

Alfredo Jaar

“Do you miss Chile?”

“No, not the Chile that I know. What I miss is Latin America, the Latin America that could be, that should be.”

“Has it ever existed?”

“No, never. But I am working on that. (laughs) Well, this is, probably what my work is all about.”

Jaars work is about dichotomy. Between conquistadores and conquered; wealth and pverty; creativity and suppression. He never lectors or propagandizes – his spirit is too generous and poetic for that. Instead, the audience is given a related sense of clues from which to make its own associations and conclusions.

There is he use of dichotomy in his choice of materials. Between the slick conventions of advertising, and the elemental substances of third world life; the directness of photographic image and the illusions of text; the technological and the primitive.

Thus, an advertisement shows a chatter putting an Andy Warhol painting in to the back of an expensive car. The caption reads “Rue Foche, 11 A.M., Sunny and Mild – of course!” on its night a photograph by Jaar of the furrows of a ploughed field in Chile, with the caption “-Chile 5 P.M. Windy and Cool – Forever”

Both the Warhol and the furrows have the word “Art” painted in red upon them. In front of these photos a pile of dirt on the floor has a reproduction of the Warhol stuck into it. The title of the piece, in bold letters is “1+1=Art”

A Large blow-up of camouflaged soldiers advances. Cropped at the neck, they are headless and thus stateless. To the right, the caption from an ad reads “Were all created equal. After that, baby, you’re on your own.” On the floor, four black brooms are propped together, like rifles or the skeleton of a primitive shelter. They support a red neon light which illuminates a travel poster, “It’s better than the Bahamas.” From this table, to the photos on the wall, snakes a collection of clocks all stopped. On the first day that this was exhibited, the Marines invaded Granada....

“The main thing that everyone must understand about us is that we are very, very alone, and when we have company, it is very bad company”

Alfredo Jaar

Born in Santiago, Chile in 1956

Lives in New York

Education

1981 B.A. – School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Chile, Santiago

Selected Awards

1984 – Artists Space, Committee for the Visual Arts, New York

1982 – Pacific Foundation Fellowship, Santiago

Selected Exhibitions

1984 – “Art and Ideology.” New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York

1983 – “In/Out” Washington Project for the Arts, Washington D.C.

1982 – Art Biennial of Paris. Musee d’Arte Moderne, Paris

1981 – Fifth International Art Biennial, Valparaiso, Chile

1980 – Centennial of the National Art Museum, National Art Museum, Santiago, Chile.

Selected Bibliography

Brenson, Michael – “Art: Political Subjects” *New York Times*, February 24th, 1984

Lewis, Jo Ann – “Chilean Concepts” *Washington Post*, April 7th, 1983

Peraza, Nilda – Catalog Essay for “Art and Ideology” New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York 1984

Valdes, Adriana – Catalog Essay for “In/Out” Washington Project for the Arts, Washington D.C. 1983

Work in Exhibition

“Motherland, Motherland. What Mother, What Land?”

Installation