

EMBODIED ABSENCE

Ephemerality and Collectivity in Chilean Art from the 1970s

Curated by Liz Munsell

Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende. Santiago, Chile 2015

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Conceptual art from the early years of the dictatorship in Chile has remained relatively isolated since the moment of its creation, when it unfolded in sheltered spaces for a minimal public willing to risk persecution by government authorities. Devastated by the brutal coup d'état and its aftermath, Chilean artists residing inside their country and abroad sought to create work that spoke directly to their experience of political, social and geographic marginalization. In order to do so, they developed highly coded languages to protect themselves from censorship and repression, obscuring the political content of their work through conceptual art devices. Resulting works were frequently ephemeral and used the body as their primary medium, leading to their disappearance following an initial, semi-clandestine presentation. The difficulty of transposing this work onto another time and place is marked by the specificities of its context, language and formats. Yet doing so is a critical pass toward their rightful inclusion in international histories of conceptual art.