

## AESTHETICS IN CHILE

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*Aisthesis*, the journal of the Instituto de Estética of the Universidad Católica de Chile, is published annually. The first number, "El teatro y sus problemas en Chile," came out in 1966. Subsequent issues have dealt with art criticism (1967), the novel (1968), architecture (1969), poetry (1970), and art education (I, 1971; II, 1972). All volumes through number 9 (1975–76) were monothematic and dealt with specific aesthetic themes. Each number is divided into four sections: (1) theories: general aesthetics, theory and criticism of art, aesthetic axiology, psycho-sociology of art, history of art, and similar topics; (2) studies: analysis of the cultural-aesthetic problems of Chile in relation to theories; (3) experiences: interviews and personal statements; and (4) information on the Instituto de Estética. Beginning with number 10 in 1977, *Aisthesis* appears changed in format and reduced in length. The issues under consideration here are number 8, "La música y sus problemas en Chile," and number 9, "La pintura y sus problemas en Chile." Also noted, although more briefly, will be numbers 10, 11, and 12.

Of the fourteen essays in number 8, a few that are representative and of special interest to readers of *LARR*, will be discussed. In "La armonía musical y la armonía humana," Raimundo Kupareo suggests that the human value of music consists principally of showing mankind how to realize fully our potential: to be in harmony with ourselves, with others, with nature, and with God. He admits, however, that this state will never be achieved and is instead an ideal for which to strive (p. 15). While developing this concept within the unity of Art, the author reminds us that the ancient Greeks worshipped all the muses in one temple and did not isolate one art from another as we do today. In Kupareo's opinion, we desire internal harmony between the intellect and the will, the spiritual and the sensitive, the abstract and the concrete. He believes that music unites all types of Art and that Art in general and music in particular bring about a harmonic union of the different facets of our being. To prove his thesis, the author surveys the course of harmony through the ages, from ancient times to the contemporary period. In sum, the author argues that the search across the centuries for different types of harmony in music is a parallel of humanity's search for harmony within itself and with its world.

“Tres maestros chilenos” by Tomás Lefever is a biographical-historical essay that discusses the importance of Enrique Soro, Pedro Humberto Allende, and Alfonso Leng in the development of Chilean music. As a preamble to the essay, the author raises the question, “What is Chilean?” He believes that it is much more difficult to find an answer today than previously because of the nation’s changes and homogenizations (p. 202). Using some general ideas from classical logic, he sketches a contradictory hypothesis for seeking an approximate definition of *lo chileno* (pp. 203–7).

The first composer he discusses is Enrique Soro, who studied in Milan and knew Verdi. After pointing out the influence of Wagner on Soro, the author goes on to state that the aesthetic conduct of Soro fixed the most definitive characteristics of Chilean music without which it would have taken an entirely different direction.

Lefever thinks that musical creation in Chile is especially outstanding in those genres that are associated naturally with feelings of intimacy, subtleness, hermeticism, and subjectivity—for example, chamber music (p. 212). After a careful analysis of Soro’s style, Lefever concludes that it is purely Chilean, although it does not contain folkloric or popular elements except in two or three insignificant instances.

Next Lefever discusses Pedro Humberto Allende’s life and music. In 1918 Allende founded an integral nationalistic style from all exotic, picturesque, and sentimental elements characteristic of the nationalistic schools in Europe during the late romantic period. The author comes to the conclusion that Allende obtained with the popular tradition in Chile parallel results to those of Manuel de Falla in Spain and Bartok in central Europe, but that Allende did so earlier than Falla (pp. 218, 223).

The author next discusses Alfonso Leng, giving something of his life and tracing his musical development. Lefever also carefully analyzes Leng’s symphonic poem “The Death of Alsino,” a work inspired by the novel of the same name by Chilean Pedro Prado (pp. 236–39). In the author’s opinion, Leng’s art incarnates in a direct, explicit manner the best of what is called “Chilean” as well as its moot weaknesses and negative aspects (p. 230). In sum, Lefever believes that these three Chilean composers were central in setting the direction for Chilean national music.

In “Estudios sobre música folklórica chilena,” Manuel Dannemann states that in Latin American countries, folkloric music is transmitted orally for the most part and that its cultural autonomy bestows on it more social than aesthetic effects (p. 270). He goes on to give a historical introduction to the indigenous and folkloric music of Chile, sketching a panorama of the development of the most important musical trends in this type of music. In Dannemann’s opinion, three ethnic-cultural currents have merged to form Chilean folkloric music: Euro-

pean, American aboriginal, and the scanty negro contribution, which was confined to the north (pp. 270–73).

One approach the author employs is to discuss folkloric music according to the nine geographic divisions of the *Atlas folklórico musical de Chile*. In the final section, he treats chronologically the development of studies of folkloric music, beginning with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and ending with the contemporary moment. Dannemann concludes his essay with a five-page bibliography. This detailed panorama of Chilean folkloric music will be of interest not only to folklorists but to humanists and some social scientists as well.

In "Consideraciones sobre la música chilena," Alfonso Letelier uses the historical-chronological approach to trace the general development of Chilean music. In this study, he points out that nationalism is much more prominent in the music of the other Spanish American republics than in Chile (p. 251). The Chileans continue to be European enough not to be absorbed by America. According to the author, the failure of the Chileans to merge the two heritages might be the source of their individualism (p. 254). In my opinion, Chile's *loca geografía* and isolation might also have something to do with this trait.

The last section entitled "Experiencias" consists of interviews with three Chilean composers: Alfonso Letelier, Juan Amenábar, and Carlos Isamitt. These interviews will be of interest to those who use the historical approach in criticism, as well as to anyone interested in the human side of composers and parallel developments in music in different parts of the world.

Issue number 9 of *Aisthesis*, "La pintura y sus problemas en Chile," also contains fourteen essays, but only a few can be discussed here because of space limitations. In "Conceptos de verdad y realidad en la pintura teotihuacana y maya," Rómulo Trebbi points out that pre-Columbian painting has its own conceptual and interpretive characteristics. From a critical-artistic perspective, he tries to maintain in his discussion a balance between sensibility (subjectivity) and ideas (objectivity) (p. 57). The author asserts that in the prescientific, experimental period, art arose as a creative manifestation. Fantasy took on symbolic forms. The basic principle of artistic creation was the idea, rather than the interpretation of events. Trebbi cites Lewis Mumford to support his thesis: "[Primitive] art is Truth, not Reality: it does not try to paint the world but instead the other world." This would be on the basis of content and form as a principle of unity: the absolute importance of the hieroglyphic sign as a true symbol of the supernatural.

Trebbi is convinced that Mexican painting left its most important works on the walls of Teotihuacán, and it was probably there that the use of mixed techniques of *al secco* and *al fresco* began. As painters drew

their sketches, they interpreted religious themes as a traditional truth, which often produced a formal rigidity that was repeated in monotonous succession of the same theme. An impression of cold religiosity is produced by the procession of gods and priests disguised as animals, accentuating the intellectual origin of the Teotihuacán frescoes (pp. 59–60).

The author believes that in the Mayan culture, images were painted with a ritual purpose and that their language remains, for the most part, symbolical-numerical. But here the human element is discovered. The divine iconography among the Mayas took on a new criterion for America: that of man with his real proportions, which substitute for the symbolic-ideal ones. Trebbi points out that from the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., a marked realistic tendency began to characterize Mayan art with respect to human anatomy and that it obtained effects of chiaroscuro that are not found in other pre-Columbian cultures (pp. 60–61). The author concludes that the realism and the precision of the facial expressions demonstrate that the Mayan painter achieved both reality and truth.

Carlos González in “Un signo pintado en la cerámica chilena” deals with the problem of the interpretation of indigenous symbols or designs. He believes that in indigenous ceramics, form is generally not autonomous, meaning that it does not seek reality per se. The works of primitive man not only reveal him as an inhabitant of a place at a specific moment, but they also show him in relation to the sacred and reveal an aspect of it. The author discusses this relationship of Man–Sacred–Object–Divinity that is manifested through ideograms, signs, and symbols that have a logic and coherence beyond all doubt (p. 65).

In the latter part of his illustrated essay, González seeks a semiotic explanation. He postulates that the repetition of a symbolic form and of the ritual act assures “normality.” He also believes that a frequent error in the study of indigenous ceramics has been describing the “decoration” as a sum of ornamental elements instead of evaluating the whole object. In his opinion, this approach leads to confusion because the true dimension of the object is altered. In reality, the object and the symbolic elements that are related to it form an organic whole (p. 68).

Other articles in this issue will be of interest to a limited audience. In “Pintura y percepción,” Milan Ivelić treats a problem pointed out by the psychologist Alfred Binet: the viewer’s difficulty in comprehending the plastic propositions that painting offers, or “the mystery of painting.” Raimundo Kupareo, using a theoretical-historical approach in “La luz, elemento esencial de la expresión pictórica,” studies the role of light in painting. At one point, he discusses light and painting in terms of music and musical terminology. In “Una visión de la pintura contemporánea,” Ramón Vinés emphasizes theory and develops his thesis that

the history of art is the history of the endless evolution of expressive (artistic) means. A link with Kupareo's essay is Vinés's discussion of Cubism. Jorge Montoya in "El pensamiento estético de Juan Francisco González" analyzes the ideas of the painter as reflected in his works. Montoya discusses González's qualities as an artist and the esteem in which he was held by his students and colleagues.

The next four studies relate to Chilean art history. Andrés Sabella, who is also a poet, in "Pintura de Antofagasta" traces painters from 1872 to the present, giving a brief panorama of painting in Antofagasta and northern Chile. In "Sobre los comienzos de la pintura en Chile y en especial de Valparaíso," Roberto Zegers concludes that there were few Chilean art critics in the nineteenth century and that those few were concerned more with individuals than with the art they produced. He finds the same situation still existing in the twentieth century. Antonio Romera discusses the students of the Grupo de Montparnasse, the Generation of 1940. He considers the Chilean artist to be *homo aestheticus* and not *homo politicus* (p. 146). In "Reseña histórica de la fundación del Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes," Lissette Balmaceda gives a brief history of the National Museum from the 1870s to 1976.

The "Experiencias" section of this volume contains three articles. Edgar Carrasco, in "La enseñanza de la pintura y la creación," shares his reflections and personal experiences derived from years of teaching painting and working in the field of pictorial creation. "Una historia, una experiencia: La Alhambra" by Eduardo Elgueta is a history of the home of the Sociedad Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago. The author interviewed professors and students in compiling this brief overview. In "La pintura: su candente realidad," Gaspar Galaz and Milan Ivelić discuss some current problems in painting with four of the most outstanding painters in Chile today: Carmen Aldunate, Mario Carreño, Rodolfo Opazo, and Ricardo Yrarrázaval. The responses of the artists give insight into their current thought and provide background on the Chilean artistic world.

*Aisthesis* number 10 (1977) reflects changes in format, being shorter than previous issues (126 pages). Also, it is not monothematic as were earlier volumes, but has studies on the justification of the beautiful, both natural and artistic, in the life of man and therefore on the importance of aesthetics. A new phase of *Aisthesis* began with this number, which was published as a coedition of Ediciones Revista de Educación, Centro de Perfeccionamiento del Ministerio de Educación, and Ediciones Nueva Universidad. Among the articles in this volume are "La muerte del arte" by Raimundo Kupareo, "El hombre y los valores estéticos" by Alfonso Kastner, and "Los fenómenos expresivos en la estética de Félix Schwartzmann" by Margarita Schultz. A new section of the journal enti-

tled "Documentos" contains a "Bibliografía y piezas originales de Isla de Pascua . . ." by Camila Laureani de Borghesi. This issue provides a general index to the first ten volumes, 1966 through 1977.

Number 11 (1978) is another small volume that is also interdisciplinary, including articles on painting, ballet, aesthetic theory, and literature (on the prose of Gabriela Mistral). Under the "Documentos" section, Camila Laureani de Borghesi has an article on the Isla de Pascua (Easter Island) that serves as an introduction to the archaeological-aesthetic studies that she will make in future numbers about the island. The latest issue, number 12 (1979), has only 106 pages and contains articles on aesthetic theory, art, and national and international poetry.

In conclusion, the essays in *Aisthesis* discuss outstanding artists, with ideas and subjects often recurring as do themes such as Cubism, Wagnerian music, and indigenous art. The authors, usually distinguished authorities in their fields, point out at times the links and parallels among the various arts. Politics, always a burning issue in Latin America, is mentioned only tangentially by a couple of authors. The essays are scholarly and well organized. A few essays are theoretical and technical, but others are historical or interpretative. The theoretical studies take abstract themes that lend a broader appeal going beyond Chilean topics when European and other influences are brought in. In spite of the titles of the volumes, the essays in numbers 8 and 9 do not restrict themselves to national themes. *Aisthesis* was originally directed toward a specialized audience, but the editors have broadened its scope, beginning with number 10, by making it a more interdisciplinary review. It is an excellent journal, and those who want to keep abreast of aesthetic thought in Chile will find it a must. *Aisthesis* was incorporated into Ediciones Nueva Universidad, the official publications series of the Catholic University of Chile, and it is to be hoped that such action indicates that this journal will continue to be published in the future.