

fourcorners

Press Release for immediate use

September 2023



Chile 50: Political Art, Solidarity and Resistance

11 September 2023 marks the 50th anniversary of the violent military coup in Chile, which overthrew the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende.

Opening this autumn at Four Corners Gallery, *Chile 50*, explores how political art was used to sustain solidarity and resistance in the face of incarceration, torture and exile. The exhibition re-stages Peter Kennard's 1978 show, *A Document on Chile*, with text by Ric Sissons, alongside a display of arpilleras - subversive patchwork pictures sewn by women during the Pinochet dictatorship - and photographs taken by contemporary Chilean activists of the recent social uprising in Chile of 2019-2022. *Chile 50* is shown as part of [Chile 50 Years UK](#), a year-long commemoration programme.

Arpilleras were created by women in prison and by the Association of Families of the Detained and Disappeared (Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos y Desaparecidos) - people, including children, who vanished after being arrested by the secret police under the dictatorship in Chile. Based on traditional folk art, these patchwork pictures were sewn from scraps of discarded fabric. They were a covert form of remembering, a dissident craft and a way of expressing resistance to state violence. In addition, they offered a means of income generation. Arpilleras of different sizes including postcards were sent abroad to solidarity and exile organisations to be sold to raise money for the families of the detainees and disappeared people in Chile. Arpilleras are an important form of popular socialist people's art, and a form of feminist art.

Photomontage artist Peter Kennard and journalist Ric Sissons created *A Document on Chile* in 1978, a touring exhibition that was shown by the Half Moon Photography Workshop at community centres and universities UK-wide. The series of 30 laminated photomontage panels, created by

Kennard in the tradition of John Heartfield, aimed to build solidarity and support the Chilean exile diaspora. The exhibition was part of many political protest and artistic events, led by the Chilean Solidarity Campaign in the UK during the 1970s.

Thirty years after democracy was reinstated in Chile, students protested against a 30 pesos rise in transport tickets. Soon after workers joined them with the slogan 'It's not thirty pesos, it's 30 years'. The chant referred to the limited return to democracy and the continuation of the previous regime's neo-liberal policies, alongside widespread inequality, repression of activists and the continuation of dictatorship-era laws. The government's reaction to this unrest was brutal, with the use of rubber bullets to cause ocular trauma, countless arrests, prisoners kept in pretrial detention for over the legal period, curfews and human rights violations. Photography collectives such as Migrar Photo and photographers such as Carlos Vera Mancilla, Ignacio Rivera and Nicole Kramm documented protesters in the capital, Santiago, in and around Plaza Baquedano – renamed by protesters as 'Plaza de la Dignidad (Dignity Square). Others documented graffiti and stencil work that emerged during this period.

Co-curator Gloria Miqueles says: '*This exhibition shows how art has been used as a powerful tool of resistance and solidarity, in the Chilean experience during the Pinochet dictatorship in the 1970s, and more recently to denounce the slow, incomplete transition to democracy in Chile. Art is a means of communicating the country's plight.*'

- Ends -

Notes to editors

Chile 50: Art, Solidarity and Resistance

Private view: Thursday 14 September 2023, 6.30-8.30pm

12 – 23 September 2023

Free admission. Opening hours 11am-6pm Tues - Sat, until 8pm Thurs.

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Exhibition events

Film Screening - Thursday 21 September, 6:30-8pm

Crafting Resistance: The Art of Chilean Political Prisoners screening + Q&A

Join us for a screening and discussion with ex-political prisoner and director Gloria Migueles, and producer Jasmine Gideon, Senior Lecturer in Development Studies at Birkbeck.

This oral history film examines how craftwork, made by political prisoners during their internment in the 1970s by the military regime led by General Pinochet, contributed to the mental health and well-being of those involved, particularly following their exile to the UK. It engages with issues of forced migration and well-being, exploring how even in the most extreme circumstances it is sometimes possible to exert a degree of agency and demonstrate resistance. Given the longevity of the Chilean experience, the film illustrates how people live with the aftermath of torture and incarceration.

[View trailer here.](#)

[Book a place here.](#)

Artists

Peter Kennard

Peter Kennard is a London-born and based photomontage artist and Professor of Political Art at the Royal College of Art. Seeking to reflect his involvement in the anti-Vietnam War movement, he turned from painting to photomontage to better address his political views. He is best known for the images he created for the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) in the 1970s–80s including a détournement of John Constable's *The Hay Wain* called "Haywain with Cruise Missiles".

Because many of the left-wing organisations and publications he used to work with have disappeared, Kennard has turned to using exhibitions, books and the internet for his work. Kennard has worked in the public collections of several major London museums and the Arts Council of England. He has his work displayed as part of Tate Britain's permanent collection and is on public view as part of 2013's rehang *A Walk Through British Art*.

Arpilleras

We are grateful to the unknown creators of the arpilleras and to the collectors who have preserved them and kindly lent them to us.

Collectors: Patricia Pons, Hernando Fernandez-Canque, Sara DeWitt, Ana Maria Pelusa, Gloria Migueles

Migrar Photo

Migrar Photo is a platform for photographic projects that works in the areas of training, communication, editorial and development of authorial works. Through collective organization and management, it seeks to generate spaces for multidisciplinary creation that strengthen visual culture in the country.

The team is made up of 12 members, including cultural managers, journalists, photographers and a designer. Our interests point to reflect on the photographic and cultural work, and narrate stories that account for our territory, identity, human relations and social conflicts.

We consider it essential to question the ways in which we work with photography. It is a cornerstone of our project to assume the artistic and political role through reflecting on issues

such as gender diversity, valuing culture as an intangible heritage of society and professional ethics.

Carlos Vera from Vera Press

Born in the city of Puerto Montt, 1008 kilometers from the capital Santiago de Chile.

Brother of 7 men and women, single father of 2 children. Alberto Vera Uribe 30 years old, Martín Vera Uribe 23 years old and my granddaughter Abby, 5 years old daughter of Alberto.

I studied and graduated in 1982 as Electromechanical Semi-Industrial Technician in my hometown.

Year 91 to 96 I studied Professional Photography from which I am a graduate in Santiago.

I work in various media, mainly in Agencies in one mainly as stringers for almost 15 years (Reuters) also in institutions such as ECLAC, universities and companies linked to sports / soccer.

I consider Documentary Photography my alma mater, which as an independent I can develop topics of interest to me.

Without caprice, pretensions, I consider myself one more chronicler of my time and space.

Acknowledgements

We are very grateful for the kind support of Gloria Miqueles, Peter Kennard, Migrar Photo, Vera Press, Jasmine Gideon and Chile 50.

Chile 50 Years UK

We are a small, intergenerational and informal network of people who were connected by the coup in Chile on 11 September 1973. Some of us were direct victims of the bloodshed that ensued, some of us are children of those victims, and some of us are people who came together to support the Chileans, offering compassion and solidarity in Chile's darkest hour. In commemorating the 50 years we pay homage to all those we lost, all those who fought and all those who stood shoulder to shoulder with the Chilean refugees which scattered across the globe, the UK story, this story, is only one small part of the Chilean exile experience. [Further information](#)

Four Corners

We are a cultural centre for film and photography, based in East London for fifty years. Our exhibitions explore unknown social histories that might not otherwise be told.