

Artist Bernardo Oyarzún and curator Ticio Escobar to represent Chile at the 57th Venice Art Biennale



Masks as part of Bernardo Oyarzún's *Werken* for the Chilean Pavilion at the 57th Venice Art Biennale

The National Council of Culture and Arts Chile is delighted to announce further details of artist Bernardo Oyarzún and curator Ticio Escobar's presentation for Chile at the 57th International Art Exhibition, Venice Biennale 2017, and to announce that Chilean artists Juan Downey and Enrique Ramirez have been selected to present work in the main exhibition of the Biennale, VIVA ARTE VIVA.

Bernardo Oyarzún will represent the Chilean pavilion in the Arsenale at the forthcoming Venice Art Biennale, opening to the public on the 13th May 2017 and on view through to 26th November 2017. The exhibition will be curated by Ticio Escobar.

Mr. Ernesto Ottone, Minister of Culture of Chile, said: "We are extremely happy with the decision made by the jury. I have admired the work of Bernardo Oyarzún for many years and am very excited about this project. Oyarzún explores the relationship between contemporary art and indigenous peoples, and I think this project will offer an important insight into the subject."

Oyarzún's project will explore the theme of the current representation of the Mapuche community, a group of indigenous inhabitants of southcentral Chile and southwestern



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Argentina. The exhibition, entitled *Werken*, will feature an impressive installation of over 1,000 Mapuche kollong masks, traditionally used in ceremonies, located in the centre of the room, forming an area which will occupy approximately 10 x 11 meters. The walls of the room will feature red LED scroll signs that will display 6,907 Mapuche surnames. Oyarzún's work often combines anthropological, social and historical elements in order to present a critique of Chilean culture and society.

The masks were made one by one by forty Mapuche artisans who live in different communities in southern Chile, from a direct relationship established by the artist with each of them.

Curator Ticio Escobar is an academic, art critic and cultural promoter. In 1979 he founded the Museo del Barro (Museum of Pottery) in Asunción with the objective of preserving Paraguayan culture, and in the same year founded the Museo de Arte Indígena, Centro de Artes Visuales (Museum for Indigenous Art, Centre of Visual Art), of which he was director until 2008. He is currently the Director of the Centre for Visual Arts at Museo del Barro.

Regarding the election of the project that will represent Chile at this Biennial, Ticio Escobar said: "I was interested in proposing the work of Bernardo Oyarzún, whom I consider to be one of the most solid names of contemporary art in Chile, because it allows me to work with historical contents and powerful politicians without neglecting the aesthetic and poetic dimension of the work. The indigenous issue, which has preoccupied me and occupied me for decades, allows me to enter into central problems of the reality of Latin America from the perspective of art. "

The selection of Bernardo Oyarzún and Ticio Escobar to represent the Chilean Pavillion at the Biennale was conducted through a call for curatorial proposals from Chile or any other Latin American country, held by the National Council for Culture and Arts (CNCA). More than 20 projects were submitted and evaluated by an international jury including:

Cuachtémoc Medina, Mexican theorist and curator, Chief Curator MUAC (Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo-UNAM) and Manifesta 9

Ivo Mesquita, Brazilian curator and art critic, Curator of the 28th São Paulo Biennale

Monica Bengoa, Chilean artist and academic, participant of the Venice Biennale 2007

Gonzalo Díaz, Chilean artist and academic, participant of the Venice Biennale 2005, winner of the 2003 Chilean National Prize for Plastic Arts

Nelly Richard, theorist, curator of the Chilean Pavillion at the 2015 Venice Biennale

Emilio Lamarca, diplomat, arts manager, responsible for the first pavilion of Chile at the Venice Biennale



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Gaspar Galáz, artist, academic and theorist

According to Bernardo Oyarzún: “The mask is a game of representation and every gesture is significant. These are like the masks of Greek theatre: some have strong expressions and others, softer. They are theatrical. This project will create a dialogue that will depend on each spectator. Viewers will feel the weight of the phantasmagoric imaginary.”

The work of Oyarzún at the Venice Biennale presents the issues surrounding Latin America’s indigenous peoples, a theme rarely explored at major exhibitions of international contemporary art.

Chile’s participation at the 57th International Art Exhibition in Venice is commissioned by the National Council of Culture and the Arts (CNCA) and organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Cultural Affairs Bureau (DIRAC) and Fundación Imagen de Chile.

At this year’s Venice Biennale, Chile will also be represented by the pioneering filmmaker Juan Downey, who passed away in 1993, and 38-year-old media artist Enrique Ramirez. Both Chilean artists were selected by Christine Macel, curator of the Biennale, to participate in her exhibition *Viva Arte Viva*. The exhibition, which will be on show in the Arsenale and Central Pavilion of the Giardini, is designed to organically evolve in a sequence of nine Trans-pavilions, which follow one another like chapters of a book.



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Notes to Editors

The Artist

Bernardo Oyarzún was born in 1963 in the province of Los Muermos in the south of Chile. He currently lives and works in Santiago. His work is inserted in a proletarian context, it's references are taken from the marginal sectors of society and it has an anthropological basis that is associated with Latin American identity, its native roots and *mestizaje*. He combines anthropological, social, historical and ethnical elements in order to present, in a critical way, Chilean culture and society. For his installations he commonly uses documents and photographs of his personal history and origins, which are linked to the native forests of southern Chile and Mapuche culture, indigenous inhabitants of south-central Chile and southwestern Argentina. His breakthrough was "Bajo Sospecha" (Under Suspension, 1998), an exhibition inspired by a past event, when he was arrested by Chilean police after being confused with a criminal. Oyarzún has exhibited at 18 solo shows in Chile and abroad, as well as 30 international exhibitions and biennales.

The Curator

Ticio Escobar is a curator, academic, art critic and cultural promoter. He was born in Asunción, capital of the Republic of Paraguay on February 9, 1947. Between 1971 and 1989, Escobar was a university professor in the fields of philosophy of law, mathematical logic, philosophical anthropology, history of art and art criticism. Until 1980, he was an art reviewer for the Museo Paraguayo de Arte Contemporáneo. In 1979 he founded the Museo del Barro (Museum of Pottery) in Asunción, with the objective of preserving Paraguayan culture. The same year he also founded the Museo de Arte Indígena, Centro de Artes Visuales (Museum for Indigenous Art, Centre of Visual Art). To this museum, of which he was also the director until 2008, he donated his own art collection. During 2008-2013 he was appointed secretary of culture by President Fernando Lugo for. He is currently the Director of the Centre for Visual Arts at Museo del Barro.

National Council of Culture and Arts Chile

The National Council of Culture and Arts Chile is the governing body responsible for implementing public policies for cultural development in Chile. Cultural development is supported through the promotion of artistic activity, the preservation of cultural heritage, advocacy of public initiatives that encourage participation in the arts, and facilitation of access to cultural events. Ernesto Ottone has been Minister President of the National Council for Culture and the Arts Chile since 2015. www.cultura.gob.cl

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