

Colectivo Acciones de Arte (C.A.D.A.) is an interdisciplinary group of Chilean artists created in 1979, of which **Juan Castillo** was a member from the beginning.

C.A.D.A. aimed to establish a critical reflection on the dilemma of Art and Politics, especially urgent given the dictatorial state Chile was going through in those years. C.A.D.A. concentrated on structuring the urban intervention to establish a new aesthetic proposal that would shake up the existing artistic circuits under the dictatorship. The group advocated for greater interaction in the media and to turn them into pillars for the exhibition and dissemination of their artistic discourse.

The expansion exercised by the C.A.D.A. group in political art against the dictatorship was radical in both senses: it inserted itself in the forbidden public terrain, using hegemonic strategies (institutions, media, private properties), occupying it as a support. It also extended the art reception circuit to the entire city, assuming its inhabitant as a valid interlocutor. In this way, the authorial condition of his works is dynamically dissolved in a broad social object. Ignoring generic or disciplinary distinctions, the group aspired to produce total works, involving visuality and writing at both literary and critical levels. In solidarity with the historical avant-garde project of fusing art and life, the C.A.D.A. was an essential protagonist of the avant-garde scene.

Some of C.A.D.A.'s works have an enormous historical relevance, as they transcended the artistic field to become part of the collective Latin American and world imaginary, such as *No +* (1983-1989).

Testimonial by Juan Castillo

"In 1979 I participated, together with Lotty Rosenfeld, in an exhibition held at the Goethe Institute, where we also met Raul Zurita and Diamela Eltit, forming the C.A.D.A. immediately. With Lotty we had been developing a visual investigation on our side, in tension with what was happening in Chile and its relationship with the territory of art. When we met Raul and Diamela our interests and affinities matched and that facilitated and gave strength to the group. We were interested in the interdisciplinary theme, so we felt the need to broaden it with someone coming from the social sciences. Fernando Ballcells had just arrived from Paris and joined us. The title of the first work I think is eloquent: *Para no morir de hambre en el arte* (So as not to die of hunger in art). We were concerned about making art from the place where we lived, and that place in the Chile of the dictatorship was hunger wherever you looked at it. The works were creating a body, articulating with each other; they created a strong controversy at the time. When we did something many people came and we had our friends who dialogued, our references and influences were many: Raúl Ruiz, Wolf Vostell, Juan Downey, Victor Grippo, Joseph Beuys, Juan Dávila, Juan Luis Martínez, Enrique Lihn, Violeta and Nicanor Parra and in general the group of CAYC (Center of Art and Communication), without Jorge Glusberg, were in the heads of all of us. I rather reread the aforementioned and poetry, but each member had a body of reading related to their interests. It is true that the circulation of information was scarce, but it existed. Juan Downey also played an important role, I think, with his visits to Chile and his generous dialogues, and we tried to distance ourselves from the mostly apolitical conceptualism that was taking place in the U.S. For us it was vital what was going on around us... well, it is always vital. The formal-intellectual games alone didn't interest

us. We were interested in the game that could be established by asking questions to what we call our reality. I think in their time both Vostell and Beuys did that." (1)

Testimonial by Juan Castillo

"The C.A.D.A. was the result of a collective work without categorization. Of course, when it came to writing, it was Raúl Zurita and Diamela Elit who gave the final shape to what was created together. The same with the theoretical texts, which generally ended up being written by Fernando Bacells, according to the ideas we had fixed. In the case of the visuality of these works, Lotty Rosenfeld and I were the ones who defined them.(2)

C.A.D.A. developed a language that allowed it to continue working, a language of multiple readings.

We never considered that a certain artistic practice, for example painting, was obsolete. At the beginning in C.A.D.A., photography and video were only means to fix our actions, which were so ephemeral. Then we realized that these media offered us an expressive form rich in possibilities, beyond registration. In our first work at the Galería Imagen we made what is now called an installation with the records of the actions carried out in video, also documents sealed in an acrylic box containing the magazine Hoy, intervened by the C.A.D.A., a copy of a speech launched in front of the United Nations headquarters in Santiago de Chile, etc. All of these documents became an active part of the discourse of the action. In my case I continue to use photography, video, and I have frequently resorted to elements of painting, to structure the occupations of space that I carry out in different places.

Beyond the spaces, perhaps the center of gravity of these actions are the discourses of their inhabitants, which I consider fundamental in my life". (3)

C.A.D.A. ACTIONS

First action of the group C.A.D.A.

Para no morir de hambre en el arte (1979) is an emblematic work that marks the political and aesthetic intentions of the group; the central presence of milk refers to the basic needs of the Chilean population and the projects of the deposed democratic government of Salvador Allende to put an end to them, abruptly interrupted by the coup d'état of General Pinochet.

Para no morir de hambre en el arte (1979) consisted of the distribution of 100 liters of milk to 100 families in a village. The plastic bag was printed with the phrase ½ liter of milk. That same day, a text was read in front of the United Nations headquarters in Santiago de Chile, in the five official languages of the organization: English, Spanish, Chinese, French and Russian.

Once the reused milk bags were distributed, C.A.D.A members went to the Centro Imagen Galería, where they placed 60 bags in a sealed acrylic box and a copy of Hoy magazine, which featured a short full-page poetic text as an advertisement. Those bags that remained enclosed in the acrylic box, kept from being consumed, followed the process of decomposition of the "work". All the actions were documented on video and shown for a month in the gallery.

Testimonial by Juan Castillo

"The inaugural action of the group was Para no morir de hambre en el arte (Not to Starve in Art). Here was condensed all the development of the C.A.D.A. group. Its need to open new spaces for the realization of the works, without forgetting that at that time all the official places, museums, etc., were practically closed due to the blindness of those who directed them. What we wanted was to show that the development of a language that comes out of the left does not necessarily go through the direct pamphleteering or advertising of its ideas. Half a liter of milk had been one of the objectives of the Popular Unity: that every child in Chile could have half a liter of milk a day. This slogan survived in the memory of Chileans and we used it to activate that memory and also as a paradox of everything that was missing in Pinochet's Chile".(4)

The action Para no morir de hambre en el arte (1979) referred to the reality of Chile poetically and defined it in a heartbreaking way, appealing to the hunger, urgency and precariousness experienced at that time, extending it to other places in the world.

CADA had made a call to other artists living in Colombia and Canada to make a simultaneous action to Para no morir de hambre en el arte. The artist and poet Cecilia Vicuña distributed posters around the city of Bogota, and at noon the same day, in front of the Quinta de Bolivar, she spilled a sticker, a substitute for a glass of milk, and wrote a poem on the pavement. In Toronto, artist Eugenio Tellez drank a glass of milk and read a text about the economic differences between countries, between the lack of some and the abundance of others.

Second action of the C.A.D.A. group.

Inversión de escena (1979). In mid-October 1979, the city of Santiago de Chile witnessed another unusual action involving milk and, by extension, it is considered a continuation of Para no morir de hambre en el arte.

Ten trucks of Soprole, a national milk products company, stopped in front of the main entrance of the National Museum of Fine Arts in downtown of Santiago de Chile. Inside one of them, a television monitor reproduced the video of the caravan's route through the streets of the city of Santiago de Chile, which simulated that of military tanks. At the same time, a group of collaborating artists placed a gigantic white canvas in front of the entrance of the institution, between two flagpoles. By blocking the entrance and "censoring" the Museum, C.A.D.A. was inverting the scene of representation of the official institution. With the canvas as a curtain towards the city, the street became the sign and the new valid context of interpretation, to which art should be directed.

Testimonial by Juan Castillo

What interested me personally within the C.A.D.A. and in my individual work so far is the ability to create social aesthetic models rather than establish supposed truths; these, in turn, function as detonators or questioners of our practices and by extension to that of others. (5)

Third action of the group C.A.D.A.

Ay Sudamérica (1981) the group CADA carried out an action in which during one morning they dropped 400,000 flyers from six airplanes over the communes of Santiago de Chile. In each plane was a member of the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA). Both passers-by, as well as the artists on the ground informed of the action, read on the flyer the singular proposal:

For every man a work in happiness, which otherwise is the only great collective aspiration/their only tear/a work in happiness, that is. We are artists, but every man who works for the enlargement, however mental, of his living spaces is an artist. We say therefore that the work of enlargement of the habitual levels of life is the only valid art montage/the only exhibition/the only work of art that lives. Thus we jointly constructed the beginning of the work: a recognition in our minds; thus erasing the trades: life as a creative act.

It was one of the most striking actions as a "visual format", and certainly risky. Art burst into the everyday life of the city, took the floor and "subverted" the structures of language to activate the memory of the community.

Testimonial by Juan Castillo

It always seemed to us that to circumscribe art only to its own world is a way of reducing it. Like many other artists, we were interested in placing art in the territory in which it developed, and that territory for us, of course, was the Chile of the dictatorship. It was not that we did not want to deal with art's own problems, but rather that we confronted those problems with the space we had to live in. That's where the ideas came from. When people talk about political art, installations, etc., it makes me immensely tired: they are words that have been worn out and neutralized by use or misuse. (6)

For the rest, putting political art versus traditional art before or against each other makes no sense to me. The maximum virulence or splendor can be contained in all art practices. Titles do not guarantee anything. The owners of the planes knew they were participating in an "art event". The truth is that it was a network of cooperating friends that allowed these actions to take place. Even today it seems incredible to me that they took place, especially at the time. (7)

Fourth action by the C.A.D.A. group

The C.A.D.A group finished the urban interventions with the mural "NO +", the most ambitious project aimed at increasing artistic spaces. This was the most socially efficient work of the group. An important number of artists from different disciplines gave their support contributing in such a way that in the city and in the minds of its inhabitants -who are not content with dictatorship- the demands for democracy in the country were met. An urban project where creativity and rigor intersect, demanding a more habitable social reality, arising from risky, plural and surprising artistic mechanisms.

No + (1983-1984) *No más* was the most powerful and significant intervention in the city, making a visual gesture extend beyond its tracing on the walls, to be assumed by the community and anonymity. CADA, together with other artists, went out at night to "scratch" the walls of the city with the sign "No +". As a call began to appear the "No + to Pinochet", No + (and the image of a revolver). Shortly after painting the phrase "No +" in the urban space, it would be noticed

that someone, some unknown person in the city, would complete the sentence with an image, word or group of words. The phrases "No + dictatorship", "No + torture", "No + weapons", "No + disappeared", "No + death", began to appear on the walls of Santiago de Chile, thus forming a textual network of protest graffiti. The anonymity of the sign propitiated the immediate appropriation and became a slogan in the city, disappearing definitively the authorship. The No + would be present in the city until the process of the plebiscite during the years 1988-1989, in which the option No + to Pinochet triumphed.

Testimonial by Juan Castillo

No + seems to me the most important work of the C.A.D.A. group in the sense that it fulfills the dream of C.A.D.A.: an art made for everyone. That's very nice because now anyone who gives a new content to No + is a new C.A.D.A. in my eyes. They were telling me that in Madrid the demonstrations started to be slogans with the NO +. That is frankly very beautiful. (8)

The last action of the C.A.D.A. group.

Widow (1985). The photograph taken by Paz Errázuriz, of an anonymous woman who had lost her husband in one of the actions of "raid" of a town by the military, was published in several magazines (Análisis, Hoy, Apsi, the newspaper La época and Came) with the label, VIUDA, in block letters. Several of the versions also included the following text:

We bring then to appear an anonymous face, whose identity strength is to be the bearer of the drama of continuing to inhabit a territory where her most beloved faces have ceased. To look at her extreme and popular gesture. To pay attention to her widowhood and survival. To understand a people.

As Diamela Eltit opportunely explained at the time: We wanted to invert the funerary parameters that have been in the works of art (faces of the dead, of the disappeared) by taking the face of a living woman. To quote death, but through life.

Testimony Juan Castillo

What seems significant to me is that the C.A.D.A. has transcended other generations, that it is currently a point of reference for many artists. The history of art in our countries is a series of decapitations: a generation develops and when it disappears, those that follow start from zero with respect to its closest history. My work is C.A.D.A., it is Amereida [Amereida Cultural Corporation, an open community in Chile that combines pedagogy, architecture, poetry and life], it is many ideas that are in the air and feed me, but above all, the history that the communities with which I establish relationships are writing. These small stories are my universe and the basis of everything I develop.(9)

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