

Residue and Resource: Landscape as Value in Chilean Contemporary Art

Since September 2009 the Chilean Central Bank has been issuing newly designed banknotes, which are gradually replacing those which have been in circulation since the early 1980s. With a highly conventional design, the obverse of the various notes each shows a different historical personage next to the national flower, the copihue, and an indigenous sun symbol; depicted on the reverse are spectacular landscapes from different national parks. As an artifact, the banknote merges the economic and symbolic capital of the nation, that is, its financial and cultural cycles of value creation. The money serves as an unobtrusive yet effective demonstration and circulation of national identity. That precisely Chile—a paragon of neo-liberalism whose unrestrained expansionary drive is neither compatible with a sustainable use of natural resources [1] nor with the protection of the rights and living environments of indigenous populations [2]—demonstratively identifies itself with images of such landscapes and cultures is only an apparent paradox. In fact, this kind of symbolic representation of landscape has significantly contributed to the processes which have helped naturalize the social and political conditions in Chile and which are discussed in this essay.

In his “Theses on Landscape” W. J. T. Mitchell writes: “Landscape is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural, the self and the other. As such, it is like money: good for nothing in itself, but expressive of a potentially limitless reserve of value.” [3] Like money, landscape is a medium which represents value(s) and through which values circulate. We do not encounter nature through landscape but instead “a form of nature manifested and represented through the medium of aesthetics.” [4] Recent theories [5] formulate a notion of landscape, which is not understood as static and pre-existing, but as a continuing process, a production of space and meaning. The aims of such approaches is not to ask what landscape might be but what it *does*, [6] and also to explore “*how* landscape is synthesized precisely in and through medial... forms of representation and what social effects... this has.” [7] Landscape develops and is assigned meaning in the process of being used—of being built upon, settled or viewed, and by what is physically or symbolically imposed upon it. In turn, landscape determines its users and uses. Through the design of space and the regulation of the access to and visibility of space, different social formations articulate themselves, such as the sense of belonging to a family, nation, social class or gender, and their relationships to one another. An individual or socially formed relationship to the space of a landscape is aesthetically determined and serves as an imaginary fixed point of identity. “With the help of landscapes, an expanding global society consolidates its value systems and establishes systems and categories of knowledge, which are declared as authoritative. The evocative moods of landscape have become... the expressive physiognomy of an international advertising programme.” [8]

The Synthetic Nation

The example of Chile provides an excellent illustration of the contingencies sketched above. Already Carl Alexander Simon’s appropriation of southern Chile through the medium of landscape painting, [9] which represented a new dimensioning of the symbolic space of indigenous cultures according to the standards of a generic European tradition of seeing and representing, was in keeping with this logic of naturalization. It sealed the seizure of land as a political fact. Ronald Kay describes this form of symbolic occupation very aptly in respect to photography, a new visual technology which also reached the Americas in the 19th century: “These photographs are optical signs of discovered geographical points, evidence of their real (and not fantastical) existence, they are a documentation of their conquest. At the same time they connote the inventory of what is to be dominated, occupied, exploited. In a way, they are *targets*. Graphically, to take photos in the New World is to take possession.” [10]

Also more recently, images of landscape have served as metaphors for a national self-image, whose suggestive power is aimed at internal and external audiences. For example,

[1] See Thomas Miller Klubock, “Labor, Land, and Environmental Change in the Forestry Sector in Chile, 1973-1998,” in *Victims of the Chilean Miracle: Workers and Neoliberalism in the Pinochet Era, 1973-2002*, ed. Peter Winn (Durham, NC, 2004), 337-387; as well as the evaluation of official environmental statistics from 2010: <http://www.mineraiy-cluster.cl/nclipp/news/viewnews.php?cli=1&tid=110058&tidcl=11333>. See also José Aylwin, “The TPPA and Indigenous Peoples: Lessons from Latin America,” in *No Ordinary Deal: Unmasking the Trans-Pacific Partnership Free Trade Agreement*, ed. Jane Kelsey (Wellington, 2010), 70-81.

[2] See Pedro Marimán Quemenaño, “Chile,” in *The Indigenous World 2011*, ed. Kathrin Wessendorf (Copenhagen, 2011), 211-219; and Daniel Carter, “Chile’s Other History: Allende, Pinochet, and Redemocratisation in Mapuche Perspective,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 10, no. 1 (2010), 59-75; and Patricia Richards, “Of Indians and Terrorists. How the State and Local Elites Construct the Mapuche in Neoliberal Multicultural Chile,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 42 (2010), 59-90.

[3] W. J. T. Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, ed. W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago and London, 2002), 5.

[4] Irene Nierhaus, Josch Hoenes, and Annette Urban, “Landschaft – Landschaftlichkeit. Transformationen

the “transition of Chile to democracy” produced a unique landscape-based metaphor on the occasion of the Expo 92 in Seville—only two years after the official end of the military dictatorship of General Pinochet. At the centre of the Chilean pavilion, a highly symbolic structure of wood and copper, [11] stood the so-called “Iceberg,” a sculpture made out of ice floes, which were thousands of years old. These were shipped to Spain from the Antarctic regions of Chile especially for the exhibition and were displayed in a cooled space. This technical and logistical feat was conceived as a testimony to Chile’s progressiveness and openness to the world. [12] However, for Tomás Moulian it became a metaphor of political cleansing: “The iceberg represented the debut in society of the New Chile—cleaned, sanitized, purified by the long passage through the sea.... The iceberg was a successful sign, architect of transparency and of cleanliness, where the damaged had transfigured itself.” [13] The iceberg metaphor is the assertion that radical political change and economic continuity are not only simultaneously possible but constitute an unquestionable logic. Currently the Fundación Imagen de Chile initiated by ex-president Michelle Bachelet is pursuing the goal of increasing global awareness of the country and attracting foreign investors through a new “branding” of Chile. [14] Interestingly the foundation’s visual strategy is based on the tried and tested association between sublime landscapes and national achievements, thereby occasioning corresponding omissions. As a British consultant to the foundation stated in 2009, on an international level Chile’s positive image was severely challenged by the controversial HidroAysén dam project with its ecologically fatal long-term impact and the veritable elimination of the indigenous population from the political arena. [15]

The colonizers’ and settlers’ image of landscape is completely opposite to the non-visual traditions of indigenous notions of landscape. José Ancan describes the difficulties involved in current attempts to reconstruct orally handed down cartographies of the Mapuches’ trade and pilgrimage routes or even traditional concepts of landscape, which are based on an undivided and intact Andean environment, whereby the physical correspondent has now already disappeared in reality. [16] The break in the chain of handed down traditions means the end of the landscape as a living environment and identificatory imagination. At the same time, Fabien Le Bonniec has observed that in their own representations Mapuche interest groups are increasingly drawing on the same images of spectacular Andean landscapes found in Chilean state image campaigns. [17] In a conscious strategic shift the real and symbolic appropriation of indigenous territories by the Chilean state—as well as the normalization of the Mapuche in keeping with neo-liberal multiculturalism [18]—is countered by the Mapuche through a repossession of their own images.

Mobilization and Magic

“What later will be called ‘liberalism’ has... initially constituted itself as naturalism; and the so-called freedoms of the market consist primarily of the obligation to free its subjects in combination with the obligation to subjugate governments and actors to the natural laws of the market.” [19] With these words Joseph Vogl outlined the origins of what he calls the “idyll of the marketplace,” a notion of liberal economics as being in constant interaction with notions of natural laws. The implicit trust which neo-liberal market theories place in the “self-healing powers” of the markets—even today—is the result of this linkage between models of nature and economics. This can be explained in etymological terms: the words ecology and economy derive from the same Greek word *oikos* (household, housekeeping). Bernardo Oyarzún’s work *Eco Sistema* (2005) makes explicit reference to this etymological connection, which is translated into a highly suggestive spatial constellation. The central element of the work is a large rectangular structure about the size of an industrial container lit up from within. Its four exterior walls are covered with life-size photographic views of a forest in the Mapuche region that light up and flicker at regular intervals. Like the Chilean Expo iceberg, the container is a representative landscape monolith and a synthetic reproduction of a natural environment that is rapidly disappearing. Container and iceberg alike serve to display an exotic “elsewhere” that has deliberately been brought from the periphery to the centre of attention. The dimensions of the container can be interpreted as a commentary on a raw materials policy which puts the ecological balance of an entire region at risk for the sake of maximizing profits on the export market, thus sacrificing the cultural and economic basis of its inhabitants. By converting the forest into a mobile, marketable format Oyarzún intertwines economic and artistic value-adding cycles with the sublimation of nature into a cultural value—by transforming nature into an artifact that can be bought and sold.

eines kulturellen Raumkonzepts,” in *Landschaftlichkeit. Forschungsansätze zwischen Kunst, Architektur und Theorie*, eds. Irene Nierhaus, Josch Hoenes, and Annette Urban (Berlin, 2010), 11.

[5] In addition to the already mentioned positions from cultural studies, see in particular Brigitte Franzen and Stefanie Krebs, eds., *Landschaftstheorie. Texte der Cultural Landscape Studies* (Cologne, 2005); and Brigitte Franzen and Stefanie Krebs, *Mikrolandschaften. Landscape Culture on the Move* (Cologne, 2006).

[6] See W. J. T. Mitchell, “Introduction” in *Landscape and Power*, op. cit., 1.

[7] Irene Nierhaus, Josch Hoenes, and Annette Urban, op. cit., 11. This is related to Henri Lefebvre’s ideas on the production of space: “Though a *product* to be used, to be consumed, it is also a *means of production*; networks of exchange and flows of raw materials and energy fashion space and are determined by it.” Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (London et al., 1991), 85.

[8] Brigitte Franzen, “Provisorische Landschaften,” in *Landschaftstheorie. Texte der Cultural Landscape Studies*, eds. Brigitte Franzen and Stefanie Krebs (Cologne, 2005), 301.

[9] See the weave *New Brothers* by Sylvie Boisseau and Frank Westermeyer

[10] Ronald Kay, *Del espacio de acá. Señales para una mirada americana* (Santiago de Chile, 2005), 29.

[11] Wood and copper are the country’s most important export products.

[12] Manuel Délano, “El iceberg antártico que se expondrá en la Expo 92 levanta una fuerte polémica en Chile,” *El País* (Nov. 11, 1991).

[13] Tomás Moulian quoted in Nelly Richard, “The Graphic Model of an Advertising Identity,” in *Cultural Residues. Chile in Transition* (Minneapolis, 2004), 109. See also Juan R. Hernández García, “Transparencias que se derriten. El ‘iceberg’ del 92 y la identidad chilena en la transición,” *El Amauta 5* (January 2008).

[14] <http://www.fundacionimagedechile.cl> and <http://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/pais/2011/01/06/rene-merino-vice->

This brings us directly to the second part of *Eco Sistema*: a frieze featuring archaic agricultural tools and apparatuses of the kind one sees in ethnographic museums or, as Oyarzún ironically remarks, as decoration on the walls of buildings and restaurants in Santiago. [20] In a society that puts as much faith in technological advances and globality as Chilean society does, this demonstrative display of antiquated artifacts must seem like a provocation. At the same time it plays with the idea of the tool as *objet trouvé* by combining the clichés about indigenous art and magic objects with seminal concepts of modern art and the elevation of the art object to a cult status. Irrespective of these ironic exaggerations, above all the tools point to *homo faber* as the creator of the material world: “Their proper use does not cause them to disappear and they give the human artifice the stability and solidity without which it could not be relied upon to house the unstable and mortal creator which is man.” [21] The creation of world, which simultaneously produces community, is of central importance in Oyarzún’s plans for a project on the “minga”, a centuries-old tradition in Chilotic culture, [22] as a “magical” practice. [23] The minga here is a collective activity in which an entire house is transported from its original location to a new site sometimes several kilometres away by rolling it over logs lined up next to each other. For example, if a family member moves, his house moves with him thanks to the active support of his family, friends and neighbours. The minga not only changes a landscape but reinforces the continued existence of a collective. Oyarzún describes the minga as a form of magic, because those unfamiliar with the practice would be left with the impression that a house disappears overnight only to reappear at a different location the next day. One can talk here of a special kind of “performative magic of the social,” [24] which is not simply aimed at perpetuating social orders by means of assimilated patterns of interaction in Bourdieu’s sense, but in which a collective “performance” of the social creates a magical event.

Francisca Benítez’ video installation *Oro dulce* (Sweet Gold) (2011) also reflects on alternative forms of land use and production in connection with collective activity. The centrepiece of her work is a one-and-a-half hour video showing her family and some helpers harvesting quince and making jelly with the fruit in the rural region of Maule. The static images alternate between idyllic impressions of the landscape and the protagonists, who each go about their tasks earnestly and with great skill. They use traditional, self-made or self-adapted tools, which have been refined over decades of use to optimally meet the functional requirements of the individual work processes. Hands and hand-operated machines work together in perfect harmony. Natural growth cycles set economic exploitation cycles in motion. In addition to this almost ethnographic observation of an “old-fashioned” system of production, in the exhibition space [25] tin-plated cans containing the family-made jelly are lined up on a large table and can be purchased for the regular selling price. The names of the purchasers and a note about the whereabouts of the tins are recorded on the table and together form a cartography of local economic relationships. Transferring this transaction, which normally takes place between Benítez’ mother and private customers in Santiago, to the gallery creates a new audience for this otherwise unseen practice and at the same time involves visitors to the exhibition in an ironic game about symbolic and commercial values, in which each person who buys quince jelly is also buying a piece of art— which in turn refers to a system within a rural subsistence economy.

As well as suggesting the extra income which allows the family to make purchases it would not usually make, the title *Oro dulce* is also a reference to Chile’s recent history. In the publication accompanying the exhibition Benítez notes an explicit connection between her work and the history of the cooperatives and land reforms introduced by Eduardo Frei Montalves in the 1960s and expanded under Allende, which were discontinued after the military putsch. In this way she integrates the seemingly archaic practice of family production into a broader discussion about reconciling economic, ecological, and social interests. Benítez contrasts the model of a global, growth- and profit-oriented market—the functioning of which is not directly accessible or transparent, and which pursues a logic of scarcity rather than one aimed at extending participation—with a practice in which all the participants, modes of production, distribution channels and beneficiaries are plainly visible and therefore proof of their own political relevance and validity as a model.

A counterpart to Benítez’ scenario of a decentralized economy is Gonzalo Cueto’s decentralized mapping of a section of Chile’s political landscape. With his Internet-based project *desterritorio.net* (2011) he interferes directly with the surface shown on Google Earth. Step by step he inserts markings into the virtual projection of the Mapuche areas in the Araucanía region, which are linked to information about cases of oppression and police brutal-

presidente-de-imagen-pais-%E2%80%9Cchile-es-una-pagina-en-blanco-lo-que-nos-da-la-oportunidad-de-escribir-una-reputacion-positiva/ (Aug. 24, 2011)

[15] See <http://www.observatoriofucatel.cl/simon-anholt-asesor-de-chile-imagen-paisel-mundo-no-puede-admirar-a-un-pais-que-ignora-a-sus-pueblos-origenarios/> (Aug. 22, 2011). An interesting artistic-scientific counter-concept to the “Imagen País” is provided by the project “Informe País,” which was initiated by Judith Jorquera and Mara Santibáñez at the University of Santiago: <http://www.informepais.cl/>

[16] See José Ancan Jara, “Los napülkafé, viajeros del wallmapu, en el antiguo paisaje del mapuche,” in *Voces Mapuches/Mapuche Dingu*, eds. Carlos Aldunate and Leonel Lienlaf (Santiago de Chile, 2002), 99–126 and Fabien Le Bonniec’s contribution in this project.

[17] See Fabien Le Bonniec, *La fabrication des territoires Mapuche au Chili de 1884 à nos jours. Communauté, connaissances et Etat*, dissertation, submitted to the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris and Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile, 2009, 212 ff.

[18] See Patricia Richards, op. cit., 69.

[19] Joseph Vogl, *Das Gespenst des Kapitals* (Zurich, 2010), 47.

[20] See Bernardo Oyarzún, “... Memories of a landscape I do not inhabit out of cowardice,” in *Eco Sistema*. Bernardo Oyarzún, ed. Galería Gabriela Mistral (Santiago de Chile, 2005), n. p.

[21] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London, 1998), 136.

[22] The culture native to Chiloë Island.

[23] See his unpublished project description “Proyecto Minga: espacio ambulante”.

[24] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 57.

[25] The description refers to the exhibition in the gallery “Die Ecke” in Santiago, www.dieecke.cl.

ity against indigenous youths compiled by the organization Observatorio Ciudadano [26] or supplied live through Twitter feeds. He pinpoints controversial large building projects and sprays virtual graffiti. In this way Cueto's artistic-activist intervention raises a series of questions regarding the representation of space, which are relevant for a contemporary discussion about landscape.

As a two-dimensional projection of space, the traditional map is a technology of the gaze, which runs counter to the perspective-based orientation of (landscape) painting towards the external observer-subject. "At its centre we find the astonishing concept of the unpositioned viewer and its essence insists on the plausibility of the view from nowhere." [27] This unpositioned view from "nowhere" can be found in the disembodied observer who navigates through the virtual space of Google Earth, who is present in ideal form: a neutral, transparent, technical image that simulates the surface of the Earth from a potentially unlimited number of perspectives and in real time. Like the linear perspective of painting, the decentralized optics of this viewing machine are also based on an ideological framework, which in this case has its roots in military technology. Picon reminds us of how virtual realities were born from the spirit of 20th century territorial policies: "We no longer read maps once they have been finished; we make and decipher them in real time, as a provisional state, a situation report, a reading of a never-ending flow of data. Even now, when the Cold War is just a memory, it is tempting once again to see the military parallel. How not to think of the diagrams on which general staffs shift around their figurines as dispatches stream in from the front." [28]

Also in this case, the parallels drawn between virtual landscape simulations and real war zones are anything but absurd; this is readily suggested by the information on violent expulsions, arrests and killing of civilians recorded by Cueto on *desterritorio.net*. With these inserts from a clearly definable here and now, he disrupts the smooth, uniform, ahistorical data surface of the virtual landscape. Google Earth as a technological metaphor for a globalized world in which all territorial, political, economic and cultural conflicts are revoked and neutralized in a uniform data space corresponds not least with the widespread perception that the territories of orally based cultures like the Mapuche culture also "lack a history." Documenting and investigating specific events, Cueto's intervention, in contrast, generates a subversive, processual chronicle that presents the history of the Mapuche regions as part of a political conflict of global consequence.

Cosmetic Landscapes

In contrary to Cueto's concerns, the metaphor of the cosmetic landscape speaks to a form of superficial intervention in spaces and architectures that can be read as symptomatic of ideological levelling and smoothing. Nicolás Rupcich's short video with the descriptive title *Diseño de Paisaje* (Landscape Design) (2006) [29] documents the planting of a single palm tree at night in a major city. A building crane is used to dangle the giant tree in the air, lower it to the intended spot, and raise it into vertical position. The anthropomorphic appearance of the uprooted tree hanging in the transport sling of a heavy machine is infused with added drama through the soundtrack, which seems to transform the profane event into a kind of choreography. The pathos of the final shot—the palm tree during the day—simultaneously reveals the irony of the undertaking. We see a majestic tree that has been transplanted to an extremely prosaic piece of urban landscape, the meridian strip of a traffic intersection. Here too we are confronted with a "magical" transformation of the city landscape, but in this case not as an expression of a collective will but as prescribed by a globally successful model of exoticism.

Such aestheticization of spatial experience recalls the work of Scott Brown and Venturi already in the 1960s, their theses on the architecture of American suburbs and its expressive symbolism oriented towards the accelerated perception of the driver instead of that of the flâneur. [30] At the same time, it marks the very same "solitude and similitude" that Marc Augé sees as defining the space of the non-place. [31] Whereas the users of non-places temporarily enter a localized but interchangeable space, they nevertheless are part of an exclusive arrangement that is regulated by the rituals of identification and authentication. [32] We also encounter this kind of exclusive anonymity in the phantasms of the tourism industry. *Big Pool* (2009) [33] is a video by Rupcich and Emilio Marín; it is a portrait of the

[26] Observatorio Ciudadano is a human rights organization that was founded in 2004 and that also functions as a documentation centre: www.observatorio.cl.

[27] Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma. Geography's Visual Culture* (London and New York, 2000), 96. On the relative notion of centre in the mapped world, see: Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance. Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor, 2003), 222.

[28] Antoine Picon, "Representing the city-territory: between surveillance monitors and digital drifts," in *GNS*, eds. Nicolas Bourriaud and Vincent Honoré (Paris, 2003), 66. See also: Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature* (New York 1991), 188.

[29] <http://www.rupcich.cl/07-Landscape-Design.php>

[30] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas. The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1977).

[31] Marc Augé, *Non-places, Introduction to an Anthology of Supermodernity* (London and New York, 2000), 103.

[32] See *ibid.*, 102.

[33] <http://rupcich.cl/09-BigPool.php>

[34] See Patrick Hamilton, *Proyecto de arquitecturas revestidas para la ciudad de Santiago* (Santiago de Chile, 2009).

[35] For a documentation of its activities see: <http://www.lanubeloca.org/Galeria%20Chilena%20Home.html> (August 22, 2011).

[36] Michèle Faguet, "A brief account of two artist-run spaces," www.apexart.org/conference/faguet.php (June 30, 2013).

[37] Catalina Mena, "Touching the Other," in *Copying Eden. Recent Art in Chile*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera (Santiago, 2010), 160.

[38] www.hoffmannshouse.com. See also Andreas Fanizadeh and Eva-Christina Meier, "Nomadische Kunst

largest swimming pool in the world, whose eight hectares of fresh water follow the coastline of the luxury resort San Alfonso del Mar in central Chile. The pool and the ocean are situated in immediate vicinity to one another. Separated only by a strip of sand, they seem to compete for attention both visually and in terms of sound. Behind the giant, almost deserted surface of the pool, on which float equally oversized inflatable swimming islands, rise the snow-white hotel buildings, which create a zig-zagged backdrop recalling a mountain chain. Natural and artificial spaces enter into a new form of synthesis, opening up sensory experiences and ecological niches that have only become possible within the conditions provided by global mass tourism. Not the local distinctiveness of the place is the key factor but the stimulating rearrangement of the familiar in megalomaniac dimensions.

We encounter a similar strategy of shifts and disguises in Patrick Hamilton's *Proyecto de Arquitecturas Revestidas* (2007-2009), a series of large-format photographic montages and collages, which play with the uniform monumentality of the office buildings in the Chilean capital. [34] Hamilton manipulates black and white photographs of well-known high-rises in Santiago by replacing their silhouettes with a corresponding form cut from coloured plastic adhesive film. In his images a banking house or a company headquarters is replaced by a stand-in made of imitation marble, exotic wood, or granite. The illusionistic simulation of transparency through the glass surfaces of a global corporate architecture is substituted by the opaque surface of solid materials, that is, their synthetic look-alikes. The overtly displayed value of the materials proves to be as exchangeable as the silhouettes of the buildings themselves. The ongoing oscillation between a deceptive surface and apparent substance, between low-quality materials and the well-made fake creates a sense of ambivalence that unmasks Hamilton's "monuments of victorious global capitalism" as a specious trick.

Hamilton's *Santiago dérive* (2008) may be considered a close counterpart to this work. It is a series of black and white photographs dedicated to the less visible economic microstructures of the capital. In apparent reference to the conceptual photographers Bernd and Hilla Becher the work shows a typology of three-wheeled vehicles used in Chile by the thousands as a means of transport or as a mobile vending unit. Whereas the Bechers' photographs were an attempt to inventory the monumental landmarks of the modern industrial age shortly before they disappeared, Hamilton shows the contemporary vehicles of a subsistence economy, which seem to stem from a pre-industrial era, but are aesthetically and functionally highly diversified. They are the counter-model to the static structures of the *Arquitecturas Revestidas*. They are the mobile collecting points of local trade. Although clichés of economic backwardness, they do in fact represent a form of value creation, which expresses the fluctuation of supply and demand through and as movement within the space of the city—as *dérive*—and links the abstraction of the "market" back to a concrete (psycho-) geography. In the exhibition context, the way that Hamilton juxtaposes his photographs of the three-wheeled trucks he has found on the street with his own three-dimensional version—which instead of goods transports a light-box with a photograph of the Santiago skyline ("Sanhattan")—comes full circle to the market- and object-fixation of the cultural context in which his own artistic actions unfold.

Recycling and Carnivalization

We also encounter a similar strategy of ironic doubling and revaluation of an ideologically hyper-coded social context in the works of José Luis (Joe) Villablanca. Since 2007 he has been working on his series *Naturalezas Muertas* (Still Lives), in which the conventional representation of unmoving or moribund nature and the material refuse of the civilizational processes ironically play out against one another. Villablanca experiments with the representational possibilities of painting by working on canvases with almost identical formats. The "minor" genre of the still life serves as a model. Although Villablanca's serial "production" is conceptually indebted to graphic design, he simultaneously is highly conscious of the skill and time inherent to the production process—painting one layer over the other in a manner that makes the materiality and dynamics of the paint application apparent. Following the tradition of "bad painting," his unorthodox and seemingly naive approach to the conventions of painting holds his work in the balance between figuration and abstraction.

His still lifes portray an opaque, more or less homogeneous body of water, where isolated objects float. Empty bottles, cans, cigarette cartons, furniture fragments, fruit remains, musi-

und städtischer Raum. Gespräch mit José Pablo Díaz und Rodrigo Vergara, Hoffmann's House," in *Chile International. Kunst, Existenz, Multitude*, eds. Andreas Fanizadeh and Eva-Christina Meier (Berlin, 2005), 115-123.

[39]
www.galeriacallejera.cl

[40]
Michel Foucault, "Des espaces autres," *Architecture /Mouvement/ Continuité*, n° 5, October 1984, pp. 46-49. (Translator's note: available in English in the public domain. See: <http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html>.)

[41]
Nelly Richard, "Neobaroque Debris: Scabs and Decorations," in *Cultural Residues. Chile in Transition* (Minneapolis and London, 2004), 49.

[42]
See *ibid.*, 56.

[43]
See the documentation of the project: <http://www.aliciavillarrealchile.cl/do/sejercicios/index.html> (Aug. 22, 2011)

[44]
Sabeth Buchmann / Cristóbal Lehyt, "Dialogue between Sabeth Buchmann and Cristóbal Lehyt," in *Cristóbal Lehyt. Drama Projection* (Zurich, 2008), 51.

[45]
Ibid., 33.

[46]
Homi K. Bhabha, "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation," in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London and New York), 295.

[47]
See footnote 8.

cal instruments, newspapers, etc. seem to be caught in an undecided moment of standstill, lacking any suggestion of movement or direction. Potentially either the carelessly discarded trash of an affluent society or the product of a natural catastrophe, the floating debris is an ambivalent sign of both excess and lack and of the residue products of technical progress and economic prosperity. With his formal references to the European artistic tradition—from Duchamp's *objet trouvé* to the still lifes of the Cubists and the painting of Gerhard Richter—Villablanca additionally takes a tongue-in-cheek stance on his own role as a “third world artist,” who not only obsessively processes the precarious nature of his own life circumstances, but whose lack of resources also forces him to imitatively recycle western art styles.

Questions surrounding the context in which art is produced and the role of the artist as product and producer of this context were addressed with particular intensity by younger artists in the middle of the 1990s, who had envisioned greater social relevance for their work in conjunction with the end of the dictatorship and the phase of “transition to democracy.” In actuality, however, they encountered a glaring lack of exhibition possibilities and lack of interest on the part of the general public. In *Gran Santiago* (1998) it is five o'clock in the morning when Villablanca points his video camera at the television screen and places a call to the studio of a call-in television show. We see how the moderators politely but largely uninterestedly listen to his concern: his desire to raise awareness for the existence of *Galería Chilena*, a nomadic art project by Villablanca, Felipe Mujica, and Diego Fernández, presented in the 1990s with exhibitions, auctions, and performances in empty real estate, that is, in spaces ignored by the commercial art establishment. [35] “*Galería Chilena* was effectively articulating a set of negative truths about its immediate context against the spastic, unwarranted optimism that had gripped Chile during the first phase of the post-dictatorship, as well as about the way in which the art world must constantly prostitute itself to publicists and buyers in order to achieve the visibility necessary to be socially relevant.” [36]

It is no coincidence that *Gran Santiago* is situated in the apartment of the artist and from this vantage point makes statements about the status quo of Chilean society. Catalina Mena points to the iconic character of the motif of the house in young Chilean art, which suggests less a sense of home and rootedness but instead points to the conscious positioning of the artists outside the official art scene. [37] In addition to *Galería Chilena* other such artistic initiatives include Rodrigo Vergara and José Pablo Díaz' *Hoffmann's House*, [38] a minimal structure for disaster victims refurbished into a temporary gallery, Pablo Rojas' *Galería Callejera*, [39] a self-built, motorized “white cube,” and Mario Navarro's *Radio Ideal* (2003), a mobile guerilla radio station. They all mediate between architecture and sculpture, transitoriness and presence, art and alternating publics. Within a social context perceived as static, these mobile sites serve as heterotopias, “real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.” [40] Out of this difference emerge new options for action in relation to the surrounding cultural and political landscape.

Let us briefly return to Villablanca's *Naturalezas muertas*, which through the refuge floating aimlessly on the water seems to prefigure the end of a social or cultural order, “like a ruined fragment of a discarded totality, of a broken totality of thought or existence.” [41] Nelly Richard suggests interpreting the garbage, that is, all the things that can no longer be integrated into the logic of usefulness and productivity, as part of a neo-baroque aesthetic strategy, which transforms the penetrating inertia of residue into an aesthetic surplus. [42] The marginal thus becomes central, and the central marginalized—a carnivalization of the social order as we encounter it in the works of Norton Maza. Based on found, collected, and recycled objects, Maza constructs three-dimensional models, which he then photographs and displays as large-format prints. In these images humans and monsters, toys and weapons, earthly desire and extraterrestrial threat confront each other in a form of organized chaos. The works draw on a collective pool of iconic images of catastrophe, whose motifs range from war and refugee dramas to the stockmarket crash and financial crisis and the attack of Pinochet's troops on the presidential palace of La Moneda; their seriousness is mitigated by the mundane material of the objects and borrowings from popular genres such as horror films and porno. One loses oneself while looking at these images, drawn in by a visual thrall that is rewarded by subversive micro-narratives taking place in the far-flung corners of the image.

Through the motif of recycling Maza brings together a critique of the grotesque outgrowths of unbridled capitalism with a direct engagement with his social environment. This is particularly evident in his five-part installation series *Territory* (since 2004), assembled four times in various exhibition venues. For this project he constructs a room with a bath in 1:1 scale out of used materials and discarded objects. Some of these objects are used for their original purpose; others are anarchically “readapted.” Maza thereby gives useless things a new use, which is, however, not a practical one. He constructs monstrous structures that are not inhabitable but that exhibit the conditional environment of a living space. They are thus not portraits of their absent inhabitants but societal “territories,” whose shifting delineations are indebted to the differentiation between garbage and non-garbage. What things are left and given to the artist at different locations and how? What is retained for one’s own use and what is thrown away? Is there anything at all that is not a reusable remainder, or is everything a potential resource? Maza’s apartments are not limited to a critical reproduction of the precarious building methods in slum areas, but make exchange and sharing—as both constructive and potentially subversive forms of communal activity—the focus of his artwork. He confronts the logic of scarcity and the privatization of resources with the alchemical transformation of things that are available in inflationary dimensions.

Inverted Geographies

The independent, non-commercial exhibition space Galería Metropolitana in Santiago, which has been run for the past thirteen years by the curators and critics Ana María Saavedra and Luis Alarcón in the working class neighbourhood of Pedro Aguirre Cerda, is linked to its surroundings in a special way. With its unpretentious corrugated iron sheeting construction the exhibition venue not only blends with the architecture of the entire street, which is dominated by small residential houses. It is also a home for projects that relate to the specific situation, population, and history of the neighbourhood. The curatorial programme for the 2009–2010 season was guided by the motto “Chile-visión”—a play on the name of one of the largest Chilean television stations, which at the time was still owned by the officiating president and multi-millionaire Sebastián Piñera and which was then in the process of turning the former Machasa textile factory, located not far from the gallery, into production studios. The programme was simultaneously conceived as a stocktaking of Chilean society. In this context, Alicia Villarreal realized a project *La enseñanza de geografía, dos ejercicios* (2010), [43] which examined the so-called “white elephant,” the derelict building of the Ochagavía hospital. Initiated under the government of Frei Montalva, it was planned as the largest and most modern workers’ hospital of Latin America. Under Allende construction was interrupted due to a lack of funds, and after the military putsch of 1973 the project was completely abandoned. Villarreal conducted a series of workshops with students of two neighbouring schools, in which the building, its history, and scenarios for future use were discussed and developed.

Interesting is the significance that Villarreal lends to visual perspective in terms of the registration and organization of this urban landscape. For example, the school children constructed viewing instruments, such as telescopes and pinhole cameras, in order to look at the building from the courtyard of their school; after visiting the site, they also produced three-dimensional maps of the property, which they finally observed from the greatest distance possible by visiting the highest point of Santiago, the Telefónica tower in the city centre. The central perspective of the static viewer, the subject of the gaze, in the long tradition of landscape painting gives way to a mobilized form of seeing, which is linked to the various physical experiences of closeness or distance. The landscape thus becomes experiential as a function of position and perspective. An additional set of exercises explored processes of defining characteristics and similarities, for example through the transformation of plaster models of the building into something that resembled the building or through imagining alternative uses for the site. By experimenting with visual appearances, optical illusions, and multiple interpretations, the uniform view of a given space—typically how geography is taught—was systematically multiplied, made plastic, and experienced over time. The final exhibition assembled all the objects and documents produced in the workshop in a display that portrayed this concrete site as a model for a communal but nevertheless contradictory landscape. The white spot on the city map became an imaginary stage, on which the students brought a forgotten place to life and thus replayed a repressed episode of recent Chilean history.

The multiplication of perspectives and interpretations in respect to images of a real space is also a central element of Cristóbal Lehyt's ongoing work *El Norte* (since 2002). Through iconic depictions of northern Chile he interrogates how a nation tells its story through images. For a series of large-format works on paper he uses motifs that tell the story of the North as portrayed in textbooks and in the manner that is more than familiar to all Chileans through countless illustrations. These mythic landscapes largely refer to the Atacama Desert, the driest place in the world, where not only spectacular archaeological finds but also the shallow graves of political opponents to the Pinochet regime are repeatedly a source of sensation. The area's rich natural resources not only secure the wealth of Chile, but in the past they have repeatedly led to bitter armed conflicts with the neighbouring states of Bolivia and Peru. Lehyt's image sources range from the Internet to newspapers to his own photographs, whose noticeably different material quality are underscored by the reworking of the images (throughpainting, drawing, enlarging, etc.). All images are identically the same size and are displayed in vertical format and leaned against the wall of the exhibition space.

Lehyt's interventions evidently are aimed not only towards confounding our stance as viewers of these images but also complicating a clear, singular interpretation of what we see. For example, is the woman with the raised fist a dancer or a demonstrator? And in another image, are we looking at an archaeological site or a mass grave of a more recent date? Things that are clearly decodable or locatable for a Chilean audience—despite the manipulations on the part of the artist—merely give rise on the part of viewers from outside the continent to vague projections of the exotic and foreign, which are punctured by the calculated incongruence of form and content. Lehyt has decided to show this series exclusively outside Latin America, in order to expose the images to precisely such “foreign” and speculative attributions. Lehyt, who himself has been living in New York since the beginning of the 2000s and thus acts from an “in-between” position, enters into an ambiguous alliance with his audience. He shares a secret with them, which nevertheless presents them with an unsolvable mystery. Already in the title of the work he plays “with the idea that my North is your South” [44] and thereby places the focus on the relative nature of a viewer's standpoint. Lehyt describes the audience as “the determining factor in the construction of the piece. I always think about what I myself would like to see when I go to an exhibition.” [45] Inscribed on the work are thus his own speculations about the expectations of the audience and about who his audience is, expectations which are then countered by the similarly vague speculations of the audience concerning who he is and from what place he is speaking. The necessary fuzziness of notions reciprocally projected onto one another thus leads to an infinite process of semantic feedback.

The centrifugal dynamic of Lehyt's work is at odds with a quasi-natural consistency and transparency of nationalistic conceptions of self, which are derived from and illustrated by landscapes: “The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasizes the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression.” [46] His work is thus symptomatic of an artistic investigation of landscape, which garners the resources of a new visuality from the residue of signification.

Lehyt's work counters a unifying panorama of a national landscape as a source of meaning and identity with the strategy of shifting and replicating contexts, which can also be found in the other artistic positions outlined here in similar form. The mobilization of sites and viewership disrupts the accustomed sense of spatial continua, allowing artistic “micro landscapes” to emerge as a provisional, alternative community of values. The repeating motifs of exchange and recycling—the reappropriation of used materials for artistic production, the ironic reproduction of artistic subjects or the restaging of invisible landscapes and repressed cultural practices—turn the logic of neo-liberal value creation on its head. The “expressive physiognomy of an international advertising programme” [47] thus provides the material for a repositioning of one's own standpoint.

Translation from German: Laura Schleussner