Marisa Cornejo Un archivo de luz

The photographic archive of Eugenio Cornejo and Crisológo Gatica



1. Eugenio Cornejo



This archive of 1,500 slides has been part of my life; since I was born, it was part of our daily life. My father was an art teacher, in the south of Chile, in Osorno, at

the Art Department of the University of Chile. Probably at that time he began to use slides to document materials for his classes, but he quickly also mixed it with his own aesthetic search. In that time, which now seems romantic to me, at the end of the sixties in the south of Chile, Eugenio became interested in the vernacular arts of his environment as an art teacher: the Mapuche weavings, local crafts, his students' works, the architecture of the faculty, the mountains, the landscape, his family, the ruins from his trips to Peru and Bolivia. His whole life was photographed on slides.

During the time of the Unidad Popular, the production becomes less frequent. He has become the father of two children, my brother and me, both very young; he has returned to Santiago and is working, teaching hours at the University of Chile, in Fine Arts, and other hours at Manuel de Salas, an experimental high school in Santiago. He has to take care of his new family. His militant work in the Communist Youth is not entirely abandoned, since it is tied to his teaching work at the Pedagógico until the day of the Military Coup.

When the 9/11 that actually matters - in 1973 in Santiago de Chile — arrives, soon afterwards he is detained, tortured, and released a few weeks later, only to be sent into exile. In the short time we had to leave our country, he selected some boxes of his slides and his camera to take with us, among other essential belongings. He continued to document our exile in Argentina (1973-1976), Bulgaria (1976-1977), Belgium (1978-1980), and Mexico (1980-1983). Every forced displacement - except the one from Bulgaria to Belgium — was a task to make sure the slides were not left behind or lost in a suitcase. And when we arrived in some of those countries, inviting the neighbours to a slideshow was the best way to avoid raising suspicion and to find trustworthy friends.

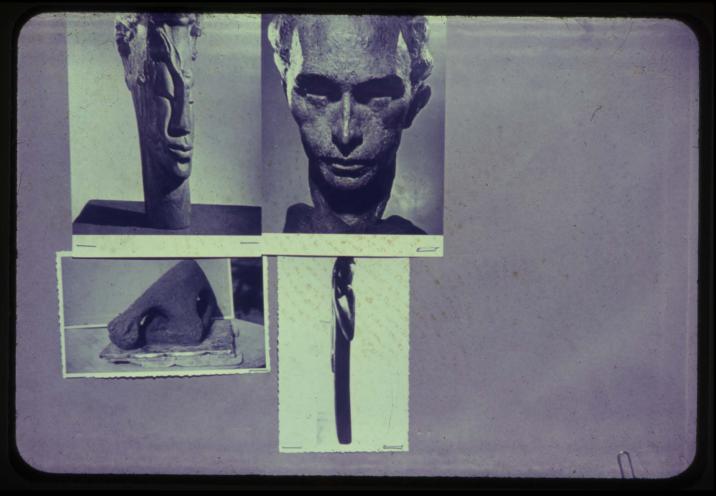
At the time, the mythologies of the Chilean coup d'état were producing a series of mythomaniacs trying to take advantage of international solidarity. This is also how I learned about my origins, where I came from — through photographs. That was my favourite activity as a child with very poor self-esteem: to spend hours looking at my family albums, from the time before the coup d'état or during those slide shows, showing new friends that what I had talked about was not a lie. Is there a better way to make strangers comfortable with your otherness?

At some time, I belonged... That is what this archive always tells me.











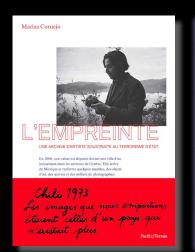






L'empreinte. Une archive d'artiste soustraite au terrorisme d'État (Memoir, published in 2023)

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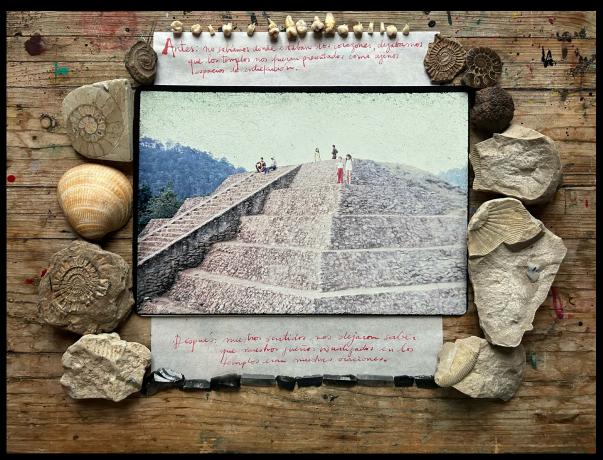


In 2006, a 3 cubic meter box is left at the entrance of a pretty villa in a resort that was built 20 years earlier near Geneva for international officials. It was sent from Mexico and contains some furniture, art objects, paintings, drawings, engravings and thousands of photographs. It constitutes the main part of the archives of Eugenio Cornejo, born in Santiago, Chile, in 1940 and deceased in Puebla, Mexico, in 2002. He was a committed artist and teacher, the victim of political imprisonment and torture under Pinochet's dictatorship, a refugee with no status, who died as an alcoholic in exile, and who never received any form of recognition or compensation from the State of Chile.

His daughter, the artist Marisa Cornejo, has saved these archives and has conducted extensive research from and within them, ever since she decided to digitalize (scan) the content of 15 boxes of 1500 slides, who revealed to her the solar side of the exile which lead her family from Chile to Mexico, via Argentina, Bulgaria and Belgium, in the midst of the Cold War.

Wether archeological sites, nature's splendor, family scenery, friendly gatherings or excursions, the images revealed in the process fill the memory gaps of the little girl, who lived this adventure between her 2nd and 9th year. They allow her to build a real story from what had been so far an unspeakable and traumatic confusion.

Contracanto general (Photography, 2023)





La niña de tus ojos (Slideshows, 2021-2023)



2. Crisológo Gatica



I brought this slide archive to Switzerland during my last trip to Chile in November 2023. I knew the heat and dryness of Santiago weren't good for slides, so I asked my

mother if I could take them. Since childhood, I knew my grandfather had traveled extensively in the 1950s and 60s—to Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Africa—thanks to his work as a teachers' unionist and member of the Chilean Communist Party.

Later, I discovered he had been editor of the international magazine Educadores del Mundo, funded by FISE in France. As I began working with dreams, he started appearing in themalways kind, humorous, and politically principled. Wherever I went-Mexico City, Santiago, Buenos Aires, Madrid-people who knew him welcomed me.

In a 2024 dream, I saw men in suits claiming to be his disciples, followed by a powerful light beaming onto my body. I had to become a star—Guñelve, the Mapuche eight-pointed star that represents Venus. Unlike political symbols that have lost their power or caused confusion, Guñelve felt right. My grandfather was born in Mapuche territory and had even participated in a youth rebellion in support of them.

As I scanned his slides, I found exactly what the dream predicted: well-dressed men, political gatherings, and rare photos from 1960s Algeria—of Ben Bella, mass

prayers, and international solidarity. He appeared in airports, always fragile, missing half a lung, yet driven—carrying packages, creating connections, spreading revolutionary ideals.

He believed in education, equality, and international cooperation. He loved photography—not for art's sake, but to remember, to prove his stories were real, and to keep communism alive. His message was simple but powerful: that the impossible is still possible.





























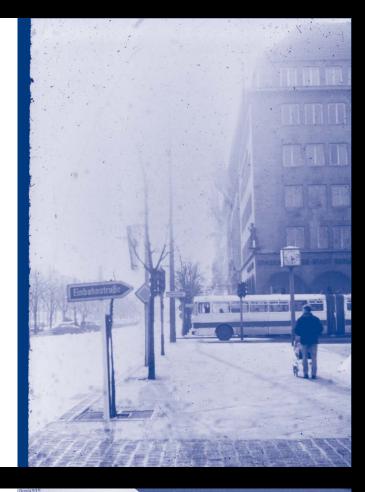




Color transparencies (Research, 2025)

On one slide, I could read «Berlin» and «Einbahnstrasse». I thought it was the name of a street, but then realized it meant «One-way street», like Walter benjamin's book. We are «behind the wall», the building is the «haus der Schweiz», built in 1936, still standing after the war. I wonder What caught my grandfather's interest - The man walking with a pushchair?

makes me think about breathing.



The same place in 1946. Instead of a bus, a bicycle and a chain of buckets. instead of a pushchair, a shovel.

In One-way street, I read: «Subject matter is what is dreamt» and «A document will overwhelm only by surprise.»



stop writing because you have run ou r stop writing because you have run nour requires that you break off only nour requires that you are only when to be met (a meal, an engagement of the control of the cont

n inspiration fails, fill in by making a fair or we done already. Intuition will awake as a fair or making a but weeks, certainly. es sine linea – Due wet vo., em a work perfect over which you have advbreak. write the conclusion of the work in you ou would not find the courage. ou would not line the courage.

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ropositions against snobs te office of art criticism. Left, a child's drag 10b: 'Picasso and that crowd can get lost.')

The primitive expresses himself in documents. No document is a worker art is only document. art as such. art is a The document serves as: didactic drama. k of art, Faced with documents, a e job. audience will be educated tand apart It is in terms of subject ner as a matter that all documents etion. communicate. art, form In documents, subject

and content are one:

meaning.
VII. Meaning is what is tried VIII. In the work of art, the material is ballast that contemplation jettisons.

of form is central. The work of art is synthetic: power plant. Viewed repeatedly, a work

In the work of art, the law

of art intensifies. XII. The masculinity of works

XIII. The artist sets out to

conquer meanings.

Subject matter is what is The deeper one sinks into a document, the denser: a document, the denser: subject matter.

In the document, forms are simply dispersed.

The fertility of the document seeks: analysis. A document will

matter prevails throughout.

overwhelm only by For the document, its innocence provides cove The primitive digs in

The critic's technique in thirteen

The critic is the strategist in the literary battle. II. Anyone incapable of taking sides should say nothing.

III. The critic is quite unrelated to the person who interprets past epochs of art.

IV. Criticism must speak in the language of artists. For the terms of the *cénacle*⁵ are watchwords. And only in watchwords does the battle-cry resound.

V. 'Objectivity' must always be sacrificed to partisanship whe the cause being fought over merits it.

VI. Criticism is a moral issue. If Goethe failed to recognit Hölderlin and Kleist, Beethoven and Jean-Paul, that is not abo his understanding of art but his moral sense.

Me vuelvo un guñelve (Performance, 30 min, 2025)

Curated by: Nathalie Killias and Cristiana Contu Assisted by: Stéphane Fretz Technical support: Sarai Aron

Sound: Simon Risi Exhibition: Passato Presente

Venue: Helmhaus, Limmatquai 31, 8001 Zürich

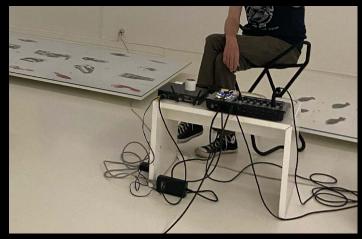
Date: 09.06.2025, 4pm











Me vuelvo un guñelve (Performance, 30 min, 2025)





Me vuelvo un guñelve

(Documentation, 2025)





Tanu, spirit of the Hain ceremony among the Selknam. Laguna de Pescados, Isla Grande, Tierra del Fuego. Photo by Martín Gusinde, 1923.

Marisa Cornejo, Sueño con Crisológo, 20.09.2024.



This performance by the artist Marisa Cornejo is based on a dream in which she metamorphoses into a Guñelve. The Guñelve, in mapudungun, the mapuche language, is an eight-pointed star that symbolises the dawn and Venus.

During this performance, Marisa is momentarily blinded by the light of a slide projector, an imposed blindness that leads her to search within her memories. In that moment, she feels like a membrane of history, determined not to let go of certain values: solidarity among workers, remebering freedom fighters like Ahmed Ben Bella, and her humble grandfather Crisólogo

Gatica, a Chilean communist who never used his political convictions to seize power for himself and who left these slides as heritage.

The audience witnesses Marisa become a channel in an attempt to bring the past into the present.