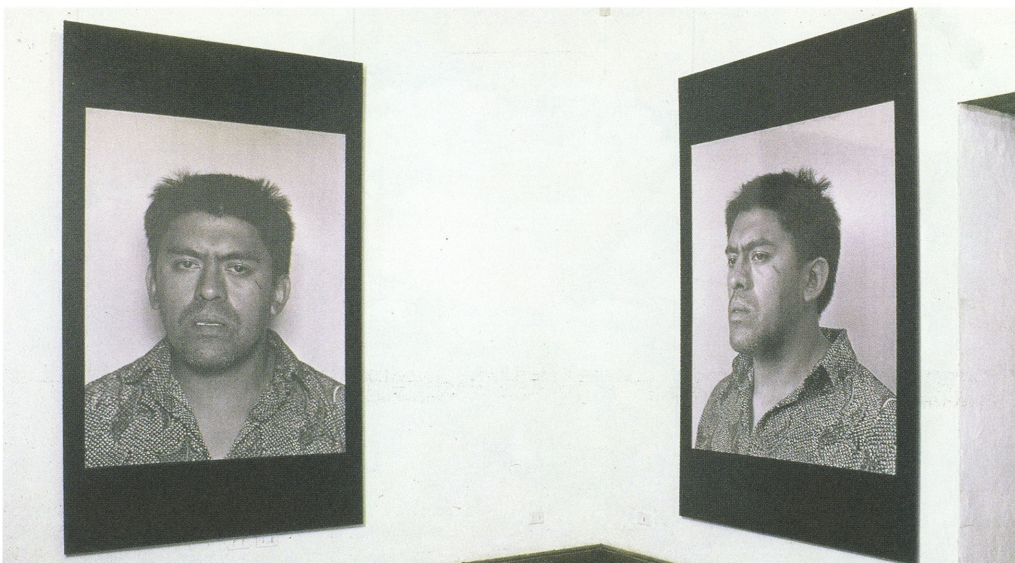
Ignacio Gumucio
 Born 1971, Viña del Mar, Chile
 (Detail) *Sacos de dormir* [*Sleeping Bags*], 2002
 Oil paint and enamel on two acrylic panels
 Gift of the artist; produced with funds provided by Fondart,
 Chile

Leonardo da Vinci described painting as a glass wall between the viewer and the model. Taking this notion literally, Gumucio places his “models” – three sleeping bags – behind a transparent acrylic pane, and renders them in paint. Despite the everyday nature of the sleeping bags, the formal arrangement recalls the frieze on the Parthenon built in the 5th century BC on the Acropolis in Athens, Greece. His work explores the emptiness of illusion and reality, reflected in the vacant, body-less sleeping bags.



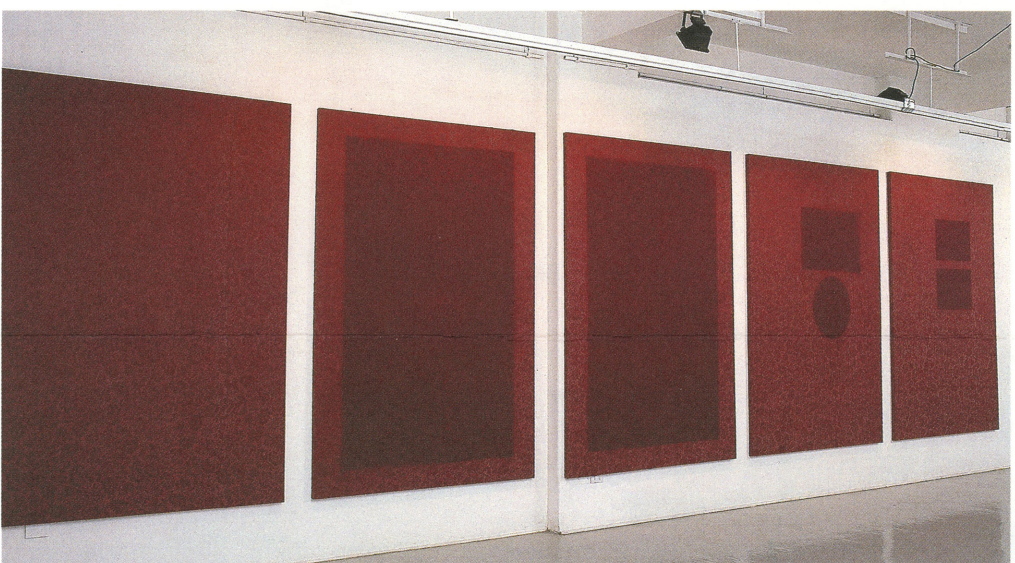
Bernardo Oyarzún
 Born 1963, Llanquihue, Chile
 (Detail) *Bajo sospecha* [*Under Suspicion*], 1998
 Photograph
 Gift of the artist
 (Featured on Guide cover)

Under Suspicion is an autobiographical work that refers to a real event: the wrongful arrest of the artist. The photographs are self-portraits, while the drawings are the police renderings of the real criminal. The text is the official description of the suspect: “He has black skin, like an atacameño [a person from the Atacama desert]; straight hair, strong fat lips above a wide chin, a narrow forehead, as if without a brain.” *Under Suspicion* reveals some of the racial prejudices present in Chile, a country proud of its European heritage.



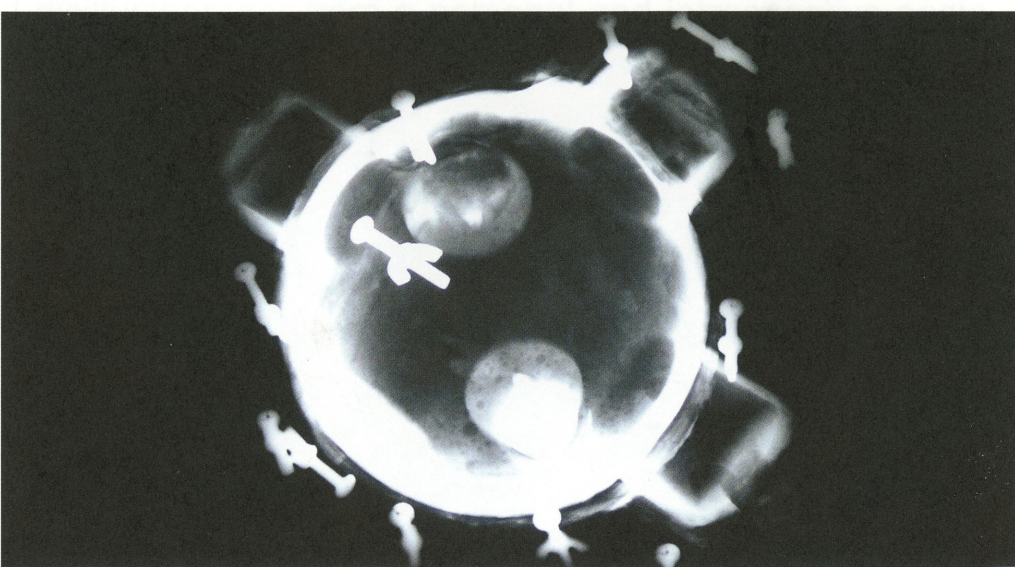
Josefina Fontecilla
 Born 1962, Santiago, Chile
Delirios [*Delirium*], 1998
 Brocade fabric
 Gift of the artist

Josefina Fontecilla creates objects that invoke a sense of loss and nostalgia. In *Delirium*, the artist presents the brocade wall fabrics typical of 19th century upper-class Chilean houses. These hangings were removed from their original context, her own family house. The ghost-like forms on the panels are a trace of the objects (pictures, mirrors) that once hung on them. The negative forms caused by the bleaching effects of the sun on the fabric create a physical memory of an absent object in a former domestic space.



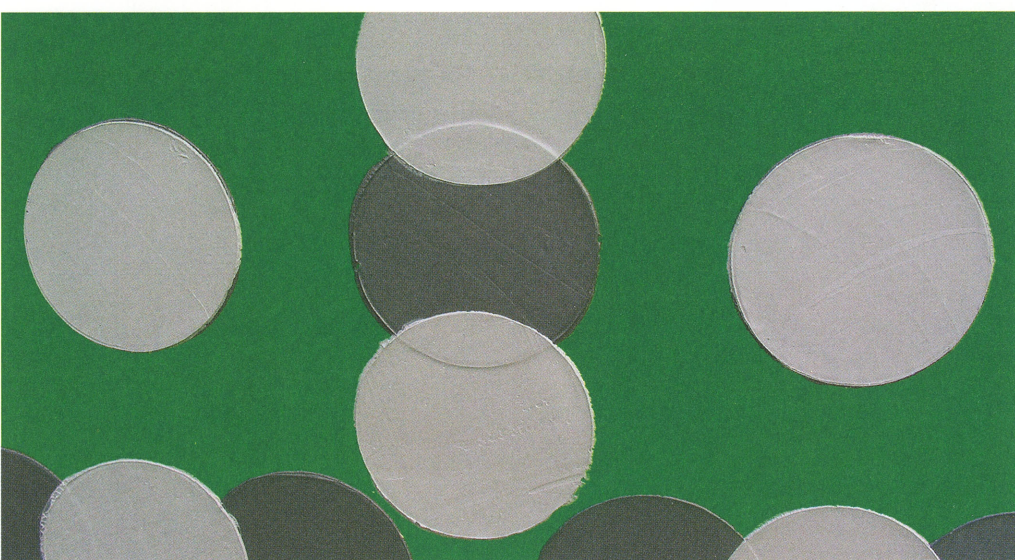
Pablo Rivera
 Born 1961, Santiago, Chile
 (Detail) *Purgatorio: La belleza va por dentro*
 [*Purgatory: Beauty Comes From Within*], 1995
 X-rays in lightboxes
 Gift of the artist

Purgatory: Beauty Comes From Within is a series of x-rays of five plaster sculptures, originally intended for a hospital waiting room. This work is part of a larger project called “Purgatory” in which these five plaster sculptures are recycled as the artist resizes them, recreates them in different materials (wicker, glass, copper), and adjusts their scale to new locations and arrangements. As in purgatory, the objects seem to be waiting for a use, identity, or place in the world.



Malu Stewart
 Born 1962, Santiago, Chile
 (Detail) *Mapa I* [*Map I*], 2000
 Paste and acrylic on canvas
 Gift of the artist

Map I has served as the point of departure for several of Stewart’s projects. The artist was interested in creating a mark-making technique that would avoid abstract gestural brushstrokes on the surface. Her materials (paste, molding medium, rubber and industrial materials) do not belong to the fine arts, but rather refer to pop culture and to the materials of urban poverty. For this exhibition, she decided to paint the entire wall in order to reference the billboard quality in her work.





The
Blanton

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