

National Museum of Fine Arts, Chile

From July 13, 2023

Views on the Wallmapu. Territories, outskirts and disputes. MNBA Collection

A reflection on the representation of the Mapuche people, tracing a small visual history, in the light of conflicts and marginalizations, proposes the exhibition *Views on the Wallmapu. Territories, outskirts and disputes. MNBA Collection*, which is presented from July 13 at the National Museum of Fine Arts.

With the curatorship of Cristián Vargas Paillahueque and the coordination and research of Eva Cancino Fuentes, in charge of MNBA collections, the exhibition includes a set of works from the MNBA collection that install a critical reflection for the representation of the Mapuche people through different approaches and artistic sensibilities. The exhibition is part of the reflections initiated by the MNBA collection exhibition *Struggles for art, a map of relations and disputes for the hegemony of art* (1843-1933), and is also part of the program of exhibitions with which the 50th anniversary of the coup d'état is commemorated.

"It is relevant that the Museum addresses the Mapuche issues in its collection from a critical perspective, accounting for current wounds and ongoing conflicts. The curatorship proposes a reflection that considers nineteenth-century authors, who initially illustrated and addressed the life of these people from the perspective of colonialist ideals and stereotypes, revealing the visions of contemporary Mapuche authors who in the first person and with current means, disarm the hegemonic discourses expressing their analysis and discontent." says Varinia Brodsky, MNBA director (s).

Through images, documents, and quotations, the exhibition allows us to follow a panoramic, both visual and historical, of the Wallmapu. "The latter, understood as the concept that allows the Mapuche people to identify their historical cross-borders territory. In a certain way, it proposes an initial concern and reflection on how and what has been said through art regarding the indigenous world and which sources help and challenge these stories from a multiplicity of authors, voices and agencies," explain Vargas and Cancino in the curatorial text.

The initial point reviews how from "the Mapuche" institutionalism, mainly from the works of the MNBA Collection, is represented as "the other". The few works that exemplify this view are also proof of the little relevance that native peoples in general have had in the artistic officiality.

Themes

Sculpture and monumentality: it addresses the sculptural representations of the body, according to the imaginaries of the hegemonic canon that stipulated how the indigenous should appear according to the artistic "araucanism". "Araucanism" was a polysemic concept that, towards the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth century, constitutes mainly three dimensions: being an "expert" in "Araucanian", being sensitive to the multiple problems of the "Araucanian" population and, finally, it accounts for the strategic enunciation coined by Mapuche organizations to dispute the political field in the public space. In this perspective, the triad between José Miguel Blanco (1839-1897), Nicanor Plaza (1841-1918) and Virginio Arias (1855-1941), combine an "Araucanist" reading of the period in relation to art and the Mapuche population.

Portraits of the territory: points out a problematic genealogy and influence between artists and sensibilities that ethnographically sketch indigenous subjects from different perspectives. These are artistic searches under the eaves of advances in methods, media and disciplines of knowledge that formed a novel visual documentation.

This section vindicates Juan Antonio Sepúlveda (1879-1958), Mapuche painter, sculptor, and politician, of enormous relevance at the beginning of the century, who belonged to the Sociedad Caupolicán Defensora de la Araucanía (1910), one of the first Mapuche organizations. He was a disciple of Ernesto Molina, painter and collector who, decades before, also remained, throughout different periods, in Mapuche territory. Pedro Luna (1896-1956) and Ramón Subirats (1891-1942), also account for the breadth of visions.

Elaboration of landscapes: giving an account of the approaches made by traveling artists, chroniclers and colonizers in the Wallmapu of the nineteenth century on problems and disputes that remain today.

Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802-1858), German painter and draftsman, created a visual repertoire of the Mapuche world, convergent with the nineteenth-century imaginary of civilization and barbarism and with the construction of "Araucanian types" in their diversity of customs. His images, together with those of Carl Alexander Simon (1805-1852) and Vicente Pérez Rosales (1807-1886), in correlation with a diversity of sources, are part of a clear amalgam of problems that transcend purely representational aspects.

From the voices: it brings together different Mapuche authorships that, becoming part of the dilemma for representation, for the uses and misuses of imaginaries, permeate a critical vision of historical and social repertoires, which elaborate new visualities related to their own biographies, experiences, and disciplinary approaches. This way, they reflect a panorama of contemporary Mapuche art as a key field for the decolonization of discourses that concern the artistic field.

The engravings of Santos Chávez (1934-2001) reformulate the imaginaries. While the critique of stereotypes, racism, discrimination, and the omission of indigenous bodies and singularities today is exposed in the approaches of Bernardo Oyarzún (1963-) and Paula Baeza Pailamilla (1988-). Paula Coñoepan (1993-) reveals the multidimensional search for origins, absences, and stories. Seba Calfuqueo (1991-) recounts from her biography historical periods such as that of the Popular Unity, from the Mapuche perspective.