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WOMEN AND THE VISUAL ARTS IN CHILE: A CASE STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last few years, the interest in women and women's issues has been increasing in Chile and research has been carried out on women from various walks of life by the research institutions in the country. However, as of yet, no sociological study has been done on women artists; Nena Ossa's The Chilean Woman in Art, which is the only book which exists on woman artists in Chile, takes a more art-historical approach.

The following study is an attempt to redress the balance with a body of information on non-indigenous women artists from the fields of painting, sculpture and tapestry. It is based on interviews of five artists studied in depth and three experts on art. The artists were selected according to the following criteria: age, income, marital status, most commonly used medium (the study is limited to the media of sculpture, painting and tapestry-making) and degree to which the artist is publicly known. The first artist is 69 years old, has had a comfortable standard of living during all her professional life, is separated with two daughters, her medium is painting and she is well known both within and outside Chile. The second artist is 78, has never had financial difficulties, has always been single, her medium is sculpture and she is famous nationally and internationally. The third artist is 29, enjoys a good economic situation, is married with two children and is a painter already well known in artistic circles. The fourth is 28, earns barely enough to pay the rent, is single, her medium is sculpture and she is not yet well known although shows promise. The fifth is 31, she has only just enough money to survive, is married for the second time with two children and her medium is tapestry, in which she is beginning to become an important figure in Chile.

The interviews of the five women artists were complemented by interviews with experts on art: Gaspar Galaz, sculptor, author of several books on Chilean art and teacher at the Catholic University; Lotty Rosenfeld, artist and women's representative at the Museum of Fine Arts in Santiago and Nena Ossa, author of the only book on women artists in Chile, ex-director of the Museum of Fine Arts and art history teacher at a private university.

In the first, descriptive part of the paper, the artists are studied in the context of education, themes of interest to them, the creative process, the working day, income, the frustrations and satisfactions of the profession, contradictions between the role of artist and the role of woman, discrimination and participation in sociopolitical concerns. The second part is analytical and includes a commentary, an investigation into the public-private dichotomy and the contradictions between the role of artist and the role assigned to women by society. Finally there is a section on methodology.

The paper is conceived as a source of information for a wider study on women and culture covering eight countries: Ecuador, Honduras, Paraguay, Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala, Haiti and Chile. The aim is not to relate all the information retrieved in the interviews, but rather to delve into underlying truths about the position of the artist in society and those peculiarities which characterize or affect the woman artist specifically. It was found that whereas the artist is essentially a questioner and challenger of norms, women are assigned the role of maintaining traditions and the stability of institutions.

I. LIVES OF THE ARTISTS

1. Education

The vast majority of women artists who have reached a certain renown have completed secondary education and pursued further studies in art at university, which implies that they have an educational level far above the average for women in Chile. In 1988 only 14.2% of women had been to university in comparison with 17.2% of men (CEPAL, 1991). Of those who frequent university, the proportion of women was 46.3% in 1989 (UNICEF, 1989). However, in the field of the plastic arts approximately 65% of the students are women and 35% are men. Santiago houses the greatest concentration of exhibitions and institutions in which art can be studied and this, therefore, is where most Chilean artists come to be trained, although the universities of Valparaíso, Concepción and La Serena have art schools. Within Santiago, the most sought-after institutions of tertiary education in art are the University of Chile and the Catholic University and it is there that most of the successful artists have studied. Studies at the Catholic University are especially expensive and the students have to buy the materials themselves. Forty or 50 % of the students finance their studies with government credits which are awarded to those who come from relatively badly-off families; 40 % of the students have three quarters of the cost paid for by government credits and one quarter by their parents; the remaining minority are financed by their parents. Most students are middle or upper-middle class in the Catholic University, but of a lower socioeconomic level in the University of Chile which is also cheaper. Four of the five artists interviewed studied at one of the above universities and continued taking courses or participating in workshops afterwards. Despite the breadth of the university course, some of the artists expressed dissatisfaction with certain aspects such as the precariousness of the teaching, the lack of workshops and the small amount of information taught. There is a tendency to minimize the value of formal education and instead to stress the importance of observing and being sensitive: "By looking one learns a great deal", says one of the artists interviewed.

2. The Artists' Work

a) Themes

There is no thematic or stylistic domain in which women artists living in Chile today do not have an interest; they are as varied as men in the areas they cover. One theme which is common to many women artists, however, is that of woman's position and problems in society, as can be seen in the works of Francisca Cerda, Lucia Waiser, Carmen Aldunate, Patricia Israel, and Patricia Vargas for example. Women artists also have in common a boldness of approach: "They are freer [than men] in so far as internal exploration is concerned, freer in the generation of self-critical discourse and of discourse which leads to the revelation of certain modes of behaviour" (Gaspar Galaz). Their exploratory and experimental approach is sometimes even "avant-garde" in the words of Lotty Rosenfeld.

The fact of living in Latin America has marked a number of women artists. These expressions of art take many forms: the theme of the magic and myth of pre-Columbian civilizations, in such artists as Tatiana Alamos and Virginia Huneus; a concern for the modernizing processes which are occurring on the continent, as in the case of Bernardita Vattier who evokes the destruction of the colonial city fabric and its replacement by ugly modern buildings; or a reflection on the political events of the continent as can be seen in Lotty Rosenfeld's work in which an important theme is oppression and the unquestioned acceptance of norms. However, it would be untrue to say that

Chilean art mostly reflects the realities of Latin America as much of it is influenced by events and trends from abroad.

Of the artists studied, the older ones have a far more intellectual approach and much of their work relates to current affairs, social commentary, or contemporary artistic debate. The younger artists, however, concentrate much more on the personal and emotional and express their state of mind, very often claiming not to know what their work means. The first artist uses the media of print, drawing and painting to express, in nearly all her work, the painful aspects of existence. An important theme is the woman, in particular the issues of maternity and the duality in a woman's life. In connection with maternity, she paints images of mother and child and uses symbols such as the watermelon which represents fertility because of its circular form and because it is a fruit full of seeds to be opened and shared. Duality in a woman's life is conceived of in terms of the opposition between the young and carefree woman as opposed to the old and broken one, subjects including Velasquez's "meninas" destined for marriage, Gabriela Mistral, Virginia Woolf and Frida Kahlo. Other themes include still lives, beds, sleepers (sleep is seen as life where unsolved problems emerge) and laid tables. The influence of Latin America is strong. In her early print-making years a favorite theme was the very Chilean image of the women in white with two baskets selling pastries in the street. The military regime inspired her to paint on the theme of the injustice and danger of totalitarian processes and the oppression and threat to freedom which they represent. She does not paint in a dogmatic way, but rather alludes to those who died or disappeared under the military regime and to figures who are connected with some form of oppression. She also uses motifs drawn from newspapers or public images and symbols such as the watermelon which in this context, because it will be pierced or cut open, represents threats to existence such as being of an "undesirable" race or having "undesirable" thoughts. More recently, she has explored the theme of "sopaipilla", a typically Chilean dish. Various artistic expressions have influenced her. Those not mentioned above include Egyptian and Sumerian art; Romanesque art with its "strength of form", Giotto, Piero della Francesca, Douanier Rousseau, Tapies and Velasquez.

The second artist claims not to have any favorite themes, although she does admit to reworking certain forms. In her early years the emphasis was on the human figure. Since then, her art has become an investigation into the language of sculpture and she has produced series based on a central theme, the most important of which are the moon series (influenced by the first landing on the moon), the Aku-Aku series on the theme of spirits of Easter Island, the Genesis series and that of letters taken from different alphabets. Apart from the Aku-Aku cycle, there is no obvious link with the realities of Latin America. The central concern in all her work after the visit to Easter Island in 1960 is to find a form, texture and style which harmonizes with the material being used. She has used cement, plaster, stone, clay, wood, various metals, and marble for her sculpture but has also worked in drawing, painting, print making, mosaic and jewellery. Artistic expressions which influence and interest her particularly include primitive Greek and Romanesque art, Michelangelo, Verrocchio and Donatello and the primitive Italian painters. Of the modern artists, she particularly identifies with Brancusi and has been influenced by Lipchitz and Lorenzo Dominguez. Literary figures who interest her greatly include Octavio Paz and Marguerite Yourcenar.

The third artist paints in a way which has been variously described as "naïf", influenced by "modern surrealism". Although she rejects these labels, the spontaneity and imagination which characterize the former and the dream-like quality of the latter are precisely those she seeks to attain in her own painting. Her favorite theme is the theatrical stage or scenario in which many people and animals play a part. The situations are often fantastical: animals with human features, humans with

animalistic features, an imaginary landscape in the background. These scenes are not intended to contain a message and in the artist's own words do not mean anything; they are merely what "comes from my heart to my hand". She feels they are strongly influenced by the fact of living in South America, however, in terms of both the bright coloring and the themes, such as the theme of the couple, or that of the "humanized" animal. The artist cannot pinpoint a definite source of influence and feels that many things inspire her, such as advertisements, street scenes, or plays. However, she greatly admires Violetta Parra and Bosch.

The fourth artist is very interested in expressing the essence of the material used and her most recent works are of stone and iron and take the form of a heavy weight in the air supported by a relatively light structure. Other themes she has explored in the past include angels, the human figure and abstract forms in materials as varied as branches, wood, fibre glass and granite. Amongst the artists who have influenced her most are Francisco Gazitúa (a Chilean artist), Tim Scott (an English sculptor) and her artistic friends.

The fifth artist's tapestries are all abstract and "reflect her state of mind". She takes great care with the selection of materials and colours as "tapestry, like sculpture has a very important tactile element". Artists who have influenced her, although "more unconsciously than consciously" she says, are Rothko, Tapiés, Shiela Hicks, Yagoda Buic and Abakanowicz.

b) The Creative Process

The creative process is not a smooth continuous one and is usually marked by variations in the quality of work produced. The artists studied have all experienced periods of more fruitful activity and periods of low productivity and describe the process as being one of "ups and downs". More fruitful periods are typically caused by a change of medium, an important event such as the military coup of 1973, or contact with new ideas and other art forms as happens, for example, in the case of workshops to which foreign artists are invited.

c) The Working Day

All the artists studied have studios where they carry out their work. Although their hours are not fixed, they typically set themselves a timetable dividing the day between work and household duties; one of them, for example, devotes her mornings to domestic activities and the afternoons to sculpture. They are all very self-disciplined and often work on week-ends as well as on week days; there is a common distrust of "inspiration" and emphasis on hard work. However, those who are not supported by their husbands also have to devote a considerable amount of time to other activities to earn a living.

d) Income

It is generally accepted by the Chilean society at large that all but the most successful artists face economic hardship. Not only do artists find it difficult to earn a living, but there is no state support for them in the form of pensions and they are usually unable to afford insurance of various kinds. There are six main sources of income for the woman artist in Chile. The first one, selling her art, is sporadic and cannot be relied on. There is a market for painting but almost none for sculpture and tapestries. The main channels for selling are galleries, friends, relatives and companies which buy on commission. The commercial side of art is very different in Chile in comparison to Europe or

North America, where there is such tremendous competition that some artists become alienated from the market and totally forgotten and the business of getting oneself known is extremely expensive because the artist must introduce herself with a sophisticated brochure; there is a higher level of professionalism and formality. In Chile the enormous pressure of the dealers' market does not exist; the artist has more freedom in that she is her own manager and salesperson. The circle of people who are interested in art is also so small that the artist becomes known relatively easily. The mass media is crucial to the Chilean artist as the coverage she receives is linked to her success. Some artists feel that women artist are favored in relation to men in this respect because 90 % of the journalists in Chile are women.

A second source of income is selling small scale art works of the kind that people buy, such as pottery or clothes. One of the artists, for example, sells shawls. The third way of earning one's living is the parallel job which involves exercising one's artistic skills in a field such as design, stage-set making for the theater, advertisement. A fourth lucrative activity in which artists involve themselves is teaching. Approximately 90 % of art teachers in schools are women, and the proportion of women art teachers at university is roughly 50 %, although for university teachers as a whole the proportion is of 40 % for women and 60 % for men (UNICEF, 1989). A fifth source of income is the scholarship to study abroad, awarded by cultural institutes, embassies, galleries or the national government, for very limited periods. In Chile, the number of government scholarships has increased since the end of the military regime. Finally, some artists benefit from family support; those who are married may depend on their husbands and those who are single sometimes receive parental support, which is made possible by the fact that most artists come from middle or upper-middle class families.

None of the artists interviewed rely on selling what they produce and are forced either to depend on family support or to work in a parallel job of an artistic nature and teach. One artist, unmarried and independent from her family, works making props for a theater group on a regular basis. From time to time, she makes stage sets for an advertising agency; she also has taught at the university in the past and occasionally participates in a symposium where she has use of machinery and materials in exchange for the sculpture she produces and a small sum of money.

3. The Frustrations and Satisfactions of Being an Artist in Chile

The artists studied consider the difficulty of earning a living through art and the lack of financial support as being the main problems of the artist in Chile. The lack of financial resources may result in the artist living in a state of relative poverty, being unable to buy the materials or tools needed, or in less serious cases being limited in her contact with other art movements and new ideas because she cannot afford to travel. Those who choose to avoid such situations are forced to dedicate a large amount of time to other occupations and their art becomes secondary. A second frustration is the relative lack of support from the government, which is also shown in the fact that few foreign exhibitions come to Chile and that museums have little money with which to keep their own collections in good condition. However, it is felt that the situation is improving; there are more government grants available, artists are taken more seriously and investment is being placed in education, which should raise the cultural level of the population and increase the interest in art. A third, related source of frustration is society's narrow-minded attitude towards art which translates into rejection, denigration, misunderstanding or worst, oblivion. A frequent complaint is the arbitrariness of an artist's success and the injustice with which she is often judged: "The people with power can denigrate your work as they like, for example, there might be no news about you ... people may not know of an artist's work even though it exists". There is also a sense that the artist is often

judged not on what she does but on who she is. A fourth frustration is the marginalization of the artist as a person; she is considered, in the words of the artists interviewed, "lazy", "strange", "irresponsible" or an "alcoholic", by large sectors of the population. A final frustration voiced by some of the artists is the existence of empty periods in the creative process, in which the work produced is not of the quality or kind desired. In the past, during the military regime, a major frustration was the absence of freedom of expression. One of the main problems was censorship, but more seriously still, artists were objects of suspicion and often associated with terrorism and therefore ran the risk of imprisonment or exile; as a matter of fact, many of Chile's best artists moved to Europe in this period.

Nevertheless, they also express that the satisfactions of being an artist are multiple: the freedom, the independence, the absence of bureaucratic norms, the self-exploration and development, the scope for self-expression, the capacity to see and sense more than most people, which for them make life "intense, rich and authentic".

4. Contradictions between the Woman and the Artist's Roles

All the artists interviewed feel that there is no intrinsic contradiction between the artist's role, which is seen as being to sensitize people to issues aesthetic or current, and the woman's role, which is perceived by society at large as that of wife, mother and good housekeeper, her realm being the private rather than the public sphere. On the other hand, maternity, in its multiple dimensions, is still the principal traditional preserve of power and presence for Chilean women. The phenomenon of fulfillment on a professional level for women is still comparatively new; despite the fact that it is increasingly accepted that women work outside the home, the responsibility for the running of the household and socialization of the children is still borne principally by them.

The problem, for nearly all the artists studied, lies in the fact that the role of wife and mother demands so much time and energy that it can be difficult to dedicate oneself properly to one's work: "A woman cannot pay full attention to that voice which is creation but has to run to and fro getting on with a series of things which are part of daily life, and moreover, maternity is more than daily life; it is something which never ends ... One wants to reconcile all these activities: being a mother, looking after the children, going to paint, returning, and then saying 'who am I?'". The profession of artist is especially absorbing mentally and emotionally and the artist's mind is continually occupied. For women artists who live outside Santiago the demands of motherhood or good housekeeping make travelling to the capital difficult, a fact which has serious implications for their career. Rather than having children and sharing the demands of the mother's role with their husbands, the majority of the artists interviewed either have avoided having families altogether or have adopted their role of woman and accepted that their art will suffer. Apart from the little time and energy the mother is able to devote to her art, exists the problem of the lack of money and the economic security required to raise a family, especially when both parents are artists. However, despite the problems, those artists who also are mothers agree that of all the professional activities women are involved in, theirs is one of the least problematic because of the flexible schedule and possibility of working at home.

One of the contradictions which result from the woman's role as housekeeper, has to do with the artist's aesthetic sense and the way society expects her as a woman to keep her houses and appear physically. Several of the artists claim that they are more relaxed than other women as far as neatness is concerned and that it often causes consternation.

A final contradiction, expressed only by one of them, is between the "aridity" and loneliness of her art (sculpture) and the "feminine" need to do work which involves more human contact. She describes sculpture as "arid", because of the necessary shutting up in the studio, and because she feels the language of sculpture to be so complex that it is beyond the reach of many people and "cannot move them as a play can". Her impression is that although a man can feel isolated in the same way, he is stronger when faced with it. As a result of this sense of isolation she sometimes feels the need to do work which she describes as closer to her feminine essence, such as jewellery or doll-making, or maybe to start a family.

5. Discrimination

There is much scope for discrimination in the world of the artist: in the awarding of scholarships, invitations to international workshops, success in competitions, presence in exhibitions, media coverage, critics' comments and the acceptance of the work. Says Lotty Rosenfeld, one of the most discriminatory groups are artists of a more traditional way of thinking, who reject the bold, avant-garde work of many women artists with the claim that it is not true art. Opinions vary greatly, however, as to whether discrimination does take place or no. The interviewed artists themselves are unanimous in the belief that discrimination has never affected them.

6. Participation in Social or Political Concerns

Traditionally, there is a distance between women and the public discourse, however in Chile this is far from being the case, especially after the military coup of 1973. Social participation by women artists during the last regime took place largely through their work, often charged with political content; the events of the last 20 years can be seen in the paintings of Patricia Israel, Concepción Balmes, Roser Bru and Gracia Barrios. Women artists were especially bold in their involvement in sociopolitical concerns, although the degree of effectiveness of this form of participation is debatable, given the relative impotence of the plastic arts in relation to the mass media as far as influencing the population is concerned. Nonetheless, their participation also took on many other forms such as lists of names in protest to certain issues, publications, marches, pamphlets, movements against the violation of human rights, and activities coordinated by La Morada, the meeting place of feminists. Left-wing intellectuals believe circumstances were extremely difficult for artists during the military regime; many had to keep a low profile with the result that there was less contact between them, an estimated 40 % of important Chilean artists were exiled, exhibitions were closed and prizes unfairly awarded. In the eyes of right-wing experts, however, the military regime was a very favorable period for artists as there was "a proliferation of galleries and an unprecedented amount of support from the private sector". Since the beginning of democracy, artists have regained freedom of expression and political issues are not so urgent, but participation continues. However, a less political form of participation is the norm: this may be, for example, the running of handicraft workshops in poor areas of cities.

Of the five artists studied, only two involved themselves in activities of a social or political nature during the military regime: one participated in a movement against torture and the other expressed herself through her art. After the military coup, the latter worked with topics in the news, public images, people whose lives were in danger, or the "desaparecidos", suggesting in her paintings death, the lack of freedom and the threats to one's life (because of the way one thinks or because of one's race). She also uses parallels from other countries to denounce war or oppression, such as the figure of Kafka (whose works were banned in a similar way to the near-banning of some Latin

American literature in Chile), that of Virginia Woolf (as she emphasizes that one needs one's own space, one's own thoughts, to develop), or that of Ann Frank. As far as social comment is concerned, much of her work is a reflection of the position of women in society. Today, none of the other artists participate in activities related to sociopolitical concerns.

II. COMMENTARY

1. The Pressure to Adopt the Woman's Role

One of the most surprising facts to emerge from the interviews is the conventionality of the woman artist in Chile, in view of the unconventionality for which the artist is famous.

Most notable is the fact that these artists do not question the role assigned to women by society. Those who are married bear the bulk of the responsibility for the children and housekeeping, and those who are single postpone marriage or avoid it altogether because they wish to fulfill themselves on a professional level, which implies that they accept that as wife and mother much time would be taken away from their work because of domestic duties: "I also want to get married, have children, but I always feel I have to put it off for later, that I cannot lose this moment. So I have been in more of a hurry [with my work] than a man". The fact that the artists with children express satisfaction with the ease with which their profession can be combined with motherhood and the reasons they give (availability in case of emergency, the flexible hours, the possibility of working in close proximity to the children), suggest not only a distrust or shortage of infrastructure such as nurseries, but also a mentality which dictates that the mother rather than the father is the parent most needed by the children. Not only is this model highly conventional, but the pressure to conform is strong. One of the youngest artist, who is only 28 years old, states that even the women of her generation "are bothered by the fact that I am not thinking of having children yet". The fact that in practice the artists accept the traditional feminine role, even though they are aware that it is imposed by society rather than innate, suggests that the urge to respond to family needs is very strong, either because of an innate "maternal instinct" or because they have been socialized from an early age to be nurturers. Moreover, the fact that men are not brought up to deal with household matters results in their partners slipping almost automatically into this role. The only husband who shared the household responsibilities and tasks had lived on his own for many years and had received much foreign influence.

Another aspect of the conservative model for middle and upper-middle class women is the absence of the phenomenon of the woman taking financial responsibility for the family. Not one of the artists has an attitude which corresponds to that of the bread-winner, because they expect their husbands to support them. This attitude is revealed in several ways: in the choice of a profession which is famed for being one in which it is difficult to earn a living, in the fact that most artists studying at the Catholic University or the University of Chile are from families where the woman is financially dependent on her husband, and in such comments as "I never thought I would earn a living, nor do I now". The only artist who does not take support from a husband for granted (her social circle also includes many married couples where both husband and wife are artists and have to work hard to survive), said that her parents expected her future husband to support her. In this, the artists' attitude is in tune with what society expects of them, as the comment of Nena Ossa reveals: "Parents are more concerned if it is their son [rather than their daughter] who chooses to study art".

The conservative attitudes concerning the role of woman and the acceptance of financial dependence exist alongside relatively progressive patterns of behaviour. These seemingly traditional women are at the same time part of a very small, progressive minority in relation to the female population as a whole in that they go to university (and even more so in that they go to the two most prestigious universities in the country). They also constitute a progressive minority because they are professionals and work. In 1990, only 31.8% of women were in the work force (UNICEF, 1989) while in 1991, of those who received a professional training, only 28.28% were women (FLACSO, 1991b). Furthermore, there are some norms of conduct which the artists reject, as suggested by certain relaxed attitudes towards neatness and "informality". The artists are in fact aware of these contradictions in their behaviour and that they are subject to pressure by society; one of them, for example, paints on the theme of the woman trapped by domestic and family responsibilities, unable to fulfill herself on a personal level, and jokes about painting "near the saucepan". Despite this awareness, however, the conservative attitudes persist. The influence of the model is strong and society's tolerance of those who do not conform, minimal.

2. Society's Narrow-Mindedness with Regard to Art and Artists

The pressure to conform is accompanied by a bigoted attitude on society's part towards art and the artists themselves.

The financial hardship which so many artists face partly exists because a great part of their production, which is created in terms of style and technique, is misunderstood and not accepted. If painting sells better than sculpture and tapestry, one of the main reasons is that a painting fits better over the mantelpiece. Moreover, painting is a traditional and institutionalized form of art whereas tapestry (for people of European descent) is not; people are reluctant to accept the new and unconventional. Artists who move away from traditional models are essentially challenging accepted ideology (which partly explains why they were objects of suspicion during the dictatorial regime). Society needs a stable framework within which to function.

3. Discrimination

The unwillingness to accept the new and unconventional has serious consequences for certain groups who become the victims of discrimination.

There is a feeling amongst some artists that a woman's avant-garde work is more easily rejected than a man's. This is not surprising considering that the archetypal woman is characterized by passivity and submissiveness, that she is the socializer of children and the upholder of one of society's most important institutions. Her role is to maintain, not to question, traditions and institutions; society reprimands non-conformity in a woman's case more than a man's. A woman, dealing with the same controversial themes as a man, is more subversive.

More blatant forms of discrimination against women artists also exist, such as the fact that of the five artists sent to represent Chile at the fair in Seville 1992 not one was a woman. The woman's representative at the Museum of Fine Arts believes that fewer women win scholarships or prizes in competitions, are invited abroad, or are represented at exhibitions. However, it is surprising that none of the artists says that discrimination has affected her personally. Admitting that they have been a victim of discrimination seems like admitting a weakness. Such is the emphasis on success in society today that people prefer to ignore factors which challenge it.

Class discrimination also appears to be a factor affecting Chilean artists. Whereas there are several well-known young women artists from upper-class families or families which have a presence in intellectual circles, there are practically none from lower-class families. The relatively small number of artists of low socioeconomic standing may be due to the fact, as explained one of the artists interviewed, that "to be an artist it is not only the intuitive and manual ability which is important, but one needs to have been brought up amongst people who are cultured, to have become visually perceptive". An alternative explanation, on the other hand, is that class differences make it more difficult for the artist to be accepted in what is unanimously agreed to be a small, tight circle in which everyone knows each other. Many artists become known because a family friend mentions them to the director of a gallery who then promotes them; if an artists comes from a social group which does not mix in such circles, this option is closed to her. Furthermore, well-positioned artists on the socioeconomic scale are more likely to benefit in a market where success often depends on "who you are" rather than "what you do".

4. The Uniqueness of the Artist as a Professional

Despite all the problems they face, from discrimination to the difficulty of earning a living, artists show a tremendous degree of enthusiasm about their work. It is a passion or compulsion which they describe in such terms as "it is my reason for being", "there are thousands and thousands of satisfying things [about the work]" or "the voice of creation which calls". Not only is their level of motivation unusual in relation to the norms in other professions, but so too is the professional framework in its entirety. Unlike most workers, artists do not work within an institution, there is no hierarchical structure which they are ambitious to climb, there is no control over their work by a superior figure, they do not have a fixed timetable and the relationship between their level of education, the quality of the work they produce and the financial reward is relatively arbitrary.

The uniqueness of the artist as professional and the non-conformity to the model of the conventional wage-earner, causes society to regard him or her as being of a dubious professionalism and personal worth. Women are more sensitive to this marginalization than men, as it is suggested by the fact that the only person interviewed who believes that society has a positive view of the artist is a man: "in the last 20 years society's perception has changed. Nowadays the artist is well-considered in Chilean society, respected, understood" (Gaspar Galaz). Women artists are more insecure than men, a fact which is not surprising considering the tremendous pressure on them to conform, the discrimination that is exercised against them and the unusualness of their activity given their gender.

III. THE PUBLIC-PRIVATE DICHOTOMY

The public-private division and the association of man with the former and woman with the latter still exists in a rigid form in Latin America today. Leaving the home to go to work continues to be something many husbands do not want their wives to do and which many women would rather not do. This mentality has negative implications for women in that, when they do leave home to work, they are not valued as much as their male counterparts (they are often paid lower salaries for the same work) and yet their activities within the home are not considered "real work".

Although the artist usually does not leave home to work as an office employee might, her work belongs to the public domain; it is exhibited in public spaces, its scope of influence is large and its content is wide-reaching. However, separation between public and private is far less marked than

for most professions. The private is allowed to penetrate, firstly in that the domestic is considered valid as a subject of artistic expression. Scenes of interiors and women at their daily tasks are not unique to the modern age; they have been the focus of genre painting for centuries. Modern day Chilean artists bring the private realm into their art by introducing domestic themes, like, for example, paints freshly-laid tables, bedrooms and mothers with children, bringing these themes onto the canvas and later to the walls of museums as an assertion of their own intrinsic worth, of the beauty and importance of the subject itself.

As such, the domestic woman has become a subject for art, the salient element being not the aura of tranquility and homeliness surrounding her as in the work of Vermeer, for example, but rather as a critical statement about her situation. Lucia Waiser portrays her as an angel with clipped wings, or as a mutilated doll, her mutilation being a metaphor for her inability to develop on a personal level because of the role she is assigned by society. Roser Bru's images of caryatids suggest the same imprisonment by the role, but also show woman as the pillar of society, the one who supports the whole structure. In this respect, they are a statement on the importance of the nurturing which takes place within the home, for the public domain of production. These artists, by bringing the principal protagonist of the private sphere onto the public stage, are challenging the traditional invisibility and unimportance of woman's existence.

IV. CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE ROLE OF ARTIST AND THE ROLE ASSIGNED TO WOMEN BY SOCIETY

Although through the artistic expression themes related to the private sphere are accepted in the public territory, the entry of the principal actor of the private sphere into the domain of the public as an artist is fraught with contradictions. A woman is expected not to interest herself in what lies beyond the walls of her home, and yet as an artist her studies open her up to the new ideas, she surveys the art of other continents and very often comes into direct contact with people from abroad. Whereas the woman's discourse is traditionally limited to the domestic and the local, the artist's scope is much broader, covering, for example, political and social issues: the realm of male discourse. Whereas the woman's influence traditionally extends no further than the family, the artist's reach is potentially much wider, influencing society as a whole.

Moreover, the artist's creation is an assertion of herself as individual and art is a domain in which individuality and originality are particularly valued. A woman, on the other hand, is traditionally defined and self-defined as "wife of" which implies an identity dependent on another's and the negation of the self. It is perhaps as a result of this contradiction that one woman artist talks of the difficulty of finding one's own identity: "the most difficult thing is being, being a person with her own voice, and a lot of thought has to go into finding that voice". As a matter of fact, many of the artists' comments about their work reveal precisely the problem of not having found their own voice. Caught between her conflicting roles, the woman artist is lost and confused, in no man's land.

Whereas in most professions, traditionally masculine characteristics are valued (the ability to be analytical, objective, active and aggressive), the artist's profession falls into a grey area in which the value and interest of both the masculine and the feminine are asserted. The essentially feminine epithets: receptive, emotional, passive and personal can apply to the artist and his or her work, and are valued in a way which does not occur in other professions. However, the art which takes a stance on social or political events, as much of the Chilean art has done over the last 20 years, does

represent an attitude from the artist which is the opposite of being passive and personal and may be defined as rather analytical and active.

Other contradictions between the role of the woman and the role of the artist are related more to the realities of a woman's existence than to those characteristics which are essentially feminine.

In Western culture space carries symbolic implications of power: the larger the office, the higher up the hierarchy; the larger the house, the more powerful its occupant. The possession of a "room of one's own" is then synonymous with the respect and value assigned to the activity carried out within this very room. Women traditionally belong to the home, a space shared by all the family, and those who work in a sense other than domestic usually do so in an altogether separate area. The artist, however, requires a space of her own in which to work, within the home. This causes problems to the woman artist in that although she is working, the family tends to feel it has free range of the studio just as it does of the rest of the house; her space is not respected and nor, by implication, is her work. One painter's children play in the studio while she is at work and it is "full of toys". The tapestry artist says that she is aware of the problem and had a glass door especially made so that the children can see their parents and yet know that they are at work and do not want to be disturbed. Another says that she tries to keep her studio safe from "invasion". A private area in which to work, to which the family does not feel it has right of access is all the more important in a woman's case because she is the parent expected to see to the satisfaction of her family's needs. The fact of working at home is therefore in many ways more of a hindrance than an asset for the woman as a professional.

The issue of income is another area of vulnerability for the woman artist. Few artists, men or women, can expect to earn a living from their work, despite the sacrifices in terms of time and energy that it involves. On the other hand, there is the idea in Chilean society that women's work (of a non-domestic kind) is justified only if it provides an income; otherwise her energies are better spent in the home ^{1/}. The woman artist is therefore faced with the difficult situation of having to justify a profession which is practically not remunerated. One of the most serious implications of this fact is that her work is not taken seriously ("only paid work is real work"), and conceived of as a hobby.

V. CONCLUSION AND METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS

The woman artist is essentially a contradictory figure, torn between the feminine role of mother and preserver of tradition and institutions and the innovative and challenging role of the artist. The paradoxes are numerous: although she does not question the woman's role, she is progressive in the fact that she goes to university, works and behaves contrary to certain social norms; although as protagonist of the domestic sphere her scope of interest is limited, as artist she looks far beyond the home; although as a woman she is identified in relation to another, as artist she asserts herself; although she belongs to the private sphere, her artistic expression is part of the public discourse.

^{1/} "Women without paid work tend to reproduce the cultural model which designates the hearth as the woman's domain, although this phenomenon is less explicit amongst women of a higher educational and socioeconomic level" (FLACSO, 1991).

Because of these paradoxes and the uniqueness of her profession, her worth is brought into doubt and she becomes the victim of prejudices. Even within her own family she has to battle for a "room of [her] own". In the figure of the woman artist, the public and private, the essentially feminine and the essentially masculine, merge; through her the collective conscience comes to light, revealing the underlying conservatism of society.

Despite the fact that this paper was intentionally limited to Chile, benefit could have been derived from an appreciation, albeit superficial, of the situation in other countries with respect to the woman artist. The use of another Latin American country and of a "developed" country as points of comparison would have permitted a more global image of the woman's role and the position of the artist to be formed, and the uniqueness of Chile to be brought into relief.

The scope of focus within Chile represents a further limitation in that the artists studied are relatively homogenous; to be complete the study would have had to encompass other sectors of the population such as the indigenous community, in which not only the artist performs a different function and uses different media, but also women occupy a position conceived of in other terms. The selection of the artists was limited in other respects, as for example the media in which they work. It would have been interesting to investigate artists working with less institutionalized art forms, such as mural painting which is a more "popular" medium. Secondly, all the artists selected come from the middle or upper-middle classes, because of the very small number from other strata and the problems of availability of those who were located. Thirdly, all the artists live in the capital and are likely to have a different perspective than those in the provinces where the social and cultural conditions are distinct.

Finally, there are many areas which the paper did not attempt to cover but which are worthy of research: a comparison of the present situation for the woman artist with earlier moments in history such as the military regime, the question of whether the artist can be a measure of the evolution of culture in society, the situation and issues concerning women who are artists in other fields such as literature or music, and an estimation of the importance given to culture by society and the government.

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LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED OR CONTACTED

- Beatriz BENDER, Brazilian painter, Santiago de Chile
- Roser BRU, painter, Santiago de Chile
- Marcela CORREA, sculptor, Santiago de Chile
- Gaspar GALAZ, sculptor, author of several books on Chilean art, teacher at the Catholic University, Santiago de Chile
- Lily GARAFULIC, sculptor, Santiago de Chile
- Moníca LEYTAN, painter, Santiago de Chile
- Nena OSSA, ex-Director of the Museum of Fine Arts and art history teacher, Santiago de Chile
- Maria José ROMERO, painter, Santiago de Chile
- Lotty ROSENFELD, painter and women's representative at the Museum of Fine Arts, Santiago de Chile
- Carolina YRARRAZAVAL, weaver-artist and teacher, Santiago de Chile