



## Paz Errázuriz

MATRIX 251 JANUARY 17 – MARCH 30, 2014

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY ART MUSEUM & PACIFIC FILM ARCHIVE

The covert role the U.S. played in installing one of the most brutal regimes in South America is now well known: the right-wing General Augusto Pinochet, backed by President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, assumed power on September 11, 1973, deposing the popular socialist president Salvador Allende. Pinochet’s ruthless regime lasted for a period of seventeen years, during which time nearly 3,000 Chileans were “disappeared” (the *desaparecidos*), tens of thousands were tortured, and countless other human rights violations occurred.<sup>1</sup>

It is against this backdrop that Paz Errázuriz, a self-taught photographer, began taking pictures. Compelled to document what was transpiring around her and to combat the censorship imposed on everyday life, Errázuriz and other Chilean artists and poets working in Santiago in the 1970s took to the streets and barrios in creative acts of resistance. In 1981 Errázuriz and other self-taught photographers formed the Association of Independent Photographers (AFI), a grass-roots organization that supported their photographic endeavors: mounting shows, publishing books, and educating one another about their legal rights. They would often go into the streets together to take pictures, seeking protection in numbers from the violent episodes they sought to document. About working during that time, Errázuriz has said, “Photography let me express things in my own way and participate in the resistance waged by those of us who remained in Chile. It was our means of showing that we were there and fighting back.”<sup>2</sup>

Over the forty years that Errázuriz has lived and worked in Santiago, she has consistently focused on figures in the Chilean social landscape that have been relegated to the invisible margins of cultural discourse; her work aims to visually reintegrate them into a society that has juridically and economically rejected them. Errázuriz’s portraits, typically black-and-white (although she also works in color), tell the poignant and personal stories of those who the military dictatorship ostracized, or worse, viciously targeted. Working in discrete bodies of work that take the form of documentary visual essays, Errázuriz’s photographs are organized around specific social groups: wrestlers, boxers, circus performers, residents of a mental institution, prostitutes, and indigenous tribes of the Patagonia.

From 1982 to 1987, Errázuriz set out to pay tribute to the lives of a dozen male transvestites who worked in various clandestine brothels in the cities of Santiago and Talca. Errázuriz met the men after working with a group of female prostitutes in the brothel La Palmera. Enshrouded in silence and having suffered a secret world of violence, the men welcomed Errázuriz’s camera, and wanted their stories to be told. Collaborating with the journalist Claudia Donoso, Errázuriz recorded their stories in a moving body of work, *La manzana de Adán* (*Adam’s Apple*), which became her first photographic book, published in 1990 after Pinochet was ousted and democracy restored. The book pairs Errázuriz’s visceral images with Donoso’s texts recounting the personal stories of the men who were forced to live an underground existence, fearful of being discovered by the police. Donoso tells the men’s stories in their own voices, unadulterated, along with her own description of her and Errázuriz’s visits. The texts and photographs together present a moving and valuable record of the men’s experiences inside the gritty interiors of La Palmera

and La Carlina in Santiago and La Jaula in Talca. Only occasionally do we get a glimpse of them outdoors—they moved frequently between Talca and Santiago, as staying in one place for too long was dangerous—and in these images their unadorned identities emerge.

The series begins with two brothers, Evelyn and Pilar, and their mother, Mercedes, with whom they were very close. Mercedes, who was illiterate, often came to the brothels to visit her sons, and they supported her with their earnings. In one text, Evelyn explains, “Mum stayed with Pilar and me because once she saw that we were ‘colas’ and would never marry, she realized that we’d never leave her. My father died some fifteen years ago, of cirrhosis of the liver.”<sup>3</sup> Out of all the men, Evelyn appears most often in the photographs, revealing different aspects of his identity: we see him as a young man with neatly trimmed hair sitting on his bed in an early image from 1983; later in 1986 we see him with longer hair, with his lover Hector; and in another, also from 1983, he glamorously reclines on a bed in drag and heavy makeup, as if waiting for his next client.

Almost all of the men documented in *La manzana de Adán* contracted AIDS, and died as a result. This was in the early days of the AIDS epidemic and, as Errázuriz recalls, the men were so detached from society they didn’t know what it was. Others died from different causes: Evelyn committed suicide, and the police killed Leyla, only one example of the brutality the men experienced. Pilar offers a firsthand description of what they suffered at the hands of the military police:

They took Chico Lucho who hasn’t been seen since. He was the owner of a brothel in San Pablo Street. The soldiers burnt it down. We were with Leila in Valparaíso when the coup occurred and they took all of us to a ship moored in the port. They took us there blindfolded, in a van. For six days I was left there, piled up with the others, in the hole. The first thing the soldiers did was cut our hair; they pulled it by the roots and afterwards they pissed on us. They kept hitting us. They hung Tamara and Tila with a rope and made them spin turning them round and round. . . . They killed several of us during the coup. They killed Mariliz who was really pretty, just like Liz Taylor. This happened over Christmas. Her body was found in the Mapocho River, full of bayonet holes.<sup>4</sup>

Only two of the men are still living, one of whom remains in contact with Errázuriz.

Errázuriz worked with the men of *La manzana de Adán* for nearly a decade without ever exhibiting the photographs, as it would have been too dangerous both for her and for the men. Finally in 1989, just before Pinochet’s regime ended, the pictures were shown together for the first time in a Santiago gallery. Their public display gave a human face and voice to a disdained social group, a small gesture toward reassimilation and an acknowledgement of the repression they endured.

Apsara DiQuinzio

CURATOR OF MODERN AND CONTEMPORARY ART AND PHYLLIS C. WATTIS MATRIX CURATOR



1. See José Zalaquett's introduction to the United States Institute of Peace's *Report on the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation*, 6–17, accessed November 1, 2013, [http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/collections/truth\\_commissions/Chile90-Report/Chile90-Report.pdf](http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/resources/collections/truth_commissions/Chile90-Report/Chile90-Report.pdf).

2. Miriam Rosen, "Chile 1973–2013, Conversations with Photographers 3; Paz Errázuriz: Looking at the Other Side of Things," *Mediapart*, September 25, 2013, accessed November 1, 2013, <http://blogs.mediapart.fr/blog/miriam-rosen/250913/chile-1973-2013-conversations-photographers-3>.

3. Claudio Donoso and Paz Errázuriz, *La manzana de Adán* (Santiago: Zona, 1990), 112.

4. *Ibid.*, 91.

THE MATRIX PROGRAM IS MADE POSSIBLE BY A GENEROUS ENDOWMENT GIFT FROM PHYLLIS C. WATTIS AND THE SUPPORT OF THE BAMPFA TRUSTEES. ADDITIONAL FUNDING IS PROVIDED BY THE JAY DEFEQ TRUST.

This exhibition includes a selection of thirty photographs from *La manzana de Adán (Adam's Apple)* (1982–87) on view in Gallery One. This is the first comprehensive display of the series in the United States. In addition, ten photographs from *Boxeadores (Boxers)* (1987) are on view in the Theater Gallery. All photographs are gelatin silver prints and are courtesy of the artist and Galería AFA, Santiago.

FRONT  
*La Palmera, Santiago*, 1982; 19 3/8 x 23 1/2 in.

ABOVE  
*Coral, La Carlina, Santiago*, 1985; 23 7/8 x 19 7/8 in.

RIGHT  
*Evelyn y su madre Mercedes*, 1983; 19 7/8 x 23 7/8 in.

LEFT  
*Evelyn, La Palmera*, 1983; 19 3/8 x 23 1/2 in.

*Macarena y Evelyn, La Carlina, Santiago*, 1985; 19 x 23 in.

From the series *La manzana de Adán (Adam's Apple)*; gelatin silver prints. Courtesy of the artist and Galería AFA, Santiago.

## Biography

Paz Errázuriz was born in Santiago, Chile in 1944, where she continues to live and work. She studied at the Cambridge Institute of Education in England in 1966, and received her degree from the Catholic University of Chile in 1972. Although primarily self-taught, in 1993 she attended the International Center of Photography in New York. She began her photographic work in the early 1980s, working for the magazine *Apsi* and for various foreign news agencies, in addition to collaborating with the Vicariate of Solidarity. In 1981, she was a cofounder of the Association of Independent Photographers (AFI) in Santiago.

Errázuriz has exhibited widely over the trajectory of her career, now in its fourth decade. Some of her selected solo exhibitions include *La luz que me ciega (The Light That Blinds Me)* at Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (MAC), Santiago (2010); *Paz Errázuriz, Fotografías Chile 1981–2002* at Centro Cultural Borges, Buenos Aires (2006); *Los nómadas de mar (Nomads of the Sea)* at Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago (1996); *Photographs by Paz Errázuriz* at The Photography Gallery,

Toronto (1992); and *La manzana de Adán (Adam's Apple)*, The Australian Centre for Photography, Sydney (1989). She has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Chile and abroad, including *Tectonic Shift: Contemporary Art from Chile from the Juan Yarur Collection*, Saatchi Gallery, London (2010); *The Gaze: Looking at Photography in Latin America Today*, Daros Foundation, Zurich (2003); the 1995 and 1986 Havana Biennials, *La Havana; Recovering Histories: Aspects of Contemporary Art in Chile Since 1982*, The Zimmerli Art Museum, New Brunswick, NJ (1993); *Desires and Disguises: Five Latin American Photographers*, The Photographers' Gallery, London (1992); and *Images of Silence*, Museum of Modern Latin American Art, Organization of the American States, Washington, D.C. (1989).

Errázuriz is the recipient of numerous awards including a Guggenheim Fellowship (1986); the Fundación Andes Award (1990); a Fulbright Fellowship (1992); the Ansel Adams Award, awarded by the Chilean North American Institute of Culture (1995); the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Critics Circle of Chilean Art (2005); and the Altazor Award of the National Arts (2005).