

María Verónica San Martín (1981) is a representative of the current generation of book artists in whose work the theme and the technically brilliant construction of the books are closely intertwined. Her work manifests a profound involvement with the recent past of her native country Chile, especially the years of the Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990) and the continuing after-effects of this period on the present. She regards her (book)art as an instrument for social change.

In installations, performances and artists' books, San Martín documents her research into the unresolved events of this period based on exhaustive archival research and conversations with victims and others involved. Text and image are based on exhaustive archival research and conversations with victims and others involved.

The sculptural form of the books and the choice for traditional ('slow') techniques such as woodcut and aquatint have not only an aesthetic significance, but also relate to the content. The three-dimensional structure of her books incorporates the viewer into the subject: on the back of a representation of the façade of a building or the majestic Andes mountains torture practices are shown which took place here, and also portraits of the victims.

For the artist, aspects of 'making' the work, such as cutting away wood for a woodcut or the acid eating into an etching plate, symbolize the course of history and the disappearance of the persecuted. By printing the image on paper she makes history and the victims visible again. In this way, the book serves as a lasting memorial to the victims.

ROOM 1

COLONIA DIGNIDAD/ DYSTOPIIC UTOPIA (2018)

The art installation is based on audio recordings, found in 2012 by the ex-colono and lawyer Winfried Hempel. Through sculpture, sound, performance, text, and a selection of historical archives, San Martín reveals a complex system of codes and how transcontinental actions culminated into crimes against minors and opponents of the Chilean civic-military dictatorship. Today the various criminal cases remain primarily unprosecuted and unresolved, due to the lack of political will, unresolved issues of legal jurisdiction, statute of limitations, the death of most of the principal offenders and the questionable legal status of the Colonia Dignidad which had been recently re-incorporated as an autonomous agricultural production center and renamed Villa Baviera.

Medium: installation with kinetic metal sculpture and metal box; 4 channel audio piece using oral history archives from a member of Colonia Dignidad, video edition of previous performances, Archives from The National Archive of Chile, Electro-magnetic tapes from Winfried Hempel archive, and ephemeral material of artist research.

ROOM 2

ARTISTS BOOKS/ MOVING MEMORIALS

Moving Memorials is a traveling exhibition, composed of several artist books, which is in constant transformation, calling for an open book and an open narrative. With these books the artist is creating spaces to activate the viewer's affects.

1. EL SIGLO. MILITARIES BETRAY THE COUNTRY (2012)

is an altered book that shows the date of September 11 at two different times in the political history of Chile. The first moment refers to the coup executed by Augusto Pinochet in September 1973, the second to what happened in September 2010 when eleven miners were rescued after a landslide. The first is represented by a real newspaper, the second is fictitious and was printed over the real newspaper.

Edition: unique (object on display is the artist proof); medium: silkscreen and ink on (vellum) paper; binding: newspaper contained in a portfolio; size: 44x30 cm closed, 44x60 cm opened. Courtesy of the artist.



2. MEMORY AND LANDSCAPE. UNVEILING THE HISTORIC TRUTHS OF CHILE (2013)

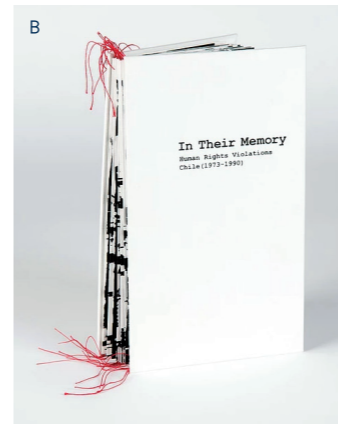
is a book about the disappearance and murder of people in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990). It tells the history of human rights violations through a timeline of historical accounts. It also contains fourteen biographies of the disappeared and executed (randomly selected) and a full list of victims. In the middle of the book we see the landscapes where the bodies of the victims were discarded. The book was designed both as a book and a sculpture: the book format was chosen so it could be a part of the collective memory of Chile, aiming to restore the dignity of the victims of the dictatorship and their families.

Edition: 2 editions (30 in total); medium: dry point/aquatint etchings, wood engraving, silkscreen; binding: double accordion, hand sewn, coptic binding in a clam shell box; size: 18x24 cm (closed); collection: Huis of the book| Museum Meermanno.

3. INDIGNITY & RESISTANCE IN THE FOOTHILLS OF THE ANDES. A CASE STUDY OF VILLA GRIMALDI, CHILE (2015)

is a research project based on one of the most emblematic torture centers during the dictatorship in Chile called Villa Grimaldi, through testimonies of survivors, visual archives, conversations with family members of the disappeared, and the support of Villa Grimaldi's current board. The book comprehends an introduction of Villa Grimaldi; the list of victims that were murdered at the center; names of collaborators; testimony of victim Gladys Diaz; and several quotations of other survivors taken from the center's oral archives. The front of the book depicts prisoners while tortured, yet also showing also the solidarity between the victims. The back of the book features the Andes which surrounds the Villa. It reflects how life continued no matter what occurred inside the walls.

Edition: varied edition of 50; medium: monotype, silk-screen, glass beads; binding: (circular) accordion, Japanese binding, long stitch; size: 33½x25½x3 cm (closed), 33½x330 cm (opened). Courtesy of the artist.



4. IN THEIR MEMORY. HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN CHILE, 1973-1990 (2012)

is a book of resistance that carries forward the protest begun by the families of the disappeared in Chile during the civic-military dictatorship. More than 40.000 political prisoners were victims of torture, execution and exile, and 1.198 people disappeared to this date. Nameless crosses are all that they received by way of a burial. It is to honor the missing and their families that this object-book seeks to disseminate and communicate human rights' violations in Chile. By documenting the identities of the victims, *In Their Memory* also invites reflection and puts forth a message of hope founded in truth.

Medium: silkscreen, digital print; binding: accordion book, hand sewn; size: 32x19x4 cm (closed) 32x125 cm (opened); collection: House of the book|Museum Meermanno.

5. THE-RIGHT-TO-KNOW: UNDER THE U.S. SKY (SILO EDITION) (2017)

is an installation of 35 portraits attached to the exterior of a silo which refers to the United States intervention in Chile during the civic-military dictatorship. The work is based on information taken from the declassified documents provided by the National Security Archive within its Chile Project, which began in the late 1990s following the detention of dictator Pinochet in London, accused of crimes against humanity. The identities of some of the disappeared disintegrate by the sun and rain over time, under the sky of the United States.

Medium: hand painted with charcoal powder on plastic sheets; binding: loose paintings on sheepskin parchment, in clam shell box; size: 76x51x6 cm (closed), 76x108 cm (opened). Courtesy of the artist.



6. THE-RIGHT-TO-KNOW: ROOM EDITION (2016)

is an artist book of the installation of the same name. The identities of the disappeared-detainees create a map of portraits and blank spaces. The portraits represent the persecuted people that relatives and reports have managed to share so far in alphabetical order. The book, made of shipping cardboard, saves the complete installation wrapped in written handkerchiefs to be reinstalled as many time as needed, with the flexibility to be shared in public spaces, as a memorial, as an invitation to reflect on the political history of a country which still cannot exercise its right to know.

Medium: hand painted with charcoal powder on plastic sheets, silkscreen; binding: loose pages (1.198, the missing to this date) printed handkerchiefs, in a box. Courtesy of the artist.

7. MAKE THE ECONOMY SCREAM (2017)

is based on the declassified document created in 1970, recently released by the National Security Archive of the United States, which reveals facts about the 'Chile Project' during the Nixon administration: its main objective was to overthrow the democratically elected government of socialist President Salvador Allende in order to protect American commercial interests. Three years later, a military operation planned in conjunction with the CIA, orchestrated by Kissinger and Pinochet, provoked the depreciation of the copper market and thus weakening the country's economy, as well as providing them ample coverage to commit numerous crimes against humanity. Portraits of some Chilean victims mirror the current status of minorities in the United States under the Trump regime.

This artist book is based on the Dignidad project, a visual and audio installation with performance developed during the artist residency at the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in New York in 2017-2018 and contains three paper movable sculptures that deconstruct symbols of power within the same structure. The book includes a text by Chilean writer Matías Celedón in Spanish translated into English and German, and three photolithography images on their back of performances at The National Archive in Chile (2018), The Center for Book Arts in New York (2019), and the Meermanno Museum (2019), after this opening. This edition will become part of the *Moving Memorials* series.

Edition: 50; medium: photolithography on paper, metal box, audio; size: 25x25x4 cm (closed), 27½x27½ cm (opened). Courtesy of the artist.

ARCHIVES

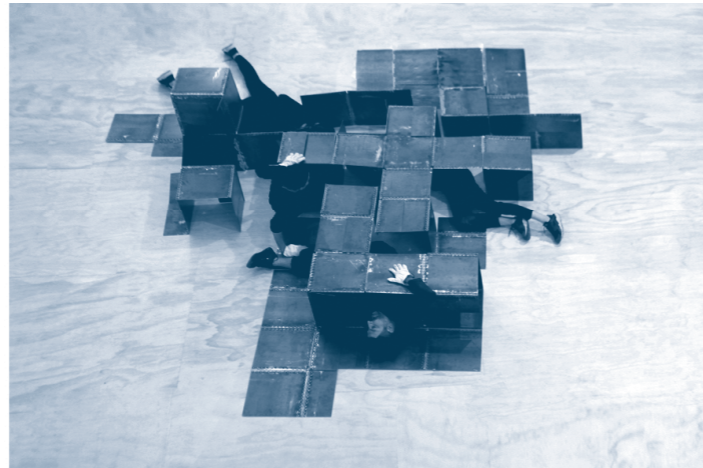
Facsimiles from the National Archive of Chile on Colonia Dignidad. (National Memorial from 2016). Copies of seized records from the PDI (Investigations Police of Chile) in Colonia Dignidad in 2005, indicating the judicial process with judge Jorge Zepeda, investigating the kidnappings of Juan Bosco Maino Canales, Elizabeth de las Mercedes Rekas Urrea and Antonio Elizondo Ormaechea (case 218-98). This highlights the finding of 46.308 files with information on people and institutions.

This is an intelligence and counter intelligence file constructed in Colonia Dignidad. These files are part of the largest archive on the repression of civic-military dictatorship found in Chile.

Electromagnetic Tapes, original (Winfried Hempel Archives). 20 Magnetic tapes, 17 in reel format (BASF, PHILIPS, and LGS Type), and three compact cassettes, which contains recordings made in the context of the Ex Colonia Dignidad. The magnetic tape number 19 corresponds to the content explored by the artist within the Dignidad project (Installation and performance).

Ephemeral material of artists research (Drawings, mockups, photos, prints).

books by María Verónica San Martín



Dignidad

The installation *Dignidad* combines sculpture, sound, performance, texts as well as archival material. Colonia Dignidad was an enclave in the south of Chile where clandestine operations of the secret service of the Pinochet regime (1973-1990) took place. Recently sound recordings were discovered, containing conversations between former Nazi agents and representatives of the regime. Through this installation San Martín reveals what happened in Colonia Dignidad, where crimes against minors and opponents of the Chilean dictator took place.

About the Artist

María Verónica San Martín (1981) was born in Chile and is currently based in New York as an artist. San Martín addresses memory as a pivotal factor for the understanding of the neoliberal, globalized present, turning recently to the subject matter of the Chilean dictatorship's violence, vis-à-vis the United States and Nazism's involvement in that violence. Her artist's books have been included in leading collections of the Whitney Museum in New York, Center Pompidou in Paris and Museo de la memoria y los derechos humanos in Santiago, Chile, among others. Museum Meermanno has included two books in the modern collection.

Captions photos

Cover: Artist Book, *Colonia Dignidad/Dystopic Utopia* (2018).

A: Artist Book, *Memory and Landscape Unveiling the Historic Truths of Chile* (2013).

B: Artist Book, *In Their Memory. Human Rights Violations in Chile, 1973-1990* (2012).

C: *Dignidad* performance, National Archive of Chile, 2018.

For more information about the artist go to the following website www.mveronicasanmartin.com or scan the QR-code:



Colophon

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This exhibition is part of the series 'Revolutionary books' organized by the House of the book, a cooperative venture between the National library of the Netherlands and Museum Meermanno, and has been made possible by Fonds Cox-De Ronde.

**HUISVAN
HETBOEK**

DIGNIDAD. Artists' María Verónica San Martín

