

# MATERIALITY AND POLITICS IN CHILE'S MUSEUM OF MEMORY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

## ANDRÉS ESTEFANE

In a 2010 article, historian Caroline Ford analyzed a phenomenon that began in Western Europe about a decade ago: the emergence of a new wave of museums devoted to non-European art and culture.<sup>1</sup> England, Belgium and France, among others, have begun organizing and exhibiting the “exotic vestiges” of two centuries of imperial expansion. This is part of a cultural strategy to come to terms with the past, materialized in the economic and socio-political consequences of the decolonization processes. Either in line or tension with the multicultural fantasies of neoliberalism, these institutions have sought to neutralize a permanent source of anxiety and conflicts in contemporary Europe. A similar process is taking place in South America, where several states have begun to translate the problematic legacies of their recent histories into the language of the museum: between 2006 and 2012 six museums of memory and human rights will have been inaugurated in the region. Following the examples of Paraguay and Uruguay, which led the first official attempts to cope with the traces of state violence, Argentina and Chile have recently institutionalized the memory of the systematic human rights violations perpetrated by their respective military dictatorships with the inauguration of two new museums. Peru and Colombia are currently working on the construction of homologous institutions that will preserve and display visual and material evidence of their long-lasting internal conflicts.<sup>2</sup> Compounding these six cases suggests that the region is immersed in what NYU professor Paul Williams has defined as the “global rush to commemorate atrocities.”<sup>3</sup>

What follows is a reflection on the design and curatorial strategy of one of these new institutions, Chile's *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* (Museum of Memory and Human Rights, hereafter MMDH), opened in 2010 to remember the victims of state repression during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990). By assessing the dynamics among sections, themes, images, and objects in the exhibition's script, and in the dialogue between the museum and two contemporary art pieces incorporated into the museum circuit, I evaluate how the museum-going experience relates to the political project of the institution. Likewise, I reflect on the material challenges associated with the representation of violence and the reconstruction of legitimacy in the aftermath of state terror and argue that this museum solves these challenges by shielding and perpetuating political and economic principles connected with the legacies of the dictatorship.

## Under the Box

Located in the Yungay neighborhood –an area inhabited by immigrants, young professionals, and working-class families– the MMDH is today one of the most active poles of what has been defined as the “cultural axis” of western Santiago. It is situated close to Matucana 100, a center for the arts inaugurated in 2001; the Library of Santiago, opened in 2005, an expansion of the National Library; the Quinta Normal of Santiago, a nineteenth-century botanical park that encompasses several museums; the western branch of the Museum of Contemporary Art; the Museum of Education Gabriela Mistral, among other cultural institutions. The contemporary architecture of the building contrasts, however, with the more traditional character of its neighbors. The museum appears as a striking glass and steel box clad in prepatinated cooper (18 m wide, 80 m long, and 15 m high, or 59 by 263 by 50 ft) mounted on robust concrete bases rising out of two reflecting pools. The building is oriented along an east-west axis and a subtle elevation from the street level reinforces its monumentality. The north and south facades are clad with tempered glass, coated with a thin cooper mesh to diminish the impact of direct sunlight, and crisscrossed by metal bars.<sup>4</sup> Visitors enter from the south through a concrete ramp with a gentle slope that slides under the body of the museum (between the concrete bases), and ends in an open space 6 m (20 ft) below street level called Memory Square (Figure 1). They can also access this agora-like space through two wide staircases located in the north side of the complex, which become an improvised seating area when the agora is used for public events. Both the ramp and the staircases were conceived as transitional spaces that allow visitors enough time to connect themselves to the “museum experience.”<sup>5</sup>

This Memory Square is the main point of access to the museum, leading into the first room of the exhibition, “Human Rights. A Universal Challenge.” This section contains what has been described as the two ideological pillars of the museum: the reports of the truth commissions organized by the Chilean state during the *Concertación* governments (the bureaucratic pillar) and the network of memorials built throughout the country to remember the victims of Pinochet’s dictatorship (the social pillar).<sup>6</sup> The Chilean truth commissions are introduced via an installation comprising a world map constituted by more than 300 pictures portraying episodes of human rights violations and some attempts of reparation; a museographic text explaining the global emergence of truth commissions around the world; and a set of thirty small frames describing the functioning, research period, objectives, and achievements of these commissions.

In front of this installation, a small shelf displays copies of the reports submitted by the three bureaucratic bodies charged with documenting human rights violations during the period between 1973 and 1990.<sup>7</sup> A plaque above states that these reports constitute an essential reference for the permanent exhibition and the muse-



Photo Ana María León.

**Figure 1** Mario Figueroa, Lucas Fehr, and Carlos Dias, Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, 2010. Lateral view of the building's north façade from Chacabuco street.

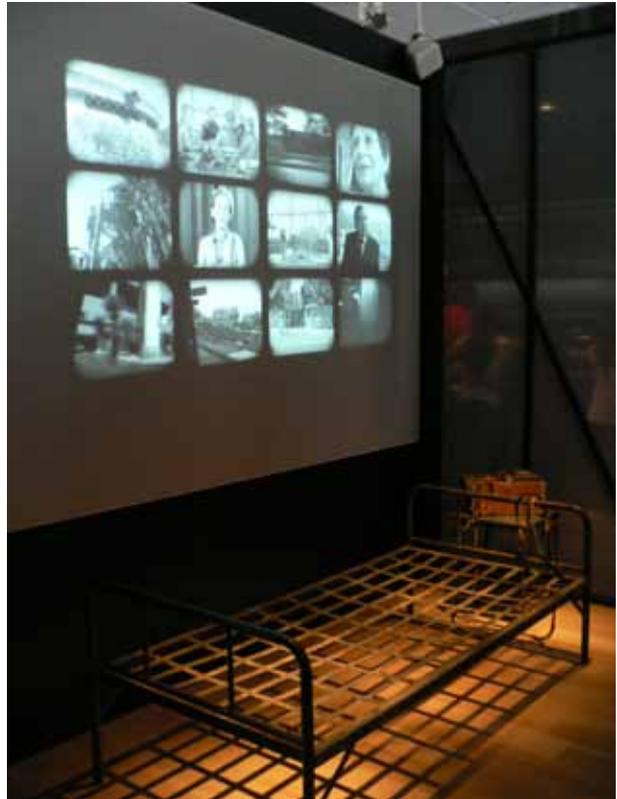


Photo Federico Brega.

**Figure 2** "Grill." Repression and Torture room, Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, 2010. Metal bed frame connected to an electroshock machine; the upper screen projects testimonies of tortured political prisoners.

um's patrimony, further fetishizing these objects. The second ideological pillar, the memorials, is represented further down the hall. A touch screen provides a detailed description of 174 sites of mourning and remembrance identified throughout the country. A plaque above the screen offers a somewhat irrelevant description of what memorials are and what their purpose is—there is no reference to links between them and the museum's program. On the floor, a large stone sculpture represents the map of Chile with eighty-four white metal signs disorderly embedded in it. They reproduce the information provided by the touch screen.

The imbalance in the treatment of the two pillars is evident. The pale and somewhat untidy recognition of the historical role played by memorials reads as a forced gesture that does not match the visual weight and solemnity attributed to the truth commissions. In the relation between state bureaucracy and society, the former eclipses the latter. Consequently, it becomes difficult not to consider the long-term implications of the state monopoly over memory, particularly in the case of a state that for the last twenty years has consistently disassembled the social forces that put an end to the dictatorship. While emerging as the logical sequel to the work accomplished by the truth commissions, the museum also signals a break from the tradition of memorials in Chile.<sup>8</sup> In a subtle act of substitution, the museum introduces itself as a cleaner, more sophisticated version of all previous attempts at mourning and remembrance. Thus, the social pillar is made into a pre-history that must remain inactive in the basement of the building.

### The Ark or the Glass Box

Estudio America, an architecture office based in São Paulo, Brazil, was commissioned for the construction of the MMDH.<sup>9</sup> Their written proposal plays with abstract concepts—nonlinear time, fragmentary memories, transparency, autochthony, national geography, and allegories of commodities—as a means to explain the internal logic of the museum. However, the proposal does not clarify how the building responds to its historical purpose. It states why the project combines glass, steel, natural and artificial light, copper, coal, and concrete and why that mixture may appeal to visitors. Yet what remains unclear is the kind of relationship the interpretation of these materials, and the way they interact, have with the memory this museum seeks to preserve. In contrast to other proposals for the project, Estudio America's includes neither reference to the historical period covered nor any mention of the dictatorship. The expression "human rights" appears only once; the words disappeared, torture, victims, violence, or *coup d'état* are absent.<sup>10</sup> How are we to read these elisions and omissions?

The proposal is rich in metaphors suggesting how the building works in the mind of its architects—let us consider three of them. The first relates to the skin of copper that clads the museum. This skin not only pays homage to a noble metal that has

played a major role in the Chilean economy, pointing to one of the major achievements of Salvador Allende's government (1970-1973), the nationalization of this natural resource. Its presence also defines how the memory of state violence must be processed. By filtering the sunlight—and protecting the museum's patrimony—the copper skin functions as an "allegory of a memory that reveals its content in a subtle way."<sup>11</sup> In other words, this memory must not be violent or disruptive: it must reveal itself delicately, gently. A second metaphor refers to the problem of light and its use in the museographic narrative. If, on the one hand, the strategic control of sunlight relates to the idea of tamed transparency, on the other hand, it exerts an anesthetic effect. Architect Miguel Lawner, imprisoned and sent into exile during the dictatorship, summarized this operation with precision in a brief essay on the architectural design of the museum: "Arguably, the fact of being in a space always bright, a cheerful space, is a way to reduce the tensions generated by an exhibition that shows such traumatic episodes in our history."<sup>12</sup> The third metaphor concerns the way the elevated position of the building and how its connection with the rest of the complex defines the status of the memory it contains. In several passages from the architects' proposal, the museum is introduced as both an ark and a glass box. Both images serve the same purpose. When defined as an ark in which the Chilean society can store all the recollections of its bloody political flood, memory appears as a floating territory, uprooted from everyday life. As a glass box, the building becomes a delicate memory device that levitates above two water pools.

These are precisely the ideas the design suggests in the transition towards the core of the building. At the end of the first hall (still below ground level), visitors find a long staircase. Along the right wall of the stair is a screen-print of a large color photomontage including four overlapping pictures of demonstrations, three of them taken prior to the *coup d'état*. Upon reaching the landing, the screen-print disappears and is replaced by a band of transparent glass that coincides with the level of the water pools, signaling the entry into the elevated copper-clad body of the building. A second set of screen-prints located above the transparent band reinforces the idea of a temporal and spatial break, with pictures of military officers taking prisoners from the presidential palace the day of the *coup d'état*. The visitors enter a large, triple-height hall. The first section, entitled "September 11, 1973," is devoted to reconstructing that day as an event. The exhibition circulation proceeds upward with lateral stairs along the illuminated exterior leaving the central space to display the bulk of the exhibition. By favoring bright and cheerful spaces, and distancing street demonstrations from the actions of the *coup*, the architects have chosen to confront these memories in a very specific way. But there is a section in which the museographic narrative interrupts the tone set by the architectural design: the challenges associated with representing state violence come to mark one of the most dramatic turns of the exhibition.

## Repression and Torture

One of the most problematic sections of the MMDH is a room on the first floor dedicated to incidents of repression and torture during the dictatorship. This is the physically darkest area of the exhibition. Its boundaries are clearly defined by a black metal structure. Its walls, also black, are covered with small gray letters marking the names of the 30,000 victims that testified in front of the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture between 2003 and 2005. Off to one side are two small dark rooms with recorded testimonies of former political prisoners. They are followed by five interconnected stations that address, in this order, the characteristics and geographical dispersion of the detention and torture centers, the executions of political prisoners, methods of torture used by the agents of repression, the search for the disappeared, and the finding of bodies and skeletal remains throughout the country. A final and independent section reconstructs, by means of videos, drawings, and letters, the exile, torture, suffering, imprisonment, and disappearance of children. Two lateral galleries surround this enclosure and complete this part of the exhibition. One focuses on the everyday life in detention centers; testimonies of survival and resistance are accompanied by the display of crafts and leather goods made by political prisoners during their captivity. The other reconstructs the strategies of communication between the inmates and their families. By means of letters and small notes, meticulously displayed, visitors gain access to the intimacy of these contacts.

This section stands as a dark oasis within the museum, escaping the image of tamed transparency. The most shocking installation included here is a “grill” (a metal bed frame) connected to an electroshock machine (Figure 2). A selection of testimonies is projected on a screen above. The voices of the victims, which can be heard persistently, play a major role: “I was bleeding from the navel, bleeding from the vagina, bleeding from the nipples, from my nose, my mouth, and my ears. I was kind of a bloody mess.” It is here where memory operates with all its power. Confronted with the voices of those wounded bodies, with their pain, disorientation, fear, and solitude, visitors are forced to take a stand. The lived experience of an individual victim, with all its ethical implications and analytical pitfalls, dominates the situation. Some visitors show empathy, trying to connect themselves with the painful experiences of those that share their memories. Others will see themselves as improvised judges in a moral tribunal, reenacting and validating the logic of extrajudicial reparation that sustain the truth and reconciliation commissions. What are the implications of these reactions?

Several scholars have cautioned against the risks of fetishizing the category of victim of human rights violations. What happens when this category turns into a fixed, naturalized, and homogenous identity? Is it possible to transcend the distinctions between victims and non-victims—based on the idea that the victim is a subject with exclusive attributes—for the sake of new collective projects? Psychologists Isabel Phipper

and Marisela Montenegro address these issues through the examination of the political construction of the “victim” in contemporary Chile.<sup>13</sup> This questioning, of course, does not mean to promote oblivion or to ignore the strategic function this category has played in promoting certain policies and reparation measures. It intends, on the contrary, to seek for strategies to avoid the pervasive effects (universalization, homogenization, potential cooptation) of the routinization of identity categories that no longer question the institutional order. According to Pipper and Montenegro’s reading, the current challenge is to evaluate the implications of the idea of damaged subjectivities—and the social limits they create—in order to identify new possibilities of agency and transformation in the realm of politics. After reassessing our memories of the dictatorship, these authors state, we would be able to redefine the range of political alternatives in the contemporary search for social change.

Other scholars, including Greg Grandin, have analyzed the consequences of the “shift away from trying to understand the historical causes and social consequences of violence to an almost exclusive focus on how violence is experienced.”<sup>14</sup> Operating within the hermeneutic rather than the analytical wing of the humanities and social sciences, Grandin argues, these new interpretations have tended to reduce acts of political violence (like torture) to singular human experiences that escape from any effort of human understanding. In so doing, Grandin asserts, by “taking violence itself—not its effects or causes—as the subject of analysis, theorists of violence [...] void the possibility of analysis, approaching terror not by examining its productive function but by stressing its epistemological mystery, its literal senselessness.”<sup>15</sup> In a related text, Grandin and Thomas Klubock have shown how the individualizing logic of the truth and reconciliation commissions, the forensic approach that rules their works, and the compartmentalized treatment of the past they promote, have tended to disaggregate the collective nature of social justice struggles and to evade a confrontation with the structural inequalities and conflicts that gave rise to human rights violations. “In the end,” Greg Grandin and Thomas Klubock sustain, “the focus on specific cases, individual victims, and individual perpetrators abets the slippery move from individual experiences of trauma and healing to social structure and political process.”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, the museographic strategy of the “Repression and torture” room embodies most of the tensions identified by Pipper, Montenegro, Grandin and Klubock. By atomizing the experience of survivors and victims of state violence and representing that very violence in terms that obscure its connection with, for example, the distribution of power and resources within Chilean society, the museum’s narrative tends to fix a discourse that reinforces a compartmentalized vision of the catastrophe, promotes isolated rituals of mourning and remembrance, and detaches the past from the contemporary legacies of the dictatorship.

## Individualistic Obsessions

This emphasis on the idea of individual victims and the decontextualized treatment of political violence also pervades two artworks installed in the museum. The first is Jorge Tacla's *Al mismo tiempo, en el mismo lugar* (At The Same Time, in The Same Place, 2010) situated in front of the souvenir shop and the cafeteria, near the museum entrance just off Memory Square (Figure 3). The artwork consists of a series of enameled metal sheets that reproduce an internal view of the Víctor Jara Stadium, a building that served as torture and detention center and the site where the singer Víctor Jara was tortured and murdered a few days after the coup. While being detained, Jara wrote a poem, divided it into fragments and had it sent to his wife, Joan Jara, thanks to prisoners who were allowed to leave the stadium. According to the museum's description, Tacla took some verses from the poem (thus recalling the fragmentary way in which the poem left the stadium) and transcribed them on the enameled surface using a torch (symbolizing pain and the malleability of our bodies). The text was then marked with white and dark stains meant to evoke traumas and skeletal remains. "The poem," Tacla explains, "is a vivid record that, from the place of violence and under the threat of death, represents the ultimate expression of an artist."<sup>17</sup> Jara's poem is characterized by a strong sense of the collective: "There are five thousand of us here / in this small part of the city/ We are five thousand / I wonder how many we are in all / in the cities and in the whole country? / Here alone / are ten thousand hands which plant seeds / and make the factories run." Even though this collective emphasis somewhat counteracts the individualistic sense of Tacla's interpretation, it cannot challenge the assumptions that sustain the final result: while state violence is processed as a self-referential phenomenon, torture is reduced to a sum of subjective experiences, and the history of the committed militant (in this case, Jara) is replaced by the myth of the unarmed martyr.<sup>18</sup>

Through *Geometría de la conciencia* (The Geometry of Conscience, 2010), the second artwork under discussion, artist Alfredo Jaar tries to establish a critical dialogue with both the museum structure and its museographic script. The work is located outside the museum's structure, in a tomb-like space, underneath Memory Square. This subterranean location creates a space defined in dialectic terms with the museum's premises: instead of elevation, depth; instead of luminosity, darkness. After descending a narrow staircase, visitors cross a thick door controlled by one of the museum's guides. The chamber is small and dark. The door is closed and visitors wait in total darkness for a minute or so. Suddenly, a panel of white lights, covered by acrylic, turns on in front of the visitors. Five hundreds silhouettes appear. Two huge mirrors located on the opposite sides of the chamber multiply these images to infinity (Figure 4). A new dialectics comes into play: instead of photographs, silhouettes. They are not anonymous at all. They correspond to five hundred Chileans, most of them victims of the dictatorship, but there are also non-victims.

**Figure 3** Jorge Tacla, *Al mismo tiempo, en el mismo lugar* (*At The Same Time, in The Same Place*), Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, 2010.

**Figure 4** Alfredo Jaar, *Geometría de la conciencia* (*The Geometry of Conscience*), Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, 2010.



Photo Pin Campaña, courtesy of Jorge Tacla.



Courtesy of Alfredo Jaar.

This is the strategy that allows Jaar to transcend the contingent frontier between victims and non-victims, questioned by Pipper and Montenegro. By eroding this paralyzing distinction, Jaar not only stresses the idea that “we all lost something with the dictatorship,” but also situates the challenges to our memory in the future and its collective construction, and not only in the individual act of remembering the past.<sup>19</sup> Although it is clear that we all lost something to the crimes of the dictatorship, Jaar’s work does not question why that had to be so. In this sense, *Geometría de la conciencia* tackles the problem of the limits of the representation of violence in the aesthetic-political axis, but it does not explore the function of violence in the historical-political one. Violence is here an aftereffect, a given fact, not a practice to be addressed. Maybe that is the reason why Chilean artist Lucía Egaña defined this work as an appendix, as a mere gesture of contemporaneity. “[Jaar’s work] is too aesthetic and should be in an art museum. That is why I think it was located outside. Its function is not other than proving that here there is room for contemporary issues.”<sup>20</sup>

The concept behind *Geometría de la conciencia* and the museum’s script intersect in the section “Absence and Memory,” situated on the second floor. Visitors are given a preview of this section upon entering the main building. From here they see a glass box that cantilevers into the triple-height space of the main hall. Facing this chamber—basically a viewing platform—the wall is covered with hundreds of photographs. “Absence and Memory” recalls the *velatones*, a common practice consisting of lighting candles in significant places as a sign of mourning and/or protest. Inside the chamber, a set of fake candles placed at floor level (to be more precise, a set of solid cylinders of clear acrylic with a cut of 45° at the tip that concentrates the artificial light coming from the base) remembers the victims of the dictatorship, whose faces can be seen across the wall (Figures 5, 6). Some frames have no pictures and have been replaced by black or white cardboard. In addition to suggesting the unfinished character of both the installation and the museum’s mission, this is also meant as sign of institutional openness. Visitors are invited to take part in the completion of the museum’s patrimony through the donation of pictures of those who are still absent from this sanitized memorial. Finally, by means of a touch screen located in the middle of the room, next to a large bench that offers rest and time for reflection, visitors can search for the names of the victims and read descriptions of their death and disappearance circumstances as registered in the truth commissions’ reports.<sup>21</sup>

The tension between Jaar’s silhouettes and the set of pictures hung on the wall reflects larger debates on the political and aesthetic challenges associated with the representation of violence and the way such exercises intervene, from the present, in the dialogue between past and future. If talking about violence, death, and politics is always a delicate task, it is made more difficult when an institution of this type processes a haunting past through the accumulation of individual tragedies rather than collective causes. This individualizing attitude completely pervades the museum’s script and, to some extent, Jaar’s work. Is it possible to pay attention to the need for



Photo Federico Brega.



Photo Federico Brega.

**Figure 5** Absence and Memory room, Museum of Memory and Human Rights, Santiago, 2010.

**Figure 6** Absence and Memory room, detail.

individual recognition without undermining the social character of a political defeat? Do we have enough methodological tools to dignify personal histories without compartmentalizing the past? What do we have to recover for our own times, the suffering of the victims, the pain of the tortured, or the ideas that animated them?

### Subverting a Socialist Maxim

Today, the MMDH is one of the most active museums in the country. Between August 2010 and July 2011, the museum had 90,748 visitors—equivalent to fifteen percent of the average annual visits to the national network of public museums.<sup>22</sup> Thanks to an effective public relations strategy, and despite the campaigns of its critics, it has gained an important space among the “cultural institutions” created by the transitional governments of the *Concertación* coalition.<sup>23</sup> Precisely because of this, it is important to map its role in contemporary politics and the ways, along with its counterparts throughout the continent, it is helping shield and perpetuate the political and economic values promoted by the Latin American liberal democracies. This interest in reinforcing a political culture based on the respect for human rights might be nothing more than a sophisticated translation of a way of doing politics that combines the overexploitation of the concept of memory and the confinement of the most pressing consequences of state violence to the realm of the past, a past that is remembered through a plastic and malleable individual memory. To quote Susan Sontag: “Perhaps too much value is assigned to memory and not enough to thinking.”<sup>24</sup>

This is why the representation of violence in the MMDH is critical. Pain, suffering, disorientation, mutilation, solitude, disappearance, torture, murder, darkness, all these tropes are here introduced as the result of the “unnatural” coincidence between violence and politics. Thus, there is no reflection on the political function of violence. There is pure violence represented in a fashion that directly appeals to the fragility of the body. Furthermore, by emphasizing the atrocities perpetrated in the past by a state that magically does not resemble and has no relationship with the actual state, by promoting an ideological and practical distance between the material and symbolic benefits of today and the brutality and precariousness of a dark past, by suggesting that outside the liberal state the individual citizen becomes vulnerable, Latin American governments are now recycling and subverting a classic socialist maxim: the precept of these times seems to be *liberal democracy or barbarism*.

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1 Caroline Ford, "Museums after Empire in Metropolitan and Overseas France," *The Journal of Modern History* 82 (September 2010), 625-661.

2 Paraguay inaugurated its first museum of memory in 2006; Uruguay did the same in 2007. Argentina and Chile opened their museums in 2010. *Lugar de la Memoria* in Lima, Peru, and *Museo Casa de la Memoria* in Medellín, Colombia, were set to open in 2012.

3 Paul Williams, *Memorial Museums. The Global Rush to Commemorate Atrocities* (Oxford-New York: Berg, 2007), 1-7.

4 The crisscross pattern somewhat recalls that of the windows of Daniel Libeskind's Jewish Museum.

5 Mario Figueroa, Lucas Fehr, and Carlos Dias, "El programa," in *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* (Santiago: Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos, 2010), 42. The idea of "agora" comes from the essay "Una manzana abierta," by Miguel Lawner, included in same publication. The block in which the museum is located was originally to serve a different purpose. As part of the reform of Santiago's transportation system, the nowadays infamous *Transantiago* project, the Ministry of Public Works ordered to start excavation works to set the foundations of a huge intermodal station. The excavation works stopped in early 2006 and the heavy equipment was withdrawn in May of the same year. The collective of architects in charge of the construction of the museum (to be described later) took advantage of these excavations to design this underground agora. The museum has an underground connection to

the subway.

6 The *Concertación*, or Concert of Parties for Democracy, is the coalition of center-left political parties that led the transition to democracy in Chile. It ruled since the end of Augusto Pinochet's dictatorship until 2010, when it was defeated by the right-wing *Coalición por el Cambio* (Coalition for Change) led by billionaire businessman Sebastián Piñera.

7 They were the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation (1991), the National Corporation for Reparation and Reconciliation (1996), and the National Commission on Political Imprisonment and Torture (2004).

8 For an interesting reflection on one of these memorials, Villa Grimaldi, and the challenges derived from the plurality of voices that take part in the construction of a collective site, see Michael J. Lazzara, "Tres recorridos de Villa Grimaldi," in *Monumentos, memoriales y marcas territoriales*, eds. Elizabeth Jelin and Victoria Langland (Madrid: Siglo XXI de España Editores, 2003), 127-147. From the same author, "Dos propuestas de conmemoración pública: Londres 38 y el Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos," *A Contracorriente* 8, no. 3 (Spring 2011), 55-90. Lazzara offers in this last article a description and critique of the MMDH that may be read in parallel to ours. Regarding the history of memorials in Chile, see *Memoriales de Chile. Homenajes a las víctimas de violaciones de derechos humanos entre 1973 y 1990* (Santiago: Flacso-Chile, 2007).

9 Carlos Dias, Lucas Fehr, and Mario Figueroa were the architects in charge. A fourth professional, Roberto Ibieta, worked as technical manager and associate architect in Chile.

10 Estudio America's proposal can be downloaded on the museum website, <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/el-museo/sobre-el-museo/definiciones-estrategicas/> (accessed 10 January 2012). It is also included in *Museo de la Memoria*, 35-42. *Plataforma Arquitectura*, a website maintained by Chilean architects,

published the best five proposals that took part in the public contest organized by the Chilean government in 2007. There, one can find images, plans, and the justification for each project, see David Basulto, "Museo de la Memoria: Proyectos seleccionados," accessed 20 October 2011, <http://www.plataformaarquitectura.cl/2007/09/27/museo-de-la-memoria-proyectos-seleccionados/>.

11 Mario Figueroa, Lucas Fehr, and Carlos Dias, "El concepto," in *Museo de la Memoria*, 42. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are mine.

12 Lawner, "Una manzana abierta," 14.

13 Isabel Pipper and Marisela Montenegro, "Análisis crítico de la categoría de 'víctima': Aperturas para la acción política," *Actuel Marx Intervenciones* 6 (First Semester 2008), 125-137.

14 Greg Grandin, "Living in Revolutionary Time. Coming To Terms with the Violence of Latin America's Long Cold War," in *A Century of Revolution. Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence During Latin America's Long Cold War*, eds. Greg Grandin and Gilbert M. Joseph (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010), 7.

15 Grandin, "Living in Revolutionary Time," 8.

16 Greg Grandin and Thomas Miller Klubock, "Editors' Introduction," *Radical History Review* 97 (Winter 2007), 6.

17 Jorge Tacla, "Al mismo tiempo, en el mismo lugar. Nueva York, 29 de julio, 2009," in *Museo de la Memoria*, 51.

18 Besides its collective tone, Jara's poem also transmits a clear consciousness of the character and origin of the violence he was experiencing and witnessing. The detailed description of his comrades' pain and the torturers' minds, his references to the horrors of fascism, or even his militant calls for global condemnation are dimensions that unfortunately did not find room in Tacla's installation. Víctor Jara, "Chile Stadium," September 1973. The quoted fragment comes from the transla-

tion by Joan Jara, available at the *Revolutionary Democracy* website, accessed 30 January 2012, <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv15/jara.htm>.

19 Javier García, "Alfredo Jaar: 'Todos hemos perdido algo con la dictadura,'" *La Nación*, 15 January 2010, accessed 20 January 2010, <http://www.lanacion.cl/noticias/site/artic/20100114/pags/20100114202552.html>. See also art critic Adriana Valdés' essay on Jaar installation, accessed 19 August 2012, <http://www.museodelamemoria.cl/expos/la-geometria-de-la-conciencia/>.

20 Lucía Egaña, "Museo de la memoria," from her blog *Violencia de la intimidación*, 1 February 2010, accessed 1 February 2012, <http://www.blog.lucysombra.org/?p=290>.

21 Both the touch screen and the brochures the museum provides explain how visitors can participate in the completion of the memorial. Of course, the museum keeps total control of the museography, so visitors cannot bring pictures and install them themselves. In fact, the museum was closed in late February-early March 2012 due to the addition of new pictures to this section.

22 Ricardo Brodsky, "El Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos," *Revista Museos* 30 (2011), 47. The national network of public museums encompasses twenty-three institutions distributed across the country. They are administered and materially depend on the Directorate of Libraries, Archives, and Museums (DIBAM). The Museum of Memory and Human Rights is directed by a private non-profit foundation, but receive financial support from the government through DIBAM. Re-

garding the temporal frame of these statistics, it has to be remembered that the museum remained closed for five months after the February 27, 2010 earthquake. Interestingly, between its inauguration and the day before the earthquake, more than 103,000 people had visited it.

23 The campaign of the museum's critics revolves around two main ideas. First, the institution reproduces a partisan, i.e. left wing, view of the dictatorship, because it only focuses on human rights issues and ignores the positive legacies of Pinochet's regime. Second, since the museum's script does not cover the government of Salvador Allende and the Popular Unity (1970-73), it prevents citizens from understanding the institutional and political crisis that led to the *coup d'état*. Its critics coincide in the need for achieving an impartial view of the recent past. See, for example, Roberto Ampuero, "Una memoria desmemoriada," *Emol.com*, 5 November 2009, accessed 10 March 2010, [http://www.cren.cl/script/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1277:una-memoria-desmemoriada-&catid=13&Itemid=40](http://www.cren.cl/script/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1277:una-memoria-desmemoriada-&catid=13&Itemid=40); Cristián Monckeberg, "Museo de la Memoria," *Emol.com*, 25 January 2010, accessed 25 March 2012, <http://buscador.emol.com/vermas/El%20Mercurio/Noticias/El%20Mercurio/2010-01-25/30830/Blog%253A+Museo+de+la+Memoria/>; and Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt, "La historia y el ratón Mickey," *The Clinic* 21 (January 2010), 24-25. These ideas started to circulate right after the announcement of the construction of the MMDH and have constantly reappeared apropos of debates regarding the history

of the dictatorship and the role the museum plays in its treatment. The last episode of this public discussion took place in June 2012 and reached its climax when Magdalena Krebs, Director of DIBAM, answered a letter by Ricardo Brodsky, Executive Director of the MMDH. While Krebs argued that the museum was not accomplishing the pedagogical duty of offering a consensual vision of the past due the lack of context for understanding the breakdown of democracy in Chile, Brodsky insisted on the idea that the museum's main mission was to pay homage to the victims of the dictatorship and contribute to the construction of a democracy committed to the human rights agenda. The controversy sparked an intense debate in which scholars, politicians, and activists of the entire political spectrum took part. See Ricardo Brodsky, "Museo de la Memoria," *El Mercurio*, 21 June 2012, accessed 21 June 2012, <http://blogs.elmercurio.com/columnasycartas/2012/06/21/museo-de-la-memoria.asp> and Magdalena Krebs, "Museo de la Memoria," *El Mercurio*, 23 June 2012, accessed 23 June 2012, <http://blogs.elmercurio.com/columnasycartas/2012/06/23/museo-de-la-memoria-2.asp>. For a critical comment on Krebs' intervention, see Andrés Estefane, "Los demonios del Museo de la Memoria," *Red Seca*, 27 June 2012, accessed 28 June 2012, <http://www.redseca.cl/?p=3258>.

24 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), 115.