The Politics of Collecting

Understanding diversity representation in public art museums' collections in post-dictatorship Chile (1990-2020)

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Understanding diversity representation in public art museums' collections in post-dictatorship Chile (1990-2020)

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Abstract

The global museum sector has shown increasing interest in widening diversity representation. Although museums have become aware of the colonial structures that have historically reproduced cultural hierarchies in museums, these debates have concentrated on existing collections, notably in ethnographic museums and curatorial practice in the Global North. This research aims to contribute to this discussion, exploring the power dynamics that shape art museums' collecting practices in the Global South, focusing on the Chilean case.

In Chile, cultural policy and cultural institutions have also claimed an interest in promoting diversity since the end of the military dictatorship (1973-1990). Nevertheless, very little empirical research has been developed in the sector to study concrete museum practices. Based on this context, the following research question is proposed: How have Chilean public art museums addressed diversity representation in their acquisitions from 1990 - 2020? This main question is supported by three subsidiary research questions: (1) What challenges do Chilean art museums face when attempting to widen diversity representation in collections? (2) What are art museums' collection strategies in Chile in the post-dictatorship period, and how does it relate to their context? and (3) How do museum workers understand museums' social responsibility regarding diversity representation, and how does this influence their practice?

To explore this question, this project considered qualitative multi-case study research, analysing collecting practices in four public art collections in Chile. This study had an exploratory character due to the scarcity of previous research focused on the Chilean museum sector's collecting practices. The research design considered four stages of data collection and analysis: (1) a preliminary study formed by four semi-structured interviews with museum workers, notably heads of collections at each institution part of the study; (2) an analysis of Chilean cultural policy from the post-dictatorship period, focused on how discourses of diversity were addressed there; (3) an analysis of complementary sources regarding museum acquisitions, including collections' spreadsheets, catalogues, collection policies, and internal procedure documents, and (4) a final round of twelve semi-structured interviews with arts professionals involved in museum acquisitions, including museum workers (collections professionals, curators, and museum directors), acquired artists, and independent researchers.

The main findings of this research were, firstly, that art museums' collecting practices in Chile were shaped by precarity issues that led them to over-rely on donations. This has only started to change in the last decade, shaped by increasing research and curatorial approaches in the sector, which has also influenced the incipient development of collection policies. Secondly, the study also highlighted increasing activism in museum workforces, connected to more professionals from working-class

backgrounds entering the sector since the 1990s. This implied that most projects that aimed to widen diversity representation were pushed by individual workers or specific teams instead of policies or institutional guidelines. And thirdly, this research identified and characterised an emergent 'transformative collecting', which were self-reflexive practices that aimed to challenge traditional museum structures through the accessioning of non-canonical artists. These practices were 'transformative' in the sense that they sought not only the 'inclusion' of historically marginalised artists but also to foster institutional change. This final point is explored based on specific acquisitions of contemporary artists of Indigenous origin in public museum collections.

Lastly, the significance of this research is based on the characterisation of the politics of collecting. This thesis discusses that, although increasing debates regarding power dynamics in museum collections have emerged in the global museum sector, these have concentrated on existing collections. Yet, museums continue to collect. In that context, this thesis explores how power dynamics continue to shape contemporary museum collecting and, therefore, collections. Furthermore, this research also presents new empirical data regarding art-collecting practices in Latin America, which is currently widely absent from the literature. Consequently, this research can contribute to academic knowledge, professional practice, and cultural policy development.

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Museums & Galleries Referenced

- **GGM**: *Galería Gabriela Mistral* (Gallery Gabriela Mistral)
- **MAC**: *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo* (Museum of Contemporary Art)
- **MNBA:** *Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* (National Museum of Fine Arts)
- **MSSA**: *Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende* (Museum of Solidarity Salvador Allende)

Organisations

- **CMN:** *Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales* (Council of National Monuments)
- **CNCA:** *Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes* (National Council of Culture and Arts). This council was replaced by the MINCAP in 2018.
- **CONADI**: *Corporación Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena* (National Corporation of Indigenous Development)
- **DIBAM**: *Dirección Nacional de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos* (National Directorship of Libraries, Archives and Museums). This organisation was replaced by the SNPC in 2018.
- **FONDART**: *Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Cultural y las Artes* (National Fund for the Cultural and Arts Development)
- **ICOM**: International Council of Museums.
- **MINEDUC:** *Ministerio de Educación* (Ministry of Education)
- **MINCAP:** *Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio* (Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage).
- **PNM:** *Política Nacional de Museos* (National Museums Policy).
- **SNM:** *Subdirección Nacional de Museos* (National Sub-directorship of Museums).
- **SNPC:** *Servicio Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural* (National Service of Cultural Heritage).

Chapter 1: Introduction

The global museum sector has increasingly shown interest in widening diversity representation in the last few decades. The new museum definition approved the by International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 2022 is evidence of this, which claims that: 'open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability' (ICOM, 2022). Nevertheless, ICOM's definitions must be considered an *ideal* of museums rather than a description of how they actually work (Ang, 2018, p.315). In fact, the 2022 definition faced two years of consultation and pushback due to the challenge of proposing a universalising definition for every kind of museum in every corner of the world. And more specifically, in the context of the museum definition, the increasing commitment to the values of equality and inclusion raised the permanent question of representation in every area of museums (Mairesse, 2020, p.78).

In Chile, the end of the military dictatorship (1973-1990) positioned the country in the landscape of liberal democracies, and consequently, diversity and equality became key values of the newly democratic Chilean state. Accordingly, cultural policy and cultural institutions have also consistently claimed an interest in promoting diversity since the 1990s. Nevertheless, very little empirical research has been developed in the sector to study concrete museum practices. And in this scenario, the area of collections is a particularly under-researched one. Based on this context, this thesis is interested in examining how diversity representation operates in art museum collecting in contemporary Chile. This research is based on a qualitative multi case study, that considers four institutions in Santiago de Chile, and draws on cultural policy analysis and semi-structured interviews with museum professionals, artists and researchers.

In this introductory chapter, I will present some initial discussions regarding the theoretical setting of this thesis. Firstly, I will explore contemporary museums' relationship with diversity. Secondly, I will introduce how this relationship has had an impact on museum collecting. Thirdly, I will explore the theoretical framework I will use in this thesis to refer to 'diversity representation'. In the fourth section of this chapter, I will present my research questions, aim and objectives, and how these situates this thesis in the current literature. Lastly, I will offer a general roadmap to this thesis, briefly presenting its structure and chapter contents.

1.1.   Museums and *fostering diversity*

Fostering diversity has been discussed in the museum sector for over fifty years. This interest has emerged from various debates held worldwide, both within and outside the cultural sector, such as the 'new museology', multiculturalism, and decolonial activism, among many others. These have informed awareness of museums as socially situated institutions responsible for contributing to social justice. This has also led to changes in museum practice, such as increasing participatory approaches, and encouraging reflexivity among museum workforces.

In Latin America, these conversations notably materialised during the Roundtable of Santiago, a conference organised by UNESCO in 1972 in Chile. This event aimed to gather museologists and academics from the region to reflect on the museum's social role in Latin America. After the event, a declaration was released, which emphasised that museums do not belong to only one group of society, criticising museums' traditional elitist approach and stating that they must be conscious of and committed to society overall (De Carli, 2004, pp.58-59). The declaration also strongly highlighted the idea of museums as a 'space of communication and multicultural encounters' (Alegría, 2012, p.160).

Unfortunately, the enthusiasm for *la nueva museología* did not last in Chile. On September 11th,

1973, a *coup d'état* started a seventeen-year-long dictatorship (1973-1990) that intervened in

cultural institutions and constrained further dialogue with international museum professionals.

Furthermore, throughout Latin America, the political instability and authoritarian regimes that

plagued the region during the second half of the 20th century directly impacted the development

of their cultural sectors (Zamorano, Rius Ulldemolins and Klein, 2014, pp.26-27). Latin

American museum professionals re-joined the global conversations on the social role of these

institutions from the 1980s and 1990s during their respective countries' restoration of

democratic systems.

Throughout this thesis, I will argue that museums' contexts and institutional histories, such as

the events mentioned above, are crucial to understanding museum practice. The goal of

fostering diversity will also necessarily have different meanings in different museums. In

museums in the Global North, the debates regarding diversity were notably pushed by non-

European immigration in the late 20th century, which presented a challenge to address

increasingly diversifying audiences (Ang, 2018, p.316). But ultimately, it also made urgent the

need to question homogeneous national identity narratives (Ang, 2018, pp.319-322).

In Latin America, on the other hand, the history of colonisation and *mestizaje* (racial mixing)

has always been at the core of the question of national identity. However, after the

independence processes in the early 19th century, early museums in Latin America were

strongly influenced by the cultural hegemony of European institutions. Museums were

considered one of the strategies by which nations could be incorporated into the *civilised world*,

attempting to portray a *modern* Latin American society; that is, whiter, bourgeois and

westernised. Museums in the Americas, then, notably reproduced the idea of homogenous

national identities, where Indigenous cultures were only represented as part of the past of these

territories (De Carli, 2004, pp.57). In Chile, this only started to be questioned after the end of the dictatorship, when the promise of a new liberal democracy made the goal of diversity and inclusion a crucial objective for society overall.

1.2. Museum collecting and diversity

Moreover, this thesis will explore diversity representation in museums and how this is addressed in art museums' acquisitions. This interest comes from the fact that most debates regarding *fostering diversity* have strongly concentrated on certain areas of museum practice, such as curatorial and education departments. These areas have raised controversial gaps in collections and the underrepresentation of artists and communities that do not fit in the canon of traditional Western art. I am interested in analysing what museums are doing to address those gaps.

At the same time, these collection gaps have been identified by acknowledging that museums are not neutral but political spaces. Similarly, in this thesis, I will argue that collecting practices must also be understood as not neutral. In 1982, Peter Vergo discussed that, 'the very act of collecting has a political or ideological or aesthetic dimension which cannot be overlooked. According to what criteria are works of art judged to be beautiful, or even historically significant?' (p.2). Furthermore, acknowledging power relations embedded in cultural representation implies the urgency to put institutional collecting under 'fundamental review' (Knell, 2016, p.2). I will call this 'the politics of collecting'; that is, understanding *how* museums collect and how this is shaped by power dynamics and the museums' contexts. This implies acknowledging not only a variety of museum practices in different parts of the globe but also the multiplicity of contexts that accompany these. It is also a call for a holistic understanding of museum practice, where critical practices must be seen as being in dialogue and flux with every area of museums.

Although Vergo's question was posed forty years ago, the literature that explores *how* museums collect is relatively scarce (Miller, 2022, p.2). When looking at the area of collections, questions about diversity representation and power dynamics have notably appeared around ethnographic and historical museum collections and their relationship with their 'source communities' (Boast, 2011, p. 56). This has pushed several conversations and actions around the restitution of artefacts, human remains, and deaccessioning in general. That said, discussions around decolonising collections have been less present in art museums. Although some research has appeared regarding race and gender pay gaps when acquiring artists of colour, women artists, or non-canonical artists in general, this has primarily appeared in major international museums.

Away from the big art capitals, the picture gets fuzzier. Museums in the Global South tend to struggle significantly with precarity and funding issues. This limits their research capability, making their practices less visible and discussed in an increasingly globalised museum sector. This situation has notably prompted my interest in studying the case of Chilean art museums and their collecting practices. As a Chilean art historian, I have always encountered some disconnection between global research regarding diversity in museums and my own experience with museums around me. This experience, I realised, was shaped by contextual differences. Chilean museums were exposed to a different set of challenges compared to the institutions in the Global North. Therefore, drawing on the Chilean case, I will explore how museum acquisitions are not an isolated practice but one in constant dialogue with their context. Moreover, I will argue that the Chilean case is relevant to study due to the changes that both museums and overall society in Chile have undergone since the end of the military dictatorship in 1990, as these changes allow me to demonstrate the aforementioned correlation between collecting practices and museums' contexts.

1.3. Defining diversity representation

Before exploring the research outline that supports this thesis, it is relevant to explore a key term that I have already mentioned a few times: diversity representation. When I started this research, one of the most challenging tasks was defining a concept to frame how to approach 'diversity' in this thesis. I soon found that this could have multiple entry points, each contesting the other. I also encountered many challenges regarding the tensions between Anglo-speaking literature and theories, debates and movements from the Global South, specifically in Latin America. Consequently, the notion of diversity representation came late in my research as a response to my data analyses, which sometimes felt disjointed from the theoretical frameworks I had prepared to make sense of my data. In this section, I will aim to unpack this journey and explain how I will use the idea of diversity representation concerning museums, particularly in this thesis.

1.3.1. Multiculturalism, interculturalismo and cultural diversity

My first attempt to conceptualise diversity was through multiculturalism. One could argue that diversity, as in 'diverse kinds of people', has always existed in societies. But our current understanding of diversity is strongly influenced by multiculturalist debates that have emerged in the public policy sector since the 1970s in Western countries (Crowder, 2013, p.9). The creation of multiculturalist policies was mainly influenced by the increase of migrants from the Global South in the Global North since the 1960s, and it was boosted in the context of Western liberal democracies. The values of liberal democracies were challenged by the problem of how, historically, certain groups have enjoyed a privileged status in society while others have been marginalised. 'For the sense of multicultural challenge to arise, this normalization has to be put in question, has to be seen as a denial of equality, which is one of the crucial values of a democratic society' (Taylor, 2012, p. 415).

Multiculturalism is the unprecedented theory that cultural diversity should not only be approved but also supported and promoted by the state through public policy (Crowder, 2013, p.3). In this regard, according to scholar Stephen May, multiculturalism as a theory has been successful 'because the issue of greater public representation for minority groups is increasingly commonplace in discussions of democracy and representation in modern western nation-states' (2003, p. 199). This implies that the awareness regarding issues of underrepresentation in institutional spaces is relatively recent, expanding in the last sixty years. This also suggests that pursuing a broader representation of minorities indicates the acknowledgement of intrinsic social hierarchies and a desire to challenge them.

Nonetheless, the concept of multiculturalism has not been free of criticism. It has been widely criticised for its emphasis on public policy, being constructed on a top-down model and not addressing the lack of agency of minorities in this context (Stokke & Lybæk, 2018, p.78). This means multiculturalism often lacks acknowledgement of the power relations in which it is involved (May, 2003, p. 201). As a response, various concepts have appeared to address these critiques, such as interculturalism and critical multiculturalism. According to Costa Rican scholar Ana Solano-Campos:

> In addition to geographical correspondence, each model is connected with times of complex social struggles for justice and recognition of minoritized ethnocultural groups: civil rights in the case of the USA (Banks 1994, 2009, Sleeter 1996, Gay 2010); increased immigration patterns and national identity struggles in Canada (Joshee 2004, Ghosh 2011, Meer and Modood 2012, Taylor 2012); and Indigenous rights in Latin America (Hamel 2008, López, 2009, Gómez and Hernández 2010). The focus of each model of diversity, then, has been directly linked to the purposes and social context for which they originated. (…) In Latin America, interculturalidad is intrinsically linked to its colonial legacy and the linguistic and cultural identity and rights of Indigenous communities. (Solano-Campos, 2013, p. 625).

As noted above, in Latin America, this debate has been carried out under the name *interculturalidad*[1], which often connects to the idea of *mestizaje* as the core of Latin American identity. *Mestizaje* is a concept that refers to the history of racial mixing in this region, understanding a *mestizo* as a person whose ethnic background includes the mixing of Spanish and Indigenous peoples. Thus, *interculturalidad* is strongly linked to the revindication of Indigenous cultures and mainly engages with developing bilingual education programs that support the protection of local Indigenous languages (Zárate Pérez, 2014, p. 95). Since the 1990s, the concept started to be widely used in public policy in Latin America (Solano-Campos, 2013, p.624), increasingly addressing the challenges of hybrid identities and Indigenous rights.

Nevertheless, it is relevant to mention that *interculturalidad* in Latin America is usually guided by governments and public institutions towards Indigenous peoples. This element seems closely related to 'traditional' ideas of multiculturalism in a top-down model (Zárate Pérez, 2014, p. 94). According to scholar Josef Esterman, this implies that the use of *interculturalidad* might end up working as 'wishful thinking' instead of addressing material and symbolic inequalities that affect Indigenous groups (2014, p. 2).

Related to these debates regarding the hierarchical approach taken by multiculturalism and interculturalist policies, the concept of cultural diversity was recommended by UNESCO in 2005. This was discussed in the context of two international agreements; the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2005 and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 2008. According to UNESCO,

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[1] A direct translation of this would be *interculturality*.

'Cultural diversity' refers to the manifold ways in which the cultures of groups and societies find expression. These expressions are passed on within and among groups and societies. Cultural diversity is made manifest not only through the varied ways in which the cultural heritage of humanity is expressed, augmented and transmitted through the variety of cultural expressions, but also through diverse modes of artistic creation, production, dissemination, distribution and enjoyment, whatever the means and technologies used (2005, p.13).

This concept has been notably influential in Chilean cultural policy since the 2000s (Cea, 2017, p.128), as the Chilean state ascribed to both conventions mentioned above. Nevertheless, the idea of cultural diversity has been criticised for being considered 'broad and fuzzy' (Burri, 2013, p.358) as it attempts to define diversity in every context. Moreover, it fails to explore how cultural diversity might intersect with other forms of diversity.

This issue above is precisely one of the challenges I faced when attempting to use the concept of cultural diversity in this research. While it was helpful to understand how Chilean cultural policy has approached diversity, it constantly felt disconnected from the conversations I had with my participants. These often highlighted how issues of representation connected to different power struggles and forms of oppression, for which the theories debated so far felt insufficient. Consequently, in the coming sub-sections, I explore how diversity should be understood as a situated discourse and how it interlocks with the idea of representation.

1.3.2. Understanding 'diversity' as a discourse

Diversity, more broadly, has become a keyword in the institutional language in the last few decades (Ahmed, 2012). It has been popularised based on the rise of theories of cultural diversity, as discussed in the previous sub-section, but also by the expansion of what diversity means. While diversity has often been used to refer to ethnicity and race, it now extends to different forms of difference, 'including but not limited to: ability; age; culture; education;

economic status; (…) gender identity; immigration status; religion; sexual orientation, etc.' (McIntyre & Ware, 2015, p.197). These often also intersect, which will be a matter of debate in this thesis, notably in the last few chapters.

Either way, using the term diversity in institutional language implies various challenges and contradictions. I find it valuable to address how feminist scholar Sara Ahmed has explored this term in *On being included. Racism and diversity in institutional life* (2012). Ahmed argues that diversity can still support the functioning of institutions where racism and other inequalities operate (2012, p.14). In other words, Ahmed warns that what has been institutionally introduced as diversity is a depoliticised attitude towards the inequalities reproduced in institutional practice. This is mainly because of the top-down approach embedded in the 'diversity discourse', as already noted in the previous sub-section. In Ahmed's words, 'when those who *are* important say diversity *is* important, diversity can *acquire* importance' (2012, p.59).

Ahmed raises awareness of the use of diversity as still embedded in complex power dynamics, for which I am interested in approaching diversity as a discourse. Following Michel Foucault's understanding of discourse, this implies that our understanding of diversity is not only constructed and shaped by power relations but can also be historicised (Hall, 1997, p.46). This means that what we understand as diversity today is specific to today's context. And moreover, this implies that there might be more than one discourse regarding diversity operating simultaneously in a given scenario. This notion is particularly relevant when looking at how our current understanding of diversity shapes our interpretation of historical collections formed in different historical contexts. I will explore this further in chapter 5, discussing what constitutes 'a gap' in art collections.

Furthermore, Ahmed put the stress of her analysis on understanding diversity as a phenomenological practice (Ahmed, 2012, p.173). This means, on the one hand, that diversity

is a conscious goal for which practice is required. But also, that 'the very labor of transforming institutions, or at least aiming for transformation, is how we learn about institutions *as formations*' (Ahmed, 2012, pp.173-174). This implies that by paying attention to how discourses, such as diversity, shape institutional practices, these practices can be re-directed to re-form institutions.

Consequently, in this thesis, I am not attempting to address diversity as a noun, as in 'diverse kinds of peoples represented', but to understand *which* diversity discourse is embedded in museum practice and how that is situated. I am interested in exploring Chilean museums because diversity can mean different things not only in different periods but also in different geographies. This was already raised in the global debate regarding multiculturalism, where different approaches to the multiculturalist theory were influenced by the context in which they were developed, depending on the historical disadvantages of minorities in different settings (Stokke & Lybæk, 2018, p.72; Solano-Campos, 2013, p. 625).

That being said, it is crucial to note that when I started this research, I was strongly interested in exploring cultural diversity and how Indigenous peoples were represented in museums. Nevertheless, deciding to adopt an exploratory research approach (as I will discuss in chapter 3) led me to pay more and more attention to gender and social class due to their presence in my data. Thus, when talking about diversity in this thesis, I will primarily draw on ethnicity, gender, class and their intersections. This is not to dismiss the relevance of other crucial forms of difference, but just to respond to the debates that emerged from my study cases.

1.3.3. 'Representation' and its uses

According to Stuart Hall, 'Representation *is* an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It *does* involve the use of language,

signs and images which stand for or represent things' (Hall, 1997, p.15). Hall was particularly interested in 'semiotic representation', which for the matter of this thesis is relevant when approaching art as representation. For example, Hall wrote that 'The figures in the painting *stand in the place* of, and at the same time, *stand for* the story' they represent (Hall, 1997, p.16). This dynamic has also been described as 'aesthetic representation' when referring to art (Disch, 2015, p.781) and implies acknowledging artistic practice as a form of language that produces meaning.

But semiotic or aesthetic representation is just the first layer of how representation can be used in museum contexts. This term has been notably debated in the context of feminist activism regarding 'political representation' (Disch, 2015, p.781). The most iconic example of this debate in the arts is the Guerrilla Girls' artwork *Do women need to be naked to get into the Met. Museum?* (1989), in which they stated that 'less than 5% of the artists in the Modern Art Sections are women, but 85% of the nudes are female'. The Guerrilla Girls joined the conversation regarding 'the politics of presence', that is, 'the notion that representation will be legitimate as long as it makes present the "social characteristics" of the represented, together with its preferences and interests in the body of the representative' (Disch, 2015, p.794).

In this regard, postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak argued that political representation and representation as 'picturing' are complicit (Disch, 2015, p.794). This means that *who* represents is constantly interacting and co-influencing with *who is represented and how*. According to feminist scholar Lisa Disch, this allows an awareness of representation as part of a complex system that signifies relations of power (2015, p.782). Consequently, Spivak argued that 'it is by proposing counterrepresentations (…) that intellectuals and activists challenge hegemonic subject formations' (Disch, 2015, p.794), meaning that representation is not only in the hands of those in power, and therefore, it can be contestatory. This understanding of representation

as not always 'on the side' of hegemonic power will be relevant later in this thesis, as I will explore, for example, Indigenous contemporary artists their identities as contestatory in mainstream art spaces.

1.3.4. 'Diversity representation' in this thesis

Based on the discussions above, 'diversity representation' will be used here to analyse how 'representation' operates in museum collecting to construct specific discourses of 'diversity'. This implies the need to identify which diversity discourses are present in Chilean museum collecting. Notably, I identified two forms to address diversity representation in my data. The first one is an institutional discourse embedded in cultural policies that pose the goal of inclusion (which I will explore in chapter 4). The second is a more critical standpoint discussed by some museum workers, regarding how their practices reproduce exclusion and their attempts to change it (which I will start to analyse in chapter 6). Throughout this thesis, I will continue to develop on these ideas to characterise how diversity is perceived in the Chilean museum sector by analysing collecting practices.

It is fundamental to emphasize here that I will not analyse diversity representation in collections, but in collecting practices. This has several implications. Firstly, it implies that *collecting* must be recognised as a text (Pearce, 1998, p.6). Scholar Susan Pearce explored this by drawing on Roland Barthes's understanding of collecting as shaped by 'contextual ideology that is both social and individual' (1998, p.183). This implies that collecting is not an innocent, neutral practice but a meaning-making one. In Pearce's words: 'collecting is a constructive act (…) We are all symbols of ourselves, and objects which, in so many ways, are our *alter egos* are equally symbols of themselves. Collecting becomes a simple, effective way of merging these symbols into broader and deeper meaning' (1998, p.184).

Pearce's understanding of collecting as a constructive act is revealing as it allows us to approach museum collecting as context-dependent. Nevertheless, it is crucial to notice that Pearce explores this by analysing *personal* collecting, which explains the stress she places on the relationship between individual and social meanings in collecting. Opposingly, this thesis will aim to examine how this operates in institutional collecting, where institutional aims may shape the meaning-making intended behind acquisitions. But that said, Pearce's understanding of personal meanings embedded in collecting will become relevant later in the thesis when I explore museum workers' agency in collecting in chapter 6.

Then, when looking at collecting practices in particular, diversity representation can be addressed from different viewpoints. First, it can mean acquiring more artworks that depict people from historically marginalised groups. Nevertheless, as seen above with the Guerrilla Girls example, if these artworks are made by canonical artists, it would take away the agency of non-hegemonic artists' over their own representation. This has been the case for most art history and has significantly shaped how oppressed groups are represented in museums.

On the other hand, diversity representation could also mean acquiring artworks that are of diverse artists' authorship. But artists of diverse backgrounds might produce artworks that do not reflect on their identity or social struggles. I do believe these artists should be acquired regardless, as they are still politically underrepresented in museums, following the idea of 'the politics of presence'. Furthermore, non-canonical artists are not obligated to offer reflection of their own oppression to the institution; instead, the institution has the responsibility of addressing their absence. But that said, I acknowledge that this would not fully contribute to introducing critical debates around diversity representation in museum spaces, as the contestatory character of the artists' identity could be overlooked when exhibited. Consequently, considering the limitations of this thesis, I am particularly interested in

acquisitions where the artist acquired is of a non-canonical origin *and* reflects critically on this fact in their work. I will examine this interest by analysing the case of two contemporary artists of Mapuche origin in chapter 8.

1.4. Research outline

To analyse the abovementioned issues, my primary research question was: **How have Chilean public art museums addressed diversity representation in their acquisitions from 1990 - 2020?**

At the same time, this was supported by three subsidiary research questions:

1. What challenges do Chilean art museums face when attempting to widen diversity representation in collections?

2. What are art museums' collection strategies in Chile in the post-dictatorship period, and how does it relate to their context?

3. How do museum workers understand museums' social responsibility regarding diversity representation, and how does this influence their practice?

Soon after I started conducting this study, I realised that there was barely any prior research regarding collecting practices in Chile. This was explicitly highlighted in the last National Cultural Policy (CNCA, 2017, pp.122-123), and in the first National Museum Policy (SNM, 2018, p.40). Because of this, the **main aim** of this research was an open-ended exploration of the correlation between museum collecting practices and the concept of diversity *representation* during the last three decades in Chile. To achieve this aim, I determined six **objectives**:

1) Characterise collecting strategies in public art museums in Chile.

2) Appraise cultural policy documents to recognise institutional standpoints regarding diversity representation in museums.

3) Discuss issues around the social role of museums in the contemporary Chilean context regarding diversity representation.

4) Identify gaps of under-represented groups in public art museums' collections.

5) Assess cases of relevant artworks by non-canonical artists accessioned in art museums' collections since 1990.

6) Recognise challenges museum workers face when attempting to widen diversity representation in museums.

Three intersecting gaps in the literature informed these questions, aims and objectives. The first is the need for more research on contemporary collecting practices, i.e. How collections are formed *today*. Debates around decolonising museums have started questioning the history of specific collections based on their connection to colonial abuse. This has resulted in several controversies regarding the restitution of artefacts and human remains from collections in the Global North and a general debate regarding museum deaccessioning. While I consider this discussion pivotal for museum institutional change, these conversations have strongly focused on existing collections. Yet, museums continue collecting today. And likewise, colonial power dynamics continue to operate today. Thus, in this thesis, I will explore contemporary collecting practices to analyse how power dynamics continue to shape museum practice.

The second gap I identified in the literature is the lack of debate on how power dynamics operate in *art* museums' practices in particular. As noted earlier, the discussion of collection formations has strongly focused on ethnographic and history museum collections. Power dynamics have been studied in the arts for several decades based on how social hierarchies operate in the high/low art divide. But the question of how this continues to shape museum acquisitions is vaguely addressed in the literature. This gap also represents a multi-layered discussion as it connects museum practice with the art world, where the art market plays a key

role. And ultimately, it is also shaped by the increasingly globalised arts and museum sector, in which international art collections keep expanding incessantly.

This takes me to the third gap in the literature, that of museum collecting practices in the Global South, particularly in Latin America. As noted earlier, most of the literature on museum practice is focused on museums in the Global North. Research on Latin American museum practice has only recently started to emerge. This emerging literature primarily connects to participatory museum methods, which nevertheless rarely touch upon the area of collections. This implies that how museums in Latin America collect artworks is widely unknown to anyone except those involved in the acquisition processes.

That said, the concept that glues all of these gaps together is the idea of 'diversity representation', which was also the starting point of my research. This research was motivated by the realisation that although non-canonical artists, notably of Indigenous origin, are strongly emerging in the Chilean art sector, few of them were entering public collections. Several of these artists exhibited consistently and gained visibility locally and globally, being acquired for international private collections. But in Chile, their work was only portrayed in museums' temporary exhibitions, making museum collecting practices incompatible with broader institutional discourses of diversity in the cultural sector. This thesis aims to explore *why* this happens. And in doing so, it will also highlight the relevance of discussing the politics of collecting in the global museum sector.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to contribute to the discussion about diversity representation in art museums, particularly in collections. The significance of this research is based on the new data it will raise regarding museums' collecting practices in Chile, which does not currently exist in the literature. This can support subsequent suggestions concerning future practices,

strategies, and development programs in the sector. Consequently, this research can contribute to academic knowledge, professional practice, and cultural policy development.

The landscape above notably informed my methodology. The lack of research on museum practices in Chile, which remains a crucial challenge in Chilean cultural policy (CNCA, 2017, pp.122-123), shaped my research design into a qualitative, exploratory, multi-case study. I considered four public collections, three from museums and one belonging to the Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage (MINCAP). The latter was considered due to its relevance and influence on the other three. My primary data collection strategy was semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, including museum professionals (heads of collections, curators and directors), acquired artists, independent researchers and workers of the MINCAP; all of whom were involved in acquisition processes to some extent. In addition to these interviews, I also drew on cultural policy analysis and various forms of complementary data, often facilitated by my interviewees, such as collections spreadsheets, collections and exhibition catalogues, and internal procedures documents, among other sources. I will explore my methodology in depth in chapter 3.

1.5. Roadmap to this thesis

This thesis is divided into nine chapters, including this introduction (Chapter 1). Chapter 2, *Preparing the ground*, will present my literature review. This will aim to introduce some crucial debates in the current literature that frames this research. I will start by discussing the social role of museums and how it influences their current relationship with diversity representation. Secondly, I will discuss how 'diversity' interacts with contemporary museums from three perspectives: art history and questioning the canon, decolonising museums and Indigenous museology, and an intersectional approach in museums. Lastly, I will also introduce previous research on art museum collecting. Chapter 2 will only offer a general conceptual framework,

as the following chapters will also introduce specific literature supporting the contents explored in each chapter.

Chapter 3 will be entirely focused on the methodology behind this research. This chapter will explore my research design and strategy in-depth. I will also present my positionality as a researcher here. This chapter will introduce my case studies and how I approached them throughout the thesis, allowing an early familiarisation with the Chilean museum context. The methodology chapter will also reflect on the challenges this research design faced due to various external issues, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and a wave of social protests in Chile that started in October 2019, which implied multiple changes I had to make to my methodology to adapt to the ever-changing landscape of my research.

Chapter 4, titled *The Chilean museum sector*, will explore the conditions under which public collections in Chile are formed, i.e. The context of collecting practices. This includes the Chilean social and political context and the characterisation of museums in Chile overall. This implies diving into institutional history and changes propelled by the return to a democratic system in the 1990s, which also introduced debates regarding diversity and representation in the sector. In particular, I will analyse how precarity and funding issues shape professional practice in Chilean museums. Although this chapter will draw on existing literature regarding the Chilean cultural sector, I will also start to incorporate data analysis here. I will analyse how Chilean cultural policy addresses diversity discourses and how these dialogue with museum workers' practices and experiences in their roles. In doing so, this chapter will also address subsidiary question 1 (what challenges do Chilean art museums face when attempting to widen diversity representation in collections?)

Following the discussion above, Chapter 5, titled *Art museums' collecting strategies in Chile*, will aim to characterise how museums and institutions collect, addressing their precarity and context. In this chapter, I will aim to answer subsidiary question 2 (what are art museums' collection strategies in Chile in the post-dictatorship period, and how does it relate to their context?), while exploring how and why collecting practices have changed in the last thirty years. I will characterise three key collecting strategies I identified from my interviews' analysis. The first, 'intuitive' collecting, is based on how many museum workers stated that they made decisions on what to acquire 'intuitively'; I will argue that this is shaped by notions of 'taste' that have historically framed art museum collecting. The second strategy is collecting by donation; most of my case studies had minimal or non-existent acquisition budgets, which made them rely on donations to increase collections assets. I will discuss that these two strategies notably hinder museums' opportunities to widen diversity representation in collections. Nevertheless, the third strategy emerged as a response to this. The third is research-based collecting; this was notoriously influenced by the rise of curatorial practice in the Chilean art sector. I will argue that research-based collecting has also influenced the incipient development of collection policies in the sector. I will conclude this chapter by exploring how increasing research and the growth of curatorial approaches in Chile have reshaped what museums understand as a 'collection gap'.

Chapter 6, titled *A new (disobedient) museum workforce*, focuses on museum workforces as the motor of change and transformative practices in museum collecting. I will argue that institutional change in Chile has come from workers' activism over institutional policies or guidelines. To support this idea, I will characterise museum workforces in Chile, noticing changes in them in the last three decades, notably shaped by the increasing introduction of workers of working-class backgrounds into the sector since the 1990s. This will allow me to

explore subsidiary question 3, addressing how museum workers understand the social role behind their practice. I will argue that many of my participants felt frustrated with traditional institutional frameworks in museums and that, by acknowledging their positionality, they often took a 'disobedient' standpoint in their professional practice, challenging traditional collecting practices.

Chapter 7 will start to look at those disobedient collecting practices. Titled *The politics of collecting*, this chapter will summarise the debates covered in previous chapters and begin to analyse specific acquisition cases. In doing so, this and the following chapter will aim to answer the main research question of this project (how have Chilean public art museums addressed diversity representation in their acquisitions from 1990 - 2020?). Chapter 7 begins by characterising what I understand by 'the politics of collecting' in this thesis and how it relates to diversity representation, questioning who is missing in collections and how museum acquisitions have sought to fill those gaps. Chapter 7 will look at two specific acquisition cases. One focuses on women's representation in collections and feminist activism in museum workforces. The second is about how the above influences Indigenous peoples' representation in collections, starting to explore intersecting politics of collecting.

Chapter 8 is titled *Transformative collecting: The case of Mapuche contemporary art*. This chapter will explore the challenges and opportunities of acquiring Indigenous contemporary art to widen diversity representation in art collections. In this chapter, I will analyse the case of two contemporary artists of Mapuche origin (the largest Indigenous group in Chile), Bernardo Oyarzún and Seba Calfuqueo[2]. I will track their presence in Chilean public art collections and analyse the contexts and practices that led them to be acquired. I will conclude this chapter by

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[2] Please note, this artist has chosen their preferred name as 'Seba' during the development of this research. Consequently, I have changed references to their deadname throughout this thesis.

reflecting on the need for 'transformative collecting', which I understand as self-reflexive collecting practices that aim to challenge traditional museum structures, fostering institutional change and often leading to acquisitions of non-canonical artists.

Lastly, Chapter 9 will present the conclusions of this thesis. I will return to my research questions, presenting how they were addressed in my thesis. I will highlight my key findings, main contributions to the field, and limitations this study faced. Finally, I will conclude this thesis by presenting recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Preparing the ground (literature review)

2.1. Chapter presentation

Considering the proposed aims and research questions presented in the introduction, this chapter will explore some critical discussions that will frame the following chapters. This chapter is divided into four parts. Firstly, and building on the idea of diversity representation in chapter 1, I will explore how it connects to debates around the social role of museums. Here, I will also attempt to introduce these discussions in the Latin American context, in constant tension with the global museum sector. Secondly, I will discuss how museums have interacted with the idea of 'diversity' from various approaches, including how art history has reacted and questioned 'the canon', decolonial approaches to museums and Indigenous museology, and intersectional approaches to museums. In the third part I will introduce the idea of museums as open systems, which will frame this thesis overall. And lastly, the final section of the chapter will explore literature focused on museum acquisitions, defining how I understand museum collecting in this thesis and recent debates regarding representativity in this field. I will also examine the particularities of art museums in this landscape.

2.2. The social role of museums

Having understood how diversity representation will be used in this thesis in chapter 1, it is now helpful to deepen into why this is relevant in museums. Like the policy sector, the museum sector has been increasingly interested in the widening representation and participation of minority groups in the last sixty years. This has often come from debates regarding the social responsibility of museums and their need to address their communities' diversity. In this section

of the chapter, I will explore some relevant debates to understand diversity representation in Latin American museums and how it relates to their social role.

2.2.1. The new museology & the integral museum

An obvious starting point for this discussion is the new museology. This debate has been primarily characterised in anglophone literature based on the anthology edited by museum scholar Peter Vergo in 1989. In this publication, Vergo defined the new museology as a 'widespread dissatisfaction with the "old" museology (…) [which was] too much about museum methods, and too little about the purposes of museums' (1989, p.3). Here, it is relevant to notice that the new museology embodied not only the introduction of a theoretical debate but also a wide 'climate of institutional reflexivity' in the sector (Ross, 2004, p.84). The new museology, then, represents a moment of critique that allowed an understanding of the social role of museums, positioning them as political and not neutral institutions (Vergo, 1989, pp.2-3).

Arguably, this political positioning propelled many critical approaches in museums that I will explore later in this chapter and throughout this thesis. But it is interesting to understand this criticality as situated. In *The reticent object*, Vergo argues that 'To examine how, and why, exhibitions are made means taking a magnifying glass to any number of sensitive, often problematic, sometimes fraught relationships' (Vergo, 1989, p.43), including museum staff, funders, the public, scholars and policy-makers (pp.43-44). This complex network of relationships will be relevant throughout this thesis, although I will analyse its impact on collecting instead of on exhibition making. It is implicit in this reflection that museum practice is shaped by each museum's context. When referring to this 'climate of reflexivity' (Ross, 2004, p.84) that the new museology represents, it is not unreasonable to discuss that this reflexivity was also present in other contexts, different to the ones Vergo referred to, and that precedes this iconic publication.

In Latin America, these debates have been carried out under the name *nueva museología* or *museología crítica*; and are rooted in a historical event that occurred in Chile in 1972. In that year, UNESCO organised an international conference called *La mesa redonda de Santiago: La importancia y el desarrollo de los museos en el mundo contemporáneo* (The roundtable of Santiago: The importance and development of museums in the contemporary world). This conference gathered Latin American heritage scholars and professionals to discuss their experiences in the context of critical museology debates in the region. As noted in the introduction of this thesis, this conference reinforced the social role of museums and museums as spaces for 'multicultural encounters' (De Carli, 2004, pp.58-59; Alegría, 2012, p.160). Moreover, the participants of the Roundtable of Santiago released a declaration and presented several articles in a special issue of UNESCO's journal *Museum* (Vol.XXV, N°3, 1973). In the introduction of this issue, Austrian-Chilean museologist Grete Mostny mentions that:

> In general, it has been possible for very few museologists of Latin American countries to participate in assemblies or round tables in Europe or the United States; and this is why our problems tend to be left to one side, notwithstanding the fact that those amongst us who can go to such meetings sense that we have many common concerns (…) The 'family meeting' in Santiago (Chile) greatly satisfied us. We were able to define the type of museum that is relevant to our needs – **the integral museum** (1973, p.128; bold is mine).

Mostny highlighted how Latin American museologists have historically struggled to access global debates in the sector. And relevantly, the concept coined by Mostny, *the integral museum*, is a crucial one to understanding Latin American museology. In general terms, the idea of the integral museum is that museums must understand themselves as part of their social landscape, having an impact on everyday life around them (Girault & Orellana-Rivera, 2020, p.10). They are 'integral' in the sense that they are part of a whole and that, therefore, they

must be open to interdisciplinary approaches to address their complex socio-cultural contexts (Vasquez-Olvera, 2008, p.6). Furthermore, the integral museum is a key concept for the growing tradition of participatory museology in Latin America, as it justifies the link between museums and communities (Girault & Orellana-Rivera, 2020, p.10).

My intention with this section introducing Latin American museology is to make visible this connection between museum practice and its context, in dialogue with international debates around the new museology. I believe that the proposals of the Roundtable of Santiago should not be considered as premonitory to Vergo's accounts, but as evidence that the new museology debate is not exclusive to European museums, nor should it be addressed in a globalising approach. Fifty years after the Roundtable of Santiago, its legacy remains relevant in the Latin American region, but has stayed less visible in the global museum sector. This has mostly been due to how these ideas were interrupted by the political instability of the region, notably shaped by military dictatorships in various countries of the continent between the 1960s and 1990s (Girault & Orellana-Rivera, 2020, p.9), during the period the museum sector started to become increasingly globalised. In Chile, just one year after the Roundtable, a *coup d'état* led by Augusto Pinochet started a seventeen-year-long dictatorship in Chile. In chapter 4, I will elaborate further on how this had an impact on Chilean museums.

2.3. Museums and diversity

The articulation of the new museology and the multiculturalist debate worldwide, and the integral museum and *interculturalidad* in Latin America, explains why diversity has become a crucial element to address in the museum sector. This is not surprising, since the idea of identity has historically played a relevant role in museums, as they have been historically 'accessing, ignoring, confronting, re-affirming and forging identities' (McLean, 2008, p.283). Nonetheless,

museums are today challenged to address this element critically, addressing the fact that representing identities involve power dynamics, where some are included and some are excluded (Woodward, 2018, p.434). Based on this, notably since the 2000s, the idea that museum professionals should promote the agency of 'minorities' in exploring their own identity has strongly emerged in the sector (Piñero, 2014, p.167). This way, 'museums, through the representation of inclusive communities within collections and displays, have the potential to promote tolerance, inter-community respect and to challenge stereotypes' (Sandell, 2003, p.45). Then, museums worldwide started to be perceived as spaces that foster and mediate inter-cultural dialogue (Bodo, 2018, p. 181).

Furthermore, the 'inclusion agenda' came with several challenges for the sector, raising awareness of the need of a paradigmatic shift that implied revising and changing working practices (Sandell, 2003, p.45). Museum scholar Tony Bennett has highlighted the power dynamics in this scenario. He argued that, even if the museum tries to be inclusive, it will continuously develop programmes from the top-down (Boast, 2011, p.65). In this context, 'the struggle is not only over what is to be represented, but over who will control the means of representing' (Pieterse, 1997, p.129), as noted in chapter 1 regarding 'political representation'. At the same time, current worldwide museum efforts still need to deal with existing infrastructure and an overall system still in transformation (Boast, 2011, p.67).

These debates show the constant tension between inclusive practices in museum spaces and their traditional, hegemonic, and authoritarian structure. Museum scholar Simona Bodo has developed research based on the experience of intercultural dialogue in European museums. She has argued that museums often end up falling into what she calls 'knowledge-oriented multiculturalism' (2018, p.182). This refers to activities where 'the "other" is conceived as an object of knowledge –rather than an individual with whom we engage in a relationship– and is

constructed from the point of view of a dominant culture' (Bodo, 2018, p.183). Therefore, these activities often do not promote these groups' participation or explore their agency over their cultural identity.

This implies that museums can end up patronising the marginalised groups, essentialising their culture. Historian Roy MacLeod has taken this discussion even further, arguing that museum practice is intrinsically Western and therefore attempts to 'include' non-Western cultures in these practices are unavoidably forms of neo-colonialism (1998, p.313). Based on this, it is possible to question that these tensions are rarely presented in museum spaces to the public (Pieterse, 1997, p.138). And therefore, acknowledging forms of historical power in exhibition spaces would offer more critical approaches to diversity in museums.

Moreover, the 'inclusion agenda' has proven to be a call for urgent change in museum practice. While some institutions have opted to develop programs focusing on quotas for minority artists (see for example Adams, 2018), these might 'encourage tokenism, short term and unsustainable initiatives rather than effect real change in the sector' (Sandell, 2003, p.58). Thus, implementing change on an organisational level to embrace inclusive values becomes pivotal for museums widening diversity representation.

2.3.1. Art history, diversity and the canon

Following the issue mentioned above, and as this thesis is interested in collecting practices in art museums, it is also relevant to mention similar debates in art history. The multiculturalist debate sparked relevant questions regarding how art history had traditionally presented a singular and universalist narrative regarding art production. In art history, multiculturalism often 'refers to the diverse art traditions and trajectories to be found globally but to which for a long time Western art history paid little attention' (Knell, 2021, p.65). This became evident due to the

'global turn', notably after the fall of Communist and authoritarian regimes in the late 20th century (Knell, 2019, p.14; Jones & Nelson, 2015, p.1). The promise of globalisation led to art historians to embrace a globalising approach to art history. Furthermore, as noted by art historian Kobena Mercer, this has meant that 'multiculturalism and globalisation have become virtually "normal" in the contemporary visual arts' (Mercer, 2005, p.8). This materialised in the understanding of modernism as a global, non-hierarchical phenomenon.

Nevertheless, art historians soon found that simply expanding the canon would not address the violence of hegemonic art history (Jones & Nelson, 2015, p.3). Responding to this, scholars Terry Smith and Simon Knell have offered relevant reflections in this regard, proposing the ideas of the 'multiple modernities project' (Smith, 2021, p.12) and 'situated modernisms' (Knell, 2019, p.27). According to Terry Smith,

> Art historical research into art made during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is no longer dominated by what we might call the "mainstream modernism" narrative. It has been replaced by a "multiple modernities" picture of art evolving differentially at various art-producing sites around the world that have varying degrees and kinds of connections with the major locales. These may act as centers in their own region, or operate mostly according to their own necessities. This picture is driven by a desire for recognition on the part of the agents currently active in, or writing on behalf of, places that were, during modern times, provinces and peripheries (Smith, 2021, p.12).

Similarly, scholar Simon Knell has characterised the idea of 'situated modernisms', which means that 'modernism can be considered plural – as modernisms – which manifest themselves differently wherever they occur' (2019, p. 23). Furthermore, Knell argues that 'situated modernisms' are a relevant tool to understand contemporary world culture as it implies the 'continual construction and reconstruction of a multiplicity of cultural programmes' (2019,

p.24). Moreover, the idea of 'situated modernisms' allows us to challenge hierarchies among different art forms and their locations, putting in question 'the existence of universal or absolute measures of significance or quality' (Knell, 2019, p.31).

Moreover, these recent debates theorised by Knell and Smith join a long history of discussions regarding the impact of the art canon. Facing this particular problem of diversification of art history narratives, art historians have been questioning the role of 'the canon' at the centre of the discipline for over five decades. This concept has been used in art history to refer to movements or artists that are 'established as crucial, of the utmost importance or exemplary' (Langfeld, 2018, p.1). The canon has a character of permanence, as it traditionally defends the relevance of specific artworks and artists regardless of context. Consequently, it is embedded in a system that reproduces the privilege of hegemonic groups. For instance, when I refer to 'non-canonical artists' in this thesis, I am referring to women artists, non-Western artists, artists of colour, or any other artist historically marginalised from art history. Moreover, in the words of feminist and art history scholar Griselda Pollock:

> The canon thus not only determines what we read, look at, listen to, see at the art gallery and study in school or university. It is formed retrospectively by what artists themselves select as their legitimating or enabling predecessors. If, however, artists – because they are women or non-European – are both left out of the records and ignored as part of the cultural heritage, the canon becomes an increasingly impoverished and impoverishing filter for the totality of cultural possibilities generation after generation (1999, p. 4).

The critique of the canon discussed above by Pollock is what has been recognised in the literature as 'radical revisionism' (Smith, 2021, p.13). One key example of this is the work of feminist scholars in noticing the absence of women artists in art history and art institutions. Art historian Linda Nochlin – to whom I will return in chapter 7 of this thesis – was one of the first

to argue that the omission of women's artworks was an institutional matter. In her essay *Why have there been no great women artists*? First published in 1971, she argued that, in order to embrace a more diverse representation in the arts, art historians must address the 'total situation of art making' (Nochlin, 2018, p.158). This implied to challenge how power dynamics shaped how art history and art institutions defined what was considered valuable or culturally relevant. In this sense, feminist interventions questioned 'the "additive" model that assumed that artists hitherto excluded on account of gender could be simply added in to a pre-existing narrative without understanding why they were left out in the first place' (Mercer, 2005, p.12).

Over fifty years after Nochlin's essay, her work remains relevant, as well as it dialogue with a multiplicity of contestatory voices around the globe. In Latin America, it is worth mentioning the work of Argentine art historian Andrea Giunta, who has become a point of reference in Latin American feminist art history. In 2018, Giunta first published her book *Feminismo y arte latinoamericano, historias de artistas que emanciparon el cuerpo* (Feminism and Latin American art, stories of artists that emancipated the body). In this publication, Giunta explores the challenges of questioning the canon today in Latin America by analysing the work of contemporary women artists in the region. Towards the end of the book, Giunta reflects on how critical revisionism remains insufficient and proposes the need for critical, transformative practices in the sector (Giunta, 2021, pp.274). She states that these practices must align with diverse forms of activism, in order to question all forms of oppression (Giunta, 2021, pp.276).

2.3.2. Decolonising museums

Following the debates mentioned above, and going back to the field of museums, another relevant discussion to notice here is the decolonial thought. When discussing decoloniality in museums, it is relevant to highlight that this focus varies depending on the context. For instance, I will differentiate here the ideas of postcolonialism and decoloniality. Broadly speaking,

postcolonialism can be approached as an umbrella concept. It can refer to the historical period of emancipation of worldwide nations from European empires to the analysis of social and material conditions resulting from colonial power relations (Hawley, 2013, p.2). But also, more importantly in this context, 'there has also been a tendency for it to remain firmly in the realm of the cultural' (Bhambra, 2014, p.115). Postcolonial theory has been strongly linked to the ideas of Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak, who have explored issues of cultural identity and colonial power in the last five decades. Postcolonialism today is based on 'the recognition of the increasing presence of neocolonialism [in the context of globalisation, shifting] the battlefield from the political and military onto the cultural terrain' (Xie, 1997, pp.8-9). Nevertheless, the theories of postcolonialism have also been situated in certain regions, particularly influenced by scholars from the Middle East, South Asia and Africa (Bhambra, 2014, p.115).

As a response to this, in this research, it is fundamental to highlight the idea of 'decoloniality'. This concept emerged in the South American diaspora as a response to worldwide theories of postcolonialism. Decoloniality is mainly influenced by the work of Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, who has argued that there is a crucial link between coloniality and modern rationality. Based on this idea, independences in Latin America only meant emancipation from colonial military power but did not address what Quijano calls the 'coloniality of knowledge' (2007, p.172). This concept refers to the cultural reproduction of modern Western thought in formerly colonised territories. This means that, even when most Latin American countries have achieved independence, colonial thought was permanently established in the region and continues to reproduce Eurocentric knowledge and values. Additionally, Eurocentrism was also supported and reproduced by the expansion of capitalism in Latin America (Quijano, 2000, p.553).

Therefore, decoloniality aims for constant historical revisionism of a culture of colonial thinking. And consequently, it expands the timeframe of study starting in the 15th century with the arrival of Columbus to the Americas. It highlights the relevance of addressing the long history of colonisation in the region in every aspect of formerly colonised societies. This represents a crucial distinction from postcolonial theory, which mainly focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Bhambra, 2014, p.115).

Another critical element of decoloniality is its emphasis on practices and actions. According to decolonial scholar Catherine Walsh, this is particularly relevant because it makes visible the subaltern's resisting practices often silenced by the intellectual practice of 'speaking for' (Walsh, 2012, p.14). 'To speak of decoloniality, in this sense, is to make visible struggles and strategies against coloniality, thinking not just from its paradigm, but from the people and their social, political and epistemic practices' (Walsh, 2012, p.20). This is why decoloniality is often used as a verb, as it aims to *decolonise* knowledge and practices.

Back to the field of museums, I will argue here that the quest for critical diversity representation in Latin American museums must be a decolonial enquiry. According to scholar Marie-Laurie Allain Bonilla, decolonising museums means resisting colonial logic while supporting and promoting plurality (2016, p.81). In other words, it responds to multicultural debates of diversity but integrates a critical approach to power and colonial dynamics in such discussions. In that line, museums have made considerable attempts to address colonial dynamics in museum practices in the last few decades (Allain, 2014, p.51).

Moreover, while multiculturalist and postcolonialist debates have focused on ethnographic museums since the 1990s, art museums have become a relevant area for the decolonial challenge. According to Allain, art 'museums will not be able to decolonize their practices if they stick to the old taxonomies and values of art history as it was built' (Allain, 2016, p.81), as art

history is also firmly embedded in a modern colonial paradigm. Art practice, nonetheless, has been notably highlighted in this context based on its capacity to explore contestatory identities (Mason, 2008, p.97). In this sense, contemporary art has become a strongly disputed area for identity exploration and decolonial artistic practice. According to scholar Rachel Mason,

> there is intellectual commitment in the contemporary art world to multiple viewpoints and the formation of global subjects (…). It is this tendency, coupled with adherence to the bohemian ideal of 'authenticity' (a deliberate search to express self authentically), that is so strongly embedded in the ideology of the avant-garde, that makes contemporary art such a prime site for this kind of identity research (2008, p.107).

Nonetheless, it has been argued that a decolonised museum strategy should approach them holistically. This means that not only the objects should be challenged by a decolonial perspective but every area and practice within the museum. For this research, it would be pivotal to highlight how the decolonial critique has challenged the collections area. Both ethnographic and art museums have 'turned to contemporary artists for techniques to disrupt conventional narratives and modes of display. In some instances, these interventions are essentially charged with doing the work of reinterpreting the museum's collections' (Coombes & Phillips, 2015, p.liii). This is based on the fact that 'older' museums carry collections that started in a period far away from the postcolonial critique. Therefore, their decolonisation cannot be based on a *tabula rasa* (Allain, 2016, p.81), but in a reinterpretation of existing collections. An example of this is the renowned art installation *Mining the museum* (1992- 93) by Fred Wilson:

> For the exhibition, Wilson incorporated objects from the museum's collection (the Maryland Historical Society) and rearranged them in ways that exposed the biases of museums to under-represent the uncomfortable histories of the oppressed. His intervention offered a new viewpoint

of colonisation, which forced viewers to confront a muffled perspective of their colonial past (Muñiz-Reed, 2017, p.4).

Based on this, there has also been wide geopolitical revisionism in acquisition policies in the museum sector (Allain Bonilla, 2016, p.52). In practice, this often means acquiring more non-Western art produced by migrants and non-Caucasian people. Relevant to notice, this exercise is more straightforward with contemporary art, as globalisation has allowed more international artists to become mainstream and access global art circuits. Nonetheless, it remains problematic that collecting art from the Global South could reproduce colonialist practices if communities from the South are not part of the decision. Decolonial approaches in museums must address colonialism in different forms in the museum in a holistic approach, which includes revisionism of all practices and awareness of positionality by the museum staff (Allain Bonilla, 2016, p.60).

That said, the decolonisation of collecting practices intrinsically relates to decolonial artistic practices. Muñiz-Reed has argued that contemporary artists have notably challenged colonial dynamics in museums more than curators, who are often constrained by institutional frames (2017, p.4), as seen in Wilson's *Mining the museum*. Thus, it is possible to say that curators often see themselves as limited by what is available in the collections, which according to the decolonial critique, is full of biases. Arguably, a broader diversity representation in museums' collections could allow a wider debate about decolonisation in museums. To achieve this, it is relevant that museums do not *only* acquire artworks created by artists from the Global South. Instead, museums must critically address decolonial debates in museum spaces, for which *what* and *how* it is represented in the artworks acquired is as relevant as who created them. Therefore, every area of the museum should work altogether to address diversity representation from a decolonial perspective.

2.3.2.1. Indigenous museology

As a response to the ideas presented above, it is relevant to mention recent work regarding Indigenous interventions in museology. *In Decolonising the museum, the curation of Indigenous contemporary art in Brazil* (2021), scholar Thea Pitman discusses the challenges of Indigenous contemporary art in the current globalised arts sector. Pitman argues that 'while there may now be increasing numbers of Indigenous people in Brazil who are willing to self-identify as artists, traditional or contemporary, such artists interface with an art world and market that are still over-determined by their colonialist origins and tacit racial exclusions' (2021, p.14). I will explore further the characterisation of this Indigenous contemporary art later in the thesis, notably in chapter 8. But for now, it is interesting to highlight how, once more, the predicament of diversity calls for a fundamental review of the systems, methodologies and discourses imbedded in museums.

While the discussions regarding decolonising the museum, earlier in this chapter, have already introduced the challenges this represents, recent literature on Indigenous museology has explored how Indigenous peoples have increasingly taken agency over museum methods. Scholar Conal McCarthy has referred to this as 'Indigenising museologies', recognising this as the active practice of Indigenous peoples who, as museum professionals or community members, have 'increasingly become involved in the management of their ancestral heritage, (…) creating their own models for caring for the past for the future outside the museum' (McCarthy, 2019, p.39). Furthermore, I agree with McCarthy in that

> The refiguring of temporality, space, materiality, sociality and personhood made possible by Indigenous ontologies offer useful tools for disciplines attempting to reorient themselves in a contemporary world where environmental disaster, ethnic conflict and the clash of 'isms' threaten not only our institutions but our very survival (2019, p.48).

This way, Indigenous museologists not only challenge the canon, but also have the agency to respond and 'eradicate colonial ideologies' in museums (Hopkins, 2020, p.132). Lastly, while extremely influential, it is relevant to mention that I have not been able to find these kinds of practices in the case studies I have explored in this thesis. I will explore the reasons for this in chapters 7 and 8.

2.3.3. Towards an intersectional approach in museums

While the decolonial thought is a crucial framework to understand this thesis, an intersectional approach became necessary to address as I developed the analysis of my data. As I have mentioned earlier, my original focus for this research was to explore how Indigenous peoples were represented in art museum collections. Nevertheless, in my interviews, my participants highlighted how other marginalised groups, such as women and working-class people were also underrepresented, and how their absence has raised awareness of Indigenous people's absence in collections as well. Ultimately, this shaped my focus on diversity representation more broadly. But it also highlighted the intersecting social struggles as crucial to understanding diversity representation in museums.

This made the concept of 'intersectionality' relevant in my research overall, and notably for chapters 7 and 8. This is a concept that comes from Black Feminism. It is used to note how different forms of oppression relate to each other and create interconnected struggles. Moreover, 'the very idea that identities do not operate alone but intersect with each other in dynamic and complex ways – that identities are intersectional – presents new possibilities for solving the challenges of identity-based inclusion' (Robert, 2014, p.24).

Debates around intersectionality have been present in Black social movements for a very long time, including Sojourner Truth's awe-inspiring speech *Ain't I a woman?* (1851), where she

explored how the notion of 'women' is historically based on white women. Moreover, this hides the fact that 'every struggle or oppression experienced by women as a whole group disproportionately impacts women of color, Indigenous women, LBTQ women, and women with disabilities' (Callihan & Feldman, 2018, p.181). American scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the contemporary use of the term intersectionality to explain how the American legal system did not address the interconnections between gender and race discrimination (1991; Robert, 2014, p.25).

In Latin America, although the concept of intersectionality itself has only started to be discussed recently, the idea of interlocking systems of oppression has been widely explored by feminist theorists like María Lugones. She drew on Anibal Quijano's ideas to explore how gender comes to play in the 'coloniality of knowledge' in the region (Lugones, 2008, p.77). Lugones proposed the concept of the 'colonial matrix of gender', arguing that the contemporary gender binary is deeply connected with colonial thought. In *Colonialidad y género* (2008, 'Coloniality and gender'), she explores Indigenous cultures that had different understandings of gender before the colonial invasion to demonstrate that the gender binary and racism are part of the same model of oppression.

While intersectionality and the colonial matrix of gender (which I will use interchangeably here) are grounded in feminist thought, they are relevant concepts in the debate regarding diversity representation in museums. According to museum scholar Richard Sandell, 'there is increasing recognition that the problems described by social exclusion cannot be considered in isolation and that, similarly, solutions must be found through an understanding of the complex interrelationships between the multiple forms of disadvantage' (2003, p.48). In other words, aiming for an intersectional approach in museums implies, once again, the revision of museum practices overall (Callihan & Feldman, 2018, p.189; Robert, 2014, p.26).

This overall revision of the museum institution can take many forms, and I will aim to unpack some of these throughout this thesis. For now, it is interesting to explore some examples offered by scholar and museum practitioner Nicole Robert (2014), regarding 'organising structures' in museums that are relevant to address from an intersectional standpoint. For instance, Robert highlights the way museums traditionally perceive time. According to Robert, temporality 'is an organizing structure grounded in cultural assumptions about race, gender, and sexuality' (p.26). This notion is based on a Western understanding of time moving 'progressively' to the present, which has often supported a narrative of civilisation that leaves 'non-Western cultures in the timeless past' (Robert, 2014, p. 27). This will be notably problematic when exploring the representation of Indigenous peoples later in this thesis, notably in chapters 7 and 8.

Another example Robert highlights is how exhibition labels are used in museum spaces. She argues that the information stated on labels reproduce assumptions of what is considered valuable (Robert, 2014, p.28). This connects to notions of authority and transparency in museums (Robert, 2014, p.29). How authority operates in museums shapes who is represented in these spaces, and therefore, it is crucial to remember how objectivity is 'an untenable intellectual position' (Joachim, 2018, p.36) in this context. Consequently, a critical positionality on behalf of the museum staff may allow the integration of narratives that make visible untold histories and identities. This can support diversity representation, not by merely integrating a quota of 'minority artists' but also facilitating 'a variety of ideological standpoints' that offer 'a multilayered engagement with power dynamics and relationships to land, economy and politics' (Joachim, 2018, p.37). This way, an intersectional approach to museums not only addresses gaps but also denounces the oppression systems that sustain and reproduce those absences.

2.4. Museums as open systems

While the following sub-section will focus on how diversity representation relates to collecting practices in museums, it is useful to introduce the idea of museums as open systems first. Open systems theory (OST) is a multidisciplinary framework used to understand organisations in constant co-influence with their environments. 'In open systems theory, the environment is not only an important part of the analysis in understanding an organization, but an organization and its environment alter each other situated within a mutually interconnected reality' (Jung, 2022, p.17). OST has been widely used in the analysis of different kinds of organisations based on the idea that internal and external dynamics in an organisation cannot be understood without each other (Jung & Vakharia, 2019, p.259).

Museum management scholars have adopted this approach to address the need for a more holistic understanding of museums (Jung & Vakharia, 2019, p.260). OST is a relevant tool for researching museums because it addresses how these organisations relate to their contexts and, more importantly, their communities (Jung & Vakharia, 2019, p.262). In a global museum sector increasingly concerned about their global social responsibilities (Robbins, 2020, p.185), OST offers a relevant framework not to isolate museums from their contexts when being researched. In practice, using OST to analyse museums implies avoiding a reductionist approach to isolated aspects of museum practice, such as educational programmes, funding, or curatorial practices alone (Jung & Vakharia, 2019, p.262). Instead, OST proposes addressing how each element of museum practice is interconnected internally and externally with its contexts and communities.

The use of OST is recent in the field of museum studies. A relevant compilation of these studies was published in 2017 in the book *Systems thinking in museums: Theory and practice* (Jung &

Love). This publication gathers various case studies that use OST in their analyses while looking at different areas of museum practice, such as museum management, exhibitions and programmes, external communications, and community engagement. That being said, a critical gap that I identify in the increasing literature using OST in museum studies is the need for more research focused on the area of collections and collections acquisitions more specifically.

In this research, OST is a relevant framework as it allows me to approach museum acquisitions not in isolation but as part of broader and ever-changing systems. In this, I avoid taking a reductionist account of how museums decide what to acquire, which implies overlooking how internal and external dynamics influence institutional decision-making. I also understand that it is only feasible for me as a researcher to address some of the dynamics that influence decision-making in the museums studied. Nonetheless, in this thesis, I aim to identify the most relevant factors of these museums' open systems. Notably, when I refer to external dynamics, I will consider elements such as institutional frameworks, developments in the museum sector, national policies, and social movements. And when looking at internal dynamics, I will focus on organisational constraints, funding issues, infrastructure and work culture. I will argue that all these factors are involved in a system of mutual casualty that shapes and influences museum decision-making regarding collections' acquisitions.

Therefore, OST allows me to put a name on an idea I have repeatedly mentioned in this chapter regarding how every museum area, and the museums' context, play a role in museum collecting. Furthermore, in the final sub-section of this chapter, and the rest of this thesis, I will draw on the idea of museums as open systems to argue that collecting practices are framed and interconnected both to external (museums' contexts) and internal circumstances (organisational issues, workforces, practices, etc.).

2.5. Diversity representation in art museum collecting

Having all these ideas in consideration, this final section of the chapter will explore how diversity representation might operate in museum collecting in particular. For this, I will attempt to address relevant discussions around institutional collecting, and particularly collecting practices in art museums. To start with, and as it has been mentioned already, museums have increasingly shown interest in aiming to include 'underrepresented or represented in discriminatory ways' groups in collections in the last two decades (Lee-Crossett, 2020, p.43). Nevertheless, 'who is present, and whose presence is absent, must be questioned (…) [as] presence does not necessarily equate to power' (Callihan & Feldman, 2018, p.181). As discussed so far, there are more complex dynamics at play when attempting to 'fill gaps' that I will aim to explore here, and throughout this thesis.

Collections have been at the core of museum practice since the birth of these institutions. After ICOM's 2019 Kyoto Conference, this has continued to be confirmed. The last two versions of the definition of a museum have considered the importance of acquiring (2007) and collecting (2022) (ICOM, 2022). *Collecting* can seem a broad term, as it encompasses the practice of collection formations overall. Scholar Simon Knell defines it as 'an integrated "acquisition-management-disposal" process' (2004, p.42). Drawing on this idea, while I will focus on acquisitions mainly, I will understand the process of accessioning artworks in museums as intertwined with collections management and, to a lesser extent, to deaccessioning collections' items. This entails acknowledging not only the decision itself but the dynamics around it, following the idea of the museum as an open system. Furthermore, regarding relevant terms for this research, and as discussed by Freda Matassa in *Museums collections management: A handbook*, 'acquisitions' refer to any item entering a collection, permanently or temporally

(2011, p.145). The act of an item entering the collection is called 'accessioning', and an item leaving a collection is 'deaccessioned'.

Researching museum collecting is relevant here because part of the process may be lost by researching museums' collections only. As I will explore in the following chapters, most of my case studies carry a history of precarity that has generated several omissions not only in collections but also in the museum's institutional history. Therefore, by looking at collections, we only get to know what is absent, but we sometimes ignore *why*. By researching *how* museums collect, we get a sense of the reasons behind the gaps. Thus, this is a crucial endeavour when questioning diversity representation in museum collections.

That said, it is relevant to note that collecting has changed continuedly since the creation of museums, especially in the last six decades. The first modern museums inherited their collecting practices from the 16th century's cabinets of curiosities, where the decision of what was relevant to collect and preserve was framed by the collector's authority, most often a white upper-class man. This authority was then transferred into museum duties, which resulted in museum collecting being shaped by wealth and power (Robbins, 2020, p.186), framing the act of collecting in a complex power dynamic. Nonetheless, while still considering collecting fundamental for museums, the current museum sector has started to question, 'why do we as museum professionals have the right to make decisions about collection destinies?' (Robbins, 2020, p.15). This new critical standpoint aligns with most of the debates I have outlined in this chapter. As collecting is increasingly understood as a 'constructive act' (Pearce, 1998, p.184) or a 'power-ridden act' (Knell, 2004, p.2), the legitimacy of those conducting this act must be open to question.

These debates have led to various changes in how museums collect, notably since the rise of professionalisation in the sector that started in the 1960s (Knell, 2004, p.4). This professionalisation pushed the development of international professional standards for collections (Knell, 2004, p.5; Matassa, 2011, pp.8-9). These standards include common jargon, shared values and discussions around what 'good practices' are in the sector. As discussed by Matassa, collections policies are a key relevant practice for museum management. This 'states the type of collection, its aims and purposes, and the types of objects the museum holds and may acquire in the future' (2011, p.145). The benefit of collection policies, like any other institutional protocol, is to standardise and rationalise decision-making; in this case, notably to align collecting practices with institutional frameworks and capability.

Nevertheless, this is far from a straightforward process, and the use of collection policies has been notably questioned and discussed in the last two decades (Knell, 2004, pp.13-14; Miller, 2022, p.3). According to scholar Steven Miller, 'collecting policies rarely provide comprehensive directives. They tend to be quite broad, even academically generic in their wording' (2022, p.3). This implies that they are often interpreted by collecting committees or staff, failing to address a 'long-term, holistic, inclusive, integrated, cooperative, sustainable, rational and thoughtful view of the purpose of institutional collecting' (Knell, 2004, p.15).

However, collections policies offer an interesting insight into what shapes museum acquisitions. I will get back to this debate in chapter 5, where I explore the existing collecting policies in my study cases, which in most cases, had been developed in the last five years only. These documents have been an attempt to state *what is relevant* for each museum to acquire, which has not been clearly aligned with each museum's mission until recently, at least in the cases I explored in Chile. While institutional missions have been reported to be a core element in the decision-making of what gets acquired, other factors such as practical constraints and public

opinion might also contribute to the dynamic in which collecting occurs (Miller, 2022, p.3). For instance, deficiencies in knowing what is already in the collection can notably hinder options to fill gaps or patterns that could make collecting practices more coherent with existing collections (Matassa, 2011, p.4), which was a struggle in many institutions I explore in this thesis.

Furthermore, the debate regarding 'filling gaps' will also be central to this thesis. As seen in this chapter, various forms of 'politically inspired criticism' (Young, 2004, p.194) have occasioned heated debates regarding historical omissions in museum collections. These omissions have started to be addressed, notably in the last decade, by various strategies. A relevant example is the decision of the Baltimore Museum of Art in Maryland, whose staff decided in 2020 to sell part of their collection to raise funds to acquire more artworks by artists of unrepresented backgrounds (Miller, 2022, p.3). Other museums have opted to combine 'funds from many sources' to complement acquisition budgets or to purchase co-owned artworks with other institutions (Jankauskas, 2022, p.44). These strategies demonstrate the increasing relevance given to a more socially conscious collecting in the last few years.

Nonetheless, collecting strategies are only part of the challenge in this regard. 'The problem is recognising what is important: an object contains a multidimensional assemblage of possible values, but only some of these can be perceived by the viewer. To select one value over another can be a manifestation of blindness of perception (…) [which] is almost certainly time limited' (Knell, 2004, p.28). In this sense, a collection is always incomplete, as what is considered relevant depends on the institutional priorities of each moment. And additionally, even the relevance given to one object in a particular time might change in the future. This also implies a direct relationship between social change and institutional collection. Borrowing the words of Richard Dunn:

> (…) the motives for acquiring – or not acquiring – particular objects may not correspond to the subsequent ways in which those objects relate to the collection, to the displays, to the museum's mission and to wider interests. Rather, such motives are the product of changing fashions in scholarship, and internal politics. It is not possible to guarantee, then, that objects acquired now and in the future will always be the 'correct' or 'most representative' ones, or that the ones not acquired will not later be judged important (Dunn, 2004, p.69).

This understanding of collecting echoes what was discussed earlier regarding diversity representation as a historicised discourse, particularly in Western liberal democracies. The need for widening diversity representation is specific to this period and, thus, has not framed museum collecting in the past. In chapter 4, I will explore this idea while analysing how the post-dictatorship period in Chile meant an increased democratisation of Chilean society, influencing how diversity is perceived and represented in the museums I researched.

But furthermore, this is precisely why giving 'quotas' to minority artists only represent a short-term strategy to address the underrepresentation of social groups in museums. Widening diversity representation in collections requires museum staff to not only work to 'shift the dominant narrative museums tell' (Callihan & Feldman, 2018, p.186) but also prepare for further, imminent and constant change in the future, for which museum collecting 'lies in the production of flexible systems and flexible workforces' (Knell, 2004, p.9).

Having this in consideration, one final element to address in this chapter is how the discussions mentioned above operate in art museums in particular. While in historical and ethnographic museums, the power dynamic is stressed in those who have the authority to present discourses in museum spaces, in art museums, this has an additional layer related to the issue of authorship. 'Art museums have historically ignored art from artists who are "non-white, nonmale"' (Jankauskas, 2022, p.43). And as I will explore further in chapters 7 and 8, art

museums have reproduced the idea that art is intrinsically Western by categorising the material culture of non-Western groups differently; for example, Indigenous art, which has been historically absent from Western art museums, and often placed in ethnographic museums instead.

This system of categorisation of cultural production and the divide between the 'high art' and any other form of material culture is powerfully shaped by the canon, as noted earlier in this chapter. Therefore, the canon is directly connected to the omission of non-dominant groups in museums and, consequently, collections. As I will discuss further in the latter chapters, questioning the canon will become crucial when attempting to widen diversity representation in museum collecting, as it implies not only acquiring non-canonical artists but also questioning how their work might not fit into the canonical standards of art production that exclude them in the first place. This will require broadening the scope into other forms of material culture, traditionally classified out of the 'high art' category, such as decorative arts, popular arts and crafts. Interestingly, contemporary artists have increasingly blurred the limits of traditional 'high arts' since the end of the 20th century. This will have a relevant impact on this thesis, as a considerable portion of the acquisitions of non-canonical artists I found were contemporary artists. I focus on this matter in chapter 8 by exploring cases of acquisitions of Indigenous contemporary artists. Here, I understand 'contemporary art' according to scholar Bruce Altshuler's definition, who argues that this term refers to

> those artworks created by living—or recently deceased—artists, but (…) [also] there is an additional filter, a presumption that 'contemporary art'—the subset of present artistic production that finds its way into significant galleries and museums—is more adventurous, more 'cutting edge' than work made by traditional artists (Altshuler, 2007, pp.3-4).

It is relevant to notice how these artworks' contemporary nature puts tension in museums' traditional collecting role, as they constantly aim to interrupt or challenge the canon. Furthermore, the contestatory character of contemporary art, in constant dialogue with broader socio-political processes, calls for an ongoing conversation regarding what is expected from museums regarding collecting priorities. If contemporary works get valorised by entering museum collections (Altshuler, 2007, p.2), it is pivotal to question how museums select what is acquired and who participates in that decision. As we will see later in this thesis, the decision-making of what is acquired today is shaped by internal and external elements participating in the museums' open systems. This might include institutional debates and notions around taste, authority, market value and nepotism. Most of these elements will be discussed in depth while exploring the Chilean art museums' collecting strategies in chapter 5.

2.6. Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter, I have aimed to present some initial discussions regarding diversity representation in museum collecting. These debates will frame some of the analyses I will introduce in each of the following chapters. In sum, the main takeaways of this chapter are:

- The interest in widening diversity representation in museums is directly linked to debates around the social role of museums.

- There have been critical approaches to diversity representation, notably pushed by politically inspired criticism, that have questioned the institutional understanding of diversity. Notably, decolonial and feminist criticism will be relevant here.

- In this thesis, I will approach museums as open systems, which means that I will understand collecting practices not in isolation but in constant co-influence with museums' internal and external dynamics.

- Collecting priorities will also be understood as context-specific, and addressing collecting critically might imply flexibility to face future changes in collecting practices.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Chapter presentation

Echoing my research outline, presented in the introduction, this chapter will explore my research methodology thoroughly. I will present my positionality as a researcher, aiming to explore how it influenced my research design. I will also present my study case design and how it changed during the research. I will explain my sampling rationale and how I defined relevant collections to study. After this, I will explore how I collected and analysed my data and how it is used in this thesis. And lastly, I will present a short reflection regarding the research's strengths and limitations.

3.2. Positionality statement

As this thesis is greatly interested in representativity, it is crucial to start this chapter by stating my positionality as a researcher. While I try to analyse the power dynamics involved in museum collections, I also recognise the need to acknowledge these in my practice. This comes from an active practice of reflexivity that I aimed to incorporate into my research, as I understand that 'where I am coming from as a researcher' entails ontological and epistemological assumptions; that is, how my individual beliefs as a researcher have an impact on my interpretation of the social world and the nature of knowledge (Holmes, 2020, p.1). In this section, I understand positionality as 'the stance or positioning of the researcher with the social and political context of the study—the community, the organization or the participant group' (Brydon-miller & Coghlan, 2014, p.628). Moreover, the researcher's positionality can be understood from three perspectives. These are, firstly, locating the researcher in relation to the

subject in general; secondly, the researcher's position regarding the study participants; and lastly, locating the researcher regarding the research in particular (Holmes, 2020, p.3).

Firstly, my relationship with the subject is shaped by my academic background in art history. Although this research focuses on museum practice, I have previously worked in the contemporary art sector, which raised my interest in how artworks are situated, used and framed in institutions. This also prompted my interest in art museums in particular. And additionally, many of the past research projects I have worked on have been related to feminist and queer art, which also connects to my personal politics. During this research, I noticed how this framed some of the outcomes I will present in this thesis. For example, my initial interest when interviewing participants was understanding how Indigenous artists were represented in museums. Still, many of my participants deflected my questions to examples about women being (mis)represented in museums. My interest in feminist politics made me curious about this phenomenon and aware of intersections between the representation of various non-canonical artists in my study cases. This became a significant outcome of this research, which I will explore fully in Chapter 7.

Secondly, my relationship with the participants of this research is also notably shaped by my career in Chile. I am Chilean; I grew up, lived and worked there until 2014. Before moving to the UK, I worked for four years in various research, events, publications and projects. The Chilean arts sector is relatively small. Consequently, I knew personally or had a second-degree connection with most of the people involved in the acquisition processes I was interested in studying. Many of the participants of this study were former university classmates, teachers, colleagues, friends, and friends of friends. This also means that many knew each other, worked together, had opinions of each other's work, and often had worked in more than one of the institutions I was interested in studying. For example, one of my interviewees was my teacher

during my undergraduate studies and had read my work several times. At the same time, she was also the curator of one of my case studies and also participated in an acquisition process in another of my cases. When I reached out to her, she was also working as a director in a third institution relevant to my research and had worked or collaborated with at least four others of my participants.

This close connection and a tight network of relationships across participants has several implications. First, it means that although I left Chile eight years ago, I positioned myself as an *insider* to some extent in this sector. This made my access to participants and data relatively straightforward. I conducted my interviews in Spanish, as this is my first language and my participants'. Consequently, even though I contacted all my participants via official emails, following protocols provided by the Ethics Committee at the University, I consistently received friendly and informal answers due to my familiarity with the sector. During the interviews, I often felt my participants trusted me enough to disclose emotions and opinions beyond their institutional roles. What's more, this notably shaped my data and outcomes as I became increasingly interested in my participants' attitudes of frustration towards the institutional frames of museums. I will explore this in chapter 6.

That said, this also presented several confidentiality challenges. Although all my participants gave me full disclosure of our conversations (except in particular situations when they asked, 'do not record this'), some participants told me things I needed to be cautious about when interviewing other participants. It also implied that my interviews often felt conversational and that I had to be aware of how I expressed my questions not to show my opinions and influence my participants. For example, at some point, I interviewed two museum workers involved in the acquisition process of one artist (who I also interviewed); one worker was in favour of acquiring the artist, the other was against it, and the artist was aware of this. I also knew the artist

personally, and I admire their work. Although the triangulation of these conversations was highly enriching and exciting, keeping a passive voice as an interviewer, and avoiding letting them know the information I already had from other sources was challenging. As I had my own opinion regarding the situation, it was also challenging not to let my views and emotions influence the interpretation of the data I gathered. I will return to this later in this chapter when I explain my data analysis approaches.

This takes me to a final point regarding my positionality – how I position myself in this research. Beyond my academic background, I recognise how my identity frames this project, for which I am the only researcher. I grew up in a working-class family in a historically proletarian neighbourhood of Santiago, and I am the first woman in my family to get a university degree. This experience has pushed my interest in representation, inclusivity and equality throughout my research career. This also implies that my arguments in this thesis are not just ideas but are also very close to my values and beliefs. I recognise this is intrinsically embedded in this research, for which I understand how crucial reflexivity is in this context.

Following that line, as one of the main interests of this thesis is the representation of Indigenous peoples in collections, it is also relevant to mention that I do not identify as Indigenous. This means that, although I am native to the context I am researching, I do not represent a culturally marginalised group. It was therefore important that I maintained an awareness of not appropriating the struggles some of my participants faced. This was particularly relevant when interviewing participants identifying as Indigenous or exploring issues around different experiences of marginalisation/oppression in the interviews. Their testimonies, furthermore, were crucial for making visible the institutional hierarchies that this thesis aims to critique.

3.3. Research design

Having stated my positionality as an entry point, it is useful now to present my research design to its full extent. This methodology is initially based on the research questions set out in my introduction. My **main research question** was: **How have Chilean public art museums addressed diversity representation in their acquisitions from 1990 - 2020?** This question was supported by three **subsidiary research questions**, which were:

1. What challenges do Chilean art museums face when attempting to widen diversity representation in collections?

2. What are art museums' collection strategies in Chile in the post-dictatorship period, and how does it relate to their context?

3. How do museum workers understand museums' social responsibility regarding diversity representation, and how does this influence their practice?

Based on the Chilean context, my questions and objectives, this research could benefit significantly from an **exploratory** approach, as I was analysing a widely unexplored field (Kumar, 2014, p.13). Moreover, this implied the need for approaching cases and their current practices. And at the same time, it is fundamental to emphasise that this research aims to explore Chilean art museums as a sector. Therefore, I decided the best research strategy was a **multi-case study design**. This would allow a 'collective understanding of the issue or question' (Simons, 2012, p.21), as a single case would have only addressed the particularities of one museum, reducing external validity to the study since the results of the research could not be 'generalized beyond the specific research context' (Bryman, 2016, p.42).

For this multi-case study design, I started with a preliminary study I conducted in December 2019, for which I considered four public art collections as cases. My sampling rationale is

explained to its full extent later in this chapter. But for now, it is relevant to notice that, in my original research design, I planned to shortlist these to two self-contained cases, which I intended to explore in-depth and create a comparative research design (Bryman, 2016, p.64). Nevertheless, after conducting the preliminary study, I faced various difficulties regarding this methodology. Firstly, each institution's available data was patchy and inconsistent, hindering my chances to go as in-depth as I initially aimed to explore each case. At the same time, the kinds of available data were highly different, making the comparison of the two collections unfeasible. Consequently, I considered these four collections as 'starting points' that led me to identify the acquisition of key artworks. Then, these became 'acquisition cases', where instead of using each of these institutions as a case study, I created 'micro study cases' within each institution.

This focus on certain 'acquisition cases' came not only from my difficulties accessing data, as stated above but also due to the nature of the museum sector in Chile. As I mentioned when discussing my positionality, this sector is relatively small. As soon as I started my preliminary study, I realised that many participants had worked in various institutions and constantly overlapped and related to each other in multiple ways. The artists whose works' acquisitions I considered relevant for this research also tended to have relationships with more than one of the institutions considered for this study and had been acquired by at least two of these. Ultimately, it became more coherent to discuss artists acquired across institutions, which – for instance – notably influenced the structure of Chapter 8. Accordingly, I propose understanding my original cases (i.e., the four collections studied) as open categories that built the skeleton of the data collected for this research.

Furthermore, as I encountered the challenge of accessing patchy and inconsistent data during my preliminary study, I realised that the only trustworthy source of information regarding

museum acquisitions was the testimony of the people involved in the acquisition processes. These were museum workers, artists acquired, and occasionally other sector agents such as independent curators, researchers and workers of the Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage (MINCAP). Consequently, my research strategy and methods were notably influenced by this. My main data source was semi-structured interviews, in dialogue with the analysis of cultural policy and other forms of complementary data that I will outline thoroughly later in this chapter.

This landscape meant that most of the data available to me regarding museum practices linked to acquisitions required language-based approaches (Bryman, 2016, p.378), firmly placing the **epistemology** of my datasets on the **qualitative paradigm**. At the same time, this is approached from an interpretivist standpoint, where 'the stress is on the understanding of the social world through the examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants' (Bryman, 2016, p.375). Moreover, it is relevant to mention that this research stands in a transformative worldview, as it is interested in highlighting how 'research inquiry needs to be intertwined with politics and a political change agenda to confront social oppression at whatever level it occurs' (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.9).

3.3.1. Other changes in the research design

Besides the discarded methods mentioned above, I discarded many other methodology options in the process. In the first research design for this project, I contemplated a mixed-method design because I considered it necessary to explore quantitative data to identify the current rates of representation of non-hegemonic groups and identities in the museum collections. For this, I initially thought of a descriptive statistics analysis of museums' acquisitions records in the period 1990-2020 as a way 'of summarizing numerical data – averages, totals, ranges, etc.' (Gillham, 2000, p.80). I thought this method would allow me to state rates that supported the argument of the under-representation of non-canonical artists. Nonetheless, I encountered

various issues with this method, starting with the lack of availability of data sets. Some museums did not have a formal record of museum acquisitions, and the ones that did still offered me patchy data that was impossible to compare or analyse consistently.

In addition, some contextual issues also hindered my access to this kind of data. In October 2019, right before my preliminary study, a series of social protests bloomed in Chile, protesting against the inequality in the country, which led to an ongoing process of constitutional change. These protests are now popularly known as the *estallido social* (the social boom), which is how I will often refer to them in this thesis. It is relevant to note that most of the institutions I was researching were based in the city centre, where the protests occurred daily for the first few months and where riots and protesters' confrontations with special forces and police brutality were frequent, leading to multiple human rights violations reported by the United Nations Human Rights Office (2019).

Consequently, many museums closed between October and November or reduced opening times. Before this situation changed, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. Museums were then permanently closed as the Chilean government declared a hard lockdown on March 18th, 2020. In terms of this research, this context made my access to information even more challenging because most museum professionals had limited access to their institution's files while working from home, as a considerable amount of these were not digitised. My chances to travel for field work were also limited, and ultimately, I decided to focus on the only data I could consistently collect, the semi-structured interviews conducted online.

Another method I initially considered for this research was the visual analysis of relevant artworks of non-canonical artists acquired by museums in the studied period. This method was meant to explore contestatory discourses in contemporary art's key artworks. Nevertheless,

this method was discussed in my upgrade panel as potentially problematic, as my positionality could notably shape the data gathered from these analyses. This is due to the focus of this research on some cases of artists of Indigenous origin. As noted earlier regarding my positionality, I do not identify as an Indigenous person, which makes the artists' testimony more relevant than my analyses of their work. Additionally, this method turned the focus away from collecting practices. Therefore, I decided to discard this method entirely and, instead, focus on interviewing acquired artists (which was not initially considered in my research strategy), so I could use their perspectives about their work as a data source instead of my analyses of it.

3.3.2. Research strategy

This section will present my research strategy and sampling rationale. Following this, I will dedicate a subsection to each of the data collection stages as chronologically conducted. The final research strategy for this research was separated into four stages of data collection. Each data collection strategy often overlapped with data analysis of previous stages. These stages were:

- A preliminary study, formed by four semi-structured interviews conducted in December 2019 in person.

- Selection of six cultural policy documents issued by the Chilean government from 1990-2020. These were gathered between April and June 2020.

- Searching collections' databases and other complementary sources related to museum acquisitions, including catalogues, reports, spreadsheets and other forms of data, gathered throughout 2020.

- A final round of twelve interviews, conducted from April to June 2021 online.

Based on this research focus, this study is considered minimal-risk research. This has been confirmed and approved by the Research Ethics Office of King's College London on two occasions, giving ethical clearance to this project on the 29th of August 2019 (reference number: MRS-18/19-14234) and again on the 6th of November 2020 (reference number: MRSP-20/21-21356).

Furthermore, I assessed the effectiveness of this research strategy based on Alan Bryman's discussion regarding 'trustworthiness' in qualitative research. Drawing on the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985, 1994), Bryman characterises the trustworthiness of qualitative research on four concepts: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (2016, pp. 384-386). Following these, the 'credibility' of my research design is based on the use of various forms of data and the triangulation of these. While this research strongly focuses on interviews as the main source, the analysis of policy documents and complementary sources strengthens and reaffirms the data collected in the interviews. In this research design, 'no one kind of source of evidence is likely to be sufficient (or sufficiently valid) on its own. This use of multiple sources of evidence, each with its strengths and weaknesses, is a characteristic of case study research' (Gillham, 2000, p.2). Furthermore, the credibility of my data is also framed by my sampling rationale, which I will explore in the following subsection.

Regarding 'transferability', Bryman notes how qualitative research struggles with transferable outcomes as 'qualitative findings tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and relevance of the aspect of the social world being studied' (2016, p.384). Consequently, Bryman draws on Geertz's (1973) idea of 'thick description', where the researcher offers a thorough account of the context researched and methodology used, so others can evaluate if the findings of this research could be relevant in another context. The concept of transferability is behind the extension of this methodology chapter, and dialogues with chapters 4, 5 and 6 that attempt

to contextualise the Chilean museum sector, while presenting relevant discussions regarding the impact of that context in museum practice.

According to Bryman, dependability and confirmability are the last two concepts that shape trustworthiness. 'Dependability' is based on a need for an 'auditing approach' (Bryman, 2016, p.384) where the researcher ensures keeping records of every stage of the research. I reinforced this aspect of my research by writing regular reports that I shared and discussed with my supervisor. Notably, I created reports for each data collection and analysis strategy, reporting the process and outcomes of each stage. And lastly, 'confirmability' connects to dependability, but aims to ensure that the researcher's standpoint does not bias data analysis and collection. I engage with this by acknowledging and keeping a reflexive standpoint of my positionality while discussing each stage with my supervisor.

3.3.3. Sampling rationale

Before explaining my sampling rationale, it is relevant to note the timeframe and location of this research. The first certainty I had about this research was that I wanted to analyse museum practices in Chile. This is based on the interests and motivations I have already mentioned in my positionality statement. The timeframe, on the other hand, was shaped by the return to the democratic system in Chile in 1990, after a plebiscite that enacted the end of the dictatorship in 1989. As mentioned earlier, this 'return to democracy' implied the democratisation of the country as a whole, and a search for equality, freedom and participation of citizens. I am interested in analysing how, or if, this had an impact on museum practice. And the end date, 2020, is marked by the limitations of this research, as I could only collect data until 2021. Moreover, many practices have changed since 2020 due to the pandemic, as working culture has adapted to remote work, and new institutional priorities influenced by the social protests of 2019. This made 2020 an organic ending point for this research.

Following this, I needed to shortlist the collections and institutions I would study. I had an initial interest in art museums, but I started considering public and private museums equally. Nevertheless, when I began approaching museums for my preliminary study, I soon realised that private museums were considerably more reluctant to offer access to information. On the other hand, most public museums I approached showed interest in collaborating with my research quickly and often reinforced that it was their 'duty' to ensure access to the institutions' information. Public museums in Chile, moreover, are often funded by the MINCAP, which implies that they are endorsed by the Transparency Law of the Chilean government. Because of this reason, they are also more directly influenced by the aims of governmental cultural policy, including mandates for equality and representation, making them relevant cases for this research.

Following this sampling exercise, I also decided to focus on museums located in Santiago only. Regional museums in Chile often have smaller collections, teams, and resources. This made it harder to research and access information in them, especially remotely. Additionally, regional museums usually relate to local realities instead of national aims. Thus, issues such as diversity representation tended to be more relevant for museums in the capital, where audiences are more diverse, and so are collections. This decision to focus on museums in Santiago was also shaped by my limitations as a researcher. Expanding to more institutions would have been unmanageable, and I had access to considerably more gatekeepers in Santiago, where I lived and worked before moving to the UK.

Based on the above, this multi-case study design was based on *similarity* among cases instead of comparative differences. I chose this criterion because it allowed a more open-ended approach (Bryman, 2016, p.68), in line with the exploratory standpoint of this research. Moreover, as I had limited information regarding collecting practices in Chilean museums prior

to my research, it was not possible for me to select cases based on existing knowledge about their practices. Thus, I could only aim to select cases that fit into a similar criterion and then identify their particularities throughout the research. Then, focusing on the criterion 'public art museums in Santiago', I shortlisted three institutions:

1. **MNBA** - *Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* (National Museum of Fine Arts):

Founded in 1880, MNBA is the first national art museum created in Latin America (MNBA, 2020). Currently, it is a public museum funded and managed by the MINCAP, and holds a collection of around 5000 items. The collection initially focused on fine arts artworks, notably paintings and sculpture, acquired in the early days of the Chilean Republic. Nonetheless, since the 1970s, there has been a change in collecting practices, starting to include artworks of modern and contemporary art. This tendency has increased since the 1990s (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019). The museum has also shown awareness of collection gaps through recent exhibitions, whose curatorial approaches have notably highlighted women artists' and Indigenous peoples' lack of representation (Cortés, 2016; Honorato, 2017; Cortés, 2020).

2. **MAC** - *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo* (Museum of Contemporary Art)

Founded in 1946, this is a public university museum, funded and managed by the Universidad de Chile, and partially funded by the MINCAP. The collection holds approximately 3000 modern and contemporary art items, mainly by Chilean and Latin American artists. The museum was created based on the University's commitment to widening access to culture (notably promoted in the decade of 1940s in the university sector in Chile) and therefore is explicitly aware of its social responsibility. That said, the museum faces severe funding issues, particularly since the dictatorship period (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). The museum is also well known in the sector for

exhibiting the work of emerging artists, especially artists that studied at the Universidad de Chile, who tend to donate artworks to the collection in the early stages of their careers.

3. **MSSA** - *Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende* (Museum of Solidarity Salvador Allende)

Founded in 1972, the MSSA was created during the socialist government of Salvador Allende, which aimed to create a museum that portrayed solidarity among the working class around the world. Following this goal, the museum invites international artists to donate their artworks to the museum, and therefore the MSSA's collection is formed exclusively by donations. These donations, nonetheless, are a political statement rather than the result of precarity (C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021). The current collection holds around 3000 artworks and is separated into three different periods. The first two periods (before and during the dictatorship) focus on international contemporary art. On the other hand, the after-dictatorship period mainly aimed to collect Chilean contemporary artists.

These three cases matched the criterion of being public art museums with active collecting practices, so I started my study focusing on them. That said, when I began researching these three institutions, a fourth collection emerged. Many of my participants referenced or highlighted the **contemporary art collection of the MINCAP**. It was mentioned constantly because the MINCAP had conducted different collecting strategies based on various institutional initiatives, including donating artists that have exhibited in government-organised exhibitions and artworks exchanged as 'compensation' for government funding given to artists. This made this collection relevant throughout my research, even when it is not a museum, as it influenced and dialogued with museum collecting practices. Therefore, I also considered it a relevant case for my research.

As it is not associated with a museum or an exhibiting institution, this collection roams permanently and has a significant presence in the sector, while based at the deposits of the National Contemporary Art Centre, CNACC (which is managed by the MINCAP, but does not hold a collection of its own). This collection is formed by four deposits acquired by the government in different instances in the last 30 years. The first one is the formal collection of the Ministry, formed by less than ten artworks donated directly to the institution in the previous decade. The second is the FONDART[3] collection; FONDART is a national fund for artists to produce artwork, among other funding opportunities. For a few years, this fund considered artists donating artworks to the institution as a form of 'compensation', notably during the 2000s. These first two deposits are of difficult access as they are not fully documented. The third deposit is the collection of *Galería Gabriela Mistral* (GGM), a public contemporary art gallery funded and managed by MINCAP, which has been asking the exhibited artists for donations since the 1990s, currently holding around 100 artworks. And lastly, a new deposit was created in 2020, based on an open contest launched by the MINCAP to acquire contemporary artworks. This was part of the aid given by the Ministry to the art sector in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and achieved the acquisition of 244 artworks in 2021.

By having these four institutions (MNBA, MAC, MSSA, MINCAP) as a starting point, I recruited participants using criterion sampling (Bryman, 2016, p.409). The criterion used was for the participants to be involved in the acquisition processes of the institutions studied. Additionally, I also used snowball sampling (Bryman, 2016, p.409), as many of my participants recommended other people I should talk to. Lastly, the 'micro study cases' I mentioned earlier, which are particular acquisitions which I will draw on in my chapters, were often suggested by

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[3] This is the acronym for *Fondo Nacional de Desarrollo Cultural y las Artes* (which translates as National Fund for the Cultural and Arts Development). It is currently called *Fondos Cultura* (Culture Funds), but people keep calling it 'FONDART' colloquially.

my participants as well. These micro cases came up in conversations where I asked for 'non-traditional artworks' being collected. I will explore this further, notably in chapters 7 and 8.

Lastly, it is relevant to mention that one key consequence of this sampling is that the institutions shortlisted mostly collect contemporary art. Among the cases I considered, the MNBA is the only one that also considers modern art. This implies that most of my data draw on the acquisition of contemporary artists, which also influences the approaches and cases explored on chapter 8.

3.4. Data collection & analysis

3.4.1. Preliminary study (pilot)

The first step of data collection for this research was the development of a pilot study, conducted in December 2019. The need for a preliminary study has been evident since the conception of this research. This was informed by the exploratory standpoint of this research, which implied the need to ensure the feasibility of the study before confirming a definitive research design (Kumar, 2014, pp.13-14). Moreover, due to the already mentioned lack of previous research in the field, it was pivotal to approach museum professionals and survey their experiences before making any final decisions regarding this research.

The preliminary study was formed by four semi-structured interviews with the Heads of Collections (or similar role) of the four institutions considered in this research. The interviewees for this pilot were chosen because they were the most knowledgeable worker regarding collections in each institution. I identified these people by looking at the organisation chart of each institution, and then I exchanged emails with them to ensure they were the right person to address. The preliminary interviews had three key aims: 1. to determine the feasibility of

different study cases, 2. to assess previous information museums held about their collections and collecting practices, including museums' workers' awareness about biases in the collections, and 3. building a relationship with potential gatekeepers. The full list of interviewees is mentioned in table 1.

Table 1: Participants of the preliminary study

Interviewees	Role title[4]	Institution	Interview date
Francisca Castillo	Head of Contemporary Art Collections	MINCAP	17/12/2019
Eva Cancino	Head of Collections	MNBA	18/12/2019
Pamela Navarro	Conservation and Documentation Unit Coordinator	MAC	20/12/2019
Caroll Yasky	Collection Coordinator	MSSA	23/12/2019

These interviews were, approximately, an hour-long each and were conducted within the museums' buildings, sometimes moving around offices, deposits, and exhibition rooms. Overall, the interviews were focused on determining the willingness of the participants in collaborating with my research and getting an introduction and general information to each of these collections. Additionally, it is relevant to notice how the contingent context of the social protests in Chile that started in October 2019 deeply shaped these interviews as well. Conducting the interviews only three months after the riots started, I decided to include an additional section to the interview guide. This section explored how museum professionals understood the role of museums in the current social and political scenario and contributed to the reflection of the social responsibilities of museums in this context. The full interview guide I used for this study can be found as Appendix A of this thesis.

These interviews were conducted, recorded and transcribed in Spanish. After transcribing, I started coding the information, by identifying relevant concepts, themes, events, and examples

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[4] Please note, this is the direct translation of each role title. In all cases, these were the workers with the higher seniority or rank in the area of collections at each institution. To avoid confusion, I will refer to all of these roles as 'head of collections' from now on in the thesis.

(Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.190). I conducted the coding process in English, aiming to transition into this language in the data analysis phase. Coding my data allowed me to label relevant discussions and facilitate my analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p.193), notably as I gathered more data in the following stages. Moreover, coding should be considered here as an initial analysis stage, as assigning a label to chunks of data imply an interpretation and hierarchisation of the information gathered on behalf of the researcher (Miles, et al., 2014, p.72). The codes I created for the preliminary study are shown in table 2.

Table 2: Codes used for the analysis of the preliminary study

Type of information	Code
Concepts	- Politics of collecting - Diversity representation - Decolonising museums
Themes	- History of collections - Audiences, communities & access - Museum workers' challenges - Precarity and funding - Curatorial practices and collecting - Work culture - Social role of museums
Events/examples	*Estallido social* (2019 protests) - Collections policies - Acquisition cases

It is also relevant to note that I coded and analysed these interviews on Nvivo. Nvivo is a software that supports the management and analysis of qualitative data. I opted to use Nvivo when I decided to focus my research design on interviews, as I considered that it would help me organise and analyse an extensive corpus of interviews and qualitative data in general. For example, Nvivo allows creating subcodes, merging codes, and connecting existing codes into

branching systems that 'reflects the structure of the data' (Bazeley, 2007, p.100). During my preliminary study, I also assessed how useful I found this tool, which then led me to use Nvivo in all of my following research stages.

As these interviews were a first introduction to the collections and some participants, I decided to analyse the data using thematic analysis. In this analysis, I attempted to identify repetitions (recurring topics, examples, arguments), transitions (participants shifting into different topics or examples), similarities and differences between participants' opinions, theory-related materials (for example, 'decolonising museums') and missing data (which I then aimed to addressed in following interviews) (Bryman, 2016, p.586).

These first conversations became the starting point of other interviews I held later in the research and set the foundations for some of my general conclusions. For instance, it notably supported the characterisation of museums' collecting strategies, which I will explore in chapter 5. Because this pilot was conducted in the context of the 2019 social protests, it also allowed me to collect data regarding the museum workers' perceptions of their social role, which influenced the conception of chapter 6. Additionally, this preliminary study successfully supported building a relationship with my initial gatekeepers, who often contributed to the snowball sampling of more participants and facilitated access to complementary sources. Ultimately, the results of this preliminary study confirmed the feasibility, relevance and urgency of this research in the Chilean context.

3.4.2. Cultural policy documents

The second stage of data collection was the gathering and selection of cultural policy documents. The analysis of Chilean cultural policy was considered a crucial step in this research because these documents offer an official voice regarding the relevance given to

diversity in Chilean cultural institutions and are a relevant source of research about Chilean cultural institutions overall. As highlighted in the most recent national cultural policy, released in 2017, the Chilean cultural sector lacks systematic research and knowledge about practices within itself (CNCA, 2017, pp.122-123). This makes cultural policy and policy documents a key source, that offer not only guidelines for the sector, but also relevant data and diagnoses developed by governments since the end of the dictatorship with the aim of identifying and addressing issues and challenges in the sector.

At the same time, the cultural policy serves as a useful tool to understand the influence of government guidelines over cultural institutions in Chile, as the state is the main funder of culture in the country. Many museums, even those not directly managed by the government, receive or have received funding from the Ministry. Considering the cases of study for this research, the MNBA and the MINCAP collection are fully funded and managed by the government, and the MAC and MSSA are partially funded by the MINCAP (managed by a university and an NGO respectively). Consequently, my participants from the preliminary study highlighted their duty to align with these guidelines, which made them relevant for analysis. And ultimately, this method responds to my second research objective, which considers appraising cultural policy documents to recognise institutional standpoints regarding diversity representation in museums.

Regarding the interests of this research, focused on diversity representation, it is significant to understand that in the last few decades the aim of cultural policies is to 'produce and animate institutions, practices, and agencies. One of their goals is to find, serve, and nurture a sense of belonging, through educational institutions and cultural industries' (Lewis & Miller, 2003, p.2). This approach was notably embraced in Chile since the creation of the Chilean National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA, *Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes*) in 2003, and in the first

formal national cultural policy, released in 2005. Ideas regarding inclusion and diversity have increased considerably in Chilean cultural policy since then, which I will explore in-depth in chapter 4.

For this research, I focused on six key documents. These documents include two exploratory documents created in the 1990s that aimed to assess the cultural sector and its needs after the dictatorship; three national cultural policies released in 2005, 2011 and 2017 by the CNCA, which then ranked up into a Ministry (MINCAP) in 2018; and lastly, the first national museum policy released in 2018 also by the CNCA. It is relevant to notice that, in the last thirty years there have been more government documents released, particularly focused on certain creative industries (i.e., national policies for film, music, visual arts, etc). Nonetheless, the documents chosen for this analysis were based on their relevance and impact in the cultural sector on a national level, and particularly in the museum sector as well. All of the documents considered for this analysis were accessed online through the MINCAP repository, which is open access. A brief description of the documents considered for this analysis is presented in Appendix B of this thesis. These documents are:

A. *Propuesta para la institucionalidad cultural chilena* (Proposal for the Chilean cultural institution) – 1991, Ministry of Education.
B. *Chile está en deuda con la cultura. Comisión asesora presidencial en materias artístico-culturales* (Chile is in debt with the culture. Presidential advisory commission in artistic and cultural matters) – 1997, Ministry of Education.
C. *Chile quiere más cultura. Política cultural 2005-2010* (Chile wants more culture. Cultural policy 2005-2010) – 2005, National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA).
D. Cultural policy 2011-2016 – 2011, National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA).

E. *Política Nacional de Cultura 2017-2022. Cultura y desarrollo humano: derechos y territorio* (National Cultural Policy 2017-2022. Culture and human development: rights and territory) – 2017, National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA).

F. National Policy of Museums – 2018, Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage (Mincap)

For the analysis of these documents, I used thematic analysis and also discourse analysis simultaneously. Thematic analysis here had a similar aim as described in the preliminary study; this aimed to gather relevant information about the cases and their context, as most of these documents started an overall evaluation of the sector as part of the policy. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, aimed to offer a first approach to ideas around diversity representation in Chilean cultural institutions. Here,

> (…) discourse analysis challenges researchers to question policy making processes, how dialogue takes place, and how power relations produce dominant discourses and marginalise others. Such questions require researchers to be reflective, querying the research material in ways that they may not otherwise consider (Hewitt, 2009, p.13).

Therefore, this method is very useful to critically approach how 'diversity' is framed by institutional aims. I will explore this further in chapter 3 where I characterise what I mean by 'diversity representation' and how it is used in institutional contexts. Following this idea, I analysed key concepts in the documents asking, 'What is this discourse doing?' and 'how is this discourse constructed to make this happen?' (Bryman, 2016, p. 532). I also analysed these documents on Nvivo, and I separated my codes depending on them being relevant to the discourse (concepts) or thematic (themes, events and examples) analyses.

Table 3: Codes used for the analysis of cultural policy documents

Analysis approach	Type of information	Code
Discourse Analysis	Concepts	• Diversity • Cultural diversity • Representation • Diversity representation • Pluralism • Inclusion
Thematic Analysis	Themes	• Precarity • Funding, budget • Context of policy • Art museums • Professionalisation of the sector, training, and unions. • Policy objectives • Indigenous peoples • Migrants • Afro-descendants
	Events/Examples	• Relevant milestones in the sector • Exhibitions

I then combined this policy analyses results with the preliminary study's outcomes. This notably influenced the guidelines I used for the final round of semi-structured interviews, which I will explore in the subsequent part of this chapter.

3.4.3. Complementary sources

Before diving into the aforementioned final round of interviews, there is one step that must be mentioned. Although I have named this section 'complementary sources', this step started as a method of its own. As I noted earlier, I originally attempted to identify rates of representation of non-canonical groups in collections, using descriptive statistics. While this was still part of my research plan, I succeeded in gathering various pieces of information, including spreadsheets, catalogues and other documents. Nevertheless, this was not comparable or

consistent enough for me to quantify rates of representation, which led me to discard this method.

That said, the data that I managed to gather was still significant to this research. Using different forms of data gave an increasingly thorough knowledge of the cases I was researching. And furthermore, these sources allowed me to identify a few cases of artists acquired, that then became my 'acquisition cases', explored in Chapters 7 and 8. These sources also informed my final round of interviews, where I was able to ask follow-up questions based on the knowledge I had built of the collections and institutions in this stage of the research. These complementary sources included:

- A spreadsheet with full list of acquisitions by MSSA since 1990. Facilitated by MSSA's Collections Coordinator, Caroll Yasky.

- List of artworks acquired by MAC in 2017, as a celebration of the 70 years of the museum. Facilitated by MAC's Conservation and Documentation Unit Coordinator, Pamela Navarro.

- List of artworks acquired by the MINCAP from 2020's open call. Facilitated by former Coordinator of Visual Arts at the MINCAP, Varinia Brodsky.

- Catalogue of the *Galería Gabriela Mistral* Collection. Printed, facilitated by Coordinator of Contemporary Art Collections at MINCAP, Francisca Castillo.

- Internal procedure document that explains criterion for acquiring contemporary art pieces at MNBA, created and facilitated by MNBA's Contemporary Art Curator Paula Honorato.

- Pictures I took during the preliminary study. These included pictures of the deposits of the MINCAP collection, and the *façade* and external walls of the MNBA, MSSA and MAC buildings. The latter pictures show banners hung by museum workers in support of the

social protests of 2019, and also graffiti those protesters made challenging museums' authority. Some of these pictures are used throughout this thesis as illustration.

- Collections policies. At the time of my preliminary study, the MINCAP collection was the only one of my cases with a collections' policy. That said, during the years this research was conducted, both MNBA and MSSA were developing their collections' policies. These were both published in late 2021, so I considered them as a source, which I notably explore in Chapter 5. All of these policies were sent by my preliminary study participants at each institution, but the latter two are also available for public access online since early 2022.

Overall, I would say that this process of gathering data around collections became a crucial step in the development of my research. It gave me a more in-depth knowledge about key moments of acquisitions and potential participants, which allowed the final round of interviews to be more complete and representative of the sector.

3.4.4. Semi-structured interviews

After the analysis of the data sources mentioned above, and addressing their outcomes, I conducted a final set of interviews, which represents the main source of data for this research. These interviews were more diverse in terms of interviewees and more extensive than the preliminary ones. These interviews included museum professionals, but also artists acquired by the institutions studied, independent curators and researchers, and MINCAP workers. The conversations with museum professionals focused on their perspectives on collecting practices in museums, their understanding of their own role, and their opinions on issues of diversity representation in the sector. The interviews with artists and curators, on the other hand, focused on their experiences when working with museums and how they understood issues of representation in those contexts. This means that I created a different interview guide for each

of these participants, drawing on the data I had gathered in the previous steps of this research, and the information they could offer on different institutions and micro cases.

The sampling of the interviewees was based on criterion sampling (Bryman, 2016, p.409). This means that I selected my interviewees by following the simple criterion of them being involved in the acquisition processes of the institutions considered for my case study. These were mainly workers from collections departments, curatorial departments, and museum directors. In the same way, I shortlisted acquired artists and curators that have worked with issues related to Indigenous representation. Notably, I was interested in establishing conversations with contemporary artists that explored their Indigenous background in their work and that had been acquired by one or more of my study cases. In the case of curators, I approached curators that had worked with the artists that I interviewed, to explore their experiences further. This implied that some of the interviewees were approached through snowball sampling (Bryman, 2016, p.415), accessing contacts provided or recommended by other interviewees.

I conducted interviews until I reached data saturation, where no relevant new findings were being generated in my interviews (Bryman, 2016, p.412). I ran a total of 12 interviews without considering the initial pilot interviews. These interviews lasted between one and two hours each and were all conducted online due to the COVID-19 situation and travel restrictions. A general summary of these interviews is presented in Appendix C. The list of interviewees is given below:

Table 4: Participants of the final round of interviews

Institution	Interviewee	Role
MNBA	Gloria Cortés Aliaga	Curator of Modern Art and Director's Assistant.
MNBA	Paula Honorato	Curator of Contemporary Art and Director's Assistant
MSSA	Caroll Yasky	Collections Coordinator (follow-up interview)
MSSA	Claudia Zaldívar	Museum Director
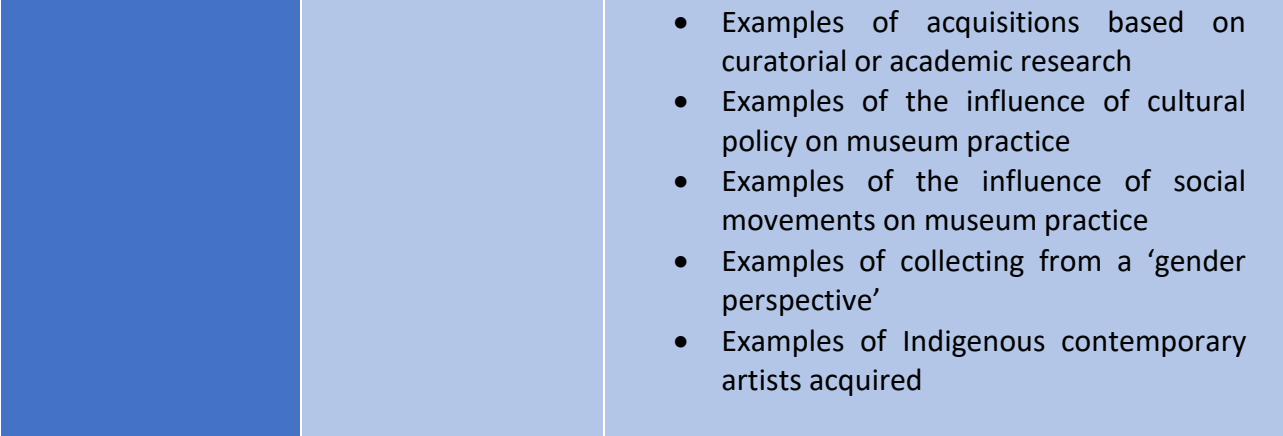
MAC	Francisco Brugnoli	Former Museum Director
MINCAP	Florencia Loewhental	Director of Galería Gabriela Mistral (GGM)
MINCAP	Varinia Brodsky	Former Coordinator of Visual Arts Department
MINCAP	Soledad Novoa	Director of National Centre of Contemporary Art (CNACC)
N/A	Seba Calfuqueo	Contemporary Artist
N/A	Cristian Vargas Paillahueque	Independent researcher and curator
N/A	Bernardo Oyarzún	Contemporary Artist
N/A	Mariairis Flores	Independent researcher and curator

For the analysis of these interviews, I started coding relevant concepts, themes, events and examples I identified in the data. Some of them were shaped by my questions, while others were repeatedly initiated by my interviewees. For these interviews, I also considered two levels of analysis, as I did with my policy analysis. I used discourse analysis to approach concepts that came up in the interviews, and thematic analysis to organise recurrent themes and examples of cases in the data. The codes used for this analysis are presented in the following table:

Table 5: Codes used for the analysis of final interviews

Analysis approach	Type of information	Code
Discourse Analysis	Concepts	- Diversity representation - Museum authority - Who decides what is collected - Notions of 'quality' and 'taste' 'Intuitive' collecting - Nepotism, friendships, privilege 'Museum Disobedience' - Contestatory collecting practices - Decolonising collecting - Feminism in museums - Inclusion and equality - What is a 'collection gap' - Museums' workers' positionality

Thematic Analysis	Themes	General museum collecting

		• Descriptive information about collections
		• Collecting strategies and priorities
		• Collecting based on donations
		   o Artists' opinions
		   o Museum workers' opinions
		• Artworks 'abandoned' after exhibitions
		• Directors' authority in collecting
		• Curatorial practice and collecting
		• Public vs private collecting
		• Art market, global market
		
		Museums' context
		
		• Precarity in the museum sector
		   o COVID-19
		   o Funding, low budget
		   o Infrastructure
		   o Lack of projection, future plans
		   o Organisational issues, small teams
		   o Lack of training or professionalisation
		   o Work culture
		• Characterisation of the workforces
		
		Politics of collecting
		
		• Activism in museum practice
		• Feminist activism in the arts in Chile
		• Absence of women artists in collections
		• Absence of Indigenous artists in collections
		• Social movements and museum practice
		• Impact of 2019 social protests on museum practice
		• Challenging categories (Western art vs traditional arts, Indigenous art, decorative arts, etc)
		• Mapuche Contemporary Art

	Events/Examples	• Collections policies • Examples of artworks donated

		• Examples of acquisitions based on curatorial or academic research • Examples of the influence of cultural policy on museum practice • Examples of the influence of social movements on museum practice • Examples of collecting from a 'gender perspective' • Examples of Indigenous contemporary artists acquired

It is relevant to notice that some of these codes overlapped constantly. Using two analysis approaches allowed me to study the same piece of data from different perspectives. For example, when asking my participants who decided which artworks would be acquired, one of the primary outcomes was that museum directors had the last word. I approached this information from both analysis standpoints, using it to characterise museum collecting in Chile (thematic analysis) and discuss how authority and taste come into play in the decision (discourse analysis). In this sense, while thematic analysis is used here 'as the basis for a generic approach to qualitative data' (Bryman, 2016, p.587), discourse analysis highlights 'language as an object of inquiry' (Tonkiss, 2017, p.478). This way, the concepts studied in the discourse analysis shaped the arguments behind each chapter of this thesis, while the thematic analysis allowed the organisation of information that sustained and feed into them.

3.5. Chapter conclusions: strengths & limitations

The main strength of this study is directly linked to its case study design, which allows an in-depth exploration of collecting practices in the Chilean art museum sector. This is supported by my familiarity as a researcher with the sector, which facilitated access to data that is not currently present in the literature. This data will also contribute to further debate and study regarding museum practices in the Global South, notably in Latin America.

Regarding the limitations faced by this research, it is relevant to notice that the cases of this study are limited and focused on Santiago. As mentioned before, this was shaped by my access to gatekeepers in museums in the Chilean capital, but also by how many cases I was able to manage as a single researcher. That being said, I recognise this as the main limitation in my research because it implies that my data will not explore regional differences in the representations of 'diversity'. Arguably, the influence of different Indigenous cultures in Chile (for example, Rapa Nui in Easter Island, Aymara in the North of Chile, Mapuche in the Araucania, Selknam in Patagonia) would have an impact on the way 'diversity' is represented in the various regions of the country. To partially address this issue, I asked a few of my participants about these differences during the interviews, notably the ones that had worked or lived in other Chilean cities. Still, this limitation implies that this research is only a first step for understanding diversity representation in Chilean museums, and that further research is needed addressing other local contexts.

Regarding the research of museum collections, it is also relevant to highlight that there are several aspects of collections that this thesis will not cover. While many aspects of collections are relevant to this research, I will not be able to go in depth regarding conservation, storage, deaccessioning debates, and many other aspects of collections management. Some of these will be mentioned when relevant to collecting practices, but as side elements. This also implies the need to keep researching Chilean museum collections and collections management in the Latin American context.

Additionally, as noted earlier in this chapter, although this thesis aims to analyse art museums in Chile, my data mostly draws on acquiring Chilean contemporary art. While I will explore some cases of modern and Indigenous art in chapter 7, the main outcomes this thesis will offer will focus on collecting contemporary art. I will present further reflections on this in chapter 8, but

for now it is relevant to notice that this represent a general limitation of this thesis, shaped by the sampling criterion used.

Another relevant limitation was shaped by travel restrictions. Even before COVID-19 and travel restrictions, as my funding did not include a fieldwork budget, my chances to visit Chile and conduct fieldwork in person were constrained. I only travelled once, for my pilot study, conducting four interviews face to face. The rest of my data was collected online. This hindered my chances of developing a more collaborative methodology, and also access to further data about collections acquisitions in physical archives. This directly shaped my datasets, and therefore results.

This research consistently adapted to an extremely contingent context. It successfully gathered data that is widely absent from the current literature and sustained a complex network of participants over the years of the research. Moreover, as this is one of the first research projects of this kind conducted in the Chilean context, this project aims to establish a precedent and a contribution to future research. This can support subsequent suggestions regarding future practices, strategies and programs to develop in the Chilean sector. Consequently, this research can contribute not only to academic knowledge but also to professional practice and cultural policy development.

Chapter 4: The Chilean Museum Sector

4.1. Chapter presentation

After presenting an initial literature review, this chapter will offer an overview of the Chilean museum sector. The chapter will draw not only on literature but also on data and analyses conducted in this research to characterise the sector mentioned above. Notably, it will use cultural policy analyses and interview data regarding the context of museum collecting. Moreover, this chapter will considerably support the exploration of my first subsidiary research question, which focuses on the challenges museum workers face when attempting to widen diversity representation.

This chapter is relevant for contextualising the Chilean museum sector and will allow me to explore museums as open systems. When I began interviewing my participants, every conversation with museum professionals reinforced the relationships between policies, institutions, and different forms of heritage as closely related. Thus, I am interested in approaching museums holistically, even when looking at one section of museum practice, such as collections acquisitions. Open systems theory allows me to do this while acknowledging the dynamics that operate inside and outside the institutions I am analysing. This chapter aims to contribute to that.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In the first, I introduce the Chilean museum sector, exploring its history and what has changed in the post-dictatorship period. The second part examines this latter period in greater depth, analysing how discourses of diversity have influenced cultural institutions. I pay special attention to how Indigenous representation has gone hand-in-hand with cultural institutions' development.

In the final part, I characterise the idea of 'precarity' in the sector as the main challenge Chilean museums face regarding diversity representation. 'Precarity' is often used in the Chilean cultural field to refer to a system of elements that affects its functioning. It can include funding issues, organisational constraints, lack of training, and workplace culture. Although I am aware it is an element present in the arts sector worldwide, I propose here that it is one of the core characteristics of the Chilean museum sector, having a substantial impact on every aspect of it, including its collecting practices.

4.2. A brief history of the museum sector in Chile

A crucial starting point for the Chilean museum sector is to examine how museums were introduced in Latin America. After the wave of independence movements in the Americas in the early 19th century, museums were considered one of the strategies to enable the region to be incorporated into the 'civilised world' (De Carli, 2004, p.57), strongly influenced by the cultural hegemony of European institutions. Latin American culture was westernised, and Indigenous peoples were only mentioned in museum spaces to highlight the 'victory' of Western civilisation over barbarism (De Carli, 2004, p.57). For instance, scholar Joanna Crow takes account of this by analysing the Chilean *Museo Histórico Nacional* (National History Museum), established in 1911 during the celebrations of the first centenary of the Chilean Republic:

> Chilean national identity, as narrated by the Museo Histórico Nacional in its early years, was predominantly an elite construction. (…) Indigenous objects and antiques constituted an important part of the museum's new collection, but primary sources suggest that most of these were relegated to the 'prehistoric' section, which was overshadowed by the displays on post-conquest civil and military history. (…) From its inception, the museum also endorsed a conservative Hispanicised version of *chilenidad* [Chileanhood], which seemed to co-exist – albeit

uneasily – with a narrative based on the liberal values of nationhood. (…) To some extent, then, the Museo Histórico Nacional celebrated Spanish colonial rule (2009, pp.112-113).

Although this colonial root of the Latin American museum is still present in these institutions today, the second half of the 20th century was a crucial period for change in the Chilean museum sector. As discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis, the accounts of the Roundtable of Santiago demonstrates that by the early 1970s, the museum sector in Chile was widely aware of the need to challenge these cultural hierarchies, fostering multicultural dialogue (Alegría, 2012, p.160). But this was not exclusive to the museum sector. The multicultural debate raised an increasingly critical approach to a Latin American identity based on Eurocentric racial stratification (Golash-Boza and Bonilla-Silva, 2013, p.1486). Since the mid-20th century, various movements of Indigenous liberation have raised the issue of 'internal colonisation', arguing that Indigenous cultures did not only suffer oppression by the European colonisers but also from the Latin American independent states (Berdichewksky, 1987, p.27). These movements raised awareness of how the current vulnerability and poverty of Indigenous groups in Latin America are directly related to colonial struggle (Luna, 2015, p.44), notably influencing multicultural public policy in the region since the 1970s.

In parallel, while the Roundtable of Santiago is a crucial landmark in the museum sector, this event was only possible thanks to an intense development of the cultural sector since the 1930s (C. Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021). In Chile, this was marked by the creation of the *Dirección Nacional de Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos* (**DIBAM** from now on, translated as National Directorship of Libraries, Archives and Museums) in 1929. This organisation came to manage a group of independent institutions working separately, supporting their network and developing professional training.

At the same time, this was boosted by a robust socialist movement that took over the public sphere in the late 1960s in Chile, leading to Salvador Allende's election in 1970, a period known as *La Unidad Popular* (the Popular Union). This political climate propelled countless conversations about the social role of institutions, which also permeated the cultural sector and DIBAM. In Allende's socialist project, cultural institutions were considered a tool for social change; therefore, supporting them was a core responsibility of the government (Cea, 2017, p.112). Thus, the ideas of the Roundtable of Santiago and Indigenous liberation were considerably in line with the cultural project of Allende's government.

These ideas were halted by Pinochet's dictatorship. The regime associated cultural development programs with left-wing ideologies and Allende's project. Consequently, Pinochet's administration intervened in cultural institutions by appointing military authorities and supporters of the regime to the directorships of key institutions, such as the head of DIBAM (González Herrera, 2019, p.44). All explicit cultural policy was erased, and all cultural activities were under surveillance and censorship (Garretón, 2008, pp.84-85). This resulted in a fragmented cultural sector, with many artists going into exile or moving to underground spaces, such as abandoned buildings and wastelands, searching for freedom from censorship[5] (Richard, 1987, p.14). This state of censorship and control over cultural expressions is why the dictatorship period has been referred to as 'the cultural blackout' (*el apagón cultural*) in post-dictatorship Chilean literature and cultural policy (Garretón, 2008, pp.85).

4.2.1. Museums in the post-dictatorship period

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[5] In fact, exhibiting in non-conventional places became one of the core characteristics of the *Escena de Avanzada* (avant-garde scene), a key Chilean art movement during the dictatorship. The ways in which leaving official cultural spaces affected the art practice in Chile are explored in the book *Margins and Institutions: Art in Chile since* 1973 (1987) by French-Chilean cultural theorist Nelly Richard.

The dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet ended in 1990 after international pressure due to the systematic violation of human rights during his rule, and a plebiscite conducted in 1989 where Chileans voted for the end of the regime. The restitution of the democratic system was known in Chile as *La Transición a la Democracia* (the transition to democracy). It was marked by an overall climate of democratisation of public institutions. In the cultural sector, the post-dictatorship governments attempted to address the issues caused by 'the cultural blackout' by aiming for equal access. This goal was influenced by the concept of 'democratisation of culture', widely used as a cultural policy aim in the European post-war period (Gattinger, 2011, p.3). This aim focused on widening access to 'major cultural works', founded on the idea that the lack of access to culture is linked to social inequality (Evrard, 1997, p.167). Accordingly, the post-dictatorship administrations considered access to culture as the entry point to recovering the sector. At the same time, it integrated the sector into the overall aim of equality promoted by the values of the brand-new Chilean liberal democracy.

This approach was accompanied by the creation of laws and regulations that aimed to protect cultural heritage and incentivise artistic production in the 1990s in Chile (Mery Gebauer, 2009, p.28). For example, in 1990, the Law of Cultural Donations was created, which promoted private funding for cultural activities by reducing companies' taxes[6]. In 1991, the first formal assessment of the Chilean cultural sector was developed, led by sociologist Manuel Garretón. The so-called 'Garretón Commission' proposed creating a National Council of Arts and Culture following the British model (C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021) and increasing the annual cultural budget (Antoine, 2009, p.68). In 1991, the Council of Museums was created, in charge of assessing and improving museums managed by the DIBAM (SNM, 2015, p.12). In

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[6] Private companies donating funding for cultural activities can apply to reduce up to 50% of the amount they donated in their tax's payment. This has a top limit of approximately 1 million US dollars per year for each company.

1992, the *Fondo de Desarrollo de las Artes y la Cultura* (FONDART, Fund of Arts and Culture Development) was created as part of the Ministry of Education. Later in 1995, a second commission was formed, this time led by Milan Ivelic, then the director of the National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA). The Ivelic Commission released a now renowned report called *Chile está en deuda con la cultura* (Chile is in debt with culture) in 1997, which insisted on the urgency of creating a governmental institution focused on developing the cultural sector (Mery Gebauer, 2009, pp.28-29). According to museum scholar Cristian Antoine, the interest of the post-dictatorship governments in developing the cultural sector can be easily seen in the increase in the cultural budget, which went from 14 million USD in 1991 to 40 million USD in 1999 (2008, p.71).

Finally, this process triggered the creation of the Chilean National Council of Arts and Culture (CNCA from now on, based on its name in Spanish, *Consejo Nacional de la Cultura y las Artes*) in 2003. The birth of the CNCA was accompanied by a cultural policy document titled *Chile quiere más cultura* (Chile wants more culture), which started the guidelines for the next five years in the cultural sector. This document mentioned a 'cultural spring' in Chile during the 1990s, referring the explosive increase of cultural activities available since the end of the dictatorship (Antoine, 2009, p.71), in line with the idea of democratisation of culture. In fact, by 2009, 87% of Chileans stated to have wider access to cultural activities than their parents' generation (Güell Villanueva, Morales Olivares and Núñez, 2011, pp.2-3). Additionally, the CNCA allowed a general improvement in the analysis of existing cultural policy, was spread across departments and councils from different ministries (Garretón, 2008, p.83), achieving a general development in the sector.

Nevertheless, the creation of the CNCA allowed an understanding of this 'cultural spring' as paradoxical. According to national surveys led by the CNCA, the increase in the cultural offer

was not increasing audiences' participation (Antoine, 2009, p.73). Most crucially, according to the first CNCA assessments, most disadvantaged people[7] in Chile were highly excluded from cultural activities (Güell Villanueva, Morales Olivares and Núñez, 2011, p.3). In addition to this, towards the end of the 2000s, it became evident that the CNCA was not capable of addressing these issues effectively because many other cultural governmental organisations were not attached to its realms, such as the *Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales* (CMN, Council of National Monuments) and the DIBAM (MINCAP, n.d., para.24).

Based on these issues, the project of creating a Ministry of Culture started to be discussed formally in 2013. This project was conceived with a participatory aim, claiming from the beginning that diversity and inclusion were central values within this new institution. This new ministry was envisioned and influenced by the idea of 'cultural democracy'. This concept emerged as a response to various critiques of the 'democratisation of culture' aims (Evrard, 1997, p.168), such as emphasising quantitative goals and its top-down approach to cultural consumption (Gattinger, 2011, p.3). Additionally, the democratisation of culture perspective is based on a universalist understanding of culture that implies inherently 'see works of art as reflecting transcendental values' (Evrard, 1997, p.169). Instead, cultural democracy aims to develop 'the means of cultural production and distribution' (Gattinger, 2011, p.3) to ensure spaces for people to explore their interests and identities. Therefore, cultural democracy aims to enhance the active participation and engagement of audiences in cultural spaces (Wilson, Gross and Bull, 2017, p.23), emphasising a more qualitative approach to measuring and

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[7] Disadvantaged people are understood here based on categories such as income, educational level or area of residence; which are categories considered in the national surveys of cultural participation that the CNCA conducted in 2005, 2009, 2012 and 2017.

analysing cultural participation (Gattinger, 2011, p.3), which allows addressing the potential diversity of audiences and a greater diversity of culture.

After a few years of pushback from the conservative sector of Congress, the ministry was finally created in August 2017 and started functioning in March 2018. Named *Ministerio de las Culturas, las Artes y el Patrimonio* (MINCAP from now on, translated as Ministry of *Cultures*, Arts and Heritage), it emphasises the idea of diverse, plural cultures in the Chilean territory. That said, at the time of writing, its new structure still needs to be fully put in place, although this is one of the key aims of the new administration that started in March 2022. A crucial change considered in this new ministry is that some organisations not part of the CNCA are now part of the MINCAP, such as DIBAM, now named National Service of Heritage (SNP, *Servicio Nacional del Patrimonio*). The consequences of this will be discussed later in this chapter.

As part of the process of creation of the MINCAP, the museum sector went through a new cycle of assessment. Former DIBAM (now SNP), in collaboration with some sections of the CNCA, conducted nationwide research on the state of museums, aiming to make this available for the new ministry. As a result, the very first National Museum Policy was released in December 2018. This policy was based on research that considered a series of meetings and seminars throughout the country with museum professionals led by the former authorities of the CNCA (SNM, 2018, p.9). The policy presented a summary of the assessment of the current situation of Chilean museums and guidelines for the sector.

The National Museum Policy states, firstly, the lack of research about the current situation of museums in Chile, which makes information 'scarce, incomplete and outdated, making the identification and solution of museums' problems complex' (SNM, 2018, p.13). Overall, the policy identifies four crucial issues in Chilean museums today. Firstly, the lack of funding, noting that the state does not offer a funding program explicitly focused on museums. Secondly,

regarding collections, the policy denounces that no regulations or laws ensure their safeguarding. There are no minimum standards for the safety of collections nor policy to promote their care. Thirdly, museums have no proper networks or organisations that allow communication as a sector. And lastly, it highlights problems regarding the museum workforce, claiming that museums have a deficient number of staff members in general and that no formal training for museum workers is available in Chile. Based on these issues, the National Museum Policy proposes to create a National Museum Law that protects collections and states minimum standards for museums, a National Registry of Museums, and a National Museum Fund (SNM, 2018, pp. 33-34). Up to the time of writing, the two latter recommendations have been put in place, but the National Museum Law is still under debate.

4.3. Institutional understandings of 'diversity' in Chilean museums

After exploring some general information regarding the museum sector in Chile in the last three decades, it is relevant to examine how discourses of 'diversity' and 'diversity representation' have come into play in this period. This sub-section will draw on my cultural policy analysis, as discussed in Chapter 3, Methodology. Out of the six cultural policy documents I analysed for this thesis, the first two are assessments of the sector from the 1990s, three national cultural policies published in 2005, 2011 and 2017, and the aforementioned national museum policy. The first two and the latter document have strong assessment approaches and propose goals based on deficiencies in the sector. These offered relevant information regarding the context of this research but were not as helpful in identifying discourses around diversity. On the other hand, the national cultural policies offer a deeper reflection on the role of culture in society, the responsibilities of the state in culture, and, notably in the 2017 policy, critical reflections on contemporary culture and social inequality. This allowed a richer analysis of how diversity is understood, valued and represented in cultural institutions in Chile.

Table 6: Keywords used in the thematic analysis of cultural policy

National Cultural Policy	Cultural diversity	Diversity	Pluralism	Inclusion	Indigenous peoples[8]	Migrants	Afro-descendants
2005	8	20	3	2	4	1	1
2011	4	14	2	4	5	1	0
2017	25	60	20	27	83	28	20

First, it is relevant to note that Chilean cultural policy interest in diversity has increased in the last thirty years. In the table above, I highlight a few keywords from my thematic analysis of these documents. This reports how recurrent these keywords were in each of the policy documents analysed. While the 2005 and 2011 policies already demonstrated an interest in discussing issues of diversity representation, 2017 shows an explosive emphasis on it. This recurrence is also connected to how diversity is understood in each document based on the context in which each policy was created.

Based on my analyses, the 2005 document approached diversity from a standpoint of 'affirmation'. Diversity is often referred to in discussions about recognising plurality in Chilean society. In this document, it is stated that 'The need of social cohesion that the country requires to fulfil national goals of common interest starts by respecting diversity and the recognition of the equality of rights and opportunities for all Chileans, men and women' (CNCA, 2005, p.12; translation is mine). This also implies that diversity is not particularly characterised, and it is addressed in a broad sense. References to the peoples that constituted such diversity are scarce and often used to reinforce discourses around the nation. The 2011 document strongly

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[8] This category includes the use of 'pueblos originarios' (native nations) and 'pueblos indigenas' (Indigenous nations). I am translating 'pueblo' as 'nation', although it is not a direct translation, because it is the only phrasing in English where I can acknowledge belonging of a group associated to specific rights over land/territories, which is the use given to 'pueblos' in Spanish.

follows the line of the 2005 one, making it even broader, but adding notions of 'rescue' and 'defence' of Indigenous languages.

The 2017 document has an entirely different approach to diversity. First, it address explicitly that cultural institutions must aim to promote diversity (CNCA, 2017, p.21). This statement shows that previous approaches have been considered insufficient and highlights that the former broad approach to diversity does not address the under-representation and under-participation of minority groups. The 2017's critical approach is likely to have been influenced by the fact that Indigenous communities formed part of the methodology behind the writing of this document and also because they participated actively in the project of the creation of the MINCAP through instances of public consultation. For instance, it was within these participatory instances that the current name of the ministry, with stress on *cultures* in the plural, was suggested and chosen (CNCA, 2017, p.50). This document, accordingly, highlighted participation and diversity as core values:

> Starting from respect for human rights, the national cultural policy must identify the critical nodes and the pertinent measures that allow advancing towards inclusion, dialogue for *Convivencia*[9] and pluralism. The cultural policy is designed, therefore, as a tool for safe keeping (…) the expression of different cultural identities, considered valuable for the human development of the social project.
> This way, altogether with the citizens, the state must put effort into developing strategies to advance towards social inclusion of vulnerable groups; the promotion of associativity of migrant groups and their linking in the social framework of the territories; the identification and development of spaces for encounters among cultures; the prevention of any form of

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[9] "Convivencia" is a concept in Spanish that refers to a respectful way to live in the same space with different kinds of peoples.

discrimination based on looks, origin, religion or nationality; making visible (…) their cultural expressions as an input and a contribution to the country" (CNCA, 2017, p.53; translation is mine).

This current understanding of diversity in a human rights framework results from almost thirty years of development of Chilean cultural institutions since the end of the dictatorship. In this thesis, I will argue that this development has notably shaped how diversity is addressed in museums and the challenges museum workers face when attempting to implement these ideas.

4.3.1. Territories and diversity

The discussions mentioned above notice how promoting diversity has increasingly become a core objective in Chilean cultural policy. But furthermore, there are a few elements that make this understanding of diversity particular to the Chilean context. Across the documents analysed, diversity is often referred to concerning territorial identities. This response to the geography of Chile and how cultural realities vary widely from north to south, including the influence of different Indigenous cultures and traditions depending on the territory. For example, the North of Chile is influenced by Quechua and Aymara culture; in the South, there is a strong presence of Mapuche people; and on Easter Island, people widely identify as Rapa Nui. Moreover, since the end of the dictatorship, Chilean governments have aimed to give more autonomy to each region, as Pinochet's authoritarian regime notably centralised decisions and governance in Santiago. Therefore, cultural policy has intended to explore local cultural challenges independently.

This has several implications when analysing the discourse of diversity in these documents. While each region must have autonomy regarding their cultural programmes and development, this approach has provoked that diversity is not cohesively understood as a general element of Chilean identity. For example, in the first assessment document, released in 1991, plurality is

only mentioned regarding regional diversity and as something that must be addressed locally (MINEDUC, 1991, p. 25); in the same way, the 1997 document emphasised that diverse identities exist 'in certain regions' (MINEDUC, 1997, p.15). These documents notably draw on the fact that there are regions where Indigenous populations concentrate. Consequently, the early policy documents from the 1990s constantly imply that regions with fewer Indigenous populations are understood as widely homogenous. Therefore, diversity is not perceived as a relevant matter on a national level, at least until the 2017 national policy.

Now, I believe this approach was somewhat pertinent right after the dictatorship, as centralisation of governance was a key challenge. Furthermore, the territorial approach to culture is relevant considering Chile's territorial diversity. I do highlight the intention behind it, as it is mentioned in the 2005 policy:

> The de-centralisation of the cultural policy also implies a recognition of the specific elements and cultural characteristics of the different regions of Chile. This allows the implementation of programmes that match such particularities, and the need to push the development of local identities that give life and character to the regions (CNCA, 2005, p.15; translation is mine).

That being said, it would be relevant to question how this approach to diversity as regional operates in institutions with a national aim. Before 2017, every document that referred to 'national identity' did it based on a widely homogenous understanding of Chilean identity, where diversity is presented as an exception. When looking at the cases considered in this research, the MNBA is a national museum, and while MAC, MSSA and the MINCAP collection are not, they all claim to have a responsibility to the Chilean public as a whole. This raises questions regarding how these museums could address diversity representation when their institutional frameworks considered diversity a local phenomenon. It would not be surprising that these museums would not consider diversity representation a priority either.

Furthermore, this understanding of diversity can also be identified in sections where the cultural policy refers to Indigenous cultural production. There is a trend in most Chilean cultural policies to relegate Indigenous art as folklore, immaterial culture or crafts and distinctively separate it from mainstream arts. Indigenous art is accompanied by verbs such as 'respecting' and 'acknowledging', while mainstream arts are keen to be 'supported' and 'promoted'. Another issue of this differentiation is that it sharply separates Chileans and Indigenous peoples without addressing hybrid identities. Once more, this could hinder art museums from prioritising the representation of Indigenous cultures, as it is considered out of the realm of mainstream art.

This understanding of Indigenous art resonates with Lewis & Miller (2002). They have argued that traditional art categories are still present in cultural policy and can become contradictory with the current aims of these policies, which now search for a less hierarchical and more participatory approach (p.176). Then,

> A critical cultural policy is thereby faced with two choices. It can either work with existing definitions of arts and struggle to find ways to make those practices more democratic, or it can begin with a redefinition that avoids class-based aesthetic hierarchies. The second course is necessarily a difficult one: if we use broad, more inclusive definitions of artistic or creative practices, we need also to establish principles by which one practice is worthy of subsidy and another less so (Lewis & Miller, 2002, p.177).

Based on my analyses, I discuss here that most post-dictatorship cultural policies in Chile have focused on the first approach. In contrast, the 2017 document attempted to move forward with the second course. For example, this latter document introduces the concept of 'contemporary Indigenous practices in the arts' (CNCA, 2017, p.43). This concept, notably more flexible than previous options, acknowledges Indigenous presence in mainstream arts and recognises them as contemporary, against the previous trend to associate Indigenous art with past or 'traditional'

crafts. This blurring of categories will be crucial later in the thesis when debating Indigenous contemporary art collecting, mainly in chapters 7 and 8.

4.3.2. A quick reflection on participation and diversity in Chilean cultural policy

Throughout this chapter, I have mentioned how this changing perception of diversity in cultural institutions is often linked to the idea of participation. Chilean cultural policy tends to emphasize a link between the return to the democratic system in Chile and the need to promote participation and diversity. In the 2011 policy, for example, democracy is explicitly linked with respect for diversity and tolerance as a key value of society (CNCA, 2011, p.11). Nonetheless, there has been an exciting shift in the ideas around the democratisation of culture and access to culture since the creation of the CNCA. The 2005 and 2011 policies use notions of equality of access, which coincides with the aim of offering wider access to culture since the end of the dictatorship. But differently, the approach of the 2017 policy focuses on 'heritage as a public good' (CNCA, 2017, p.21), which reveals a reflection on the role of heritage and why it is relevant in a governmental context. This implies that heritage must not only be available for access but also must be considered a fundamental right, as something that belongs to all peoples and as something to be taken care of by the government. Thus, participation is constantly reinforced as the motor of cultural rights and is now placed at the core of cultural development.

That said, *who* is involved in this participation varies notably among the documents analysed. Before the creation of the CNCA in 2003, most policy documents referred to participation only among the arts sector members. This early approach is explicitly mentioned in the 1997 report, where the agents of the cultural sector are identified, mentioning: creators, public agents (government), private companies, corporations, the media, the cultural industries and cultural management (pp.77-83). No audiences are mentioned at this point. On the other hand, there

has been a progressive inclusion of participative approaches that include audiences since 2003, and policies from 2005 and 2011 considered public consultations as part of their methodologies. The 2017 policy also took this approach further by noticing the inequality among audiences:

> The state has taken care of establishing civil, political and social rights in a transversal manner, [but this] is still a challenging duty, specifically regarding groups that, based on their socio-economic situation or their socio-cultural identity, have been excluded from this pledge. Groups that, to a major or minor extent, escape from the homogenous notion of citizenship and require tools of public action that address that difference, their needs and, more importantly, their potential. (…) [This policy is] a project that, in the first term, addresses the cultural diversity of their citizens, acknowledging and valuing the active input of the citizens in the cultural construction, through the specific mechanisms of participation, from the territories, in the formulation of proposals for action and implementation (CNCA, 2017, pp.1-2; translation is mine).

Consequently, Indigenous communities were particularly considered in the methodology of the 2017 document through various instances of public consultation with Indigenous communities. Unsurprisingly, this document is where diversity and representation are highlighted the most. This also matches the creation of an Indigenous advisory committee as part of the MINCAP right after the release of the 2017 policy. Therefore, this policy is an excellent example of how participation brought something to the table that was not there in previous policies, specifically regarding critical approaches to non-hegemonic cultural groups.

Based on this and the analysis of Chilean cultural policy, it is evident that discussions of diversity representation are currently in the process of change in Chile. There are two different discourses of diversity highlighted in this analysis. The first one is the early approach in the 1990s and mid-2000s cultural policy understanding of diversity as regional and from a

standpoint of 'recognition'. I will refer to this approach as 'institutional' as it is directly related to the development of new governmental cultural institutions in the post-dictatorship and their need to align with the democratic and liberal values of the Chilean democratic system. The second one, notably embedded in the 2017 policy, is a discourse of diversity shaped by a more critical standpoint, influenced by the increasing participation of marginalised groups in policy-making. This approach recognises diversity as linked to human rights, cultural rights and social justice. I will argue later in this thesis that this approach was adopted by museum workforces before it was included in Chilean cultural policy. Furthermore, this latter critical and more participative approach notably shaped the creation of the MINCAP, and it remains relevant to discuss how this has impacted museum practice.

Because of this, after conducting my policy analysis, I considered participation a pivotal element to discuss in my interviews. I was interested in exploring how this participative approach might impact museum practice, particularly collecting. However, that was not the case. Most of my cases claimed to struggle to have programs that incentivised audience participation. In the circumstances they did manage to develop such programs, these were not necessarily focused on specific under-represented communities. When asking about participative approaches to museum collecting, I could not find any examples of acquisition processes that could be considered 'participative'. This suggests that the 2017 document promoted values and objectives regarding participation that museum workers often found themselves incapable of performing. I will argue in the following subsection that this is due to the sectors' precarity.

4.4. A precarious museum sector

Regardless of the post-dictatorship governments' efforts to develop the sector and, notably, foster diversity through cultural institutions, this final section will explore why this has not been

successful. This section will illustrate the precarity that affects museums in Chile, based on what was discussed by my interviewees, in dialogue with what was stated in the National Museum Policy. I will also discuss how these various forms of precarity impact collecting practices, although this will be explored in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

Funding is the first and most crucial issue in the Chilean cultural sector, leading to precarity. Despite the budget for culture being limited in Chile, as mentioned before in this chapter, it has increased since the dictatorship ended. This budget increase has considerably risen since the creation of the MINCAP in 2018, reaching 196,653 million Chilean pesos (around USD$214,352) in 2020, representing an increase of 3.9% compared to 2019 (INE, 2022, p.95). While this currently means 0.33% of the total public budget for that year (INE, 2022, p.95), the current government aims to increase this steadily until 1% of the national budget is destined for culture (El Mostrador, 2022). Compared with the rest of the Latin American region, the Chilean cultural budget is only surpassed by Peru, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina (OEI, 2016, pp.40-46). This means that Chile still cannot be considered a powerhouse in cultural terms in the region but represents a relevant growing cultural economy.

That being said, the museum sector in Chile has faced several issues regarding funding distribution. This issue dates back to the creation of the CNCA in 2003, which came with increased funding for the cultural sector in early 2000. Nevertheless, a few cultural organisms pledged not to be included in the CNCA to keep their institutional autonomy. Some of these were DIBAM, the organisation that manages and funds public museums in Chile, and the Council of National Monuments (CMN). Consequently, DIBAM and CMN did not have access to the budget increase mentioned above. This has caused a systematic imbalance between public museums and other kinds of cultural institutions. To illustrate this issue, in 2014, the funding distribution was 65.6% to CNCA, and the remaining 34.4% was divided between

DIBAM and CMN (Brodsky, Negrón and Pössel, 2014, p.63). At the same time, CNCA is the youngest institution in governmental cultural organisations. Thus, the institutional experience is shorter and still developing (V Brodsky, personal communication, June 24, 2021), although it is the organisation in charge of most of the budget in the cultural sector.

This unequal funding distribution is even more noticeable when comparing museums (funded by DIBAM) and other art institutions, such as art centres (funded by the CNCA). Claudia Zaldívar, MSSA director, reflected on how problematic this is, considering that museums have a material heritage to safeguard, and cultural centres do not (personal communication, April 29, 2021). She discussed that

> Without wanting it, they are supporting cultural consumption over the heritage sector development. (…) now [with the creation of the MINCAP], they are trying to balance it. Because in public opinion, they always say, 'oh, they have reduced the budget of cultural institutions!' But it is always about balancing [the funding between] the heritage sector and the arts (…). That has not been achieved yet. (C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021).

Indeed, one of the aims of the MINCAP has been to address this issue and ensure more comprehensive access to funding for museums under the care of DIBAM. To do so, DIBAM has now been integrated into the MINCAP under the name of the National Service of Heritage (SNP, Servicio Nacional del Patrimonio). But as noted by Zaldívar, funding distribution is still a work in progress, and, at the time of writing, it is still a struggle within the organisation. This uneven distribution impacts the infrastructure of museums and museum collections. It implies issues with storage and safeguarding (C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021), as well as a lack of professionals to properly take care of collections due to staff shortage (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019; E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

When focusing on how this affects museum collecting practices, this funding imbalance notably limits museum chances to acquire artworks via purchase. Acquisition budgets are meagre and often neglect museums' opportunities to collect 'relevant artworks' (F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021) as taking care of existing collections is prioritised. It also implies that a relevant part of the artworks that museums' accession to their collections is based on donations, which will be explored in detail in chapter 5. As argued by some of my interviewees, this also implied a complex disadvantage of museums when competing with private collectors (V Brodsky, personal communication, June 24, 2021). Soledad Novoa, the former curator of MNBA, shared a few experiences around this:

> (…) it happened a few years ago; I cannot remember if Sotheby's or Christie's were auctioning a painting by Charton de Treville, a landscape of the view of Valparaiso, which, based on the perspective of art history, should be at the MNBA. [But] I did not have anything to bid for it. I just did not; I lost it. That happened many times. Or, for example (…) if an [local] artist legitimately wants to sell artworks to a foreign gallery, I should have the resources to say, 'no, no, that cannot go outside, I will buy it, that must stay here!'; Your hands are tied by the administration [of the museum], making it really hard (personal communication, June 2, 2021).

This dynamic also has an even more substantial impact when collecting contemporary art. It usually implies that it must be strongly justified when museums manage to acquire artworks. Consequently, most public museums only acquire artworks from long-career artists, as collecting their work does not represent a 'risk' for the institution (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Seba Calfuqueo, the youngest artist ever acquired by the MNBA at 29 years old, reflected on the issues of this trend, arguing that mainly museums acquiring long-career artists neglected the museums' opportunities to represent what is 'relevant today':

The narratives of art are quite temporary. You can have five years of career but still have an incredible and more relevant production than an artist with forty or fifty years of career. So, I see it being very restrictive here; it is like people only enter collections when they are dying, which is not ok (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

At the same time, many of the artists and curators I interviewed that did not work for museums or galleries directly argued that public institutions' lack of collecting also reproduced the sector's precarity overall. Indeed, these issues affect cultural institutions and individuals working independently in the sector. Independent curator and researcher Cristian Vargas Paillahueque reflected that:

There is a precarious dynamic in the arts in Chile in general. It is like, 'hey, I invite you to exhibit', or 'come exhibit your work because you are going to get symbolic capital from exhibiting in this place, and it is going to look good in your CV'. But let us not talk about money, or artwork reproduction rights, or production fees, none of those. And that comes with the idea that they are doing you a favour. This does not only happen to Indigenous artists but is generalised in the arts sector in Chile (C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021).

This precarity for cultural workforces has been widely reported in the Chilean sector. In 2014, 46.4% of the workers in the visual arts sector were making CLP$150,000 (USD$160) or less per month (Brodsky, Negrón and Pössel, 2014, p.32), under the minimum salary that year in Chile, which was CLP$216,250 (USD$235). This situation worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the cultural sector was reported to be one of the most affected by the health crisis. According to a monitoring study conducted by the Chilean Observatory of Cultural Policy (OPC), by July 2020, 82.5% of cultural workers in Chile declared that their income coming from artistic work had been reduced, with an outstanding 32.6% reporting not being able to work in the sector anymore (OPC, 2021, p.12). This situation improved slightly by 2021, with 50.7% of

workers now declaring to have kept or increased the number of hours working in the cultural sector (OPC, 2021, p.12). Still, this crisis seems to have only worsened already precarious conditions.

These conditions also relate to relying on public funding for the arts in Chile. Today known as Fondos Cultura (Culture Funds), the grants given by the MINCAP are popularly known as FONDART, the name they had initially since the 1990s. Museums usually rely on FONDART for developing projects. It is usually the only way they manage to add staff to their team or conduct research on their collections that their staff do not have the capacity for (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). This reliance on FONDART also implies that a big portion of cultural workers work on a short-term project basis and without contracts, even when working for major museums (V Brodsky, personal communication, June 24, 2021). In fact, in 2014, 88.3% of cultural workers in Chile reported working without a permanent contract (Brodsky, Negrón and Pössel, 2014, p.20).

This system of precarity and reliance on public funds, contestable by year, implies a systematic lack of projection in the sector as well, focused on 'events' (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021) instead of programmes or policies. Additionally, there's a lack of interest in the state regarding what's produced with those funds later. Florencia Loewenthal, director of *Galería Gabriela Mistral* (GGM), questioned this directly:

> What's being produced by the state? What are artists producing with the funds of the state? Is there… Is there an identity, a particular development? I do not know. (…) I wish there were a museum of contemporary art [in Chile] able to do that, to have the resources, the power to acquire [consciously] (F Loewenthal, personal communication, May 5, 2021).

Additionally, the national museum policy reported that although the DIBAM funded some

museums directly, the CNCA did not offer public funds for museums to apply for. Institutions cannot fund artists, so artists rely on FONDART. But as noted by some of my interviewees, artists cannot live from contestable funds, as they are short-term and not designed to make a living from (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021). In 2014, only 50% of cultural workers lived fully from their art practice, and the other half reported needing to work in different sectors to sustain themselves (Brodsky, Negrón and Pössel, 2014, p.32). This constantly reproduces an unsustainable art system that art museums are part of.

I recognise that the issues mentioned above are not necessarily exclusive to the Chilean art sector, but analysing its characteristics offers insights of how precarity affects museums' collecting in particular. For instance, a general understanding of how funding for the arts works in Chile quickly demonstrates several organisational issues among cultural institutions and organisations. While the creation of the MINCAP aimed to solve many of these, the difficulty of its implementation shows that the solution will take time and effort. Soledad Novoa discussed that, even in cases where the funding is available or an artwork is affordable, the systems to purchase it are too complex:

> [One time] we were about to acquire an amazing [artwork by] Vergara Grez, which by the way (…) I knew because I have dedicated [my career] to studying Chilean art, I knew that it had to be *that* artwork because it had been in the São Paulo Biennale in 1975… So yeah, what happened is that, in the meantime we were convincing whom we had to convince to buy the artwork when we went to buy it, it was gone, abroad. Later, the person selling it called me back and said, 'you know what? the collector wants to re-sell it', so we started with the speculation, and they were trying to re-sell it for three times the original price… To cut a long story short (…) We do not have it because we were not capable of making a decision fast enough (…) because the organisational systems are so complex, you miss these opportunities. (personal communication, June 2, 2021).

Regarding workforces, museums also face the issue of working with small teams. This implies that museum workers often have to multi-task (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019), and roles in the sector are not clearly defined. Additionally, museum staff must face a history of precarity. In terms of collections, this often implies museums have to deal with past issues, such as a lack of documentation of acquisitions from the past (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). Then, having small teams and strenuous tasks, the current state of precarity hinders workers' capacity to address these issues. This often neglects the crucial aim of collections management of knowing 'what you have and where to find it' (Matassa, 2011, p.3). At the same time, having small teams and limited funding for recruiting often generates unrealistic expectations of job applicants in museums. Job descriptions in museums managed by SNP are often designed by ministerial authorities without discussing them with museum staff. Gloria Cortés, a current MNBA curator, reflected on this:

> [I try to tell them that] that person does not exist! In Chile, at least. Or on the other hand, that profile does not respond to what that role actually requires. (…) The authorities get that wrong all the time. They assigned you with a ton of responsibilities, and you do not have the experience, expertise, or capacity even, nor the will, to accept such diversity of tasks that does not align with your line of work or with what you know how to do. So, public posts also have that flaw. You see the recruitment profiles and say, 'no, that is not it!' (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

These recruiting issues are also somewhat connected to a lack of training or professionalisation in the sector, which my interviewees constantly reported. Caroll Yasky, at the MSSA, noted how difficult it was to find specialised staff in the area of collections:

> For example, we are recruiting for a registrar post, head of collections registrar. And I swear, well... There is no specialised training for that in Chile. [So] we receive everything, every kind of

CV. And well, that has to do with the lack of job offers, but also with the lack of professionalisation. So, you only see that [a registrar role] in the Historical Museum, they have all of these kinds of roles, but not even at the MNBA do they have a head of collections registrar, the head of collections does it all… So it feels like we are light-years away from the authorities being fully conscious of the need to professionalise this sector, and that, once it is professionalised, you need to generate the required regulations and standards for those people to work under the proper parameters. So, that is it; my views on it are rather pessimistic (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021).

The lack of workforce training responds to a general shortage of specialised programmes in the country. While there was a boom in arts programmes in the early 2000s (S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021), these almost exclusively focused on art production, forming artists and no other arts-related professions. According to a study conducted in 2014 focused on characterising the situation of cultural workers in Chile, 63.5% of the cultural sector identified themselves as an artist (that works at least 8 hours per week on their art production) (Brodsky, Negrón and Pössel, 2014, p.17). At the time of writing, only two universities offered programmes in art-related subjects that do not follow the mentioned approach, namely Universidad de Chile (public), a BA in Theory and History of Art, and the same programme in Universidad Alberto Hurtado (private). The Higher Education sector has been developing specialised postgraduate or diploma programmes, but only in the last ten years. This has led to a recent professionalisation of the sector, which is just starting to emerge (S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021). There has also been a wave of young professionals getting trained abroad and returning to the sector with further education. Claudia Zaldívar reflected on this and noted a generational change in the workforce:

Many young professionals have gone to study abroad (…), so many curators have arrived,

people working on collections, conservators have arrived… The subject is much more globalised now. And I believe that this group, this generation, [is formed by] many young researchers, and that is amazing, many people, and many women… So many women! (…) My generation, I am 52 years old, and we did not have that chance. I mean, when I graduated, I studied art history, I could be an academic, an art critic, and that is it. The field was very small (…). I was the first one that studied art management. Go figure that out! In the 1990s… I left to study in Barcelona in 1996; I did some short training courses, but… I mean, the offer of specialisation started after, with your generation (…). The specialisation and the people, the workers, have pushed this thing with professionalisation. Right? And at the end of the day, institutions are their teams. (C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021).

Generally, most arts professionals learn in practice once in the post (F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021; G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021). Some interviewees noticed that this training issue is also true for artists. Notably, collections managers reported that artists sometimes attempted to sell artworks in conditions that were unfair to themselves—for example, selling the rights of artwork entirely instead of a serialised version (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021; P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021). They noted how they felt the responsibility to inform artists how they should deal with their own work, as there is no training available for them to learn this. This role, which could be associated with the gallery system elsewhere, relies on museum workers as the private art sector in Chile is extremely small. Artists interviewed also noted the same issue and commented on how certain people in the sector had helped them understand how to value their work in monetary terms.

Overall, this section aimed to characterise the various precarious situations shaping museum practice in Chile. Notably, it is relevant to highlight how public museums have suffered a lack

of funding, even in a context of constant growth in the budget for arts and culture in post-dictatorship Chile. This has affected the condition of museum workers in this period, leading to work with a staff shortage and a history of precarity, hindering their chances to develop more critical, self-reflexive practices. As noted in the national museum policy, this has also limited the chances museum workers have had to develop more robust professional networks and national policies or guidelines regarding good practices in the area of collections and museum practice overall. In this context, it is relevant to ask if a sector affected by precarity like the Chilean one has the capacity to be self-critical, inclusive and, ultimately, represent diversity at all.

4.5. Chapter conclusions

This chapter aimed to analyse the Chilean museum sector while addressing my first subsidiary question regarding the challenges museum workers faced when attempting to widen diversity representation in museum collecting. Following this objective, this chapter started by narrating a brief story of the sector and how its changes have been influenced by the political and social scenario of the country. Notably, understanding how the dictatorship implied a regression in the cultural sector in Chile is a relevant takeaway from this chapter. Moreover, this allows situating this research in a context of intense development after *the cultural blackout* of the dictatorship. And additionally, it also highlights how current objectives of Chilean cultural policy and institutions, such as their interest in diversity and participation, come from an alignment with the values of the post-dictatorship Chilean liberal democracy.

In the second part of the chapter, a first characterisation of how diversity is understood in Chilean cultural policy was presented. This section demonstrated various changes of perception regarding how diversity is approached in cultural institutions in the studied period.

Most importantly, this characterisation identified that recent trends are attempting to develop more critical approaches to cultural policy in which diversity is crucial. In the coming chapters, I will keep developing this idea and start to analyse how these changes usually come from practitioners. In other words, current policy in Chile tends to report what is already being discussed in the sector instead of proposing new approaches. I will explore this in chapter 6.

Lastly, the final section of this chapter aimed to analyse how precarity in the sector might impact museums, and the challenges museum workers face. Altogether with the previous sections, this contributes to understanding museums as open systems and how various factors, inside and outside of museums, shape museum practice. As noted here, funding, organisational and training issues are connected to the history of institutional development in the country, as well as to its socio-political context. This also represents a difference between what was discussed in chapter 3, regarding an increasing professionalisation of the museum sector worldwide. Arguably, in Chile this process was interrupted by the dictatorship, representing a delay in this regard. The Chilean museum sector, then, is now starting to discuss these issues and aim for further, critical and more self-conscious development, notably in the last ten years. In the next chapter, I will analyse in-depth how museum workers have dealt with this context and what strategies they use to acquire artworks in art museums in Chile, given the context described in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Art Museums' Collecting Strategies in Chile

5.1. Chapter introduction

Following the takeaways of the previous chapter, chapter 5 will focus on the core of this research: art museum collecting practices in Chile. However, this chapter will not explore *what* is collected but *how* it is collected. This will be crucial for later chapters, as it will allow an understanding of how the artworks acquired are framed in collecting practices, strategies and models, which are part of open systems shaped by precarity. This allows me to explore the gaps as empty spaces that respond to various circumstances, ideologies, and practices.

In this chapter, I will discuss what I have characterised as 'collecting strategies' based on how they are connected to the sector's precarity and other museums' open systems factors. I argue, then, that these are 'strategies' in the sense that decisions are based not only on what professionals want or consider relevant to acquire but also on how they deal with their context and the institutional constraints they work with. In other words, what strategies do they use to overcome their institutional challenges and how does that impact collections acquisitions? In this sense, this chapter will primarily answer my second subsidiary question, 'what are art museum collecting strategies in Chile in the post-dictatorship period, and how does it relate to their context?'.

I have divided these collecting strategies into three types: acquisitions based on donations, 'intuitive collecting', and research-based collecting. These strategies often overlap and interrelate, but I consider each an identifiable approach that allows for a concrete understanding of *how* museums collect in Chile. This characterisation will be followed up by examples in this

and the following chapters, aiming to explore how collecting strategies are directly connected to what is currently available in public collections in Chile. Here, I will also attempt to discuss how these processes compare or dialogue with a global museum sector rethinking issues of authority and taste. I will also draw on a few micro-case studies that will be integrated into the discussion when appropriate. For instance, I will explore the collection policies of some of my cases and the process behind writing these documents.

Lastly, I will conclude this chapter by discussing a changing conception of collecting practices in Chile, pushed by increasing curatorial research in the sector. This is also shaped by institutional developments and the recent professionalisation of the sector described in chapter 4. This section establishes a framework to understand this shift and prepare the ground for the coming chapters that will look at more specific acquisition cases as well as how personal initiatives of museum workers have pushed these changes.

5.2. The donation model

The first relevant strategy to highlight is that most art museums in Chile rely on donations to acquire artworks. This is not necessarily new in the museum sector. Literature on collecting studies has widely reported that most of what is in art museum collections was accessioned through donations (Knell, 2004, p.37; Miller, 2022, p.5). This is particularly true in modern European museums, whose collections originated in private collecting that then 'sought public support' (Knell, 2004, p.6). But this is not necessarily the case in Latin America, and certainly not in the cases I considered for this research. Even the first public museums in Chile were created as such in the late 19th century, with no prior collection that preceded them. Their original collections were formed to emulate modern European museums and were initiatives pushed and funded by the Chilean government.

Moreover, private collecting in Chile is scarce and considerably recent. While there have been collectors since Chilean independence that attempted to emulate European collecting, modern and contemporary art collecting is a phenomenon that started to emerge timidly in the 1980s and remains widely unresearched in the sector. Even the artists I interviewed for this research noted that, in most cases, contemporary Chilean artists were acquired abroad before catching the eye of the very few Chilean private collectors (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021). This makes institutional collecting in Chile a practice that has always remained in the realm of the public sector. This suggests that the reason why most art museums in Chile rely on donations might differ from those in museums of the Global North.

This came up in my data quite rapidly. In simple terms, when I asked collection managers how their collections were formed, most of them answered straightforwardly that the majority of the artworks were acquired by donation, i.e., without monetary retribution to the artist or owner. One of the few exceptions to this was the National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA), which stated that it has a small, but at least consistent budget (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021; P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021). This might be connected to the fact that this is the only national museum I am analysing in this thesis and, therefore, is the one with more stable funding. That said, this did not mean they could not accept donations if offered, which they do if they consider the acquisition relevant (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

However, the reasons why museums relied on donations varied depending on the institution. At the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC), all of the acquisitions were based on donations, as the museum does not have a budget for acquisitions at all (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019; F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021). Although the museum staff said they were uncomfortable with this situation, mainly because

they considered it unfair to the artists, they declared they had no chance to pay for artworks anyway. This implies that, in this case, collecting based on donation was connected to a general situation of precarity and severe lack of funding. Interestingly, the museum staff tended to overlook the funding required to maintain this collection. And this was, surprisingly, one of the museums with more acquisitions in the period 1990-2020, surpassing eight-hundred artworks accessioned in the last twenty-five years (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019).

The Museum of Solidarity Salvador Allende (MSSA) had a completely different standpoint in this regard, although they also acquired exclusively by donation. Claudia Zaldívar, the museum director, stated that this was a political decision (personal communication, April 29, 2021). When the museum was founded in 1972, the collection was formed by asking artists sympathetic to the Socialist government of Salvador Allende to donate artworks 'in solidarity'. This practice is still ongoing and is an approach the current museum staff decided to maintain. That said, museum staff reported that this has not always aligned with the capacity or institutional priorities of the museum (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021), as the 'political gesture' of donating was often considered enough reason to accept an artwork. Nevertheless, this has consistently been debated and questioned by the museum staff in the last ten years. Consequently, this propelled a process to create MSSA's first collection policy, released in 2021, which I will analyse later in this chapter.

Lastly, the Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage (MINCAP) collection was also acquired by donation, but in this case, it was often considered a transaction in the form of 'retribution'. The MINCAP, former National Council of Culture and the Arts (CNCA), has a history of asking artists to donate artwork for their collection as part of their agreement when giving funding for art production. For example, since the mid-2000, the National Fund for the Cultural and Arts

Development (FONDART) used to establish that every artist funded to produce artwork with public funding had to donate an artwork back, as a form of 'compensation' (F Castillo, personal communication, December 17, 2019). This practice stopped in the mid-2010s because, as noted by some of my participants, this practice was widely considered unfair in the sector, and thus, it was quite controversial. That said, this strategy is still implemented in different collection deposits, although this is no longer mandatory. For instance, the *Galería Gabriela Mistral* (GGM) still asks artists exhibited to donate to their collection, which is part of the MINCAP collection. And Bernardo Oyarzún's *Werkén*, exhibited in the Chilean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2017, was acquired as part of the agreement between the artist and the MINCAP when it was decided that he would represent Chile at the Biennale. I will analyse this last acquisition in detail in chapter 8.

This scenario highlighted the relevance of contemporary artists' agency in museum collecting in Chile. When I refer to donations here, it is often living artists who personally donate their work to a museum collection. This happens in various ways. In many cases, the donations were proposed and pushed by the museum director, who often concentrated the institution's authority, as I will explore later in the chapter. In other instances, artists approached institutions themselves. When talking about artist's motivations to donate their work to museums, contemporary artist Seba Calfuqueo reflected that:

> The artists trust that, I do not know, that [donating] will give them prestige, or it can be that… For example, I donated [to MAC] because I did not have the space to store that artwork. And it is pretty sad to talk about it like that, right? But that is the situation that artists face in Chile. You do not have the space, I mean, to have a… To have a studio, you need money; to have a storage space, you need even more money, and so on. Especially considering institutions do not pay

you for exhibiting your work (…), they do not pay you for anything basically, so… (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

Calfuqueo's words also resonated with other interviewees that commented that some artworks found in collections were sometimes 'artworks that were left behind' after exhibitions (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019), as the artists never picked them up. At the same time, this is related to the lack of a strong art market scene in the Chilean arts sector, which implies that leaving artworks behind does not necessarily represent a significant loss to the artists.

This reliance on donations often implies a lack of awareness on behalf of museum workers of the impact of having something erratically accessioned into collections. This makes collections based on donations to be formed 'randomly', based on 'simply what is offered to the museum' (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). My interviewees discussed a few of these cases where this situation was rather extreme, when the museum was offered the donation of many artworks altogether as a set. Caroll Yasky and Claudia Zaldívar discussed the case of an entire collection of surrealist art, of over two hundred pieces, that was donated in the previous directorship to the MSSA. When Zaldívar started her period as director, she stopped the donation as she considered the museum could not take that number of artworks without revising its priorities or storage and preservation capability. Then, that same donation was offered to the MNBA, which accepted it.

Eva Cancino, head of collections at MNBA, justified the decision mentioned above, saying that 'it was around 200 artists, all very different from each other, but we knew that they [the donators] were donating the collection as a whole, and there were a few artists (…) too outstanding to overlook' (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019). She discussed this from

the standpoint of an institution that struggles to find the budget for acquisitions, which in this case, notably shapes what enters the collection. The museum might not be aware of their gaps or even want many artworks from the set, but the chance is too good for them to miss. In a similar line, Pamela Navarro told me about a massive donation by Chilean artist Guillermo Núñez after a solo exhibition at MAC:

> Núñez, for example, had an exhibition in 2015… He was turning 85, I cannot remember the name of the exhibition, but he donated the whole exhibition, all of it! (…) We already had around 200 artworks by Núñez because Núñez … Well, he was a director of the museum [in the past], and he is very generous; he came with trucks [laughs] and left the collection for donation… (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019).

In these kinds of experiences, it is worth questioning if the museums have the capacity to take care of this sort of huge donation. The lack of budget for acquisitions makes museums tend to accept any relevant donation, but there is an absence of questioning if the museum needs such artworks or can take care of them. This is why I call this 'the donation model' here; it is a model in the sense that it is a practice that has become naturalised and systematically replicated in the sector. Cases like the MSSA demonstrate that forming collections based on donations is not intrinsically careless. Nevertheless, in most cases studied, donations were seen as an opportunity that remained unquestionable.

I will argue here that this has several and severe consequences. For example, Calfuqueo discussed that the donation model had caused some public art collections not to be 'representative' of particular periods. They explore one key example: the *Escena de Avanzada*, an avant-garde movement from the dictatorship period, which is virtually absent from public collections. This is because museums did not acquire this movement during the dictatorship,

as most of these artists exhibited outside institutional spaces, and therefore they were not very visible in the 'official' arts sphere until the 1990s. The movement became popular in the post-dictatorship period, and private collectors and international institutions started to acquire a big part of their production. Consequently, Chilean museums could not compete with the art market and were not capable of acquiring these artworks. Calfuqueo reflected on how this means that the 'most contestatory collections [of Chilean art] are in private collections' (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021); or international museums, such as the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid, that currently holds a significant collection of artworks from the *Escena de Avanzada*.

Another element to highlight regarding the donation model is the issue of unfairness regarding artists not receiving monetary retribution for their work. Calfuqueo reflected on how getting paid by MNBA for the acquisition of their work allowed them to 'have economic stability, to keep producing [art], keep doing things. I do believe that's the museum's responsibility, (…) to generate sustainability' (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021). I will argue here that the reliance on donations is one of the critical elements that reproduce inequality in the arts sector in Chile. While more wealthy artists might be able to keep producing art, artists from working-class backgrounds will struggle with this. This usually means they need side jobs to fund their production, thus investing less time in producing art. At the same time, this can influence their presence in exhibitions and collections. Therefore, I aim to characterise the donation model as a relevant part of the system that reproduces the absence of non-hegemonic groups in collections.

Furthermore, this also highlights problematic discourses of authority in museum collecting. As discussed with some of my interviewees, some public cultural institutions and the ministry itself take a role of entitlement. Oyarzún discussed this quite critically: 'It's like they "deserve it". Kind

of. It is bizarre; the way it works is very strange, and so, strictly speaking, that's not collecting. That's accumulation (…) there's no proper collecting because there's no rigour, no system, no reasoning, there is nothing.' (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021). The lack of self-reflection regarding what museums *should collect* generates the sentiment that they do not need to justify that. This was particularly criticised by my interviewees who did not work directly in museums and even by some museum workers. If we think of historically marginalised artists, this is an authority standpoint taken by the museum that urges critical review. And ultimately, it introduces the next collecting strategy: intuitive collecting.

5.3. Intuitive collecting

I started many of my interviews with collections managers asking them to tell me the 'history of the collection' and how it had been formed throughout the years. When describing the collecting process, many interviewees defined it as 'intuitive'. The more this came up, the more attention I paid to this notion. When saying the collection was formed *intuitively*, my interviewers often meant that there were no guidelines or museum policies regarding acquisitions. Thus, workers did what they *intuitively* considered right. If a significant donation with relevant names was offered to the museum, workers *followed their intuition* and accepted, even if this was not a museum priority or if the museum did not have the capacity to take care of the artworks. In this section, I am interested in exploring why this notion is problematic and how it is deeply connected to the sector's precarity and assumptions regarding museum authority.

When asking for more detail on what they understood as 'collecting intuitively', I identified different understandings in museum workers. The first one was intuition as a survival strategy. Some of them approach it as an attempt to respond to flaws in the art system in a context of no policy, standards or frameworks for their practice:

I think there was a lot of **instinct** and gut feelings involved in the foundation [of MAC]. [The founders] realised that there was no space where contemporary artists could exhibit (…) So, what was going on with the avant-garde? (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019).

I think acquisitions have been **intuitive** [in the sense that] it is based on which artists are in vogue or something like that (…), [because] there is no collection policy that you can go and check anywhere… (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

In these cases, both quotes refer to museums acquiring contemporary artists as an attempt to 'catch up' with the art scene. I consider highlighting the impact of the arts scene in decision-making as relevant, as it shows how museums as open systems relate to what happens outside the institutions. But at the same time, the art system overall, formed by collectors, curators, and artists, functions differently than museums. While private collectors might collect based on *fetichism* or personal interests, museums are framed by their institutional goals and social role. Moreover, public museums, in particular, are also influenced by governmental policy. Considering institutional understandings of diversity explored in the previous chapter, one could argue that allowing collecting decisions to be strongly influenced by the art scene represents the risk of contradicting institutional aims.

On the other hand, some of the interviewees understood *intuition* as somewhat connected to knowledge or expertise in the arts:

Intuition, deep inside, has to do with the knowledge you have, the experience you have, and intuition gets better when you keep developing that knowledge and experience. I mean, the intuition of a young person that just finished university is not the same [as the one of a] person with 30 years of experience (F Loewental, personal communication, May 5, 2021).

One could take it as **intuition**, but it was… It was something also given by the knowledge of many references and lots of information, but also something very personal that cannot be measured, that cannot be classified or rationalised (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021).

These quotes highlight the need for specialised knowledge regarding the arts to make a decision on acquisitions. This might sound obvious, but the fact that it is framed as intuition implies much more complex dynamics. This connection between knowledge and intuition resonates with what scholar Linda Young discussed in her essay *Collecting: reclaiming the art, systematising the technique* (2004). The *connoisseur*, as understood in early modern collecting, was an individual that combined the extensive knowledge, taste and sensibility needed to decide on acquisitions. It is this idea that I recognise in the quotes above. That said, it has been widely discussed that this notion of *connoisseurship* has been firmly shaped by privilege. Young notes that the idea of *connoisseurship* has reproduced 'elitist, aesthetic and antiquarian values, with which few would care to identify' today (2004, p.187).

But Young also states that there is a need to 'reclaim the art and skill of connoisseurship from the elitist connections it has held since the nineteenth century' (2004, p.185). In her words:

I propose that we should reclaim the skills of connoisseurship to mean not the finicky 'nose-jobs' (…) but [as] the base of knowledge and experience that enables curators to identify and assess the importance of artefacts, as well as the theoretical models that have been developed or applied to material culture research (Young, 2004, p.187).

Following Young's ideas and getting back to the quotes above that link expertise in the arts and intuition, I argue here that while the former is fundamental in collecting, the latter might be connected to assumptions of 'taste'. I will explore the impact of taste on art museum collecting

in the following subsection. But here, it is crucial to note that Young also warns that, in order not to reproduce the elitist character of *connoisseurship*, there is a follow-up strategy needed: 'the systematising of collecting according to explicit criteria which enable a more-or-less standard assessment of the significance of acquisitions' (Young, 2004, p.188). I agree with Young on this. But in the Chilean scenario, intuition appears problematic precisely because of the absence of systematisation of the collecting practice.

The context of precarity in Chilean museums makes this systematisation of collecting difficult, often unviable even. When I conducted my research, some interviewees noted that they were dealing with a long history of precarious practices. Pamela Navarro, head of collections at MAC, pointed out that the museum did not have a systematic method for acquisitions until 2013 and that she barely had the time to do this process, let alone address significant gaps in documentation of artworks acquired since the 1940s (personal communication, December 21, 2019). Caroll Yasky, current head of collections at MSSA and former worker in the same post at MAC, mentioned she introduced this systematic process herself in both museums. She also stated that there was a similar case in the MSSA; for example, she mentioned that during the current migration of the collection to a new deposit, they found artworks whose origins were unknown, even though they were accessioned in the last twenty years (personal communication, December 23, 2019). At the same time, this implied that their collections were widely under-researched, as the lack of documentation neglected chances to explore the collection in depth.

So, if the systematisation of collecting is not feasible given museums' conditions, it is pertinent to suggest that Chilean museums would be prone to a less critical understanding of *connoisseurship*, potentially reproducing its elitist patterns. Arguably, added to the donation

model, this implies that collecting practices in art museums in Chile considerably neglect the accessioning of non-canonical artists to collections.

In the following sub-sections, I will unpack these ideas to argue how this intuition might be connected to different forms of privilege in tension with the Chilean context. Firstly, I will explore how notions of taste are relevant in the arts and how they are framed in Chile, according to my interviewees. Secondly, I will explore how this represents a form of museum authority, notably embodied in the role of museum directors. And thirdly, I will analyse how these issues are problematised in recent collections policies developed by the MINCAP, MSSA and MNBA, all released in the last ten years.

5.3.1. Notions of 'taste' in art museum collecting

In *Collecting in contemporary practice* (1998), scholar Susan Pearce argues that *who* is behind the collecting shapes *what* is collected (p.22). This, at the same time, suggests that if there is a hierarchy in society, there would necessarily be a hierarchy of the value given to material culture. Following Pearce's ideas:

> Just as populations can be (and generally are) divided into "quality" groups which comprise "higher" and "lower" social classes, so material is traditionally allotted a place in the hierarchy of values, which revolve around its perceived qualities of "high" and "low" cultural value. We can, therefore, see that **two distinct systems of character are involved, for both collector and collected**. One revolved around a hierarchy of cultivation, taste of quality as this is seen to be demonstrated in the nature of objects, while the other embraces distinctions of socio-economic and personal status which run across the human subjects (Pearce, 1998, p.22; bold is mine).

This recognition of a system that involves the collector and the collected is revealing when attempting to understand the power dynamics involved in collecting as a meaning-making

practice. I will return to the latter and focus on *the collected* in chapters 7 and 8. But here, and in the next chapter, I will emphasise *the collector* and its influence. Notably, in art museums, the notion of taste has been fundamental and closely related to the ideas of intuition expressed earlier in the chapter.

A relevant entry point to the idea of taste is Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of this term as a manifestation of cultural capital (Wilder, 2018, p.77). According to Bourdieu,

> Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the *embodied* state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the *objectified* state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.) (…); and in the *institutionalized* state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee (Bourdieu, 1986, p.17).

Echoing Bourdieu, scholar Laurie Hanquiet argues that 'people's cultural preferences not only reflect who they are but also their social position' (2018, p.142). This implies that taste is strongly connected with social hierarchies and thus reproduces different forms of domination (Wilder, 2018, p.77). Taste also operates in a complex dynamic, where the valorised objects become symbols of dominant classes while legitimising their superior societal position (Wilder, 2018, p.77).

In this context, museums are certainly part of this dynamic. German sociologist Niklas Luhmann has coined the term *Musealisierung* to define 'the process through which an object, theme, person, or organization achieves a higher validating status and irretrievable cultural capital through the accession into universally respected and unquestioned value context of the museum' (Lehnert, 2018, p.101). In this sense, museums play a role in valorising specific

artworks based on aesthetic evaluation and selecting the ones that are 'worthy of preservation' (Lehnert, 2018, p.101).

In this sense, the act of collecting art implies not only the existence of taste but also a practice of 'taste-making'. According to Bourdieu, the role of art critics embodied this practice of 'taste-making' by canonising 'approved artworks' (Wilder, 2018, p.77). Following this idea, artists and museum workers can be understood as 'taste workers' as they actively contribute to the practice of taste-making as well (Quinn, 2018, pp.5-6). As noted by scholar Michael Lehnert, this is 'a systemic process immanent to the art system (*Kunstsystem*). There is no super-curator explicitly "pointing it out", but rather distributed communicative processes over time, often of a non-linear nature, through which the negotiation is conducted' (Lehnert, 2018, p.102).

In the cases I analysed, the ideas of how taste and capital are connected remained widely unquestioned amongst museum staff. The exceptions were based on politically influenced criticism, which I will explore in the following chapter. But I will argue here that, due to the reliance on donations because of the museums' precarity, the naturalisation of intuitive practices was widely shaped by assumptions of taste and authority. This authority was firmly concentrated in certain workers, most notably museum directors.

5.3.2. Whose intuition? Director's authority in museum collecting in Chile

When I was in university, studying Chilean art history, a lecturer told us a story, a sort of urban myth among local art historians. The story said that in the early 20th century, a French art dealer travelled to South America, aiming to sell an avant-garde corpus of artworks, mostly Impressionist artists. This art dealer wrote letters and sent prints of the paintings to all national fine art museums in the region. The director of the MNBA at the time received these prints but decided not to buy any of these artworks. The story says that this Chilean director was furious.

He thought the art dealer wanted to scam him. He considered the artists behind these artworks 'did not know how to draw' and that the paintings were not at the level of the MNBA collection. But the people in charge of collections in other museums in South America did not share this sentiment. And to cut a long story short, as the urban myth says, this is why you can see great artworks of Impressionism at the National Fine Arts Museums of Buenos Aires, São Paulo and Lima. But these are unfortunately absent from every Chilean public collection.

Although this might sound like a silly story, and regardless of whether it is true or just an urban myth, this story exemplified many of the discussions I have presented in this chapter. In this story, the museum director, the one with authority and supposedly the *connoisseurship* to decide, found his taste outdated. He was probably far enough from Europe not to have heard of the impact of impressionism on the art scene. This also demonstrates how an artwork is often not valorised by its aesthetic characteristics but based on what is already canonised in the arts. In this example, the museum director assessed artworks based on the quality of the drawing, which is not necessarily relevant in an impressionist painting, but it was in his knowledge of canonical artworks.

Additionally, the anecdote mentioned above has one more relevant element: the authority embodied in the museum director. When looking at my study cases, I could recognise that the power of decision-making was focused on different people depending on the institution. That said, there was some protagonist role of museum directors in it, with a recently emerging role of curators in influencing what was acquired. Thus, I would like to discuss *who decides* what is acquired currently; in other words, *whose taste* is relevant when determining what is worthy of preservation.

Just looking at the sample of my study cases, the MNBA was historically influenced by the director's interests, with an increasing role of curators or 'director's assistants' since the 1990s

(E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Currently, the MNBA has been questioning this concentration of authority, creating acquisition committees (more of this later in this chapter). At MSSA, the situation was similar, with directors making most decisions on what was relevant to be acquired, at least until the start of Claudia Zaldívar's period in 2012 (C Yasky, personal communication, December 23, 2019). At MAC, the decision was discussed with the team, but the director took the ultimate decision (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). Similarly, in the MINCAP collection, exceptional acquisitions such as Oyarzún's *Werkén* were mediated by the minister at the time. And in the GGM collection, the last word was of the gallery director, Florencia Loewenthal.

It is interesting to highlight how the role of the head of collections and collections managers were often limited to technical advice. They would often comment on how the presumed artwork to be acquired would fit the deposit or its preservation needs but would not have much to say in the decision-making. In any case, the role of directors or great authority figures usually decided what entered permanent collections. When discussing this idea, interviewees seem to have mixed feelings about it. Some of them reflected on the relevance of leadership in that sense, but in line with the institutions' objectives:

> I do not think everything must rely on my opinions. Still, I do believe that [a director] must be aware and has to have a programme, and has to have objectives, not only regarding collections but also about communications, programming, the guidelines… A director needs to have a broad vision of everything, and then the teams must… There must be a dialogue, of course, between what the head of collections needs, but with clear objectives (F Loewenthal, personal communication, May 5, 2021).

This was often approached as an ideal and different from every institution's reality. Some interviews highlighted that the director's priorities sometimes did not align with the teams'

proposed guidelines. This was particularly true in contexts where the leadership of the museum director was not too present or unclear. As discussed by MNBA curator Gloria Cortés:

> At the end of the day, the final voice is the authority from above; they are the ones who make the final decision. So, no matter how much we, the teams, work in a [critical] line, if he [the director] allows an exhibition from another curator or an external curator even, that goes against that line or even against the ethical principles of the team… It is a decision by the director or the authority at that given moment (personal communication, April 21, 2021).

Another element closely related to the protagonist role of directors was how personal relationships influenced their decisions. For example, at MSSA, in the 1990s, the director was Carmen Waugh, a former gallerist. Thus, she had been involved in the art scene before becoming a director. MSSA's Head of Collections, Caroll Yasky, argued that she knew artists and was friends with some of them, which influenced some museum acquisitions in that period. Later, in the second directorship of the museum after the dictatorship by artist José Balmes, she argued:

> I think he had pretty autonomous decision-making. I doubt he consulted with anyone [laughs]. (…) Both Carmen and Balmes were involved with the museum [before their directorships] (…) So, there is this appropriation and personification of '**I am the museum**', which is very strong. And they are, both have a background… Carmen, for example, was a gallerist, and Balmes, was an artist. They both end up being directors but not how we have it [directors] today, that there is more professionalisation (personal communication, December 23, 2019).

When referring to directors' decision-making in the 1990s and into the 2000s, it seems to go broadly unquestioned, which often characterised their decisions as more whimsical or intuitive. This is due to assumptions of authority in their role as a personification of museum authority. Yasky's characterisation of this as an 'I am the museum' attitude demonstrates a lack of

criticality in these directors regarding how their practice goes beyond themselves. And from an open system standpoint, this unquestioned authority might hinder the opportunities museums had to align with national cultural policies' values or even their teams'. As noted by Yasky, this started to be questioned only when the sector began to professionalise, mainly in the last ten years. That said, the role of directors also faces the difficulties of the precarity in the sector. Gloria Cortés commented on this:

> There is no training for museum directors [in Chile] either, for example. That does exist elsewhere; in Argentina, they are much more advanced in that than us. Right? They have more training in museum management. The directors… It makes me really sad to see them come with excellent working plans, with enthusiasm, [but] then you see them in the second year absolutely depressed… Because they are not capable of putting their plans into practice. For the same reasons, because of the lack in their teams, because of the bureaucracy that hinders any chance of growth… (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021)

Echoing Cortés's words, I will argue here that many of the elements I have discussed so far in this chapter as problematic are shaped by the Chilean museum sector's precarity. While intuitive collecting perpetuated to some extent the reproduction of authority in museum practice, I recognise that more critical approaches require resources, training, and even time, which museum workers in Chile have historically lacked. This idea is supported by the fact that, according to what was reported by my interviewees, as more resources and training have become available to museum workers, more of these assumptions about authority, taste and intuition were put into question. For instance, this pushed a recent and emerging development of collection policies in the sector, which I will explore in the following subsection.

5.3.3. Absence and emergence of collection policies in Chile

First, it is crucial to mention that collection policies were broadly uncommon in Chile when I

began conducting this research. The National Museum Policy, released in 2018, highlighted the lack of policies as one of the core issues in the museum sector in Chile (SNM, 2018, p.45). Notably, it stated that there were no standards for collections on a national level or organisations capable of addressing or developing these frameworks. This has a substantial impact on museum collecting practices. In 2019, when I conducted my pilot study, I could only identify three cases of collections policies in Chile:

- The MINCAP collection policy (which drew my attention to this collection to be part of this research), released in 2012.

- The Museo Historico Nacional (National History Museum) collection policy, released in 2017, and

- The Museo de Artes Decorativas y Museo Histórico Dominico (Museum of Decorative Arts and History Museum Dominican[10]), also released in 2017.

Interestingly, the director of the latter museum, Ximena Pezoa, was formerly the head of collections at MINCAP and developed the first collection policy in 2012. This demonstrates that the discussion regarding the need for collections policies was rather a niche in Chile until very recently. That said, during my preliminary study in late 2019, most of my participants noted that they were aware of the need to develop policies and standardised guidelines, and some of my case studies stated they were in the process of this. Consequently, since I started conducting this research, three other collection policies were released, all of them in 2021:

- The MSSA collection policy

- The MNBA collection policy, and

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[10] *Dominico* here denotes belonging to the order of Saint Dominic, a Castilian Catholic priest. The Dominic Order was notably influential in the arts in Latin America in colonial times. This museum is part of that heritage as it holds collections from that time, and it is based in a colonial building that formerly belonged to that Order.

- Museo Regional de la Araucanía (Regional Museum from Araucania) policy.

Although having a policy is still an exception in the Chilean museum sector, it is relevant to highlight how these have become increasingly common in the last decade, especially in major museums, and it would not be surprising if more Chilean museums were in the process of creating their policies at the time of writing. According to my participants at MNBA, the interest in writing a policy came from requests 'from above' (the Ministry) or external pressures to identify collections' priorities and minimum standards for their care. While at the MSSA, the debate was noted to be an internal one due to broader discussions among the museum staff regarding collections' priorities. In any case, it is interesting to highlight how this tended to be associated with the increasing professionalisation of the Chilean sector.

Additionally, regarding timeframe, the process of developing collection policies in Chile is a recent phenomenon compared to what has been discussed in the global museum sector. In the early 1990s, it was already reported that museums worldwide were developing policies to 'regulate and standardize previously haphazard practice' (Knell, 2005, p.2). This consequently pushed a process of general review regarding good practices and international standards in the sector. This process, nonetheless, came late in the Chilean sector, arguably due to the country's political history and how it affected cultural institutions, as discussed in chapter 4.

In general terms, collections policies set minimum standards and procedures in collections while also including some notions about how to manage acquisitions. According to Freda Matassa:

> The purpose of an acquisitions policy is to inform visitors, researchers and staff on the types of items that will be accepted into the collection. If an object is offered by gift, the museum can consider if it fits the collecting remit and, if not, can more easily refuse the gift. Likewise, a

potential donor who has an object to give can identify the museum that is best placed to receive

it. Lack of clarity on acquisitions policy has led in the past to many cases of unwanted objects

being accepted that are not in line with a museum's purpose and that have been left unused. A

good collection is dependent on a good acquisitions policy (Matassa, 2011, p.146).

This seems particularly relevant considering Chile's previously mentioned collecting strategies,

shaped by donations and intuitive collecting. That said, and as noted in chapter 2, collection

policies have started to be questioned in the last two decades as they have not fulfilled their

original aim to rationalise and standardise museum collecting. This is due to its often-vague

character, which hinders them from addressing collecting holistically, and often isolates

collecting from other museum practices (Knell, 2004, p.13). Yet, while this critique is pertinent

elsewhere, it seems relevant to ask how this operates in the Chilean sector, considering the

complete absence of collection policies until the last decade. In the following subsection, I will

explore how Chilean museums have navigated the learnings from the global museum sector

when producing their policies.

5.3.4. Case studies: collection policies

As noted above, out of the four cases this research considers, three of them currently have a

collection policy, MAC being the only one that has not. MINCAP, on the other hand, was a

pioneer in this matter, with the earliest released policy, in 2012. And lastly, both MSSA and

MNBA developed their policies alongside and released them in 2021. In this sub-section, I will

explore some key elements from these policies, aiming to identify critical discussions relevant

to the following chapters, where I will start to analyse specific acquisition cases.

5.3.4.1 MINCAP Collection Policy

Starting with the MINCAP policy, this document was created for the GGM collection, which was

part of the National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA) at the time, and now is part of the

MINCAP collection. The document is currently used across all collection deposits of the Ministry (F Castillo, personal communication, December 17, 2019). This document is titled *Policy of selection and incorporation of artworks to the contemporary art collection of the CNCA*, and it follows the governmental format of an Exempt Resolution. This is a relatively concise policy, six pages long. It starts by establishing some general aims of the institution (the CNCA, now MINCAP), stating that their objective is to 'support the development of the arts and the access to culture, [as well as] contributing, **increasing**, and making available to people (…) the cultural heritage of the Nation' (CNCA, 2012, p.1; bold is mine).

In this analysis, I will mainly focus on the part of the policy that states a general framework for accessioning artworks and their selection criteria. In this regard, the document states that safeguarding 'contemporary artistic heritage' is a crucial strategy to achieve a 'proper understanding of the national and regional contemporary art production' (CNCA, 2012, p.2). This means that the Ministry recognises collecting from an archival perspective, 'registering' what is happening in the art scene. In this sense, this document fails to identify any meaning-making capacity in the practice of collecting. This might have to do with the fact that this is the only case I am considering here that does not belong to a museum, and therefore the motivations for collecting are different.

Moreover, the policy states that authorities must select artworks based on a specific criterion that considers the 'contemporary aesthetic value' and the specific physical condition of the artwork (CNCA, 2012, p.3). While the second element generally focuses on the artwork being in a condition that ensures the MINCAP can take care of and store it, this idea of 'contemporary aesthetic value' is quite interesting to explore. According to the policy:

By contemporary aesthetic value, it is understood that the artwork belongs to an artistic practice of 'contemporary art', which is one that develops a critical and reflexive exercise facing its own means of production (the visual arts), [and] its historical, social and political context. This production experiments with different stands and materials, putting them in tension, in crisis, and incorporating any object or material possible or pertinent to the research process, creation and artistic production as naturally its own (CNCA, 2012, p.3; translation is mine).

I consider various elements interesting in this definition. While it focuses strongly on defining contemporary art in a very open-ended way, the idea of its 'value' remains widely undefined. Moreover, the 'value' of the artworks is based on the value given by the institution's authority. This not only implies that it is based on the authority given to the museum worker but also that this criterion might change and vary depending on who is in the post.

As stated above, the perspective and goal of this collection has often given great flexibility regarding what is acquired, as reported by some of my interviewees. As mentioned in chapter 3, this collection is constituted by various deposits, all formed in different contexts, making them differ in terms of objectives. For instance, Florencia Loewenthal noted that the GGM collection was formed from an 'educational approach' from the beginning, where the potential use of the acquired artworks in educational programmes of the gallery was fundamental at the time of acquiring (personal communication, May 5, 2021). On a different note, Varinia Brodsky noted how the acquisition call in 2020 as an aid for the COVID-19 pandemic was more interested in registering the contemporary scene of Chilean art (personal communication, June 24, 2021). In the aforementioned acquisition call, the most relevant element considered in the evaluation for an artwork to be acquired was the 'originality of the artwork', which was defined as 'the expression of a poetic or authorial identity reflected in the artwork presented' (MINCAP, 2020, p.6).

Arguably, both of these different approaches can be confluent in the same collection thanks to the broadness of the objective stated in the collection policy. This connects to another relevant element of this policy: the establishment of acquisitions 'Expert Committees'. As noted in previous sections of this chapter, the decision of what enters the collection was mediated mainly by museum directors, with the support of curators on some occasions. The MINCAP policy is the first record I have found establishing the need to form a committee of art collections in Chile. Nonetheless, this 'Expert Committee' was formed by the institution's director and the head of collections (CNCA, 2012, p.3). This means that the decision remains in the hands of the same workers that used it to be before the policy was created. Still, this notion has been recently challenged and re-interpreted. A relevant example is the recent 2021 acquisition, where a panel of nine external experts was gathered (MINCAP, 2020, p.5). These experts were:

- One representative of MNBA, named by its director.

- One representative of MAC, named by its director.

- One representative of MSSA, named by its director.

- One worker of the Subsecretary of Arts and Culture from the area of Visual Arts (MINCAP).

- One worker from the Department of Culture and Arts Development (MINCAP).

- One worker from the Subsecretary of Cultural Heritage (MINCAP).

- Two external and independent curators with knowledge of regional scenes (outside Santiago) who have previously worked with the Subsecretary of Arts and Culture.

- One former winner of the National Art Prize.

This broad committee demonstrates that the policy itself needs to catch up with the discussions in the sector regarding *who should decide* what is acquired. In this sense, it is relevant to note

that the MINCAP policy is the first of its kind in Chile. Therefore, it is a sort of proto policy, that should be addressed as such. The other two policies available at the moment were released nearly ten years later, with an increasing professionalisation of the sector that allowed a more encompassed process of policy development.

Lastly, one of the most exciting elements of this policy is its stand regarding deaccessions. The policy states that 'the Council reserves the right to deaccession, change, or replace (…) artworks that do not represent the general criteria of selection of the collection and/or the artistic production of their creators faithfully' (CNCA, 2012, p.3). This implies that the policy is relatively flexible compared to 'traditional' collections, where deaccession is rarely on the table. Interestingly, my interviewees also reported that artists themselves have also used this clause regarding deaccession. For example, Francisca Castillo noted how there had been cases where artists felt like the artwork they had donated to the collection in the past was not representative of their work anymore and decided to change them (personal communication, December 17, 2019), which the professionals who worked with the collection encouraged.

Overall, this policy is a general framework needed to establish some fundamental procedures and priorities for the collection. Nevertheless, by discussing collecting practices with the MINCAP staff, it was evident that they have interpreted this policy differently throughout the years. Furthermore, more critical debates regarding who makes the decision or even the permanency of the items in the collection have been possible thanks to how broad and arguably vague the policy language was at times. In the following sections, I will explore the MSSA and MNBA policies, which are much more recent and might address some of these critical practices further.

5.3.4.2. MSSA Collection Policy

The second relevant case here is the MSSA collection policy. This document, released in 2021, is a much more comprehensive policy, more extensive (about twenty pages long) and goes into more detail compared to the MINCAP collection policy. As reported by my interviewees, this policy came from a process of reflection with a more significant part of the museum team. In fact, according to this document, although considerably focused on the area of collections, 'the whole museum adheres and commits to the principles and practices suggested' (MSSA et al., 2021, p.3). This was backed up by the Head of Collections, Caroll Yasky, who noted that it took them a few years to write this policy because they were invested in involving the whole museum staff in its writing (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021). Compared to the MINCAP one, the MSSA policy also gives more details about the methodological approaches and the background that pushed the development of this policy. It states that it also draws on the ICOM's *Collecting and Ethics* guidelines[11], acknowledging international standards of collections.

One relevant element to highlight in this regard is that the policy states that one of its aims is to ensure that all processes of safeguarding heritage held by the museum are aligned with the mission and foundational purposes of the museum (MSSA et al., 2021, p.3). In this sense, while the MINCAP policy works more like a procedure document, the MSSA one is a publication in its own right, firmly situated in the museum's context. The first few sections of this policy introduce the history, aims and organisational structure of the museum to the reader before discussing how this shapes the museum collection. This also suggests that this policy is also

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[11] They used the Spanish version of this document, titled *Constitución de las colecciones y deontología*.

aimed to be accessible to a broader public, compared to the MINCAP one that uses a more institutional language.

Moreover, the MSSA policy is also an excellent example of what was discussed earlier regarding the formation of committees. Developing this collection policy pushed the creation of two committees: one for collections (in general) and a second for acquisitions. Both committees aim to 'guarantee the plurality and broad professional criterion in the decision-making regarding the collection' (MSSA et al., 2021, p.9). This also echoes the creation of a broader committee in the MINCAP acquisition discussed earlier, demonstrating increasing interest in the sector for widening the number of people involved in acquisition decision-making. Furthermore, at MSSA, both committees are organised by the head of collections and meet every six months unless an exceptional case needs urgent discussion. The policy also mentions more details in terms of procedures, saying that the work of these committees will be based on researching background information, writing reports and presentation of cases (potential acquisitions) for their analysis and decision-making based on majority voting of the committee members (MSSA et al., 2021, p.9). Regarding this final point, MSSA director Claudia Zaldívar reflected on some of the discussions they had about it and how it related to the need for challenging authority-based decisions:

> Now that we are writing the [collection] policy, we had that discussion that you were asking me about. We said, ok, we have a committee with an even number of members. Who decides if we disagree? So, I said, 'the director, obviously'. Because she/he is the legal representative. Then a colleague answered, 'but Claudia, you are easy-going, you are a historian, you know what you are talking about. But what if they [the Ministry] assign another director, I do not know, for political reasons…', do you see? So, should we give directors that role? (…) We said no, we will not. (C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021)

Zaldívar commented that they decided to add one extra member to the committee to make the numbers uneven and ensure they could choose based on a majority vote. I consider this an explicit example of museum workers questioning the authority concentrated in the director role, which notably pushed the 'intuitive collecting' narrative, discussed earlier in this chapter.

It is also relevant to notice that MSSA decided to have two independent committees, including one specifically focused on acquisitions. The collections committee is there to discuss any decision-making regarding the 'uses' of the existing collection: loans, moving, restoration, etc., while the acquisition one focuses only on artworks potentially being accessioned. What is interesting about this difference is precisely who makes the decision. Both committees are integrated by four fixed members: the director, coordinator of collections, main collections registrar and head of conservation. While the fifth member in both cases is also a museum worker, the collections committee includes the archive coordinator, and the acquisitions committee consists of the programming coordinator. This is a fascinating difference, as I think it implies that acquisitions are supposed to be more connected to the museum's present, to what are their priorities and aims today. Additionally, the policy also states that if needed, the acquisitions committee can invite an external member to contribute with specific knowledge about certain artworks or periods, not without stating that this external member cannot have any conflict of interest, including a ban on experts that work or (have worked in the last year) with people involved in the art market (collectors, galleries, auction houses, etc.) (MSSA et al., 2021, p.10). The MSSA collections policy also states a clear criterion regarding what the museum should acquire, summarised in the following table:

Table 7: Summary of criteria included in the MSSA acquisitions' policy

Criteria	Description
Pertinency	The artwork reinforces and promotes the mission and vision of the museum.
Origin and rights	Clarity of ownership of the donor to guarantee no artwork dealt illicitly is accessioned.
Chronology	The artwork is to be framed in the period of the MSSA collection.
Conservation	The artwork is in good condition, and the museum has the resources to guarantee its care.
Technical feasibility	The museum has the space to store and exhibit artwork.
Exhibition criteria	The artwork has 'exhibition potential', following the curatorial line of the museum.
Quality	The artwork has characteristics and attributes that make it stand out in the arts.
Authenticity[12]	The artwork proves to have original artistic authorship.

These detailed criteria prove that the MSSA acquisitions policy challenges the intuitive collecting approach. Compared to the MINCAP collection policy, the MSSA policy demonstrates a deeper conversation held within the museum staff regarding the role of the collection and collecting in the museum's present. It also shows how collecting is understood more holistically in conversation with other areas of the museums, attempting to integrate them into the practice of collecting through the creation of the acquisitions committee. Lastly, Head of Collections Caroll Yasky also noted that, although this policy might change in the future, it ensures a precedent in how things should be done based on the current situation and position taken by the museum staff (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021). This demonstrates an understanding of the museum as ever-changing. It also acknowledges the need to register the museum's institutional history and how it impacts the collection, which has been widely absent from institutional procedures in museums in Chile due to their situation of precarity.

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[12] This is written as 'originality' (originalidad) in the document, but I consider the most accurate translation is authenticity.

5.3.4.3. MNBA Collection Policy

The last case I will explore here is the MNBA collection policy. This policy is a middle point between the former two analysed documents. It is a shorter policy, three and a half pages long, which focuses on presenting the museum's mission, the collection's origin, the collection's characteristics, relevant procedures, and acquisition criteria. Additionally, the document includes fifteen pages of appendix that might be as relevant as the rest of the document. These appendixes present the approach taken by each of the two curators of the museum, Gloria Cortés (curator of Modern Art) and Paula Honorato (curator of Contemporary Art), and a list of artists each recommends for acquisition. On a first read, the acquisition criteria of this policy are, to some extent, a mixture of the positions taken by both curators, but this can be unpacked further to understand the functioning of the museum and the role of collecting within it.

The first part of the policy states the museum's mission, which according to museum staff, is still based on the original objective of the institution. However, there have been recent attempts to add elements to it that address its current social role. The mission states that:

> The National Museum of Fine Arts is the oldest art museum in Latin America. It was founded on September 18th, 1880, with the objective of promoting knowledge, circulation and enjoyment of the visual arts by the country's population, **which today includes a wide variety of public and communities**. (…) For this, its heritage collection is a fundamental axis. In its activity, [the museum] seeks to **promote values such as solidarity, diversity, inclusion and sustainability** (MNBA, 2022, p.1; bold is mine).

In this extract, the phrases in bold are new statements added to the original museum mission. This demonstrates how the museum attempts to update the institution's role but still struggles to restructure completely. This makes these phrases work as patches, feeling disjointed at times. Furthermore, the role of the collection is not clearly defined, and it is only stated that 'it

is fundamental' for the museum's role. Just in this short paragraph, it is already visible a process of change and constant tension in the MNBA, which I will keep on exploring here and in the following chapters. But crucial to highlight that part of this tension comes precisely from debates regarding diversity.

To unpack this, it is helpful to take a closer look at the acquisition criteria stated in the policy. These criteria included seven elements the museum proposes to have in consideration when acquiring (MNBA, 2022, pp.2-3), summarised in the following table:

Table 8: Summary of criteria included in the MNBA acquisitions' policy

Criteria	Description summarised
Strengthening the Chilean Art collection	It is stated that the MNBA aims to become the region's most relevant Chilean art collection. This means acquiring artworks that keep the collection updated and as complete as possible while constantly revising 'gaps' in the existing collection.
Internationalisation of the collection	Acquiring artworks relevant to the historiography of Latin American or Western Art, to widen and complement what is currently in the MNBA collection.
Art and contemporary practices	Acquiring 'emerging' contemporary art, aiming to identify new forms of art production or new critical discourses in the sector.
Disciplinary junctions	Acquiring artworks that work with juxtapositions between different disciplines (music, architecture, literature, new media art, applied art or popular art), and might be interesting from an art history standpoint.
Equity and inclusion	To reduce the gender gap in the collection, which currently holds 11% of women artists. And at the same time, to acquire artists that were historically excluded due to gender, race or social class. Also, to balance the representation of visual arts from all regions and territories of the country.

Document Collections	To increase the acquisition of documents and archives that contribute to the history of the MNBA and the arts in Chile.
Conservation of the country's heritage assets	To be able to conserve the acquired artworks.

These criteria tend to be rather broad and not necessarily compatible with each other at times. Compared to the MSSA criteria, which works as a checklist, the MNBA criteria encompass debates regarding what is essential for the museum collection today. Moreover, these criteria seem to echo the added phrases in the museum's mission. This suggests that these criteria are, to some extent, attempting to address issues faced by the museum in everyday practice. This idea is supported by the fact that the workers behind the policy were mainly the head of collections and the two curators mentioned earlier.

That said, the first interesting element to highlight is the strengthening of the Chilean Art collection. The policy mentions that the MNBA acknowledges the need to be aware of many spheres of the art system, including the historiography of art and art criticism, analysis and research on archives, including personal archives or relevant agents of the arts sector (MNBA, 2022, p.3). Although not explicit, this implies an understanding of museum collecting as part of an open system that mutually feeds into each other and that what is considered a 'gap' is also constructed by that dynamic.

Interestingly, the following three criteria could be considered more of a desirable practice rather than one that the museum has had the capacity to do in the past, or a criterion for acquisition at all. Regarding international art, it is relevant to question if this is something the museum can afford or if it is even appropriate for it, considering how the staff has widely stated that acquisition budgets are extremely limited for the MNBA. On the other hand, collecting emerging

artists has not been a common practice for the MNBA, and the only cases have occurred in the last five years. And the 'disciplinary junctions' criterion, although interesting, does not necessarily align with the museum's mission whatsoever.

This takes me to criterion five, that of 'equity and inclusion', which might be the most relevant for this research. It is interesting to highlight how the debate regarding underrepresentation reached the MNBA collection policy in its first version. Compared to the previously analysed policies, this might respond to the fact that the MNBA is a national museum and has, therefore, faced more questioning regarding diversity representation. Additionally, it is crucial to notice how this came from an acknowledged gap in the collection: the gender gap. As reported by my interviewees, this came from various initiatives on a national level regarding gender disparity in the arts, which pushed the MNBA to research their collection's gender gap. In the following chapters, I will unpack this further, exploring how museum workers' activism has raised awareness regarding underrepresentation in the sector, shaping some recent acquisitions— and arguably, influencing collecting, as shown in this policy.

The last two criteria of the policy respond to more standardised needs of the museum, namely, increasing archives regarding their collection and being able to take care of the artworks they acquire. This, once more, disconnects from previous and more self-reflexive elements of the policy, implying the document could benefit from further coherence overall.

5.3.4.4. Collection policies and museum collecting in Chile

Overall, this section focused on my study cases' collecting policies aiming to gather more insights into how collecting practices in Chile have started to change in the last ten years. These policies, timidly but steadily emerging in the Chilean museum sector, demonstrate increasing conversations among museum staff regarding the need to regularise collecting practices. This

implies a growing awareness of the meaning-making potential of collecting and the need for accountability in every area of museum practice.

There are three key takeaways from these collection policies' analysis that I would like to highlight before moving into the following chapters. Firstly, the rise in the creation of acquisition committees in Chilean art museums. While earlier in this chapter, I argued that there was a strong concentration of authority in the role of the museum director when deciding what was acquired, these collections policies demonstrated that this idea has started to be challenged. The development of these policies has come hand-in-hand with the need for addressing diversity representation and how it is involved in the decision regarding what is acquired. At the same time, this shows how the process of producing a collecting policy has pushed or has embraced new critical debates in the sector regarding what should be acquired.

Secondly, these policies represent a particular moment in the institutional history of these museums, where collecting has gained a different relevance. This echoes scholar Richard Dunn's essay *The future of collecting: lessons from the past*, where he explored how collecting practices of the V&A have changed throughout time alongside its institutional purposes. He reflected that:

> It is not possible to lay down for all time one fixed, objective and unbiased collecting policy. Rather, we should adopt an approach that I would call 'self-conscious collecting'. By this I mean that we should be open about the processes and immediate motives involved in the acquisition of particular objects, and record these as far as is practical. (…) By adopting such approach, I believe that museums could avoid the perceived need to justify with respect to current aims the existence of collections which, because acquired in the past with very different motives, fit awkwardly with those aims. After all, these motives might change; the objects may be reappraised. (Dunn, 2004, p.71).

Following Dunn's words, the policies analysed should be approached, understanding that they are responding to the present need of their institutions. As noted by some of my interviewees, these policies might change in the future, but these documents will serve as a precedent of the museum's priorities at this given moment. For instance, while the MINCAP policy aimed to support the regularisation of acquisitions in the Ministry, the MSSA policy reflects a broader and more complex process of self-reflection within the museum staff regarding the role of their collection. The MNBA policy, on the other hand, shows the current tensions within the museum regarding its institutional role overall while still struggling to leave behind its original aim. Moreover, all these insights will be valuable when analysing specific acquisitions in the following chapters.

Thirdly and lastly, these policies reveal that the change above is often pushed by museum workforces. At MINCAP, the examples mentioned showed how current collecting practices have reinterpreted and adapted the collecting policy statements by integrating more members into acquisition committees and using the deaccession clause to question permanency in collections. At MSSA, the process of writing the policy demonstrates that the museum staff are examining the museum's role and collecting holistically, proven by the fact that it was the staff from the collection department who raised the need for a policy that aligned with all practices in the museum. And at MNBA, although the policy was less cohesive at times, it still showed heated debates among museum staff, notably regarding representativity in collections. Altogether, these elements raise the question of the role of museum workforces in institutional change and collecting practices in general, which I will explore in-depth in chapter 6.

5.4. Research-based collecting and the impact of curatorial research

The above analysis of acquisition policies reveals that collecting practices are in the process of

change in Chile. More museums have recognised the need to document their approach to establish standards and guidelines for museum practice. These documents demonstrate critical debates and new concerns among workforces facing collecting practices. These policies notably challenge some of the problematic elements of the previous two strategies I introduced in this chapter: the donation model and intuitive collecting. They do so by proposing more explicit criteria on what kind of donations museums should accept, aligned with their institutional objectives, and who should be part of the decision by forming committees, diversifying the discussion and decision-making. This scenario of change and increasing criticality around collecting practices is directly connected to the third and last strategy I would like to introduce here: research-based collecting.

When researching my study cases, I identified a few instances of research-based collecting in the last ten years. By this, I mean acquisitions that came from a research process that highlighted a gap. In other words, these were acquisitions inspired or influenced by a curator, scholar or museum worker that conducted research and then asked, 'why is this not in the collection?'. These cases were usually linked to short-term projects funded by external public funding given to the museum or individuals in partnership with museums. In the rest of this chapter, I will analyse how this has influenced changes in collecting practices in museums and how it has shaped diversity representation in acquisitions.

5.4.1. The curatorial turn and collecting practices in Chile

Art history has always been a small field in Chile, and increasing research in the arts came through the influence of curatorial practices, which have become more popular in the country since the 2000s. This is quite late if we compare it with the rise of curatorship worldwide, or at least in the Global North, as curatorial practice has changed and expanded considerably in the last few decades (George, 2017, p.9). In the 18th and 19th centuries, the term 'curator' was

somewhat interwoven with the roles of directors and collections keepers. Consequently, 'the term "curator" [is the one] that came to be most closely associated with the custodian of a museum or other collection of objects – art or otherwise' (George, 2017, p.10).

However, this role has constantly been changing since then, but the most relevant moment to highlight is what is now referred to as *the curatorial turn* (O'Neill, 2007). According to curator Paul O'Neill, this process started in the 1960s, when a new form of 'curatorial criticism' began to raise the need to understand artworks not as 'autonomous objects of study/critique' but in constant relation with exhibition spaces (2012, p.13). This germinated on the 'curatorial turn' blooming in the 1990s, along with an increasingly transnational arts sector, establishing 'curatorial practice as a potential space for critique' (O'Neill, 2012, p.14). At the same time, this moment represents a turn in the curator's conception from a 'carer' to a more creative or authorial role (O'Neill, 2012, p.15; Green & Gardner, 2016, p.37).

The curatorial turn represents a relevant moment in the museum sector where, as it meets and shares concerns with the new museology, the sector acknowledges the practice of exhibition-making as always ideological (O'Neill, 2012, p.14). In fact, the new museology was also a critical process that pushed 'a critique of representation, identifying how knowledge was produced, as well as what and who was being excluded from exhibitions, collections and audiences in the process' (Bayley, 2019), thus influencing critical curatorial practice in museum spaces. Therefore, both the new museology and the curatorial turn imply that curators have now taken on a broader set of responsibilities, which include recognising the wide audiences to which they communicate the collection (Vivian, 2012, p.20).

That being said, little research has been done on how curatorial practices have reshaped collecting practices. In a recent report released in 2019, Lucy Bayley discusses some of these

issues based on her research of Tate collections, framed by the project *Reshaping the collectible: When artworks live in the museum*. Bayley reflects on the idea of the 'liveness' of contemporary artworks, as opposed to a former static understanding of collection items. She argues that this results from 'parallel shifts in curating, art history and museology' that have reshaped the way artworks 'live' in the museum, as now in constant dialogue with its context (Bayley, 2019), both institutionally and transnationally. Arguably, the new museology, in conversation with the curatorial turn, contributed to a growing interest in research and the creation of research-focused museum departments (Bayley, 2019).

Now back to the Chilean museum sector. The curatorial turn impacted the Chilean context slightly later, in the 2000s. It aligned with the creation of the CNCA and increased funding to independent projects. As noticed by my interviewees, this has impacted the sector, although it has reinforced the precarious working conditions of cultural workers. This is because permanent curator roles are scarce in the sector, and most Chilean curators are, in fact, independent curators. This has implied that curatorial practice in Chile has remained less institutionalised than art sectors in the Global North. Arguably, a less institutionalised curatorial practice has allowed it to remain more critical of institutional frameworks.

At the same time, it is essential to notice that none of my case studies had a department focused on research only, and public funds focused on research in the arts are considerably smaller than other lines of funding, such as art production and exhibition-making. This suggests that most of the research conducted in the arts sector in Chile is curatorial research. But at the same time, this often implies that arts research is short-term and project-based.

That said, I will argue here that the phenomena mentioned above have had one key outcome in collecting practices: changing the way 'a gap in the collection' is perceived in the Chilean

museum sector. While historically, museums in Chile have aimed to align collecting and art history, curatorial practice has raised questions regarding what is not in art history, and thus not in collections either. I will unpack these ideas in the following sub-section.

5.4.2. What constitutes a 'gap' in the collection? Identifying new collecting priorities.

In this final section of this chapter, I will review how all the processes explored above have changed not only how museums collect in Chile, but also what they collect, in the last few decades. This process of change has encompassed various simultaneous developments. These include the increasing professionalisation of the sector and many debates regarding the role of museums and their collections. Ultimately, if the purpose of museums has been re-shaped throughout history, it is not surprising to expect that the purpose of collections has changed as well.

Furthermore, here is where debates regarding diversity representation started to gain relevance in the Chilean context. Even if still in process, an increasing systematisation of collecting has allowed awareness of the fiction that represents older perceptions of collections as ever 'complete'. As noted when looking at Chilean museums' collection policies, defining criteria for acquisition has become relevant as museums revise their own institutional aims. Although far from 'resolved', Chilean museums are increasingly addressing how previous understandings of gaps might be problematic given the changing role of museums in the Chilean context. And diversity representation emerges as one of these conflicting axes, as the underrepresentation of groups is one of those fundamental gaps. And thus, the need to define what each museum wants to acquire or considers relevant to acquire starts to be highlighted as a crucial institutional task.

Following my conversations with museum workers, I recognise two fundamental approaches in which they understood collection gaps. The first was based on art history gaps, and the second was on recent criticism regarding how the former has reproduced hegemonic understandings of identity. When I conducted this research, these two approaches were co-habiting, albeit problematically, in the Chilean museum sector.

I will start by exploring the first approach. When discussing what was 'a priority' for museums to acquire, many other interviewees agreed and stated that, usually, a gap relates to what is in the literature but not in a collection. Paula Honorato and Soledad Novoa, both academics as well as museum curators, discussed the influence of academic art history in their understanding of museum collecting:

> (…) Gaps based on what? From which point of view do I say, 'there's a gap'? I took as a starting point the artworks or series considered the reflections in the critical historiography of art in Chile. I mean, in which ways does the collection… If I put a mirror facing the production of Chilean art historiography, I should be able to find [in the collection] the phenomena discussed there. Thus, there is a relationship with the writings that do not necessarily have to be complete. Because, as I said, there are many authors that are discovered many years later… (P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021).

> I am an art historian, so my education shapes my world. So, for me, a museum collection is in dialogue with art history, with the writings, the re-writing, the impugnment, whatever, but it has to do with that [academic writing], right? (…) [when selecting artworks for acquisitions], why do we consider *that* artist, *that* artwork, right? What happened with that artwork? How do we articulate that period? How do we give an account of that period? Obviously, taking into consideration that it was going to be an approach… An incomplete approach, undoubtedly, do you see? (…) When I refer to art history, I understand it as a discourse that cannot be all-

encompassing, no doubt. But you do need to start somewhere. To re-write, to question it, to

complete it, to whatever. (S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021).

Honorato and Novoa draw on art history to identify what is missing in the collection. But also,

both of them recognise that art history is not a complete narrative that can represent *a whole.*

This interest by Honorato and Novoa in collecting what is in academic writing is also influenced

by the fact that Chilean museums have been historically incapable of collecting systematically.

One could argue that you could always keep collecting canonical artworks, but the reality is that

in Chile, those canonical artworks are *also* widely absent from collections. As Novoa notes:

'how am I supposed to teach, as a Chilean art history teacher, the birth of the [arts] academy

in Chile If there are only six paintings of the academy's first directors [in the collection of the

MNBA]?' (S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021). This is because of the intuitive

collecting I discussed earlier in this chapter, which has caused museums to have collected what

erratically has been offered to them, not coinciding necessarily with what is stated in canonical

art history.

Arguably, international discussions regarding the need to fill collection gaps based on

representation already respond to a contestation of the canon. In Chilean art museums, this

canon is absent. Thus, some workers argue for the need to collect it. This reveals an interesting

tension between collecting *for the present* or aiming to represent the past. The positive side of

this art-history-influenced collecting is that it is not based on anyone's 'intuition' but on workers'

or scholars' systematic study of gaps. But the risk of this collecting strategy is that it still relies

on a discourse that often reproduces hierarchical understandings of culture and art. Some of

my interviewees problematically justified decisions based on the value given to scholarly

knowledge. When referring to art history sources, both Honorato and Novoa were not

necessarily considering contestatory art history discourses but canonical ones. Although this

could be viewed as a 'starting point', in some cases, it still represents a potential contradiction with current institutional aims.

In this sense, I am interested in discussing that the fact that public collections do not own artworks by artists highlighted by the academia of their time does not necessarily mean that it should be an institutional priority. Their acquisition might still be relevant to represent the values of a period in the past, but is it a *priority*? Would it be acquired *preferably*, instead of historically marginalised artists? Curator Gloria Cortés questioned this scholarly approach:

> You might go and fill a 'historical gap'. But what is a historical gap? There is always an opportunity for a crack. Because on the one hand, you might propose that 'historical gaps' are the ones that are inscribed in art history but are not in the collection. And there are plenty of names there, right? (…) [but instead] **we propose that 'historical gaps' are precisely the ones that *are not* inscribed in the history of art**. Do you see? So, there you have the conflict again. What is being understood as a historical gap? (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

This discussion was present across all the institutions I researched, but quite strongly at the MNBA, whose role of representing Chilean identity has most likely pushed this debate to the core of the museum's aim. It is relevant to notice one final phenomenon regarding this discussion about which gaps to fill in collections: the role of museum workers in this shift. When conducting these interviews, I recognised polarisation among museum workers. Some defended a more canonical understanding of art, and others challenged it. Interestingly, the ones who challenged it often struggled to identify with the values of the institution they worked for. They positioned themselves in a disobedient standpoint regarding the institution they were part of, aiming to question traditional, elitist approaches through their professional practice. And it was these 'disobedient' workers who pushed a new agenda in museum collecting, focused

on challenging the canon. In chapter 6, I will characterise these workforces and their disobedience.

5.5. Chapter Conclusions

Overall, in this chapter, I have argued that a mix of under-researched collections, undertrained workforces, and the biases associated with ideas of taste has meant that Chilean museum workers have often not had another chance but to collect 'intuitively'. Many elements have contributed to the notion of intuitive collecting being acceptable in public museums. These often have to do with ideas of authority in the sector, i.e. assumptions that museum workers have the expertise to make decisions based on their knowledge. At the same time, this starts to be challenged by the professionalisation in the sector, which, for example, has allowed the development of museum policies very recently. I have also discussed the emergence of new collecting practices in Chile, notably shaped by the increasing writing of collections policies and research-based collecting approaches influenced by the rise of curatorial research.

Chapter 6: A New (Disobedient) Museum Workforce

6.1. Chapter presentation

In previous chapters, I have discussed how Chile's socio-political history has shaped the museum sector's development. I have argued that museums in Chile face a general situation of precarity, leading them to rely on unsystematic practices, such as the reliance on donations and on intuitive collecting, explored in the previous chapter. Nevertheless, recent developments in the sector, such as the creation of the Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage (MINCAP) and the increasing professionalisation of cultural workers, have led workers to question these unsystematic practices. That said, while the previous chapters looked at the institutional changes that have pushed shifts in collecting practices, this one will explore a more specific aspect of institutional change: its workers and their motivations.

In this chapter, I will discuss how individual museum workers have often pushed many recent changes in the sector based on their own sense of social justice, instead of institutional frameworks or policy guidelines. Conversations with these workers showed that their work motivation was often their personal positionality and activism. Thus, while previous chapters presented a top-down analysis of museum practices, this chapter will aim to discuss a bottom-up force pushed by museum professionals, often challenging institutional frameworks that they are, at the same time, part of. In this sense, this chapter will primarily answer my subsidiary question number three: How do museum workers understand museums' social responsibility regarding diversity representation, and how does this influence their practice?

To explore this, the chapter will be divided into three parts. The first one will characterise the demographics of museum workforces in the post-dictatorship period, highlighting recent changes in this labour force. These changes relate to professionals from working-class backgrounds entering the museum sector, notably since the 2000s, in Chile. It should be noted that although all my participants allowed a complete identification of their names as sources for this thesis, some of the stories they told me for this chapter reveal sensitive opinions regarding their relationships at work. Thus, I have opted to anonymise some of these sources for this chapter.

In the second part of this chapter, I will explore how the social responsibilities of museums are understood in the Chilean context by the workers characterised above. I will argue that recent social movements have started shaping museum practice by pushing workers to self-reflect on their social roles. Notably, I will analyse how the *estallido social*, the social protests that occurred since October 2019, strongly challenged museum workers and pushed new and urgent debates regarding the social role of Chilean museums. Lastly, the third part of this chapter will introduce the ideas of 'museum activism' and 'museum disobedience', noting how these workforces have started to work from the standpoint of contestation, questioning the values of the institutions they are part of.

6.2. Who are the Chilean museum workers?

There have been few studies of the cultural sector's workers in Chile. Even fewer characterise specifically museum workforces. While this research does not have the capacity to address this data gap, I will draw on what my interviewees told me about the sector and their personal stories, in addition to a few national reports released in the last twenty years regarding the labour force in the cultural sector in Chile. In this section, I will discuss who are the Chilean

museum workers based on three key elements. Firstly, their demographics, based on previous studies on cultural professionals in Chile. Secondly, the process of professionalisation since the 1990s, as discussed by my interviewees mostly and the aforementioned studies. And thirdly, the emergence of 'new workforces', notably from working-class backgrounds.

6.2.1. Demographics of Chilean museum workers and inequality in the sector

When looking at previous research focused on museum workers, this information tends to be blurry. Since the creation of the National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA), some national studies have been conducted, but often addressing the cultural sector as a whole. Art museum workers are sometimes tricky to identify in these studies, as they are classified under different, overlapping sectors, including the visual arts sector, cultural management, and the heritage sector. This subsection will summarise the information gathered regarding art museum workers from three previous studies. The first one is titled *The workers of the cultural sector in Chile, a characterisation study*, released in 2004, along with the creation of the CNCA. The second research was published ten years later, conducted by the Chilean Observatory of Cultural Policies (OPC) in collaboration with the CNCA (Brodsky, Negrón & Pössel, 2014), and titled *The scenario of the cultural worker in Chile.* And finally, a very recent report released in 2022 by the MINCAP, titled *National registry of cultural, artistic and heritage agents, an approach to their measurement and characterisation.*

While the first two studies focused on the situation of cultural workers in Chile (their working conditions, unionisation, professional training, etc.), the latter was the first research conducted on a national level that addressed the socio-cultural characteristics of cultural workers in the country. This was based on the self-registration of cultural workers and institutions in a national directory, and the report is an initial analysis of the data gathered. This study was designed as

a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2020, the MINCAP has faced the challenge of not being able to address the issues that impacted cultural workers because they needed a characterisation or updated data regarding the sector (MINCAP, 2022, p.2). The 2022 report is the first formal attempt to address this issue. While museum workers are still not explicitly approached, it is still possible to identify critical elements of the cultural sector relevant to this research, as will be explored in this and the coming sub-sections.

For the first time, the characterisation presented in the 2022 report considered workforce diversity criteria, such as ethnicity and non-binary gender categories. This is relevant to highlight, as there is little research regarding diversity management in museum workforces worldwide (Sandell, 2010, p.214). According to scholar Richard Sandell,

> diversity in the museum workforce will increasingly become a strategic imperative for museums if they are successfully to become more reflective of diverse societal concerns and meet the contemporary challenges presented by a political agenda that is dominated by issues of social inclusion and access (2010, p.214).

Considering this, although not focused on museum workers exclusively, the 2022 report highlights a relevant characterisation of the labour force that can serve future research regarding the link between their political and symbolic diversity representation. For instance, regarding ethnicity distribution, the 2022 Chilean report informs that 15.4% of the participants declared to belong to a native nation or to be a tribal afro-descendant (MINCAP, 2022, p.28), which goes over the national average of 12.1%[13] (INE, 2018, p.3). That said, this section of participants was notably concentrated in *artes populares* (craftmanship) (41.7%) and immaterial

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[13] This rate only considers Indigenous peoples, as tribal and afro-descendants were not considered as a category in the most recent Chilean census.

cultural heritage fields (32.6%). I will return to the relevance of this in the following two chapters, where I discuss traditional categorisations of cultural production in museum acquisition cases.

While ethnicity is a very recent criterion by which this sector in Chile is studied, gender has been considered in previous research, which allows for identifying an increase in the non-male workforce in the last twenty years. Women in the sector were generally underrepresented in 2004, with only 36.8 of the workers identifying as women (CNCA, 2004, p.36). On the other hand, the 2022 study reports that the gender distribution of the cultural sector is: 51.2% men, 43.6% women, 0.9% non-binary, and 0.3% trans (MINCAP, 2022, p.27). Identifying non-gender-conforming individuals is also a new criterion in this survey, representing new and exciting data regarding cultural workers' characterisation in Chile.

On the other hand, the most comprehensive characterisation offered by these reports is the socio-economical aspect of cultural workers. The study published in 2004 already pointed out precarity issues in the sector, noting 'pluri-employment', i.e., most cultural workers have more than one job simultaneously (CNCA, 2004, p.18). This has not considerably changed since then, as by 2022, 50.1% of participants declared to have between two and five jobs per year, while 22.3% declared to have more than five (MINCAP, 2022, p.127). Not all these jobs were necessarily culture-related, as only 34.5% reported working for the cultural sector exclusively, and 53.2% declared to have employment that shared their occupational time with other sectors (MINCAP, 2022, p.132). Having this in consideration, it is also relevant to notice that cultural workers who received all of their income from the cultural sector only represented 19.8% of the workers, implying a significant part of the workers in the sector are unpaid labour (MINCAP, 2022, p.134). This was also confirmed by many of my interviewees, who stated they had begun their careers in museums with unpaid internships that often lasted over a year.

Furthermore, the 2022 study collected crucial data regarding the 'other sources' of income for the workers who did not receive all their income from their cultural work. One relevant finding was that 37.7% of workers declared 'own, family or friends' funds' as their *primary* source of income. More interestingly, the visual arts sector was reported to be the one that depended more on personal capital, as 42.7% of the workers reported to have as their primary income their 'own, family or friends' funds' (MINCAP, 2022, p.140). This was already highlighted in the 2004 report, which argues that the visual arts have been traditionally considered an 'aristocratic activity', noting that most people involved in the sector have historically belonged to an economic oligarchy in Chile (CNCA, 2004, p.40).

Based on this data, the art museum sector is notably shaped by workers from the upper classes in Chile. This is because, firstly, they had been associated with the visual arts sector due to a traditional understanding of the fine arts as part of cultural capital. But secondly, the precarity of the sector makes casualised jobs and unpaid labour unavoidable to some extent. This means that forming a career in the cultural sector in Chile is a privilege that requires family support or economic capital.

Furthermore, due to the lack of formal training for museum workers in Chile, access to the sector has historically required social capital, also reserved for the upper classes. By this, I mean that many of my participants reported that a relevant part of jobs in the field is assigned based on network, personal contacts or family connections. This, once more, implies that workers from poorer backgrounds will struggle more to access jobs, making them rely on side jobs in other sectors, as reported in all of the characterisation studies mentioned above, perpetuating inequality in the workforce.

Other forms of privilege could also influence and intersect with this inequality. For instance, while the 2004 report does not present specific data regarding income gender gaps, it states

explicitly that women's salaries are always lower than men's and significantly lower outside Santiago (CNCA, 2004, p.34). Furthermore, this report noted that 63% of workers that have a technical degree and 71.6% of workers that had a specialised certification were men (CNCA, 2004, p.36), suggesting that women workers tended to have less access to higher education and training in general, at least until the early 2000s. These kinds of intersecting issues are widely under-researched in the mentioned reports. New categories considered in the 2022 study, such as ethnicity and non-gender-conforming groups, might also face similar intersecting struggles in the sector, which calls for further research in the future.

Consequently, while this concentration of cultural workforce in the upper classes, particularly in the visual arts, has been socially reproduced by the ideal of 'arts for arts' sake', it has significantly perpetuated inequality across the workforce sector. This was repeatedly reported by many of my participants who came from a working-class background. They reported having faced several struggles to get permanent jobs and that these often came much later in their careers compared to their upper-class counterparts. That said, they also noted that this started to change in the post-dictatorship period, and the critical element they highlighted for this change was increased access to higher education since the 1990s.

6.2.2. Higher education and professionalisation in the Chilean cultural sector

A change in the social demographics of cultural workers was already noticed in the 2004 report. Back then, it was found that people that work in culture tended to have more years of education than the average Chilean. Most importantly, they also tended to have had more education than their parent's generation (CNCA, 2004, p.113). This point was underpinned by the fact that the working classes started to have increased access to universities from the 1980s and 1990s. This process of broader access to higher education in Chile began with the 1981 reform enacted

by the dictatorship authorities that aimed to privatise the sector. Pinochet's objective was to develop a market-based model accompanied by a loan scheme managed by the state. This model continued to be reinforced in the first few years of the post-dictatorship period and was only revised by a new reform in 2016 led by former president Michelle Bachelet (Espinoza, 2017, p.8). This reform proposed a mixed model that considered gratuity for lower-income students and resulted from significant student strikes in 2006 and 2011 due to the debt caused by the privatised model.

That being said, the privatisation of higher education is also the reason behind the increased access to higher education in Chile in the last five decades. The overall access to universities in the population between 18 to 24 years old went from 8% to 53% in the period 1980-2015 (Espinoza, 2017, p.8). Furthermore, lower-income students notably increased their access thanks to scholarship programmes developed since the 1990s (Espinoza, 2017, p.20). For instance, the lowest socio-economic quintile rose from 4.1% in 1990 to 36.1% in 2015 (Espinoza, 2017, p.21). Non-male and ethnic-minority students also started to access universities in increasing numbers in this period. Women students went from 27.3% in 1987 to 54.8% in 2015 (Espinoza, 2017, p.23), and ethnic minorities, although considerably under-researched, went from 9.6% in 1996 to 18.6% in 2009 (Espinoza, 2017, p.23).

This explosive growth has undoubtedly impacted the cultural sector as well. The 2004 report noted the rise in professionalisation in the cultural field overall in Chile. That report also discussed that 'professionalisation' refers not only to formal education but also to a particular attitude on behalf of the worker, manifested in the persistence and focus on the development of the [professional] activity' (CNCA, 2004, p.114). This is particularly relevant in Chile, where the offer of formal training courses is limited. That said, the growth of the higher education market brought a boom of art schools flourishing in the university sector in Chile, notably since

the 2000s (S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021). These mainly focused on forming artists instead of art managers or other art-related professions. In fact, according to the study conducted in 2014, 63.5% of the participants considered themselves an artist (Brodsky, Negrón and Pössel, 2014, p.17). This number showed a reduction by 2022, where 55.5% of participants declared their primary activity to be the 'creation, interpretation or design of artworks, goods and services' (MINCAP, 2022, p.37). Arguably, this could be caused by the rephrasing of the question (from how they title themselves to what is their main activity) but also by an increasing professionalisation of other roles in the sector, notably focused on cultural management.

Overall, workers in the cultural sector with a university degree have steadily increased since the end of the dictatorship, going from 30.4% in 2004 to 42.7% in 2022. Workers with postgraduate degrees have doubled, going from 6.2 in 2004 to 12.5% in 2022 (CNCA, 2004, p.80; MINCAP, 2022, p.28). This means that by 2022, 8 out of 10 cultural workers will have attended higher education (MINCAP, 2022, p.208), demonstrating more availability of specialised degrees in the sector. Although there is no specific data available regarding how women and ethnic minorities have increased their presence here, my interviewees reported an increasing feminised workforce in the arts (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021; C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021) and a generation of Indigenous students entering art schools in university notably since the 2000s (C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021). That said, although there is an evident development of specialisation in the cultural sector, my interviewees reiterated that the inequality in the workforce persists and notably affects workers from less privileged backgrounds. For example, many of them argued that the debt they had for their undergraduate degrees hindered their chances to attend postgraduate courses without a scholarship.

A relevant element not explored by the reports analysed above is the lack of programmes focused on museum professions more specifically. My interviewees reported that the programmes they studied, mostly art history and visual arts, did not prepare them for their current roles at museums or working with collections. This meant that most museum workers tended to learn the specificities of their job 'once in the job'. This often implied learning *from* colleagues but also learning *with* colleagues. Former director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) Francisco Brugnoli reflected on this, saying, 'in our museum, we have trained the museum workers. I have contributed to this but have not been the only one. We have trained each other. We have learned, let's say, gradually' (F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021). That said, the approaches mentioned above have pushed a strong sense of associativity in the sector, which, nonetheless, has consequences for workers from less privileged backgrounds. This is because workers' networks tend to be informal and strongly linked to social capital. As argued by my interviewees, this has perpetuated a system where knowledge is concentrated among upper-class workers.

Lastly, one final crucial element highlighted by my interviewees in this regard is the increasing interest of museum workers in studying abroad, aiming to get a more specialised profile in the museum sector (M Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021). While studying abroad is associated with considerable economic, social and cultural capital, this has also pushed a change in museum roles, with an emerging influence of global practices, such as the emergence of 'programme curators' (F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021) aiming to develop a curatorial approach not only to the exhibitions but also educational programmes, artists' residencies and other public-engagement activities. Some interviewees also noted that this professionalisation is, at times, going faster than institutional development

(S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021). This often means that there is a growing, highly skilled workforce that then struggles to find formal job posts available.

6.3.3. A new workforce in a changing sector

While the previous sections have started to build an understanding of inequality and challenges in the museum workforce in Chile, this section will focus on a new generation of museum workers. This 'new workforce' often came from a working-class background and entered the cultural sector thanks to the increased access to higher education since the 1990s. This new workforce, then, is characterised by the struggles narrated by some of my interviewees. They entered the cultural sector without the cultural, social, and economic capital that cultural workers traditionally used to have in Chile. This implies different challenges but also different mindsets and changes in the museum sector's work culture.

Regarding challenges, some interviewees reflected how this implied that it took them 'longer' to enter public institutions, as they had to go through less traditional paths to learn. For example, Gloria Cortés, a curator of the National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA), discussed that she could only get a job at the museum after conducting and publishing impactful research in her late thirties (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021). In this changing workforce, some workers worked for very long-time outside institutions and managed to train themselves independently, based on project-based, casual jobs that they complemented with side jobs in other sectors. Some younger professionals learned through unpaid internships and managed to build a career in public museums but in very precarious working conditions (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). This is particularly the case for education teams, which is where much of this workforce is concentrated:

> At a level of [permanent] teams, [the access of working-class workers] is really recent. For
>
> example, I see it in the mediation teams; they were maybe the first teams to open themselves to

this possibility, for obvious reasons, because they come from the education field… Right? But this [phenomenon] does not have more than fifteen years. In the areas of curation, collection managers… It is tremendously recent. I mean, ten years maximum. And in some cases… There are very few cases that you can find in those roles. I think there is still some lack of openness there. Particularly in art museums, let's say, because there are other museums where yes, from the beginning they are there, they have been considerably more open to critical perspectives and social renewal (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

There are three interesting elements in this quote. Firstly, it highlights how workers with working-class backgrounds started to appear in education roles in museums, as education curricula are widely available in Chile, compared to cultural management programmes. Education has also been historically considered a promising career for working-class women in the country. Interestingly, this is often where 'inclusion programmes' are developed (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019). Secondly, this reinforces that more specialised roles still require some level of social and economic capital for their training. This is the case for collection managers, as there is no formal training for this area of collections in the country. And thirdly, it also notices how this is an issue, especially in the arts sector, identified as notably elitist earlier in this chapter. Cortés goes further on this point and says:

Art continues to be a world for the elite in Chile and Latin America in general. (…) If you come from another space, it is difficult to be validated. Because you did not study in the same schools basically, it is not even about university. It is because you were not born in the same networks (…). They all know each other. So that is shocking. They all studied in the same schools. And that leaves a mark, a route, a field which you cannot even enter to compete (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

While talking about these things, Gloria Cortés told me a personal story of her childhood, and her relationship with the MNBA, the museum where she is now one of the two permanent

curators. She told me she came from a working-class background and attended a state school in a peripheral area of Santiago during the dictatorship. When she was nine, a teacher took her and her classmates by public transport to the MNBA, located in the city centre. But, she remembers, right at the door of the museum, the guard stopped them:

> They did not let us in. Because we were too poor. My classmates did not have any relationship with cultural spaces. I did not have a relationship with those spaces either, but my dad and mom loved history and the arts from the periphery… So my mom taught me to draw. My dad got me history encyclopaedias. So I was the weird kid in the class. And that experience [at the MNBA] left a lasting mark on me. (…) We ended up in the National History Museum, which was the place for that marginalised childhood, where the indoctrination was needed. (…) And when I grew up, I… I resolved that I would enter that space [the MNBA].

Cortés was not alone in that resolution. Many other workers from less privileged backgrounds tended to express a strong sense of injustice regarding the inequalities in the sector. And as will be seen later in this chapter, this became a motivation for challenging elitism in their professional practice. Similarly, both Indigenous contemporary artists I interviewed for this research highlighted this issue and how challenging it was for them to enter an arts sector while coming from a marginalised group:

> They have this very weird understanding, like, they take for granted that if someone makes art, it is because they have money; otherwise, what are you doing here? I mean, 'how would a *roto*[14] do art?' which is my case; I am a very marginal individual that came from nothing and started to make art in this very complex scene (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021)

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[14] 'Roto' is a slang that has been used over centuries in Chile with different meanings. It originally referred to people from a poor background, growing up in the city, but having no education. The term has been historically used by the upper classes in pejorative ways to refer to lower-classes folks. This is the way in which Bernardo uses the term in this quote. That said, in some contexts, the term has also been reclaimed by lower classes to point out the role of working classes in shaping national identity.

In the first years of my career, I had to have three jobs to be able to make art, I mean, I had a job just to be able to afford to produce art, and that is super violent because, it is true, there are other people of my generation that have all the capital of their inheritance. Not just economic [capital] but also cultural, political [capital]. (…) I feel like I am a crack in that inheritance of hegemonic, endogamic art. It is quite terrible. But at the same time, I exploit myself a lot [laughs], to a brutal level. I do not know if this is really healthy or that good (…). At the end of the day, the system of the arts is very unequal. And institutions do not do anything for that to change (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

What is relevant in the situation described in these quotes is how addressing these inequalities often relies on personal will. As Calfuqueo describes, they were able to build a career not thanks to institutional 'inclusiveness' but what they described as self-exploitation. Another of my interviewees, a museum worker, told me that.

This is why I felt the need to open institutional spaces to other people (…) because I had worked so hard to enter them. I felt like I deserved to occupy that space (…), but that has taken an enormous toll on me; it has been one of the worst experiences in my professional career…

I consider it relevant to differentiate institutional motivations of 'inclusiveness' from personal motivations of inclusion here. Throughout this chapter, I will argue that while there has been an increasing interest in Chilean cultural policy for representing diversity since the 1990s, what has pushed institutional change has been personal motivations fuelled by this sense of injustice in museum workers. Furthermore, this motivation often overlaps, is in dialogue with and challenges institutional aims. To analyse this, it is necessary to characterise how museum workers understand the so-called 'social role' of the institutions they work for and how they differentiate themselves from that framework.

6.3. Social responsibilities of museums

As discussed earlier in this thesis, museums' 'social role' is usually related to the rise of the new museology in the second half of the 20th century. Nonetheless, it can be discussed that 'museums are, by their nature, socially responsible institutions' (Fleming, 2018, p.9). Early museums 'aimed to associate the museum with the nation and the constitution of a unified collective, if not universal memory' (Brown and Mairesse, 2018, p.528). Although different from our current understanding of social responsibility, museums have been aiming for the 'public good' since their establishment. That said, I will argue here that the understanding of the social role of museums has not only changed throughout history but is also socially situated. This was one of the core challenges of the new museum definition by the International Council of Museums (ICOM). What a museum is for varies considerably depending on each case and context, putting tension in the attempt to agree on a global definition that serves *all* museums, everywhere (Brown and Mairesse, 2018, p.526).

And yet, there has been an undeniable tendency worldwide to expand the boundaries of museums' social responsibility. This has resulted in museums increasingly focusing on understanding their audiences while simultaneously getting involved in contemporary social issues (Fleming, 2018, p.9). The paradox here is that what museums must do to be socially responsible depends on the needs of their specific communities. Thus, this social role cannot be fulfilled without a broad awareness of the museums' contexts. Therefore, I consider that the current globalised museum sector should search not for a universal definition of the social role of museums but for an awareness of the locally situated realities of these institutions. This awareness must be a starting point for constant dialogue in the museum sector globally, which can allow for increasing cooperation and mutual nourishment. Following this discussion, wherefore:

In Anglophone scholarship today, 'social role' brings to mind the work of recent scholars such as Sandell (2002, 2016) or Crooke (2007), and is a contemporary critical issue linked to governmental agendas concerning social inclusion. At the same time, contemporary Latin American scholarship in Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese, foregrounded by ICOFOM-LAM, traces a way of seeing where the needs of people (rather than policy makers or funders) are taken as a starting point (Brown and Mairesse, 2018, p.527).

Noticing this difference allows a better understanding of the social responsibilities of museums in Chile. For instance, while in the Global North, there has been a tendency for the 'museum as Mall', shaped by an audience-consumption focus and increasing privatised funding, this is far from Chilean museums' reality, where private funding is virtually non-existent. At the same time, the prevalence of public funding in Chilean and Latin American museums has reinforced the model discussed by Brown and Mairesse above, as 'the needs of people' become the core objective of museum practice, as funding needs to be 'justified' to their funding body (often the MINCAP). Moreover, I will argue here that this people's needs focus has made Chilean museums more sensitive to social inequality and political struggles.

6.3.1. What is a 'socially responsible museum' in Chile?

When interviewing museum workers, I asked them two key questions. Firstly, 'what do you think are the social responsibilities of museums?' and secondly, 'what is the social responsibility of the area of collections specifically?'. I identified three primary outcomes from these questions, which I will explore in this subsection. The first concerns the inclusiveness and representativity of diversity, and the second concerns fairness and inequality among workforces. And lastly, an understanding of the area of collections is strongly connected to accessing and putting heritage 'at the service' of people.

Starting with the first outcome, the lack of representation of diverse identities in museums was often understood as connected to inequality. Eva Cancino, head of collections at MNBA, commented on this: 'I think that the door must be opened for other stories indeed. You cannot continue to hegemonise. You cannot keep perpetuating the inequalities' (personal communication, December 18, 2019). This discussion was particularly relevant in the context of national museums. For many of my cases, being a 'national' museum represented various challenges in terms of audience. While some museums like the Museum of Solidarity Salvador Allende (MSSA) were able to have a more direct relationship with the community around the museum, national museums such as the MNBA and MAC struggled with this. In these two museums, workers noted that their 'community' was too broad and that any attempt to focus on narrower communities was often perceived as going against their national aim.

Arguably, this demonstrates how the original social role of national museums has changed radically since their foundation and updating their responsibilities relies on a dialogue with their contemporary context. This reflection was particularly relevant for the MNBA. This museum was founded during the early years of the Chilean nation, and its current building was inaugurated for the Chilean Centenary in 1910. The Centenary was a celebration of the first one hundred years of independence. The Centenary reinforced national identity and unified *Chileanness*: notably white, highlighting Spanish-descent, Western and modern. This is precisely what gets put into tension when museum workers attempt to put 'inclusive' policies in place:

> You have to take responsibility for the museum because the [MNBA] is a symbol of the Centenary. So, what are you celebrating? Which nation are you celebrating? A centenary of what? **Today, the museum belongs to everyone**. The museum must be a space for the representation of the community, where that community can reflect on what they do not see

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about themselves, about those things that are their own conflicts. (…) Here, you work for a general audience, from those who come from the street and enter to use the toilet, to specialised audiences. Those are very different experiences. So, you work for all those audiences simultaneously, which is a very interesting challenge (P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021).

On a very similar note, Eva Cancino noted:

I think it is necessary to highlight and make evident the exclusion of women, make evident the exclusion of Indigenous peoples; as I said, the department of collections is also doing that research. I think this kind of thing, exposing this sort of thing, makes you realise that **the social role of the museum [is not] inclusion policies only; it is about social justice**, do you see? I do not want to use the word 'inclusion' because I do not think I am doing a favour to them, as inclusion is often treated. But the social responsibility… **It is social justice that the museum has 'the different peoples that inhabit Chile' represented**. That is the role, I think, of a national museum today (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

This was also a relevant element from the artists' point of view. Calfuqueo and Oyarzún, both artists that explored their Mapuche identity in their work, commented on how important it was to them to be part of public collections, as it allowed their work to be accessed by more people. But also, they both reflected on how education departments in prominent museums allowed a mediation of their work when presented to audiences. This was highlighted as a critical difference between being part of a museum collection and a private one: in a museum collection, the social role of the museum implied a responsibility regarding the critical, ethical, and educational use of their artworks (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021; B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021).

Regarding the second outcome of these conversations, many interviewees argued that museums' 'social responsibilities' could also mean being fair to their own workers. This notion was often shaped by their own sense of inequality in the sector. Some museum workers reflected on how paradoxical it was to aim to be socially responsible while asking artists to donate their work for free, especially when they were part of marginalised groups (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019; P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). Seba Calfuqueo reflected on this as well and extended it to all museum workers:

> Museums truly must take responsibility for paying artists for exhibitions. [Or] think of the education teams (…) Because many times those people [museum workers] work without a contract, in an eternal internship. That only perpetuates that vulgar idea of the museum, that it does not even pay its workers! So, I do not know… The museum needs first to solve its administrative and payment issues and then get worried about what it will propose as an institution to the world. (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

This point overlaps with other discussions held in this chapter. While it has been discussed that the education department is where more working-class workers are concentrated, they are also the ones that tend to be in the most precarious working situations. Moreover, they are vital to addressing the museums' social role as they mediate artworks to audiences. Thus, it is logical to question that, to be socially responsible, the museum cannot overlook inequality in its museum workforce.

Lastly, the outcome of these conversations had to do with the social responsibilities of the area of collections in particular. As evident until now, when discussing the social role of museums, answers tended to focus on education departments. But when I asked collection managers about *their* role, there was a notion firmly embedded in access and conservation:

I think [the social responsibility of collections] is to document artworks properly and to make them circulate, generate access, and research. I think that is it, access, research, cataloguing… And conservation, obviously (C Yasky, personal communication, December 12, 2019)

Inclusion? Well… That is sort of out of my hands (…). We are more like a service (…). For me, personally, I think it is essential to see the collection as a public good, and thus it belongs to all Chileans. So for anyone interested in knowing about it, in doing an exhibition, a curatorship, research, like you with your thesis… Our duty is to put it at the service of any citizen who wants to know about it (F Castillo, personal communication, December 17, 2019).

Although I do not necessarily disagree with this overall, what was missing was an understanding of collections and collecting practices as political, just like other areas of museum practice. There was a generalised notion of collection departments as more 'neutral', which implied a general lack of awareness of the collecting process as a socially situated practice. Even for workers that expressed very critical views on the social role of museums overall, it tended to seem less necessary to them when it had to do with collections and acquisition practices. Arguably, this is problematic because, as reported by curators, museums then struggled to present contemporary political issues when exhibiting their collections. I will continue to build on this point in the following chapters.

6.4. Social movements and 'disobedient' museum practice in Chile

In previous sections of this chapter, I have characterised a new museum workforce in Chile, notably of working-class backgrounds. I have also argued that these workers shared a sense of injustice regarding inequality and elitism in the sector. And ultimately, this has led them to understand the social role of museums as closely related to diversity representation and the development of a fairer arts sector overall. In the rest of this chapter, I will build on these ideas to argue that this new workforce has also strongly positioned itself politically in the

contemporary social landscape of the country. This positionality tends to be very critical of the traditional museum role and has shaped a 'disobedient' standpoint in some of the museum labour force. Disobedient in the sense that institutional frameworks have remained conservative, while workers have increasingly taken an activist standpoint in their professional practice. To unpack this idea, I will explore how museum workers reacted and engaged with the social protests of 2019.

6.4.1. Study case: museum workers' positionality during the *estallido social*

As I briefly introduced in Chapter 3, the *estallido social* was a series of protests and riots that happened throughout Chile at the end of 2019. Because I conducted my preliminary study in December of that year, all my initial interviews drew on the recent events to discuss the social role of the museum, notably shaping my data in this regard. To offer more context, the protests started due to the rise of the metro fare to 30 Chilean pesos, the equivalent of £0.03. Although a seemly marginal increase, this led to high school students' protests of evading paying the metro fare by jumping over turnstiles. Students were then followed by workers, and the situation escalated rapidly into mass protests in central and peripheral Santiago, notably on Friday, October 18th. While the protests started with the metro fare rise, this was just the tipping point of an accumulation of social struggles. The protests quickly diversified in their purpose, becoming a broad movement against systemic inequality in Chilean society and the rise of the cost of living and essential services, such as healthcare and education (Peters, 2020, p.52). Most of these services were privatised during the dictatorship through enacting the 1980's Constitution (still in force today), which explains why protesters then started to demand constitutional change in 2019. As noted earlier in this thesis, these protests were also shaped by strong police brutality, leading to multiple human rights violations reported by the United

Nations Human Rights Office (2019). These were notably eye mutilations caused by police forces shooting rubber bullets directly into protesters' eyes (see McDonald, 2019).

The epicentre of the *estallido social* was around Plaza Italia, a big roundabout in the centre of Santiago, where Chileans usually gather to protest or celebrate. During the protests, protesters renamed this place as *Plaza Dignidad* (Dignity Plaza), referring to the movement's motto: to protest until dignity becomes a custom. The area around Plaza Dignidad became a battlefield for the following months, where the confrontation between protesters and the police was common. Thus, this area was often referred to as the *zero zone.* It is crucial to note here that there is a great concentration of cultural institutions around Plaza Dignidad as it is in the city centre, including MNBA and MAC, located just two blocks from the Plaza. Following this scenario, Chilean sociologist Tomás Peters researched cultural institutions' experiences during the *estallido social*. Peters narrates how these institutions were impacted by the protests from the very first day:

> Museums and cultural spaces near the zero zone were in the middle of various activities and programmes. In Chile, the second half of October is marked by the return from the celebrations of independence [in late September] and by the fact that the weather improves (the start of the spring). During the Thursday and Friday of that week [when the protests started], half of the spaces had planned exhibition openings or were staring new cycles of programmes. (…)
>
> From 6 pm [on October 18th 2019], the concentration of people in the zero zone grew exponentially, and, according to the interviewees, the museum teams kept an eye on the situation. (…) Nevertheless, in the following hours, the first confrontations between the police and protesters started, which led all spaces to close their doors, evacuate the public and ensure the safety of their workers. According to the interviewees, the level of violence was unprecedented compared to past experiences [of protests in the area]: in addition to the

destruction of public infrastructure, nearby buildings were burned, barricades were built, and there was strong police repression (Peters, 2020, pp.58-59; translation is mine).

This led museums to remain closed that weekend and reduce their opening times for the next few months. My interviewees from museums nearby the zero zone also noted how this brought great insecurity in the area and how they often found themselves in the middle of confrontations between police and protesters right outside the museum. Peters noted that many institutions opted even to block their doors and windows with bunker-like iron planks to protect the inside of the buildings (2020, p.59), as restaurants and businesses in the area did as well.

Furthermore, the *estallido social* not only impacted museums in material or practical terms. It also notably challenged museums symbolically. For instance, many of my interviewees expressed how they felt it triggered an urgent responsibility to integrate more diverse 'voices' in museum spaces. In the words of Pamela Navarro: 'Voices from the outside are necessary. Especially today, when everyone is out on the street [protesting]. So, if we are not, we will lose relevance…' (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). Other interviewees noted that this urgency came from the fact that museums had not openly dealt with the inequalities of contemporary Chilean society until then. Calfuqueo pointed out that,

> The institution has had to rush into these discussions because they did not take this into consideration [before]. I mean… They have had to keep up with the fact that the world is changing. And that is ok because the institutions were keeping themselves in the past. (…) They were always proposing perspectives from outdated notions and, considering everything that is happening today, that is a very bad decision (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

These reflections did not only emerge in museum teams or in the arts sector exclusively. Protesters directly challenged museums near the zero zone through graffiti that notably covered

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the buildings of the MNBA and MAC during the *estallido social* (see images below). Some of these graffiti were generally related to the protests, but others were directly challenging the role of the arts and museums in Chilean society. As some interviewees discussed, many museum workers defended the graffiti. They asked it not to be cleaned from the building's wall, as it was considered an exciting manifestation of the protest and the history of the museums.

Figure 1: External wall of the MNBA. Picture taken during my fieldwork, on 18th December 2019. The graffiti in purple reads as 'how does art deals with our dead?'.

But this was not necessarily a generalised agreement across museum workforces. Many interviewees noted that this situation raised debate and tension among the teams. While some wanted to express their support for the protests openly, others considered they needed to 'remain neutral'. As narrated by one of my interviewees (anonymised by request), some of the 'political differences' they might always have within the teams suddenly became severe disagreements. This was also reported by Peters, who additionally highlighted that these differences of opinion were marked by the hierarchies of workers, where directorships tended to keep themselves out of these debates. 'In this sense, tensions between workers and

directors were highlighted regarding the "strategies for dealing" with the social conflict' (Peters, 2020, 60; translation is mine).

Figure 2: External wall of the MAC. Picture taken during my fieldwork, on 18th December 2019. Graffiti in red reads as 'long live peripheral art', the one in blue 'art for the people', and the one in black 'art will be militant, or else it will not be art'.

That being said, while some workers opted not to participate, many museum workers' organisations expressed their support openly. Some cultural institutions in the zero zone were used as a refuge or as first aid stands for injured protesters, and many others hung banners in support of the protests (Peters, 2020, p.59). In fact, out of the cases considered in this thesis, MNBA, MAC, and MSSA hung banners on their facade, as shown in the images below. This led to museums positioning themselves explicitly in the political landscape, hosting open spaces for social debate, and creating sectorial organisations, such as 'Museos Zona Cero' (*zero zone museums*), an organisation of museum workers located close to the epicentre of

social protests and riots. This associativity was characterised by being worker-led and not officially recognised by the authorities of each institution.
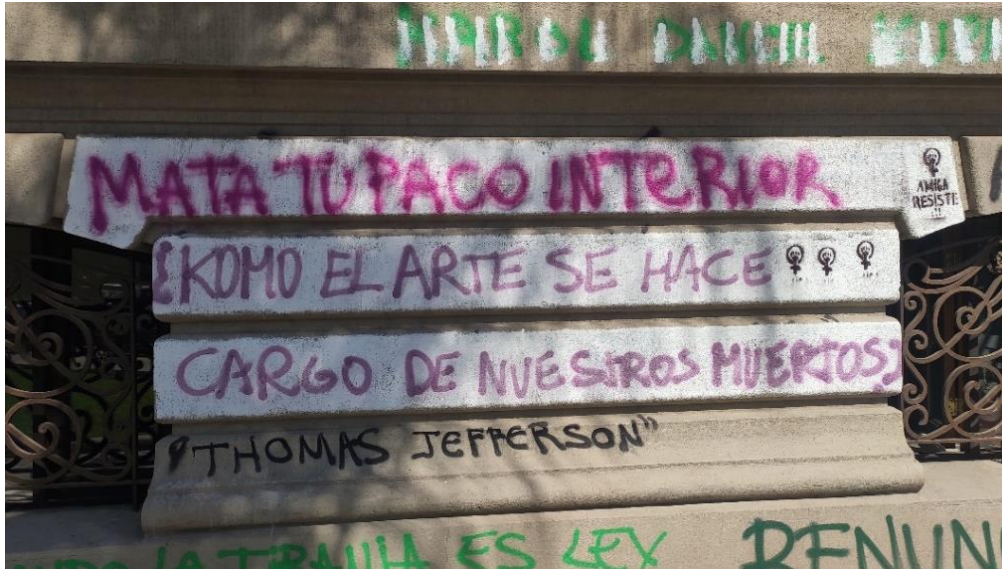

Figure 3: External wall of the MNBA. Picture taken during my fieldwork, on 18th December 2019. The graffiti in purple reads as 'Against the art that neutralises. The niche of capitalist art'.

According to my interviewees, these organisations became spaces for sectorial reflection that are partially absent in the Chilean museum sector. The urgency of situating themselves in the *estallido social*, not as an institution but as subjects, led museum workers to meet and discuss their work. One of my interviewees told me, 'we discussed how we are hanging in each institution, how we deal with the public, until what time we open, why are we even open, which days, how do we reflect and question our work day by day in the middle of the contingency, of the uncertainty'. This demonstrates that workers were understanding their everyday practice, even in the most administrative sense, from a political standpoint that must acknowledge its social context.

Figure 4: MSSA façade. Picture taken during my fieldwork, on 23rd December 2019. The banner reads as 'supporting a culture of dignity'.

Interviewees noted that this kind of space for reflection is scarce in the museum sector. Due to museums' precarity, small teams, and huge workloads, chances to meet and reflect are limited and challenging to organise. While associativity has risen in the last few decades, it is still not a strongly unionised sector. The urgency of situating themselves in a contingent scenario pushed them to do so. Although it is too soon to study the impact this might have long term, it is evident that the *estallido social* caused museum workers to question and reshape their practices. Eva Cancino reflected on this specifically regarding acquisitions:

Because of the *estallido*, we have also discussed that we must question our acquisition methods… Because we know there are gaps. So, it is about how the museum deals with a period

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of social crisis, which also directly questions the inclusion of Mapuche culture and [gender] parity

(E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Figure 5: MAC façade. Picture taken during my fieldwork, on 18th December 2019. The banner reads as 'MAC workers supporting dignity'.

Cancino's words resonate with what has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, regarding how museum workers tended to link the social role of museums with diversity representation overall. This can also be seen in the banner the MNBA hung, as shown above. While MAC and MSSA banners referred to dignity, which encompasses the overall inequality the *estallido social* was denouncing, MNBA took a more specific position. The MNBA team chose to hang a banner

explicitly referencing the violence that takes place in Wallmapu, Mapuche territory. This was accompanied by an image of an MNBA collection artwork by Chilean painter Pedro Luna, portraying a Mapuche *lonko* (a chief of several Mapuche communities). This artwork was, in fact, one of the few works in the collection that represented an Indigenous person, according to my MNBA interviewees[15].

Figure 6: MNBA façade. Picture taken during my fieldwork, on 18th December 2019. The banner reads 'No more violence in Wallmapu'

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[15] This artwork's information is available at: https://www.surdoc.cl/registro/2-4995

While the *estallido social* works as an interesting case to analyse how social movements have impacted museum practice in Chile, it is relevant to note that this is not an isolated case. The banner mentioned above, with Pedro Luna's painting on it, is an example of this. Although the authorship of the painting is from a non-Indigenous identifying artist, my interviewees noted how this painting had been 'rescued' by the museum staff after being offered to the museum in very bad conditions in 2015. The decision to accept an artwork in these conditions was based on prior conversations the museum staff have had regarding the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples at the MNBA collection. Therefore, although the banner mentioned above was hung in 2019, this was the result of ongoing conversations about diversity representation at the MNBA in the last decade. On a similar note, many workers noted that most of the gender inequalities debates raised by the *estallido social* were not new to the museum, as I will explore in chapter 7. Arguably, what changed with the *estallido social* was the urgency of these conversations, which became a public debate not only in the cultural sector but also in Chilean society overall.

I argue here that processes of this kind, where social movements influence and dialogue with museum practice, have been happening in the last few decades in Chile. If we start from the premise that museums are open systems, they can never be isolated from their contexts. Most certainly, museums have always been shaped by their social contexts to some extent. Nevertheless, during my interviews, I found an explicit self-reflection pushed by social movements. What I would like to highlight about this self-reflection is that it was shaped mainly by workers' positionality and how they politically understood their role and responsibilities as cultural workers. When I refer to positionality, I refer to the political positioning of an individual based on various elements, including their identity and political views. While identifying a positionality might be a subconscious process for many people, I consider that due to the social

protests of 2019, a process of self-reflection has been held across the sector in a more explicit manner. This made it easier to identify how workers were positioning themselves in the current socio-political context in Chile.

Another way personal motivations have been an evident determinant in critical museum practice is by the personification of contestatory practices in certain workers. When I asked about particular critical practices, exhibitions, and acquisitions, my interviewees often said: 'that was the idea/work of x worker' (which also significantly supported my snowball sampling). Even when discussing the development of policies, the same names came up again and again. This was also reinforced by the fact that Chile's museum sector is relatively small. Thus, many workers have worked in more than one institution over the years, spreading certain practices across the field.

Besides other workers identifying the role of certain colleagues in the sector, my interviews also highlighted a strong sense of personal political positioning across workers. Many interviewees mentioned how they participated in the protests and that it was impossible for them not to question their professional role in the middle of this social process. Many others did not doubt before stating that their practice was shaped by their feminist activism. Moreover, these interviewees noted that their personal politics and coming from a working-class background were precisely what made them aware of injustices and misrepresentations in museum spaces.

That said, it is relevant to remember that not all workers have this background. This often was highlighted as a needed 'negotiation' within the workforce. Some interviewees noted that not everyone was open to a 'critical perspective' in their role. In this sense, more than censorship, museum workers had to face the resistance of more conservative colleagues that were not necessarily interested in questioning the power dynamic in traditional museum practice. In the words of Eva Cancino:

I do not think that we will reach an agreement. I think we can say, 'we will include other [kind of] artists' and carry out a conversation that way. But if we say 'we will make a decolonised, communitarian museum'… No! It would all go to hell [laughs]. Any political effort we make is a negotiation (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

This tension also highlighted how self-reflexivity regarding museum practice is not necessarily an institutional priority but the interest of particular workers. In this chapter's coming and final sub-section, I will characterise these workers' practices as disobedient and strongly shaped by an activist standpoint.

6.4.2. Museum activism & workers' disobedience

In *Posterity has arrived: The necessary emergence of museum activism* (2019), scholars Robert Janes and Richard Sandell introduce a global phenomenon of political engagement in museum workforces. They note that, as a response to the growing approach of the 'museum as Mall', there has been an increasing interest by museum workers to question the reproduction of the status quo through their professional practice (Janes and Sandell, 2019, p. 2). Moreover, they argue that,

> With a variety of notable exceptions, the museum community is not responding to the world, be it climate change, species extinction, or social justice issues such as poverty and homelessness. Instead, there is a continuing preoccupation with attracting bigger audiences, along with a growing fascination with digital technology. Museums have their own distractions and internal agendas that preclude or discourage responding to the world. It also seems that museum practitioners are overly careful with their actions and speech. As crises mount, museums are alarmingly invisible—reluctant to disturb or assert. Raising museum voices in opposition to anything is traditionally out of character. Are museum workers and academics simply agreeable

people who are not free or empowered enough to meet the global challenges? We suggest that they are not. (Janes and Sandell, 2019, p.18).

I echo Janes and Sandell, as I also recognise a growing museum activism in the Chilean museum sector. This activism has taken many forms, including some of the strategies mentioned earlier in the chapter, such as the banners and associativity in the context of the *estallido social*. I also agree with Janes and Sandell regarding this apparent carefulness of museum workers in Chile when referring to social issues. Nevertheless, as explored in the previous sub-section, the *estallido social* represented a trigger in Chilean museum activism, as it made those social issues an urgent matter of debate. Moreover, Janes & Sandell discuss an articulation of the global museum community in pushing for museum activism, as there is a collective character of this activism. And while I also recognise a rise in the collective articulation of Chilean museum workers, notably since 2019, I would like to argue here that Chilean museum activism has been supported by a form of 'disobedience' that is deeply personal, and that has been building up for decades.

I characterise this disobedience as an attitude of some museum workers in Chile. This attitude comes from not agreeing with how the museum has historically marginalised people that are non-hegemonic—but also taking action to go against that hegemony by using the power they have gained in their professional role. I recognise here a tension between the traditional structures and workers' motivations. While this interest in broader inclusion has been present in most museums worldwide and in Chilean cultural policy, I identified in the Chilean sector that the precarious system has neglected that debate on a museum-practice level. Thus, museum workers have taken the initiative: they have pushed for inclusive and critical practices, even if it goes against the institutional guidelines or directorship interests. Then, I consider that this

disobedience is deeply political, socially situated, and strongly connected with the emergence of the new workforce in the sector.

What makes this a disobedience and not an institutional development is that although it comes from within the museum, these actions find resistance in the traditional institutional structure. When discussing the social role of museums, most of my interviewees differentiated their understanding from the institutional one. They repeatedly mentioned they were discouraged because they felt like the institutional structure did not allow them to conduct more radical changes. Many of them reinforced their ideas by saying, 'for the record, this is what *I think*; I am not speaking for the institution'. This differentiation between their individual views on social justice and the 'institutional response' was emphasized when they talked about how audiences perceived them. For example, when discussing the graffiti on the museums' walls that questioned the elitist character of the arts, many museum workers expressed frustration, as they agreed with protesters but at the same time were part of the institution.

I argue here that this also implies different discourses of diversity at play. As noted in chapter 4, cultural policy often offered an 'institutional' understanding of diversity, that notably focused on 'recognition'. But on the other hand, when these workers talked about diversity, they did so from a critical standpoint and strongly connected to social justice, where diversity representation aimed to address historical and systemic inequalities in Chilean society. Many of these workers highlighted that their motivation for working in major museums came from the exclusion they have felt personally and their interest in opening spaces for others, as noted earlier in this chapter. And therefore, it was their critical positioning regarding the traditional values of the institution that they work for that allowed them to identify the reproduction of social hierarchies in their practice.

Overall, it is an exciting phenomenon that so many workers do their work from a position of disagreeing with the institution they are part of. They have embraced the old motto of 'breaking the system from within'. Moreover, disobedient workers often used the resources of museography itself to disrupt hegemonic dynamics in their roles. This included intervening in curatorial texts or information labels, introducing critical reflections on education programmes, or questioning traditional art history categories. These strategies will be explored in the coming chapter when looking at specific cases of acquisitions.

But lastly, I argue that museum disobedience has been facilitated to some extent by the sector's precarity. While the voices of more conservative workers have pushed back some of the critical practices being led by disobedient workers, institutional structures remain precarious and weak. This implied that disobedient workers have been able to sneak in critical practices here and there, where surveillance has not reached them. Paradoxically, the institutional standards, policies and guidelines that could potentially shape museum practice in Chile are so rare that museum workers end up having more freedom in their practice. That said, when I commented on this idea with my interviewees, they all agreed but warned me that it also implied a significant toll on disobedient workers. Gloria Cortés told me straightforwardly:

> Yes, but that has a price, Cata. A price for the workers and the institution. And it is a very high price. (…) I could not imagine staying for twenty more years in the museum. (…) I cannot project myself like that in the museum because it is very tiring. In that permanent negotiation, it is tiring to be part of that resistance. I feel like I have aged in this museum. Not only I got sick, but I also aged all the years that I had not aged before (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

Having this in consideration, note here that I do not wish to romanticise this 'museum disobedience'. This disobedience has been a survival strategy in a sector without the resources to develop consistent institutional growth or adaptability to its context. While in the coming

chapters, I will explore some examples of this disobedience, I will argue from now on that disobedience is not sustainable. It claims urgent institutional responsibility that must come from consistent policy development, formalisation and clear guidelines for museum practice. Whether pushed by the Ministry or associations, museum disobedience is nothing but a symptom of a sector whose workers are questioning their institutions before the institution even gets to assess their own functioning.

6.5. Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter, I aimed to characterise a new museum workforce in Chile. I have argued that this new workforce has demonstrated a much more critical and even disobedient standpoint regarding their role as museum workers. Furthermore, this positionality is shaped by their personal experiences of exclusion. It is relevant to mention here that the data that shaped this chapter was not planned and emerged contingency alongside the development of the *estallido social*, during the first year of this project. Consequently, I must point out that this particular topic requires much further research. As noted in this chapter, studies that characterise the museum workforce in Chile are scarce and urgent. Conducting further research regarding the diversity of museum workers in Chile can greatly contribute to the sector development, as well as recognise how the demographics of the museum workforce shape, influence, and condition the capacity of museums for fulfilling their social role.

Chapter 7: The Politics of Collecting

7.1. Chapter introduction

Following the discussions from previous chapters, in this one, I will start to focus more directly on specific cases of acquisitions in Chilean art museums. I will analyse cases where there have been attempts to widen diversity representation, and the implications of them. I will also explore how these acquisitions have often raised debates among museum teams regarding intersecting struggles, and how this connects to the own workers' positionality. Furthermore, I will deepen the idea of museums as open systems, discussing how dynamics inside and outside the museum (such as museums' precarity, changes in museum workforces, and broader social movements) have influenced and shaped the acquisitions analysed here.

Throughout my thesis, I have glimpsed new collecting practices emerging in the Chilean museum sector. I explored how the intuitive collecting approach is starting to be questioned by research-based collecting, influenced by the curatorial turn and the emergence of collection policies. I also argued that there is emerging disobedience in museum workers, shaped by the increasing presence of workers of working-class background in museum workforces. Based on this complex network of ideas, relationships and practices, I will characterise what I call the politics of collecting. To do so, I will question how collecting practices have often remained embedded in traditional museum methodologies in Chilean museums. As noted in chapter 6, collections have lacked further self-reflection compared to other areas of museum practice, such as curatorial and educational departments. Still, some workers have started challenging and rebelling against these through their professional practice.

To explore these ideas, I have divided this chapter into four sections. The first one will introduce the concept of the politics of collecting and how it relates to diversity representation, particularly in art museums in Chile. This will entail returning to ideas regarding 'gaps' in collections, how museums have aimed to fill them, and how this relates to intersectional struggles. The second section will focus on initiatives that tackle the underrepresentation of women artists in Chilean museums, followed by an acquisition case analysis at the National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA). The third section will focus on the underrepresentation of Indigenous peoples and artists in art museum collections. In particular, I will argue that the absence of women artists has led museum workers in Chile to highlight other marginalised groups absent in museum collections, notably Indigenous peoples. I will explore this idea by analysing the case of a set of artworks found at the Museum of Solidarity Salvador Allende's (MSSA) collection, donated in the 1970s by a group of Indigenous women, and how the museum team has re-interpreted these artworks in the last few years. And the final section will explore the challenges of acknowledging collection gaps based on diversity representation and how it has been addressed in Chilean art museums.

Lastly, it is relevant to mention that this chapter will build on the debates presented until now in this thesis, aiming to support the exploration of my main research question: How have Chilean public art museums addressed diversity representation in their acquisitions from 1990 - 2020? Consequently, this will allow me to unveil and explore what I consider 'the politics of collecting' in this thesis.

7.2. What are the politics of collecting?

In *The politics of museums* (2015), museum scholar Clive Gray interrogates the statement that museums are political. In his words, being political 'involves more than the simple presence of

matters of contention – it also involves the mechanisms by which these may be resolved, who is rightfully involved in producing such resolutions, and the basis upon which they can then be justified' (Gray, 2015, p.1). Following this idea, museum politics are understood here not only by an explicit activist standpoint, as explored in chapter 6, but an overall and complex power dynamic. This dynamic is also permanent and unavoidable and requires a constant and holistic self-reflection of the museum institution.

Following this idea and the cases I have explored in the previous chapter, the political positioning that I recognised in museum workers during the *estallido social* should be understood as only one of the multiple manifestations of the politics of museums. Arguably, museum practice is always political, whether or not museum workers are taking an activist standpoint. For instance, in chapter 6, I mentioned how some museum workers opted to 'remain neutral' during the protests, notably those in higher ranks and directorship levels of the museum workforce. This position is, in this sense, also political as it implies *inaction*, which is a conscious choice of not taking part. Paradoxically, this demonstrates that a neutral museum practice is impossible.

This is why Clay highlights that museum professionals are the most relevant actor regarding museum politics, as they have a central role in 'the construction of governing ideologies surrounding their institutions' (Clay, 2015, p.151). Moreover, if the politics of museums are unavoidable, then this leads to questions regarding the uses of power and who is behind these uses. Clay notices a shift in the uses of power by museum professionals, moving from a 'power over' standpoint to a 'power to' that 'allows for the actual choice of ideology, legitimacy and rationality in the first place' in the last few decades (Clay, 2015, p.10). In this sense, while both approaches imply an exercise of power, the 'power to' approach allows an acknowledgement of this dynamic and, therefore, a conscious and self-reflexive practice.

In this line, I argue that collecting in museums must also be understood as inevitably political. That said, collecting is not always as visibly political as other forms of museum practice. As I have mentioned in chapter 6, most of my interviewees, although often very critical of elitism reproduced by traditional museum practice, tended to overlook the political aspect of collecting, even defining it as 'a service'. Nevertheless, the politics of collecting have started to gradually become more visible in Chile due to various processes, including professionalisation, policy development, and social movements. This has made the practice of collecting in art museums in Chile increasingly self-conscious of the power dynamics around it, and less *intuitive*.

Interestingly, this increasingly self-conscious collecting has been emphasised in the context of the *estallido social*. This echoes what historian and archivist Graham Dominy argued in his essay *The politics of museum collecting in the 'old' and 'new' South Africa* (2004). There, Dominy explores the process of collecting *what is missing* in museum collections, in the middle of intense social change in South Africa after the end of the apartheid era. I borrow Dominity's words regarding the politics of museum collecting to argue that while collecting priorities have permanently changed throughout history, it is perhaps in moments of intense social change that this becomes urgent to address. Furthermore, this urgency might be shaped by the context of social change in which it is situated. Therefore, I argue here that, in Chile, the post-dictatorship period, particularly during the *estallido social*, has been crucial to reconfigure what museum professionals consider a collecting priority. Moreover, I will discuss in this chapter that diversity representation has become a core priority in this regard.

Several reasons explain why diversity representation has increasingly become a collecting priority in Chile. At the same time, these reasons allow an understanding of museums as open systems because they are both external and internal to museums. Furthermore, they interconnect and dialogue with each other, shaping museum practice. I will quickly characterise

these factors here and then analyse two case studies to explain how they operate in museum collecting.

Firstly, it is relevant to echo many of the previous discussions in this thesis to acknowledge **external** factors influencing diversity representation in museum collecting agendas. This interest in Chile is shaped by the return to democracy, where public institutions in Chile went through a process of democratisation and growing transparency. This process led to an increasing value given to diversity, particularly in Chilean cultural policy since the 1990s, as discussed in chapter 4. This interest in diversity, nonetheless, started as a more institutional one, mainly focused on the recognition of diversity. As explored later, the discourses of diversity have continuously changed since then, reaching a recent understanding of diversity from a critical standpoint in Chilean cultural policy and museum practice, acknowledging a power dynamic in which non-hegemonic groups are marginalised in cultural spaces.

The above-mentioned phenomena have also been in dialogue and tension with local social movements. While the *estallido social* was a tipping point in this regard, various movements have shaped Chilean politics in the last three decades. Notably, the articulation of a broad feminist movement in the last decade in Chile will be relevant to this chapter. This movement has mainly formed around the illegality of abortion in Chile, sexual harassment in higher education, and, more broadly, gender inequality in the country. Another relevant movement to highlight here is Indigenous activism, notably Mapuche, which has gained visibility and strength since the 1990s. This activism is focused on the constitutional acknowledgement of Indigenous nations in Chile, and their cultural and territorial rights have become fundamental in the process of the new constitution, which is still under process at the time of writing.

A final external element to highlight, and that I have yet to explore but will be relevant in the next chapter, is a change in the arts sector, particularly in the diversifying character of contemporary artists. In this regard, contemporary artists of Indigenous origin have gained crucial relevance in the last two decades in Chile. As I will explore in chapter 8, Mapuche contemporary art takes a critical stance regarding the marginalisation of Indigenous identity in the Chilean cultural landscape and positions itself as a contestation to hegemonic art.

Arguably, the external phenomena mentioned above have made it impossible for museums to ignore a changing perception of Chilean identity, increasingly putting a value on the representation of historically marginalised groups, namely women and Indigenous peoples. But that said, museums have struggled to integrate these social changes into their practices and, quite notoriously, into their collections. The cases where this has been possible are relatively recent, often in the last ten years, and have been pushed by various simultaneous processes at an internal-museums level.

The **internal** elements, as already highlighted before, have to do with the sector's increasing professionalisation and the workforce's diversification. The professionalisation, closely related to the broader access of working classes to higher education, has also allowed those students to enter the museum workforce, diversifying a demographics of museum professionals that a social elite in Chile has historically dominated. At the same time, as discussed in chapter 6, this new workforce has reflected on their social role from an activist and disobedient standpoint and has managed to push for change in museum practices from a critical positionality. These practices, at the same time, have been possible thanks to the sectors' precarity and lack of guidelines, which has allowed disobedient workers to sneak in practices and initiatives that do not always align with institutional goals or frameworks. These new practices, as I argued in

chapter 6, also align with a more critical understanding of diversity representation, strongly linked to social justice and lack of representation as a form of social marginalisation.

Overall, understanding museums as open systems allows approaching all of these internal and external dynamics as relevant agents that influence and shape museum practice. This particular scenario, additionally, also explains the relevance given to widening diversity representation in museum collecting in the last few decades in Chile. And lastly, this complex network demonstrates the political character of collecting, as it is entangled in the power dynamics of artistic representation, the workers' agency, and the values historically promoted by the museum institution.

In the coming subsections of this chapter, I will explore two specific acquisition cases. I will analyse the decision-making and the social context in which these acquisitions occurred. This will aim to unpack and exemplify the above debates regarding the various elements that have made diversity representation a collecting priority in Chile in the last few decades. The first case responds to the gap of women artists in the MNBA collection. I will argue that this has not been only a 'gap filling' strategy but a self-reflexive practice that aims for social change, deeply rooted in museum politics. I will characterise this kind of acquisition as 'transformative collecting', and I will continue to develop this idea in the following chapter. In contrast, I will introduce a second case, this time at the MSSA, that focuses on the absence of Indigenous art in art museum collections in Chile. This second case was acquired in the 1970s, and the rationale for collecting was completely different but equally political. The MSSA team has 'rescued' this acquisition and re-signified it in recent years. This case will allow me to continue to discuss the politics of collecting and how the significance of museum items has changed throughout time.

7.3. Where are the women artists?

Before outlining the first case, it is helpful to explore the context in which it happened. The first relevant element to highlight in this regard is the development of a feminist movement in Chile in the last ten years, along with Latin American and global feminist activism. On March 8th, 2020, over one-million women protested in Santiago against gender violence in one of the most multitudinous protests in Chilean history (Cuffe, 2020, March 8). This protest is undeniable proof of the growth of a feminist movement in Chile that has occupied a central role in Chilean politics. Consequently, I will discuss here that it is not a coincidence that the absence of women artists in museum collections has been so strongly denounced recently in Chile and that 'feminist' museum practices cannot be understood in isolation or simply shaped by 'inclusive policies'.

Feminist activism has had a significant impact on the cultural sector in Chile. Many of my participants spoke explicitly from that standpoint, and many institutional developments have occurred in the last ten years regarding gender equality. In 2013, the National Directorship of Libraries, Archives and Museums (DIBAM) released the *Guidelines for incorporating gender perspectives in museums*. This guideline compiles initiatives developed as part of the 'Improvement program for the gender-perspective management', which started in 2002 in DIBAM, exploring examples and recommendations for promoting gender equity in museums. According to this document, 'incorporating a gender perspective to museum practice represents a contribution to overcome the inequalities and different forms of discrimination, whether symbolic or material, that affects women and other sexually diverse peoples' (Maillard Mancilla et al., 2012, p.14; translation is mine).

Moreover, the guideline explicitly addresses dealing with gender inequality in collections. The guideline argues that gender perspectives can be included in 'technical processes' such as

registry and documentation by integrating gender categories to acknowledge women's authorship (Maillard Mancilla et al., 2012, p.53). It also states that a gender perspective in collections can be promoted by conducting research that makes women's authorship visible and contributes to exhibition-making that does the same (Maillard Mancilla et al., 2012, p.53). Interestingly, the guidelines do not mention anything regarding acquisitions and highlight that the DIBAM was still at a stage of acknowledging a gap but was still incapable of addressing it.

Overall, this guideline is a milestone in the institution that acknowledges the gap between women and male creators in museums. Still, as noted by my interviewees, the action taken to address that gap was often based on workers' motivations. Varinia Brodsky, the former coordinator of the area of Visual Arts at Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage (MINCAP), told me:

> One of my roles was to develop the visual arts policy in the last period, that is, 2017-2022. And one of the issues that I identified was that there was no research, references, or indicators that addressed women's work. I mean, those instruments did not exist because they had not been appropriately addressed. Today, five years since I started working for the Ministry, I can proudly say that in the future policies, that information will be available (V Brodsky, personal communication, June 24, 2021).

Varinia notices that, although we had this conversation almost ten years after the guidelines for gender perspectives in museums were released, most of its recommendations remained as such: recommendations. Until very recently, there has been no consistent data or research regarding this issue. This often had to do with the precarity of the sector and the prioritisation of other tasks over gender inequality or inequality in general. What pushes these initiatives, then, is often the workers' motivation and interests. Following this point, I will argue that social

movements and the workers' backgrounds have shaped museum practice more strongly than guidelines such as the one cited before. An example of this is the 'Editathon for women artists'.

7.3.1. Editathon for women artists: 'The action of naming.'

'Editathon' is Wikipedia jargon for editing marathons on the website. In September 2017, a group of museum and arts workers met at the MNBA to write Wikipedia sites for Chilean women artists. The activity achieved the creation of around eighty Wikipedia pages for artists that were, until then, absent from the world's largest free encyclopaedia. There was a second Editathon in 2018, where thirty other entries were created. This initiative started based on an invitation received by Gloria Cortés from the international organisation Art+Feminist, to join a global plan to create Wikipedia entries of women artists (Brodsky, 2017).

Many of my participants noted that this international invitation was just one of the reasons that pushed the initiative. What is interesting about this initiative is that, although various institutions supported it, it was worker-led. Many of them highlighted the work of Nicole González, a former MNBA registrar who wrote her MA thesis on gender representation in the MNBA (González Herrera, 2019). González had been conducting her MA research while working at the MNBA, on top of her responsibilities as registrar, before moving to Mexico to study for her MA (as no museology MA was available in Chile). She had circulated some of her findings in the museum before leaving: only 11% of the artworks in the MNBA collection were made by woman artists, versus 78% of male authorship. The remaining 11% are artworks whose authorship is not identified, which according to González are likely to be of female authorship as well, representing a 'symbolic gesture of annulation and disregard, where having a woman's name is equivalent to having no name at all' (González Herrera, 2019, p.7; translation is mine).

According to Eva Cancino, current head of collections at MNBA, González's research was 'the baseline for the action of the Editathon' as she explicitly presented the data on the underrepresentation of women in art collections in Chile for the first time. Moreover, by circulating this data, González also created awareness of the lack of research on this matter in other Chilean museums. All heads of collections from MSSA, MINCAP and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) acknowledged Gonzalez's research and the Editathon in their interviews, arguing that that was the tipping point that pushed them to conduct studies on woman's representation in their collections (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019; P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019; C Yasky, personal communication, December 12, 2019). In the words of Pamela Navarro, head of collections at MAC:

> Of course, that pressure came from outside [the museum], we always wanted to do it [to count women artists in the collection], but we never had the time. But it suddenly became so necessary. Because of all the news about gender representation in collections that started to come up… That made us do it. (personal communication, December 20, 2019).

As a result, the CNCA acknowledged that the representation of women artists in public art collections reached an average of 12% (Brodsky, 2017). In an article titled *The action of naming*, former coordinator of the visual arts department at MINCAP, Varinia Brodsky, argued that the Editathon demonstrated an 'almost non-existent integration [of women artists] through artwork acquisitions, reaching a 2% in the case of the MNBA (…), demonstrating an insignificant interest or intention to include women artists in the scene at a level of public policy' (Brodsky, 2017; translation is mine). Interestingly, Brodsky was then part of the Ministry and participates in the policy-making she is referring to. This demonstrates that, although 'gender perspective' guidelines and programs have existed at DIBAM and MINCAP for over a decade, most

initiatives that have pushed action regarding these issues have been worker-led, not policy driven. It is also an excellent example of workers' disobedience and how their motivations shape policies and inclusive practices.

Furthermore, some participants reflected on how the experience of this Editathon led them to reflect on other gaps in collections. Gloria Cortés and Eva Cancino noted how González's research and the Editathon started conversations in the museum about other potential gaps, such as Indigenous peoples, in the MNBA collection (personal communication, April 21, 2021; & December 18, 2019, respectively). On a similar note, Pamela Navarro noted that when they counted the women artists, this made them question the gap of queer identities in the MAC collection (personal communication, December 20, 2019). And Caroll Yasky reflected on how they noticed intersections in the MSSA collection, where many of the women artists were 'linked to more popular production, Indigenous production', such as textile art, traditionally considered a feminine craft (personal communication, December 12, 2019). I will return to this later in the chapter and in chapter 8. But for now, I want to acknowledge how feminist activism in new museum workforces pushed inclusive initiatives that started to pave the way for more inclusive collecting practices overall.

Ultimately, it is relevant to notice that there are two fronts in which the underrepresentation of women in art collections has been denounced: from above, in policy-making, and from underneath, from museum workers. Nevertheless, museum workers have also consistently denounced the difficulty of properly addressing this underrepresentation. Arguably, this difficulty comes from a disconnection between policy and actual practice, strongly hindered by the sectors' precarity. In this sense, While the Ministry acknowledges the need to address this underrepresentation, it does not offer enough resources for workers to conduct institutional change. This is why I argue here that although the Ministry promotes diversity, it is the museum

workers who enable widening diversity representation, as they keep facing resistance from the institution to change. This point is supported by the fact that the representation of diversity appearing in Chilean museum collections notably has a contestatory character, shaped not by institutional understandings of diversity (as in recognition only) but by a more complex self-reflexive standpoint. I will develop this idea by exploring some acquisition cases here and in the following chapter.

7.3.2. Study case: MNBA's collecting practices

The Editathon represents an initial stage of questioning collecting practices: to denounce a gap. But museums' chances to address gaps are still shaped by institutional constraints and the sector's precarity. Pamela Navarro noted that although they now know the extent of the gender gap, they have not been able to change their practices or prioritise acquisitions of women artists at MAC, as they still rely on donations (personal communication, December 20, 2019). Fortunately, this has not been the case for all institutions. Among my cases, the MNBA stood out for increasing self-reflexive collecting practices, which makes it the perfect candidate to explore in this section.

I have explored the MNBA in depth here because it is the case that encompasses most of the elements I have discussed so far in this thesis. Namely, the museum has a history of precarity that has hindered options to question the strong museum authority in the acquisitions decision-making. Nonetheless, this has started changing recently, shaped by increasing research in the museum and the development of their first collections policy, released in 2022. It is also one of the museums whose workers' disobedience has been most visible and has notably pushed feminist initiatives, such as the mentioned Editathon. Moreover, it was at the MNBA where I found more examples of 'transformative' collecting practices, as I will outline here and continue to explore in chapter 8.

Nevertheless, these practices represent several challenges and contradictions that museum teams must face. For instance, this can be seen by exploring the MNBA collection policy. This document emphasises 'equity and inclusion', as it is one of the critical criteria for acquiring artworks. This document also highlights the need to pay attention to emerging artists and question traditional notions of 'trajectory' in the arts. These two elements dialogue and work together. Some of my interviewees noted how non-canonical artists might struggle more to remain in the art scene, often leaving them out of acquisitions for being considered 'not relevant enough'. And therefore, their 'trajectory' will be different from canonical artists.

Cortés offered an example of this. She told me about the work of María Cristina Matta, an artist who only exhibited during the 1970s in Chile. According to Cortés, Matta's work has been systematically omitted because 'she did not stay relevant' in the art scene. She told me that when she attempted to acquire an artwork by this artist, there was resistance, arguing that her trajectory was not relevant enough to be part of the national museum. 'Relevant enough', in this context, often means to have a continuous presence in the arts scene, having relevant scholars or critics writing about your work, or being able to prove historical relevance in general. What is problematic about this logic is that the idea of career trajectory was conceived thinking of male artists. What happens to women who become mothers? Does interrupting their work to prioritise childcare makes their work less relevant at a given moment? Should we overlook the fact that they are reportedly underpaid in the sector and thus struggle more to maintain the continuity of their practice? Would not this put women artists at a systematic and permanent disadvantage of being acquired by museums? What is highlighted by this case is not necessarily how women artists are explicitly excluded but how the system of the arts works with procedures, notions and categories that do not address the diversity of creators.

Incorporating non-canonical artists into collections implies questioning how the canon operates in the first place. This was already noted by art historian Linda Nochlin when she published her essay *Why have there been no great women artists*? in 1971, in which she established that the absence of women 'geniuses' has always been an institutional issue. Nochlin criticised how art historians had historically considered social and institutional structures in which artists worked as 'mere secondary "influences" or "background"' (Nochlin, 2018, p.156). This leads her to the conclusion that:

> Art is not a free, autonomous activity (…) but rather, that the total situation of art making, both in terms of the development of the art maker and the nature and quality of the work of art itself, occur in a social situation, are integral elements of this social structure, and are mediated and determined by specific and definable social institutions, be they art academies, systems of patronage, mythologies of the divine creator, artist as he-man or social outcast. (Nochlin, 2018, p.158).

I consider this conclusion not only revealing but relevant to addressing 'inclusive practices' in museums. Nochlin argues that, when researching women artists, it is necessary to stress 'the institutional' rather than 'the individual' to address the 'preconditions for achievement or the lack of it in the arts' (Nochlin, 2018, p.176). This can be extended to any so-called 'minority group'. Simply put, it is not enough to state interest in inclusion because it would focus most of the energy on finding 'minority artists' that already fit into categories and characteristics shaped by privilege. Instead, institutions must question how their practices reproduced inequality in the first place.

Gloria Cortés reflected on how she felt conflicted about being part of this dynamic. She noted that every time she attempted to acquire or exhibit non-canonical artists, there was resistance in the institution. But then, after exhibiting, they were canonised:

Then they [the artists] suddenly acquire another category. Right? Just because of the fact of being in the museum (…), if I write an article about them, then they get invited to other exhibitions. They are not to be questioned as artists anymore. In a way, they get inserted into the system and then they are accepted. I find it a little bit cynical. Like, yesterday you were saying that this person, these artists, did not have the category to enter the museum, but since the moment they enter the museum…. Magic! [laughs]. But there is the institutional responsibility again. The one we carry as museum workers. It still happens to me that I am not yet conscious enough of the relevance and repercussion that my work in the museum can bring. (…) It is like… It is hard for me to understand and assume it. And to moderate the responsibility that I carry as an institutional professional. As a museum curator. (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

Cortés touches upon a relevant point here. On the one hand, museum workers on the more 'conservative' side of the spectrum usually embodied the museum authority by saying, 'this should not be in the museum'. But on the other hand, for museum workers pushing the entry of non-canonical artists, the relationship with their position of power was conflictual. They often struggled to recognise themselves as subjects of power. They found themselves in an intermediary role between their positioning as a critical subject and a representative of a traditionally conservative and hegemonic institution. This latter work is the one that I have characterised as a 'disobedient' museum worker in the previous chapter. It echoes Clay's notion of museum workers moving from a position of 'power over' to a 'power to' approach when they make use of the authority in their role to conduct transformative practices that challenge that authority at the same time.

In the following sections, I will argue that museum professionals are incapable of 'including' historically marginalised groups without questioning how traditional practices, protocols and standards in museum practice reproduce social inequality. In museum collecting, this includes

examining categories of art history and cataloguing and notions such as trajectory. This is also implicit in the MNBA's collection policy on criterion 4, which already acknowledges that contemporary art has been blurring the limits of what was considered art in the past. I will also discuss how this self-questioning of traditional categories in museum practice implies several institutional challenges. It requires cohesion of the museum team, a shared vision and a willingness for criticality. This, once more, might be substantially limited by the precarity of the institution, which is still struggling to cover basic needs for museum practice, such as research resources, documentation and material conditions for properly conserving their assets.

That being said, most of my interviewees noted that the acknowledgement of underrepresented groups in collections often came from explicit absences they often identified in the exhibition-making process. Gloria Cortés shared a story that exemplified this. Before she became curator of the MNBA, she published the first systematic study of women artists in Chile. It was compiled in a book called *Modernas: Historias de Mujeres en el Arte Chileno, 1900-1950* (2013, 'Modern Women. Histories of Women in Chilean Art, 1900-1950'), which explored the absence of women artists in Chilean art history. Cortés commented on how this research shaped her working experience when she started her role at MNBA:

> When I arrived at the museum, the first thing I was asked to do was obvious. 'Well, you come with this book, do an exhibition about women artists'. And I am like, 'great, sure, let's go! This is my dream; I worked a lot for this'. And then I entered the collection, and I was like, 'I cannot do this; there are no women'. (…) It was the first time I was able to look at the collection like that, *in situ*. And it was like, wow! So, what I had identified on a historiographic level is replicated in the museum. There are no women. (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

In this anecdote, Cortés demonstrates how collecting priorities of the past limits her chances of curating an artwork that addresses social issues in contemporary society, such as the role of

women and gender inequality. It also shows how curatorial practices have increasingly challenged traditional collecting practices. Furthermore, this implies the urgency of revising not only gaps in the collection but museum practices overall. As noted by scholar Linda Young,

> Politically inspired criticism, mainly feminist, has documented the absence or misinterpretation of major social groups in the museum record of material culture. Post-modern approaches to the study of institutions have reconstructed the authority of professionals as a form of power, and explanatory accounts as repressive master narratives. These critiques suggest that museum collecting needs to become much more transparent, more explicit and more accountable. (Young, 2004, p.194).

Young's ideas stress this idea of increasing accountability in museum practice. But at the same time, raises questions regarding the capability of museum workers to address this responsibility while dealing with existing structures and categories.

7.3.2.1. MNBA's acquisition of Aurora Mira's artworks

To explore the phenomena described above, I will focus on one specific acquisition by the MNBA. It is the purchase of a set of six artworks by Chilean painter Aurora Mira, acquired by the museum in 2020. Aurora Mira (1863-1939) was one of the first women to enter the National Arts Academy of Santiago, where she studied between the 1870s and 1880s. Chilean art historian Antonio Romera included her in his *History of Chilean Painting* (1951), considered the first compendium of Chilean artists. Mira was one of the 21 women artists considered in a total of 383 artists mentioned in the book. About her work, Romera simply mentions that 'she painted flowers, still lifes, portraits. Her colouring, sometimes opaque and bituminous, was nonetheless delicate and exact in terms of quality' (Romera, 1951, p.79; translation is mine).

Romera's description can be read as an example of the 'traditional categories' I mentioned earlier. Although he includes Mira in this significant compendium of outstanding artists, he

mainly highlights elements of her work that keep Mira in what was expected of a women artist in the late 19th century. He mentions that Mira focuses on minor fields of painting, such as still lifes, which were considered less valuable or requiring fewer skills than, for example, historical painting. He highlights her technique and the quality of her work, i.e. her painting matches the institution's standards. Lastly, he praises her for being delicate, which is traditionally considered a feminine attribute.

Following this description, one could argue that Mira's work is not particularly contestatory. However, I highlight here that she represents a form of resistance, as she pursued a career as an artist in a male-dominated sector. In the same way, my interviewees noted that, often, this was enough reason to aim to acquire artwork by women artists in the 19th to 20th centuries, as there were very few women artists recorded in Chilean art history of that period which could support the goal of balancing the gender gap in the MNBA collection. However, this is not why I am interested in the artworks purchased by the museum in 2020. My interest lies in the characteristics of these works in particular and the self-reflexive practice workers employed to acquire them. While these paintings do, in fact, represent still lifes and flowers, they are not presented in a traditional Fine Arts format. As narrated by Gloria Cortés:

> Last year we bought some wonderful boards by Aurora Mira. These were wardrobe doors and kitchen furniture doors, which were painted and signed by Aurora Mira[16]. We said, well… it was a discussion because… Is it artwork? Is it an artwork created for a [arts] circuit? No, it is not. It is an artwork of the domestic space. But that is the space where women artists were producing their work because they did not have another way to do it. So, **we bought them because we**

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wanted to problematise what 'an artwork' means (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

I would like to unpack what is going on here. Mira did produce a corpus of artworks in a traditional 'fine arts' format, i.e. paintings on canvas. The museum could have acquired those. Nevertheless, the museum team deliberately decided to acquire these ones, representing a practice that steps outside traditional fine arts museums' standards. Moreover, this acquisition questions the categories of 'Fine Arts' versus 'Decorative Arts' and shows a critical reflection by the museum staff about how these categories have marginalised the production of women artists.

Thus, these are not necessarily contestatory artworks, but their acquisition represents contestatory museum practice. More specifically, I argue that this is a 'transformative collecting practice'. It is transformative in the sense that it not only demonstrates how the positionality of the workers allows them to question power structures in traditional collecting practices but also how they pursue change through their professional practice. In this case, this pursuit of change is multi-layered; it includes changing traditional museum categories and also the broader representation of women artists as connected to promoting gender equality and, therefore, social change.

This pursuit of change based on questioning traditional museum practice was often focused on the reshaping of cataloguing methods and collections categories overall. Workers at MNBA highlighted another example of this. They commented on the *Monvoisin[17] project* and how they have changed cataloguing categories, such as replacing 'anonymous' with 'undetermined

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[17] Raymond Monvoisin was a French painter who was invited by the Chilean government to direct the first Fine Arts Academy in the mid-19th century. Although he ended up rejecting the offer once in Chile, he portraited most of the Chilean aristocracy of the time, having a great impact on the local arts.

authorship'. Note here that the word 'anonymous' in Spanish (*anónimo*) implies masculine gender, while *autoría indeterminada* is gender neutral. This debate was highlighted by my interviewees at MNBA widely and was also registered in the González thesis mentioned earlier (González Herrera, 2019, p.7). That said, Gloria Cortés warned that the institution had remained resistant to this change:

> We have had these discussions as starting points, but it requires structural changes. Right? Because it is not just about the willingness Eva or I might have, it also implies -for example- modifying SURDOC[18] … And no, that has not happened; the people of the Documentation Centre have not allowed that conversation. We have tried to add categories of authorship where you can indicate the gender of the author, and they [the national documentation centre] ask me, 'what for?'. And I am like, 'well, because we want to know who is behind this production', if they are a woman, a man, a dissident subject… Because that conditions the production! And in the end, I had to abandon that boat; it just was not feasible because **these structures are there for that reason (…) they are designed to keep that canonical aspect that prevents you from introducing cracks** (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

Echoing Cortés's words, I believe socially engaged collecting practices are only possible by questioning traditional categories in museum practice. While back in the 1980s, Peter Vergo argued that the new museology was 'a state of widespread dissatisfaction with the 'old' museology (…) [which was] too much about museum *methods*, and too little about the purpose of museums' (1997, p.3), I will argue here that a question about the purpose of museums *is* a question about their methods. *How* museum professionals perform their practice determines the possibility of a museum fulfilling its social role.

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[18] SURDOC is the unified system of online cataloguing of public collections. SURDOC stands for *Sistema unificado de registro y documentación* (unifired system of registration and documentation). It is a tool managed by the National Centre of Documentation of Heritage Assets, part of the SNPC.

Furthermore, this not only implies the need for structural changes but also for the museum to document the rationale behind these decisions. This is because the transformative practices mentioned above notably relate to the MNBA's current teams, where many use feminism as a standpoint or are sympathetic to it. Moreover, many of my MNBA interviewees recognised that there has been a recent bonding among workers who come from a less traditional background, and that the collaboration between them has allowed more critical and reflexive practices. Nevertheless, this flags the risk of relying on workers' motivations and circumstances, as the sustainability of these critical practices depends on the teams at a given time. Ultimately, not acknowledging the accountability that museum workers aim for when executing transformative practices might hinder its continuity if teams change in the future. In this sense, these practices are not settled in the museum but in the disobedience of their workers.

7.4. Where are the Indigenous artists?

The case mentioned above introduces how museum professionals have started questioning the use of traditional categories in museum practice as a fundamental strategy to challenge the reproduction of hegemonic identities in museum collections. Interestingly, as I will explore here and in the following chapter, this has also been the entry point for museum workers to identify the absence of other social groups in collections, notably Indigenous identities. As mentioned earlier, I started this research by questioning the absence of Indigenous identities in art museum collections in Chile. While there was less awareness about this gap compared to women artists, most of my interviewees did acknowledge the lack of representation of Indigenous peoples in museum spaces. Nevertheless, I will argue in this section that the reasons behind this absence can differ from the lack of women while also relating to the same power structures.

While Indigenous cultures have always been part of the territory that we today call Chile, their identities have been silenced since the beginning of the Chilean Republic in the early 19th century. Their presence in Chilean museums is concentrated in ethnographic and national history museums, where their identities have often been framed in discourses around 'the past' and pre-Columbian history (Crow, 2009, pp.112-113; C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021).

A few institutions in Chile started to challenge this notion, primarily museums that would be categorised as an 'ethnographic museum'. Notably, many of my interviewees highlighted the work of the *Museo Mapuche de Cañete*[19]. This local museum has been highlighted for its work with Mapuche communities in the area (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021; C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021). Although it was founded in 1968, the museum has increasingly adopted participative approaches since 2001, when Juana Paillalef (who is of Mapuche origin and had collaborated with Indigenous museums in the past) was appointed as the museum director. Paillalef led a process of institutional change that invited communities' participation in reshaping the museum's mission and museum narrative (Canals Ossul, 2016, p.68-70). From a similar approach but on a national level, the Chilean Museum of Pre-Columbian Art (*Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino*) in Santiago have also started to question hierarchical narratives around Indigenous identity representation in museums in Chile by integrating dialogue and participation of Indigenous communities in their exhibition-making (Aldunate del Solar, 2019, p.186). Both institutions have stressed Indigenous cultures as *living cultures* in dialogue with their collections and exhibitions.

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[19] Translates as *Mapuche Museum of Cañete*. Cañete is a small city in the South of Chile. It is an important zone in terms of Mapuche history, as Spanish conquistador Pedro de Valdivia was killed there by Mapuche leader Lautaro in the mid-15th century. The area is currently affected by forest exploitation and rural poverty while also concentrating high density of Mapuche population (Canals Ossul, 2016, p.67).

Notwithstanding, while Indigenous voices have started to emerge strongly in ethnographic museums in Chile, this debate has remained absent from art museums. When I asked my interviewees about Indigenous representation in art collections, most said their presence was so low that they could easily name the few artworks that explored or represented Indigenous identity. Many of them argued that this is an incipient but very recent debate. Eva Cancino noticed that the MNBA had started to discuss this in the last decade, and during their work writing the collection policy, influenced by the central role Indigenous voices have had in recent social movements (personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Many interviewees noted that art museums 'arrived late' to this discussion, as Indigenous art has been present in the art scene for much longer (M Flores, personal communication, June 15, 2021). Gloria Cortés commented on how this gap in the collection was recognised during the making of *De aquí a la modernidad* ('from here to modernity'), an exhibition based on the permanent collection of the MNBA, open from 2018 to 2019. The exhibition was focused on how the idea of 'modernity' had failed in Latin America, marginalising systematically dissident individuals. As narrated by Cortés:

> One of the topics [within the exhibition] was 'denied territories'. And they were denied for sure; they just were not part of the collection. None. (…) Afro-descendants and the Andean World[20] were in a small room with lots of participation from contemporary artists [invited for the exhibition only]. Because otherwise, we would have had five artworks in the room. It was brutal. So, there is a gap to fill. But how do we fill it? Because we do not have much information either. We do not know… We identified one artist, for example, who had an Indigenous origin, named Pedro Churi. His case is quite emblematic because he has been catalogued as 'Mapuche', and apparently,

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[20] 'Andean World' is used here to refer to Indigenous cultures around the Andes Mountain chain, which notably shapes Chilean geography.

he was Aymara[21]. So, it is this issue of generic racialisation, right? 'he is Indigenous, so he must be Mapuche'. No! There are other ethnicities that participate in the culture of Chile. But there is no artwork of Pedro Churi [in the collection]. And in my case, as a feminist art historian, I have not yet explored artists that are out of the academy that might come from the world of popular arts. Less traditional arts, women that might come from Indigenous spaces, or afro-descendant women that had participated in painting schools. I have not explored that yet. (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021)

There are a few layers in Gloria's comment. First of all, it reinforces once more that her feminist activism has fuelled her interest in exploring other gaps in the collection. It has also made her aware of her limitations as a researcher, which led her to give more agency to the Indigenous artists that participated in the exhibition, with strategies such as asking them to write the information panels of their artwork in *De aquí a la modernidad* (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021). But this reflection also highlights a relevant difference compared to the absence of women artists. While art institutions unequally collected women's work, we have some precedents of women artists working in particular situations since the beginning of art academies (often as daughters of painters, as noted by Nochlin, 1989, p.168). The case of Indigenous artists is different because their work was often *not categorised as art at all*; thus, they are not only absent from art collections but art history overall.

This takes us back to the inevitable. It becomes evident, once more, that traditional art categories reproduce hierarchies within cultural production. In this section, I will explore how to understand Indigenous art today and how art museums in Chile have approached it.

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[21] Second largest Indigenous group in Chile.

Specifically, I will define the concepts of popular art, and Indigenous art. I will explore some examples and case studies for these in the coming section and in chapter 8.

7.4.1. Indigenous art: back to challenging categories

The debate above is, of course, not exclusive to the Chilean sector. In the Global North, the discussion regarding the divide between high and low art is usually situated in the 'mature phase' of the industrial revolution, with the differentiation of mass-produced goods and 'authentic' pieces. 'In the great tradition of high culture, authenticity and value is held to reside within a series of paradigms or vector valuations upon which objects can be placed as in a grid of worthiness' (Pearce, 1998, p.37). Susan Pearce discusses this regarding the rise of kitsch in the context of capitalist goods production. But when looking at the Global South, Indigenous production has been a long-standing resistance to such mass production and is equally positioned in opposition to high culture. This has sparked debates around these categories not being innocent but embedded in discourses of cultural hierarchies and cultural hegemony. At the same time, Indigenous art has been emerging on the global art scene worldwide in the last few decades, notably in the context of decolonising the arts and museums.

In *Becoming Art: Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories*, anthropologist Howard Morphy explores this issue. Based on the case of aboriginal groups in Australia, he argues that aboriginal peoples have always produced art, but this 'has only recently been recognized as art' (2008, p.xi). Morphy argues that this implies two different definitions of art at play:

> On the one hand there is a cross-cultural definition of art that encompasses actions and objects that have something in common that can be referred to as 'art' and that places them in the analytic category of artwork. On the other hand there is a designation of certain works as 'fine art' – works that are bought and sold as such in the art market and that are exhibited in art

galleries and museums of fine art. (…) what then needs to be answered is: who defines art and fine art and how do works become included within the latter category? (2008, p.xi).

Morphy then notes that this implies a separatist nature in the 'fine art' category that hinders art history (and art institutions) from embracing the diversity of art manifestations (in a cross-cultural sense) in the world (2008, p.xii). And most importantly, while now aboriginal and Indigenous art has started to enter the art market, i.e. being collected (2008, p.xii), Morphy warns that 'The encounter between Indigenous art and the fine art world has usually been written from the perspective of the Western art world. (…) The focus has been on the artworks once they have arrived in the gallery, once they have become fine art' (Morphy, 2008, p.xv). This notion has started to change thanks to growing Indigenous artists' activism, intercultural policy-making and critical scholarly debates around the definition of 'art' (Morphy, 2008, p.3).

In Latin America, these debates have been notably raised by Paraguayan scholar, curator and former Minister of Culture of Paraguay, Ticio Escobar. He has theorised the concept of 'popular arts' (*Artes populares*[22]) as a relevant example of contestatory art production. Escobar's understanding of popular art is based on a Gramscian notion of hegemony, applied to how power dynamics continually shape the 'encounter' of cultures in the Americas, where Eurocentric and American imperialist cultural forms dominate the cultural system. Following these ideas, Escobar argues that 'popular art' is any art that presents itself as in opposition to hegemonic art practices, today often shaped by capitalist culture (Escobar, 2011, p.8). Escobar defines popular art as art produced by groups that are 'unfavourably positioned in the social scene' and therefore struggle to access positions of power. These groups often experience

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[22] The direct translation of *artes populares* is 'popular arts' (in plural). Escobar has translated it like this as well in the few papers he has written in English. Nonetheless, this must not be confused with the concept of 'popular culture', usually associated with the Birmingham School. I have seen Escobar's concept of 'popular arts' translated as 'folk art' as well.

dissonance with hegemonic representation systems and opt for 'alternative forms of symbolic production' (Escobar, 2011, p.8).

For Escobar, then, 'Indigenous art' is a form of popular art (Escobar, 2011, p.7; Bejarano Lopez, 2013, p.143). This is since Indigenous art, by definition, would be art produced by Indigenous individuals, unfavourably positioned in Latin American societies, but also by how it sets itself in opposition to Western, hegemonic art. Escobar highlights three elements that show how Indigenous art does not fit into any of the mandates of modern art. Firstly, it is often not an individual creation, as it is usually created collectively or based on shared knowledge of a given craft. Secondly, it does not generate 'transgressive' changes in art production, as it often follows established patterns on how the craft has been traditionally practised. And thirdly, and as a consequence of the second element, popular and Indigenous art is often not created as a 'unique piece' (Escobar, 2011, p.5).

Thinking of museum practice and art institutions, these reflections show how traditional categories of art history, fine arts, and museum collections systematically neglect Indigenous art access to those spaces. Escobar questions if Indigenous art can even survive in a context that reproduces conditions that are intrinsically opposite to their origin (2015, p.1). So, based on these ideas, it is not surprising to encounter only a few examples of Indigenous art or representations of Indigenous peoples in art museums. And I will argue here that, while contemporary art practices have increasingly blurred the limits of traditional 'fine arts' and 'popular arts', museum practices in Chile have tended to be slower, especially in collections. In order for museums to embrace these increasingly blurry limits between traditional art categories, further self-reflection by museum staff is fundamental. I will explore a case where this was successful in the next sub-section.

7.4.2. Study Case: *Molas* at MSSA

One of the most interesting cases I found during my research is a set of thirty-eight *molas* in the collection of the MSSA. *Molas* are a form of textile art famously made by Guna women, an Indigenous group from Panama and Colombia. *Molas* represent 'through abstract and figurative forms, the worldview of the Guna people' (Yasky, 2019). Thus, these artworks are examples of what we could call popular art or Indigenous art. They fit into Escobar's description in opposition to Western art, as they are often produced collectively by Guna women, following similar patterns, and not necessarily as unique pieces. As noted earlier in this thesis, the MSSA is a modern and contemporary art museum whose collection is based on donations that contemporary artists make to the museum to honour 'solidarity'. Therefore, finding these *molas* in the collection was an exciting discovery[23].

But beyond its characterisation as Indigenous or popular art, its acquisition process is also worth highlighting. As narrated by MSSA's Head of Collections Caroll Yasky and some documents available in the MSSA archive, this set of *molas* was donated during the dictatorship to the – then called – *Museo de la Resistencia* (Museum of Resistance). During this period, the now MSSA operated outside of Chile as most of its workers had gone into exile. These workers had made an open call for artists to donate artworks that represented 'an instrument of agitation and propaganda' in resistance against the dictatorship in Chile (MSSA, 2014, October 27). This donation was part of a campaign conducted in 1976, named *una mola for Chile* ('a mola for Chile'), a solidary event organised by the University of Panama. In the context of this activist event against political repression in Chile, it was registered that 'a notable painter' had 'collected

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[23] These artworks can be seen here.

"molas" among the national minority Guna, which were handed over to the Museum [MSSA] as an expression of support for the Chilean Mapuche' (Yasky, 2019, p.81).

In a conversation with Caroll Yasky, she commented that this narrative has been difficult to confirm, and that no direct contact with the Guna Women that created the *molas* has been possible (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021). Thus, there is some unclear information, such as when they were produced exactly. But it is still significant to consider that the politics behind this donation were not only based on the repression of the dictatorship's regime but also a political standpoint taken by the Guna Women in solidarity with the Mapuche people. In the catalogue publication of *Social fabric: textile art and political commitment* (2019-2020), an exhibition held at MSSA that exhibited the complete set of *molas* for the first time, Yasky explored this idea in more depth and explained that:

> They are people [the Guna people] who know about resistance, which has shaped their identity. The Guna women are fundamental to the preservation and transmission of this cultural heritage [the molas]. They are the ones who produce the molas and teach the girls not only the complex technique behind their confection (the superposition of several colored fabrics sewn together) and their role in women's clothing, but also their symbolic and primordial value. Each time a mola is created, the collective sense is renewed, the social identity of the community is affirmed and expressed, and the mythical and ritual tradition of these people is activated. **In this sense, its production is also a political exercise. That is where the importance of their legacy to the Museum lies** (2019, p.81; bold is mine).

These *molas* have been exhibited a few times in the last decade as Yasky has developed further research on the artworks. But more importantly, although they do not fit into what would be understood as modern or contemporary art, there has been an explicit reflection of the

museum team regarding these categories, where they have agreed that the political context of its donation justifies their belonging in the MSSA collection. Moreover, Yasky noted:

> For me, it [the *molas*] brings richness to the collection and to the diversity of artworks that the collection holds. But it overpasses the limits of 'Art', let's say, 'traditional art'. That is what I like about them. It is the same with the *arpilleras*[24], which also have a popular root; it is a popular production. **I think it is valid because they have that political connotation.** (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021).

This conception of these artworks has allowed various discussions within the museum team about how to properly handle the *molas*, considering their particularities as Indigenous art. For example, she mentioned that when they curated *Social fabric*, they discussed the relevance of exhibiting the complete set of *molas* together, not just a few. Yasky reflected that 'their relevance is collective, as a whole set' (C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021) due to the context in which the *molas* are often created, as noted in the quote above. Exhibiting them together allows the museum to also reflect on that political collectiveness. On a similar note, I asked Yasky about the cataloguing of the *molas*, as the author is written as 'Guna women from the region of Guna Yala[25]' in the museum's catalogue, which I think significantly challenges traditional notions of the author as a single individual, often male and non-Indigenous. Yasky mentioned that the artworks used to be catalogued as 'anonymous' (echoing the MNBA discussions regarding the male character of *anónimo* in Spanish), so the team

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[24] *Arpilleras* are another form of textile artwork made on burlap. It is formed by colourful patchwork and often represents figurative scenes of everyday life. It is a form of popular art often produced by working class women in Chile. It became popular during the dictatorship, where women organisations used it as a tool to denounce human right violations in Chile. The Tate Modern acquired a set of 20 Chilean *arpilleras* in 2018.

[25] Guna Yala is an Indigenous province in Northeast Panama.

discussed the relevance of highlighting that these pieces were made by women, by Indigenous women.

Overall, these artworks could have easily been excluded from art museum collections, as they would be traditionally categorised as popular arts. Furthermore, the intersection of these two forms of marginalisation, as being artworks of Indigenous and female authorship, explains how unusual it is to find this kind of artwork in art museums. Pamela Navarro, head of collections at MAC, commented that they had found a similar artwork in their collection that aligned with the idea of popular arts. Nevertheless, at MAC, the decision was to transfer that artwork to the Museum of Popular Arts (MAPA), also managed by the Universidad de Chile. One could argue that the *molas* at MSSA could have had a similar destiny. But the museum staff there recognised the contestatory character of the artwork and their donation, valorising it over the validity of art categories.

In this sense, this case demonstrates the relevance of having information regarding an artwork's acquisition documented. While this might sound like a common-sense practice elsewhere, the documentation of acquisitions has been fairly rare in Chile, due to the museum's precarity and lack of procedures, as noted in chapter 4. Having information regarding how and why these artworks were accessioned allows the current museum team to justify their relevance for the museum, as it aligns with its objectives and mission. But it should be stressed that while this case is rather anecdotal, it is one of the few artworks in the MSSA collection (and in my cases in general) representing Indigenous identity, or trespassing the divide between Western and Indigenous art. And this has only been possible by very specific circumstances, considering the story of its donation in the 1970s, the particular interest the MSSA has for political activism in the arts, and the recent self-reflection and criticality in the museum staff.

Furthermore, similarly to Mira's acquisition at MNBA, the *molas* might not depict a political message, besides the resistance that they represent to disrupt a hegemonically Western art world. But what is 'transformative' in this case is the dynamics of their acquisition, as it was shaped by explicit activism, and also the recognition of collecting as a political act on behalf of the Guna women and museum staff. In this sense, although not as clearly prompted by museum workers' self-reflection, this case allows an understanding of the politics of collecting as a relevant strategy for widening diversity representation and transformative museum practice. Ultimately, it is interesting to highlight that both of the cases mentioned here support widening diversity representation, but from a critical standpoint that allows museum workers to challenge the reproduction of cultural hegemony in museum collections *and* in their practice.

7.5. Challenges of transformative collecting: institutional struggles of change

While the cases presented here represent an exciting debate among the museum staff that has challenged traditional fine art categories through their professional practice, it is important to notice how the *molas* at MSSA and Aurora Mira's boards acquisition at MNBA are relatively isolated cases. The debates held by museum staff had been often triggered by specific circumstances rather than a systematic search for category-challenging acquisitions. Except for the *molas*, most of the cases I found in art museum collections representing Indigenous identity have been contemporary artworks. This is the result of a history of hierarchies among cultural production that, nonetheless, is increasingly being challenged by contemporary artists, as I will explore in chapter 8.

This raises many questions regarding the sustainability of transformative collecting. Contestatory practices are still framed in institutional settings. And even if the museum teams agree on a critical standpoint, they must still adapt to more comprehensive policies established

by the MINCAP, such as standardised categories in centralised catalogues. Furthermore, as noted by Cortés, many of these standardised categories were designed to maintain cultural hierarchies and thus would often not naturally allow any 'openings' for critical discourses. This explains why cases such as the ones explored above are rather exceptions in the Chilean museum sector, and why the representation of non-hegemonic groups is still a task for all of my study cases.

While national cultural policies promote diversity and ask practitioners to widen representation, the feasibility of this is limited by the same institutional structures that produce those policies. Museum workers often find themselves in a trap where they cannot fulfil their roles, and any institutional change ends up relying on their motivation. This, added to the precarious situation of museum workers, demands significant amounts of emotional labour. Museum workers in Chile receive the burden of 'not doing enough' in an institutional setting that, at the same time, makes it difficult for their practice to effect any impact or social change.

Transformative practices represent tension within the museum institution. These imply a need to question traditional methods, which can often create disagreements and a lack of cohesion among teams. This raises the question of the sustainability of transformative collecting practices in a scenario of precarity, where many workers also noted a lack of leadership in some main institutions. While policies must address the need for new methodologies, that represents a paradox as transformative practices, by definition, will challenge and aim to change institutional frameworks.

Considering this, I think the best strategy to ensure critical and transformative practices is establishing spaces for workers' self-reflection. The precarity of the sector currently limits these spaces. It is unlikely that workers would be able to stop their daily responsibilities to question

the status quo when the to-do lists are endless. Creating discussion spaces for museum professionals, considering the lack of academic instances in this area in Chile, becomes pivotal for challenging social exclusion through museum practice. And at the same time, it promotes cohesion and dialogue among teams and institutions.

7.6. Chapter conclusions

In this chapter, I have aimed to introduce the idea of the politics of collecting, by exploring how various dynamics, both external and internal to museums, shape what is collected. I have also explored two cases of acquisitions that have supported diversity representation, and have discussed that these acquisitions would not have been possible without the acknowledgement of the political character of museum collecting. More specifically, understanding traditional art categories as not neutral, but shaped by hierarchical understandings of cultural production, is crucial to widening diversity representation from a critical standpoint. Furthermore, I have also argued that the cases where this has been achieved have been rather isolated and that more spaces for museum workers' self-reflection are pivotal to ensuring the sustainability of self-conscious and transformative museum collecting. In the following chapter, I will continue to build on these ideas, focusing on another case of transformative collecting: the acquisition of Indigenous contemporary artists.

Chapter 8: Transformative Collecting: The Case of Mapuche Contemporary Art

8.1. Chapter introduction

In previous chapters, I have discussed how art museums in Chile collect is not an isolated practice and also how their capability to address cultural diversity through acquisitions is limited and shaped by the museums' context and circumstances. In chapter 4, I explored how the way public museums are funded and managed in Chile impacts their collecting practices. This often relates to a general state of precarity in the sector that, in practice, implies low or non-existent budgets for acquisitions and underdevelopment of collection policies. In chapter 5, I analysed how museum workers have adapted to these conditions and how acquisition processes work in practice: intuitively and over-relying on donations. There, I also argued that there had been some recent changes regarding this due to increasing research-based approaches and an incipient development of collections policies across the museum sector. This process has gone hand-in-hand with transformations in museum workforces, explored in chapter 6. Workers from working-class backgrounds have entered museum workforces in the last thirty years, leading to growing activism (and disobedience) in Chilean museum practice. This has highlighted inequality in cultural representation in museums overall, propelling some more self-reflexive acquisition processes, which I started to explore in chapter 7.

These discussions allowed me to characterise what I understand as 'the politics of collecting'. That is the idea that museum acquisitions are in constant, dynamic tension with their context in a multifactorial sense. Historical context, changes in workforces, discussions on the purpose of museums and the museums' conditions all shape what is acquired and remains as a heritage

for the future. Moreover, I argue that this should not be a careless process and that museum workers should deliberatively consider these elements when defining museums' acquisitions priorities. In chapter 7, I started to explore cases where I think museum workers had practised this kind of reflection and succeeded in challenging traditional museum structures, favouring contestatory acquisitions, or what I refer to as 'transformative collecting'.

As outlined earlier in this thesis, I understand transformative collecting as collecting practices that not only include underrepresented groups but also aim to transform and challenge traditional museum practice. In this sense, transformative collecting fosters social and institutional change through museum practice while, at the same time, supporting widening diversity representation in museum collections. Furthermore, I will argue here that fostering diversity representation without pursuing structural institutional change is counterproductive as it would only add on artworks under a 'quota' model without addressing the traditional structure that has supported cultural hegemony in museum practice in the past. Moreover, analysing transformative collecting implies recognising the challenges it brings to museum workers, notably tensions within teams and with museums' external dynamics, including the public, funding bodies and the art market, among others.

In this final chapter, I will continue to develop this idea of transformative collecting by exploring the specific case of acquisitions of Mapuche contemporary art in Chilean public art collections. As I mentioned in chapter 1, the initial concern behind this research was a growing scene of contemporary artists of Indigenous origin in Chile, which nonetheless was not entering public collections; thus, I was interested in exploring why. The first thing I found in this regard was that the 'decolonial' debate was very recent in Chilean institutions, often pushed by other movements, as analysed in chapter 7 regarding feminist practices in museums. That said, Indigenous resistance has a long history in Chile and Latin America, although widely held

outside institutional spaces in the arts. Many of my participants recognised that challenging traditional art categories has been notably more common in art practices than museum practices.

While I started to explore the challenges of Indigenous art in art museum collections with the case of the *molas* at Museum of Solidarity Salvador Allende (MSSA), these proved to be exceptions shaped by very particular circumstances. Collecting this kind of artwork retrospectively might be tricky, as they were often not registered or historicised as artworks. On the other hand, Indigenous contemporary art (which I will characterise in the following section) is a self-reflexive practice that can explicitly present a contestation to the traditional categories that have historically excluded Indigenous art from museums. Consequently, acquiring Indigenous contemporary art is a relevant strategy for art museums to address collection gaps and challenge traditional art structures while promoting historically marginalised artists.

I am particularly interested in exploring Mapuche contemporary art due to its increasing presence in collections and in the arts sector in Chile. Mapuche people are the largest Indigenous group in Chile. According to the 2017 census, the Indigenous population in Chile is 13%, of which 79.8% self-identify as Mapuche (INE, 2017). An emerging scene of Mapuche contemporary art has gained strong visibility in the last ten years. I consider this a disruptive discourse in mainstream contemporary arts, where Indigenous artists take agency in the sector to explore their experiences and identities in the first person. I will promote this by giving Indigenous artists the central role through their testimonies in this chapter.

Furthermore, as I will discuss below, I recognise these artists share a critical discourse of diversity with disobedient museum workers, and their collaboration has often allowed them accessioning to museum collections. Following this idea, museums must discuss how to give

adequate institutional spaces to Indigenous contemporary art practice, where I identify collecting as a crucial action. And finally, I will explore how collecting Indigenous contemporary art allows an understanding of the politics of collecting in a more comprehensive and intersectional sense.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first one will aim to characterise key concepts, such as Indigenous contemporary art and Mapuche contemporary art. The second one will explore the challenge of collecting these in art museums. I will explore in depth the idea of decolonising museums, particularly decolonising museum collecting. I will analyse how this idea was perceived among my participants and how it was framed in a global debate regarding cultural representation in museums. I will do so by analysing the acquisitions of two Mapuche contemporary artists, Bernardo Oyarzún and Seba Calfuqueo.

8.1.1. A brief introduction to Mapuche history

Before diving into the contents mentioned above, I would like to introduce some general information regarding the history of the Mapuche people in Chile. This will allow a better understanding of how Mapuche artists are framed in the contemporary arts sector. Firstly, it is relevant to know that until Chilean independence in 1810, Mapuche people lived autonomously and had successfully resisted the Spanish conquest (Boccara & Seguel, 1999, p.747). Facing this situation, the Chilean government started an armed occupation of Wallmapu, the Mapuche ancestral lands, in the decade of the 1850s (Luna, 2015, pp.61-62). This war was supported by an anti-Indigenous ideology popular among the Chilean elite authorities of that time, which claimed that Indigenous peoples were an obstacle to the development and modernisation of the country (Luna, 2015, p.62).

After the occupation of Wallmapu, the Chilean state started a strategy of dividing Mapuche communities by delimitating their territory. This was also supported by an ethnocide, where native peoples' cultural values were not recognised by the state (Berdichewksky, 1987, p.26). An example of this is educational programmes developed by the state from the 1920s. The Chilean government installed schools in rural-Indigenous areas, teaching in Spanish and imposing Western approaches, suppressing Indigenous perspectives and languages (Boccara & Seguel, 1999, p.763). This illustrates how the Chilean state aimed to promote a homogenous culture to build a strong national identity from the 19th century (Subercaseaux, 2016, p.212), assimilating Indigenous peoples into the Chilean 'rural population'.

This is to say that Mapuche culture has been historically silenced since the foundation of Chile as an independent state. This only started to be questioned after the dictatorship. Notoriously, during the campaign for the plebiscite that put an end to the regime, the first post-dictatorship president, Patricio Aylwin met with Indigenous leaders in December 1989 to discuss Indigenous rights in the potential scenario of democratisation of the country. They signed the *Acuerdo de Nueva Imperial*[26] (Nueva Imperial Agreement). In this agreement, Aylwin committed to addressing indigenous demands if he were to be elected. In this sense, democracy became a 'symbolic glue' that supported a more participatory view of society, giving space for multicultural debates (García Peter, 2016, pp.315-316).

This has facilitated a process of revitalisation of Mapuche and other Indigenous cultures, notably focused on the rescue of the Mapuche language, Mapudungun, declared a critically endangered language in the 1990s. Furthermore, since the 19th century, the Mapuche population has substantially migrated into cities in search of employment, placing Mapuche

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[26] Nueva Imperial is a province, part of Wallmapu.

identity in a hybrid cultural context. This has led to the growing visibility of Mapuche culture in the Chilean public sphere and the cultural sector in the last few decades.

That said, Mapuche contemporary history is also strongly shaped by a lack of constitutional recognition and land struggles, and many of the promises of the return to democracy were not fulfilled. Mapuche activists have occupied land stolen from them in the past, engaging in complex political tension with the state. Governments of the post-dictatorship period have strongly repressed these movements, militarising Wallmapu and pursuing criminal prosecutions under a 'Terrorist Law' against Mapuche activists involved in illegal occupations (Campos, 2002, p.40). The tension between the Mapuche people and the Chilean state climaxed in 2018 when police special forces murdered Mapuche farmer Camilo Catrillanca. The press leaked a video showing that Catrillanca was shot in the back of his head without any provocation. Catrillanca's murder raised awareness of the arbitrary violence in Mapuche territory by police special forces towards Mapuche people, denied until then by the government. This case gained attention from the media and activated strong social support for the Mapuche cause (Leone & Ponce, 2019, para.10), shown in various public demonstrations since late 2018.

This brief sub-section aims to introduce how Mapuche's identity has been profoundly shaped by politics and resistance to colonialism until the present day. Indigenous peoples are yet to be recognised as nations in Chile. Their resistance to occupation and assimilation is also embedded in the artworks I will analyse later in the chapter and cannot be understood as a simple manifestation of a 'non-Western culture'. These artworks are, too, a form of resistance.

8.2. Indigenous Contemporary Art

On April 23, 2021, I had a long conversation with Mapuche art historian Cristian Vargas Paillahueque. He took me through his ideas about Indigenous art and what he identifies as

Indigenous contemporary art. Vargas Paillahueque's background is in art history. Still, he has become increasingly interested in how traditional art categories have diminished Indigenous cultural production, particularly in the context of the global contemporary art scene. I interviewed Vargas Paillahueque because he has worked for a very long time with Seba Calfuqueo, whose work I will explore later in this chapter.

In our conversation, Vargas Paillahueque noted that Indigenous art production often faces issues around the timeframe, where Indigenous art is often conceived as production from the past (personal communication, April 23, 2021). Even when Indigenous art attempts to use 'contemporary methods', it is often questioned for not following the traditional patterns of the craft. Escobar picks up on this matter and notes that this is a paradoxical issue in Latin American art in general. He argues that the only choice that peripherical art has for survival is adopting 'strategies of resistance and conservation through practices of appropriation, copy and transgression of metropolitan models' (Escobar, 2011, pp.9-10). Popular and Indigenous art depends on its adaptability and use of hegemonic models of representation in order to survive. The category of Indigenous or popular art for Escobar, then, is not based on the visual or material characteristics of the artworks but on the political positioning of the art production as contestatory to hegemonic art forms.

Moreover, Vargas Paillahueque emphasised that traditional Indigenous art is also contemporary. For example, in the case of Mapuche art, this traditionally relates to textile art, silver and woodwork. Mapuche people practise these to the present day and thus can and should be considered 'contemporary' practices in terms of timeframe. But Vargas Paillahueque makes a distinction between these practices and Indigenous artists' art practices working in a mainstream, Western 'contemporary art' setting. This is what he calls 'Indigenous contemporary art', and it will be the focus of this chapter.

Scholar Thea Pitman has also explored this issue, focusing her research on the curatorial practices of Indigenous contemporary artists, particularly in Brazil. She characterises Indigenous contemporary art as 'Indigenous art that engages with genres of contemporary art, including, most notably, electronic, digital and new media forms' (Pitman, 2020, p.1). Considering the cases I will explore in this chapter, this relationship with new media forms is particularly relevant when approaching the work of Seba Calfuqueo. In the context of a recent project in collaboration with Vargas Paillahueque at the *Museo de Arte Precolombino de Santiago* (Santiago's Precolumbian Art Museum), they both participated in a video where they discussed and reflected on the role of digital media in Indigenous art. In that video, Calfuqueo says:

> For me, personally, it is very important to work with technology because I feel that there is a stereotype of Indigenous artists, a pre-determined place, of working with traditional techniques, with what is associated with the crafts; and I think that opportunities (…) for working with technology, break into those rigid structures over Indigenous subjects, about what they must do, which aesthetics they must use, etc. (Museo de Arte Precolombino, 2022; minute 3:20 to 3:48; translation is mine).

Vargas Paillahueque also noted this in our interview, where he mentioned that there is an emerging, young generation of Mapuche contemporary artists that are increasingly (but not exclusively) working with new media formats. Furthermore, as noted by Pitman, Indigenous new media arts have been most common in countries like Canada and Australia, as 'they are large, politically stable, liberal democracies with strong economies that are well able to support and sustain a healthy Indigenous arts "scene" in a way that has not been possible in other contexts (…) such as Latin America.' (Pitman, 2019, pp.185-186). This explains, to some

extent, why Indigenous new media art in Chile is relatively recent, gaining relevance in the last ten years.

Having this in mind, I find it helpful to understand Indigenous contemporary art more broadly. By drawing on Vargas Paillahueque's ideas, I understand 'Indigenous contemporary art' here as any mainstream contemporary art produced by a self-identifying Indigenous person that uses resources, materials, and techniques of contemporary art to 'interrupt' the Western art system.

That said, I acknowledge that this definition is also paradoxical. While I have argued before that questioning art categories is pivotal, I am here creating new categories that differentiate Indigenous art practices. I am aware of this contradiction, but I consider it relevant to analyse Indigenous contemporary art distinctly, mainly because categories still operate in the arts and museum institutions, and aiming to debunk them does not mean they would magically disappear. In this context, noticing this difference allows awareness of how certain practices are still hierarchically separated in museum spaces; and, in parallel, how Indigenous contemporary art is positioning itself as a contestatory art practice in the contemporary art sector.

Furthermore, contemporary art curator and researcher Mariairis Flores noted that the field of contemporary art, compared to more traditional forms of fine arts, has the flexibility to get rid of these hierarchies by debunking notions of 'high art' and integrating contestatory materials and techniques in an art practice that come from former 'low arts' (personal communication, June 15, 2021). And additionally, globalisation has allowed a 'globalized indigeneity' (Pitman, 2021, p.4) where Indigenous peoples have experienced collaboration and dialogue across the globe. In the arts, this can be seen in the increasing residencies and transnational initiatives in which Indigenous artists participate. For instance, both of my interviewees noted they had had these

experiences (Oyarzún in New Zealand, Calfuqueo in various countries in Europe and North America), propelling their careers but also allowing them to exchange experiences and strategies with other Indigenous artists around the world.

That said, it is relevant to ask if it is possible to do this without reproducing a colonial understanding of Indigenous production. While there are increasing numbers of Indigenous artists entering the arts sector worldwide,

> Such artists interface with an art world and market that are still over-determined by their colonialist origins and tacit racial exclusions. (…) This is an art world still very much in the thrall of Euro-American values and trends. It has opened up to Indigenous art just fractionally, to the extent that it seeks to include and consume Indigenous artists and their works as part of a generally tokenistic, exoticising or politicising 'Global' or 'Indigenous Turn' (Pitman, 2021, p.13).

I agree with Pitman on this, and I believe this debate is pivotal when analysing the institutional collecting of Indigenous contemporary art. But additionally, I want to emphasise the agency Indigenous contemporary artists have in this dynamic. According to Vargas Paillahueque, 'Indigenous contemporary art thinks, analyses and positions itself over Indigenous identity. **That identity is always contestatory**. It is not about just saying "this is Indigenous", but rather "I, as an Indigenous person, take a stand regarding what has been said about Indigeneity"' (personal communication, April 23, 2021). Vargas Paillahueque notes that Indigenous artists' production is inevitably contestatory to hegemonic art forms, even when institutionalised. In this sense, and echoing Escobar's ideas, when Indigenous contemporary artists use contemporary art languages, they do so by taking agency over their identity and 'appropriating' the dominant art to create a 'crack' in that system.

Chilean cultural policy has only recently addressed this, notably in the most recent national cultural policy released in 2017. The document introduces the idea of 'contemporary Indigenous practices in the arts' (CNCA, 2017, p.43). In the policy, it is stated that there cannot be one universal definition of Indigenous cultural heritage and that, based on instances of public consultation with Indigenous communities, it was discussed that

> Indigenous (…) cultural heritage is an indivisible whole, without distinction between the material and the immaterial; it is alive, in a constant re-creation, comprising the traditional and the contemporary; it is transmitted from generation to generation; it is threatened by economic and scientific interests, and therefore, requires revitalisation and protection (CNCA, 2017, pp.47-48; translation is mine).

This reflection recognises the challenges that former categories of cultural production have posed to cultural institutions when aiming to widen diversity representation. It also highlights how there is no single form of Indigenous art and that discussions regarding the 'authenticity' of Indigenous production reproduce hierarchical understandings of diverse and overlapping forms of Indigenous art. That said, in this chapter, I will particularly explore Indigenous contemporary art in a more mainstream and institutional sense due to its increasing presence in museum collections. The consequences of this will be discussed later in the chapter.

Lastly, it is relevant to mention that although these ideas have increasingly emerged at the Ministry level, this debate has little impact on museum practice. Among my participants, only a few recognised the need for these changing categories, while others reinforced ideas of Chileanness as encompassing Indigenous identity. Nevertheless, as shown in some of the cases I will explore later in this chapter, this has slowly started to be questioned in the museum sector, notably due to the emerging presence of Mapuche contemporary art.

8.2.1. Mapuche Contemporary Art

Drawing on the idea of Indigenous contemporary art, Mapuche contemporary art is mainstream contemporary art produced by a Mapuche artist. This also implies that the artworks might mix traditional practices of Mapuche art or popular art and contemporary art practices or materials. It also often implies that the artwork would present some reflection on Mapuche identity or Mapuche struggles. This characterisation is based on the conversation I had with Cristian Vargas Paillahueque, who has developed further research regarding this category and has collaborated with various Mapuche artists such as Seba Calfuqueo, Paula Baeza Pailamilla, and Paula Coñoepan.

Vargas Paillahueque frames the emergence of Mapuche contemporary art in Chile as happening immediately after the dictatorship, arguing that in that context, there was a notable reflection on the role of Indigenous culture in the new, democratic Chilean state (personal communication, April 23, 2021). We also discussed how these artists had had much more visibility in the last decade, creating a sense of this being an emerging movement in the arts. Nevertheless, Vargas Paillahueque argued that the idea that Mapuche contemporary art is recent comes from the fact that Indigenous artistic practice has been recorded to a lesser extent, compared to mainstream Western art. Thus, there is a fragmented historiography of Indigenous art. On that note, Mariairis Flores noted how in her research, she has come across Mapuche contemporary artists that have transitioned into a popular art scene:

> There is a Mapuche artist [called Lorena Lemunguier] who worked at the end of the 1980s. And she exhibited… She worked with the loom but from a contemporary perspective. And she gave an interview for the press, so they highlighted the fact that she was Mapuche. (…) And then I researched a bit more, and I found a few more exhibitions, but the later ones were more in the line of [traditional] Indigenous art, not contemporary art. So, I found that interesting to think she

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transitioned. She started as one thing [a mainstream fine arts artist] because she studied at the Fine Arts School at the Universidad de Chile but eventually turned into an artisan. **But I also think that maybe that happened because there was no context of reception for her work at that time**. (M Flores, personal communication, June 15, 2021).

Both Vargas Paillahueque's and Flores' reflections point to the fact that Indigenous art has always actively related to contemporary contexts, but what has changed recently is the institutional reception of these artworks. This fact also reinforces the idea that Indigenous art has been historically located in the past, making invisible their manifestation as a contemporary, reflexive practice just like Western contemporary art. This perception is an institutional perception, and thus institutions, such as museums, must take a stand and responsibility.

It is interesting to note how and why these institutional perceptions have shifted in Chile. Vargas Paillahueque highlights the return to democracy as a key moment, but also the widening access for Indigenous peoples to universities and, therefore, to art schools:

> In the 1990s, it was tough for Indigenous people to enter university. Even more difficult to enter art faculties. In fact, many of my friends that work in the arts and I are the first generations to enter university in our families. So, what do I think? That it is, in fact, that generation from 2005 to now, or 2010 onwards, where more Indigenous people start to enter art faculties. I am not saying that that is a requirement [studying to be a contemporary artist] because many Indigenous artists, Mapuche artists, did not go to university. (…) [But because of this] they are now more visible, and there is this perception that just now 'Indigenous contemporary art' is a thing. (C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021).

This implies no less than Indigenous artists accessing the institutional language of fine arts. It also means that they had not necessarily been invited to the art sector but instead had intervened in it. It is relevant to notice that art schools strongly shape the arts sector in Chile,

and autodidact artists are uncommon. Therefore, Indigenous artists studying in traditional fine art schools means they have unprecedented access to the arts sector. Moreover, as noted earlier, the blurry limits of contemporary art practice allow Indigenous contemporary artists to appropriate languages from the fine arts in dialogue with popular arts.

Nonetheless, Vargas Paillahueque mentions that this mixture causes tension in both mainstream contemporary art and traditional popular arts. Where the former tends to reject popular art techniques in defence of the hegemony of fine arts, the latter denounces colonial appropriation of popular arts, where the Indigenous contemporary artists become an embodiment of colonial cultural hegemony. I cannot entirely agree with this as it fails to acknowledge Indigenous contemporary artists as individuals with full agency over their identity that deliberately chose to challenge the limits of both ends of art production. Both artists that I interviewed for this research, Bernardo Oyarzún and Seba Calfuqueo, agreed on this. In Oyarzún's words:

> An art critic wrote recently, here in Chile, that my artwork [*Werkén*] had become decolonial by being exhibited in the hegemonic art's capital [the Venice Biennale]. **And it is innocent to think that I do not know that**. That the artists do not know what they are doing. It is absurd to think that way, (…) that is the whole point [of the artwork]! (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021).

Beyond the agency Indigenous contemporary artists have to explore languages across categories, it is also relevant to highlight a contestation of the idea of authenticity often imposed in popular arts and Indigenous art. Escobar warns that 'the reclusion of supposedly intact identities is as pernicious as the servile adoption of the colonial canon. Confinement is not a good strategy; the best alternative facing imperial expansion is going out and trying to reformulate and transgress the rules of their game in the function of projects of one's own'

(Escobar, 2015, p.2; translation is mine). This idea questions the notion of authenticity as a whole and justifies Indigenous artists' appropriation of mainstream contemporary art languages. Furthermore, Escobar argues that this exercise implies a conscious political standpoint by Indigenous artists and that this is just another strategy Indigenous artists put into practice in their cultural production, which started in pre-Columbian times (Escobar, 2015, p.2).

At the same time, saying 'Mapuche contemporary art' represents a contestation regarding the autonomy of Mapuche identity and the Mapuche nation in Chilean territory. As reflected by Mariairis Flores in our interview, just like one might say 'Chilean contemporary art' to refer to contemporary art of artists that produce their work in Chile, one might say 'Mapuche contemporary art' to stresses the autonomy of Mapuche people as a nation (M Flores, personal communication, June 15, 2021).

That said, one of the risks is essentialising Indigenous art and assuming that Indigenous contemporary artists can only make artworks that discuss Indigenous struggles (C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021). This works if an artist self-identifies as an Indigenous artist. Still, if it is the institution the one stressing this, it might operate as a system of control and colonial power. This shows a problematic relationship between Indigenous artists and institutions and calls for accountability, reflexivity and dialogue in the museum sector when building relationships with Indigenous contemporary artists. According to Vargas Paillahueque, this debate is still in an 'assessment stage' in the Chilean museum sector. Most artworks of Mapuche contemporary art I could find in public collections were acquired very recently, in the last five years. These recent acquisitions are also often related to recent exhibitions that pushed their accessioning to collections. I will explore these in depth later in this chapter.

8.3. Collecting Indigenous Contemporary Art in Chilean Art Museums

Before exploring these cases, it is helpful to characterise the practice of collecting contemporary art in general and Indigenous contemporary art in particular. Due to my sampling rationale, most of my cases collected contemporary art only. This led me to have several conversations regarding museums' specific challenges when collecting 'the contemporary'. For instance, former director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) Francisco Brugnoli reflected on how paying attention to the political context was particularly relevant for contemporary art museums:

> The museum [MAC] is a contemporary art museum. What is contemporary? It is the present. If you carefully revise what the museum has in its collection, the moments when more artworks have been accessioned are when there have been changes in our society. (…) If the museum does not archive that present-day, it is wrong. 'Contemporary' is always constant; tomorrow, there is another present, do you see? I would be in a contradiction if I did not understand that flow (…). The museum needs to take risks. The artists put themselves at risk by putting their artwork on the scene. And we must be coherent with that. We are, after all, a contemporary art museum (F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021).

Brugnoli's words echo MAC's collecting strategy during his directorship. This strategy, which strongly relies on donation, has acquired over eight-hundred artworks since the 1990s (P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). As argued earlier in this thesis, this has also reproduced the precarity of the museum, as this acquiring model often overlooks the resources needed for taking care of these artworks. That said, I believe Brugnoli's understanding of contemporary collecting is also notably shaped by the idea of the integral museum, which I introduced in chapter 2. This idea argues that museums are part of their social landscape (Girault & Orellana-Rivera, 2020, p.10) and that they must work accordingly. I argue that this has made Chilean collections particularly sensitive to being formed and shaped by

social movements. For instance, museums like MAC have prioritised collecting artworks that *reflect* what is happening in Chile on a social and political level. In this sense, I believe Brugnoli's approach has been extreme in attempting to cover everything happening around the museum. But, at the same time, this has also led the museum to accession relevant and interesting artworks.

On a different end of the spectrum, there were also workers who considered that collecting while being influenced by the present was risky. For example, curator of MNBA Paula Honorato reflected that,

> The difficulty regarding this criterion is that it has to do with the present moment. And there has been a trend of work focused on contemporary art that is more linked to activism than language. So, there are many artworks of the second and the third category from an artistic point of view that gets justified by their activism. Robust activism. And there, you must be careful because that is where the market works perfectly. It is difficult to draw the line because you need to think of the artwork in the future [when collecting]. It is not an artwork for the moment, for the current juncture. How do we address the phenomena we have lived in Chile in the last few years without allowing market opportunism? How do you separate the wheat from the straw? We have had eternal discussions about this (P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021).

There is an interesting contradiction here. I think Honorato's standpoint is that acquiring artworks that reflect current issues runs the risk of politicising collections. Nonetheless, paradoxically, the idea of quality in the arts she expresses is distinctly shaped by discourses of hierarchy and power. Then, once more, what is problematic here is the lack of awareness that collecting is always political. Furthermore, one could argue that 'all collecting is inevitably contemporary collecting, even if we are collecting things which are valued because of their

association with the past' (Knell, 2004, p.34). Viewed this way, collecting is always a reflection of contemporary society.

If we take this to the debate regarding diversity representation, it also recalls how we understand diversity as socially and temporally situated. As noted in chapter 1, understanding diversity as a discourse allows us to approach it as constructed and historicised. Therefore, when aiming to widen diversity representation through collecting, it is relevant to question which diversity discourse is at play. Furthermore, I will argue in this chapter that collecting Indigenous contemporary art must come from a critical understanding of diversity to avoid tokenism. To achieve this, I recognise that it is crucial to aim to collect Indigenous contemporary art, not due to the absence of Indigenous representation in collections but to acknowledge the participation of Indigenous peoples in contemporary Chilean society.

That said, as collecting is not an isolated practice, the aim mentioned above still represents several challenges. This is particularly complex when looking at the global character of the arts today. The art of the Global South has steadily started to enter metropolitan spaces, which has led to an increasing collecting scene of Latin American art and Indigenous Art. But this phenomenon comes with further and more complex power tensions, where the question of fetishisation and tokenism is always on the table. This represents an unavoidable overlapping dynamic between museums' priorities and the conditions of the art market, where:

> In general the highest monetary value is associated with works that fit into the Western fine art category. There is no simple ranking of value associated with other categories, but in general craftworks, pottery, glass and fibreworks are valued much lower than painting and sculpture, and folk art tends to be valued less than Oriental antiquities (Morphy, 2008, p.13).

Furthermore, Latin American museums must now face the challenges of competing with prominent international institutions when collecting local contemporary art. Gloria Cortés, who firmly pushed for acquiring artwork by Mapuche contemporary artist Seba Calfuqueo for the collection of the National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA), reflected on this:

> Calfuqueo was another [debate] we had. Discussing the option of acquiring young artists for the collection was just off the table. (…) [But] Seba Calfuqueo is not an 'emerging artist' anymore. I mean, they had participated in three biennials by the time they were in their twenties. They are circulating on an international level. **And today we can buy it. I can assure you, in a few years, it will be impossible for us to buy Seba's work, with the market prices and our current budget**. So, the museum must take the task of getting ahead and betting on certain names, whether that is artists from the past or contemporary artists. **Those names must allow us to fill gaps or open new critical debates** (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021)

This reflection demonstrates how acquiring non-canonical artists implies more challenges besides just changing a mindset regarding how collecting is also a political practice. Some elements go in hand with acquiring contemporary art in general and how that links to the art system and the art market. Collecting contemporary artists implies a need to acknowledge museums as open systems to adequately address power imbalances in the transaction. Considering the Chilean museum and art sector, it is interesting to notice that the gallery sector is less robust than in big art capitals. This means the negotiation to acquire artworks is often held directly with the artist. This implies various opportunities to address power imbalances between museums and non-hegemonic artists.

That said, many of my interviewees noticed how often, in Chile, personal relationships with museum directors shaped what was collected, supporting a system of nepotism that reproduced inequalities among artists (F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021; S

Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021). Similarly, if museums do not invest in research, they might tend to collect what is more visible in the arts sector overall, i.e., artists most exhibited (E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019; P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019). This can be risky as artists with more significant personal capital would have an advantage, while artists from less-privileged backgrounds might struggle more to put their work in circulation. Bernardo Oyarzún, for example, commented how even while being a mid-career artist and having exhibited at the Venice Biennale, he still has no website or a publication compiling his work (besides exhibition catalogues). In contrast, wealthier artists might be able to do this early in their careers (personal communication, May 28, 2021).

Thus, if museums are unaware of the inequalities of the arts sector and how different forms of capital influence how visible a contemporary artist is, they might end up reproducing these inequalities through their collecting practices. That said, negotiating acquisitions with artists directly also represents opportunities to address these inequalities and make the acquisition process fairer. It allows museums to support historically marginalised artists whose work will get more attention after being acquired. It also opens space for artists to have more agency regarding how their work is portrayed in public collections. This was particularly highlighted by my interviewees regarding their respective acquisition processes. Both museum practitioners and artists commented on how the process aimed to respect artists' voices regarding their own work by discussing which artwork would represent their work better or how it could be used by education teams and in dialogue with the existing collection (F Castillo, personal communication, December 17, 2019; G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021; S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021; F Loewenthal, personal communication, May 5, 2021; P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021; B Oyarzún, personal

communication, May 28, 2021). This negotiation might be particularly relevant when acquiring artists of Indigenous origin, as it would imply opportunities for self-representation.

8.3.1. Decolonising Museum Collecting

Following what has been discussed here, it is relevant to return to the debate regarding decolonising museums, as introduced in chapter 2. This debate has been pushed by discussions around the repatriation of Indigenous artefacts and, most importantly, human remains. Again, this strongly concentrates the arguments in ethnographic museums for obvious reasons. The discussion has reached prominent international museums in the arts sector, raising conversations about fairness in pay gaps among contemporary artists from the Global South versus artists from the art capitals. There have also been notorious debates about race pay gaps pushed by black contemporary artists. And ultimately, black women artists have been the ones to denounce more clearly the intersections affecting them in the global art market.

That said, it is also relevant to notice the difference between the debates around decolonisation in the Global North versus those in Latin America. While in the Global North, the debates have been strongly around race and how racism shapes art's reception, in Latin America, the debate is focused on the homogenisation of culture, making Indigenous cultures invisible or less valued. Furthermore, Thea Pitman has argued that,

> The door to hegemonic art institutions is ajar, but not wide open to radical change of the status quo as yet, and while truly activist curatorial practice may choose to avoid museums and galleries altogether, there is also an ongoing need to attempt to decolonise such institutions by tackling the ways in which Indigenous art is curated (2021, p.14)

I want to echo Pitman's words and take them further, arguing that collecting Indigenous art self-reflexively is also crucial. In Chile, the rise of Indigenous curators, such as Cristian Vargas

Paillahueque, has increased the overall visibility of Indigenous struggles in the arts. However, how often do these interventions disrupt museum deposits? I will argue here that while artists and curators can challenge representation in exhibitions in museum spaces, museum practitioners could also intervene in collections' deposits by acquiring contemporary art that challenges representation gaps. Acquiring these artists implies using the 'permanent' character of collections to introduce 'cracks'. While exhibitions can set precedents, collections remain and constitute the heritage to be inherited. So not acquiring these artists also imply a sort of *inaction*, as they are allowed to intervene in temporary spaces but are still not invited to intervene in the permanent discourse of the museum.

That being said, the idea of 'decolonising the museum' was not as present in my interviewees' understanding of their practice. I asked many of my participants what 'decolonising the museum' meant to them. Although some had studied the topic, many others declared not to be influenced by it but had found out about it later in their careers. Some interviewees even considered it a 'foreign concept' (as in, mainly used in Europe and North America), and my overall impression is that their approaches to it were less academic compared to the art sector in the Global North. However, when discussing what I meant by decolonising the museum, my interviewees tended to relate to it. Still, they reinforced that, for them, these discussions came from difficulties they found *in practice*. This outcome seems coherent with the fact that most contestatory practices were pushed by workers' activism, as explored in chapter 6.

But beyond a definition, when discussing the idea of a decolonised museum, my interviewees' answers tended to explore if it was even possible. There was a general agreement that achieving a decolonised museum was extremely difficult, if not impossible. The reasons were mostly because museums were identified as colonial entities at their core. But some actions and practices could push for an anti-colonial agenda or make museums enter a process of

decolonisation, shaping this not as a goal but as a process. And in this sense, I consider discussing how to decolonise museum practice as – if not more – relevant than decolonising the museum. Thinking of decolonising museum practice, particularly museum collecting, puts stress on the methods and actions that reproduce colonial cultural hegemony in museums while acknowledging the agency of museum workers and artists in changing this dynamic.

Some of my interviewees explored practices that can support the decolonisation of museum practice. Vargas Paillahueque noted that decolonising means not only 'including' but structural changes in *how* Indigenous peoples are portrayed in museums. For example, he said, 'if I go to a historical museum, they show you the Indigenous world during the period of "discovery" and conquest only, but they are not represented after those periods, so you assume that Indigenous peoples stopped existing based on that positivist and linear narrative' (C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021). This is also reproduced in art museums. Vargas Paillahueque argues that decolonising the museum would also mean leaving that narrative behind and embracing a multiplicity of voices and historical timelines in the past and the present. This also connects to why Indigenous contemporary art is such an exciting element to collect: it reflects the breaking of linear narratives and allows these multiple voices to present themselves. While much has been said about integrating communities through audience participation, collecting Indigenous contemporary art is another means by which the museum can question traditional museum authority. This notion also highlights how important it is for critical processes, such as decolonising the museum, to be understood holistically and not only focused on one area of museum practice.

In this sense, some of my interviewees also highlighted the relevance of working with Indigenous peoples in general. While dialogues with communities have been steadily integrated into museum practice worldwide, this is often focused on education programmes and curatorial

projects. The area of collections does not often explore dialogues with communities. The few cases available are most likely to be held in an ethnographic museum, working with the so-called 'source communities'. How can art museums integrate the voices of communities that are simply not part of the collection? Vargas Paillahueque argued that Indigenous artists and Indigenous curators should be invited to explore collections so that they can acknowledge their absence. On the same note, Cortés reflected: 'how can we address this [the Indigenous struggle]? I cannot do it; I cannot do it alone. I am not part of that struggle; I have not lived that struggle; I am not part of that community; I am part of other struggles' (G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021).

I argue that collecting Indigenous contemporary art is an important strategy supporting the process of decolonising museum practice. The acquisition of Indigenous contemporary art has a multifactorial effect. First, as mentioned earlier, it intervenes in a collection that is most likely based on categories that reproduce cultural hierarchies. Secondly, it activates a process of self-reflection and criticality among the museum workers involved in the acquisition process. Thirdly, it facilitates dialogues with other museum programmes that might be already taking a critical approach, supporting those processes by rethinking collection formations as well. Fourthly, it implies a dialogue with an Indigenous contemporary artist regarding their work and how it relates to existing collections. And lastly, it supports historically marginalised artists in a global art system that has systematically undervalued their work.

This last point implies a stand by museums that acknowledge themselves as open systems. There is an urgency for Chilean museums to position themselves in a global landscape shaped by art clusters and an international art market. As discussed by my interviewees, without this awareness, museums are unable to get ahead of the interests of the market and will be at a disadvantage when attempting to collect relevant artists. Moreover, critical collecting practices

must not be based on the 'content' of the artwork or the artist's identity only, but on how the action of collecting is thought about in this complex and broader system of relations in which museums are located. In other words, decolonising museum collecting does not only mean collecting more artists of colour but also making the collecting process fairer.

In the area of collections, art museums must establish ongoing debates regarding the value given to historically marginalised artists. This value must be based on a critical understanding of traditional categories, as well as the values given by the art market. This debate must be held with artists and communities to avoid the reproduction of power dynamics that do not consider the artists' standpoint. I consider that this process is still in a very early stage in Chile, and museum professionals are just starting to reflect on how their traditional practices reproduce social inequalities. Furthermore, these reflections are also pushed by disobedient workers, and there is no consistent policy or institutional backup to ensure their sustainability.

8.3.2. Study Case I: Bernardo Oyarzún in the MINCAP and MNBA collections

To explore these ideas in-depth, it is helpful to look at specific cases where these debates have concerned Indigenous contemporary art collecting. When analysing the emergent Mapuche contemporary art scene, most of the names that come up are young artists in their late twenties or early thirties. But one of the most emblematic events regarding Mapuche contemporary art is the intervention that Bernardo Oyarzún made at the Chilean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2017 with his artwork *Werkén*, which the Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage (MINCAP) later acquired. Oyarzún (born 1963) is a long-career artist; He started his work in the 1990s, and although some of his work has explored his Mapuche ancestry, it has not been the exclusive focus of his work. His participation in the Venice Biennale was a tipping point in his career, making his work much more visible and establishing him as a 'collectable artist'. In his own words:

Thinking of collections, I mean, I did not use to be an artist of collections; I never was. No, at least in Chile, that was unthinkable. It was utterly unthinkable because of the kind of work I do. There are other components as well; it is also because this is a classist and racist scene. I can say it like that, in capital letters. (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021).

According to my findings, Oyarzún is now the artist of Mapuche origin that has most presence in public art collections in Chile, with three artworks. But although he has been producing art since the 1990s, all of these have been acquired in the last decade. The artworks that are now in public collections are:

Table 9: Bernardo Oyarzún's artworks in public art collections in Chile

Collection	Artwork	Acquisition
GGM collection, part of the MINCAP collection	*Fetiche*, 2012	**Donated** in 2013 because Oyarzún exhibited in GGM in 1999. This artwork does not explore the Mapuche issue but the working-class struggle.
MINCAP collection	*Werkén*, 2017	**Donated** in 2018 as part of the agreement signed in the context of the Venice Biennale with the Chilean Government.
MNBA collection	*Bajo Sospecha*, 1998	**Bought** directly from the artist in 2018, after being exhibited at the MNBA in 2017.

Unpacking Oyarzún's trajectory and his relationship with collections offers insight into not only the politics of collecting Indigenous contemporary art but also the challenges this represents to museums. The Venice Biennale is the perfect starting point to explore his work. Oyarzún worked with Paraguayan curator and researcher Ticio Escobar for this project, who, as we have seen, is an international point of reference regarding Indigenous and popular art. This was the

second time the Chilean Government had opened a public contest to exhibit in the Chilean Pavilion at the Biennale, and Oyarzún's work with Escobar's curatorship won in 2016. Their work was chosen by an international panel invited by the Chilean Government. Its members were all relevant names not only in the Chilean arts sector but also at a Latin American level. The panel included Mexican curator Cuauhtémoc Medina, head curator of the Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo; Brazilian curator Ivo Mesquita; curator of the 28th São Paulo Art Biennial; French-Chilean cultural theorist Nelly Richard, curator of the Chilean Pavilion in the Venice Biennale in 2015; Chilean art historian Gaspar Galaz, academic at the Universidad Católica de Chile; Chilean National Art Prize winner Gonzalo Díaz, who also represented Chile in the Venice Biennale in 2005; Chilean contemporary artist Mónica Bengoa, also an academic of the Universidad Católica de Chile; and Emilio Lamarca, former director of the Directorship of Arts and Culture in the Chilean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who also negotiated the participation of Chile in the Venice Biennale (Artishock, 2016).

The artwork presented at the Biennale was called *Werkén*, which translates as *the messenger* in Mapudungún, the Mapuche native language. The installation exhibited over a thousand Mapuche masks in a space of 10x11 meters. These masks are called *Kollón*, and are used to represent a character that takes part in a traditional dance called *Kollón Purün*. The *Kollón Purün* is generally part of the *Ngillatun*, an ancestral Mapuche ceremony aimed to connect to the spiritual world and strengthen the unity of the community. In Oyarzún's work, the *Kollón* masks were presented at the height of the spectator's gaze, supported by iron stands, simulating a crowd. Around the masks, on the room's outer walls, there were LED signs showing 6906 Mapuche surnames, all of the ones today registered in the CONADI (National Council of Indigenous development) (Artishock, 2016)[27].

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[27] Images of this artwork at the Venice Biennale can be found here.

Werkén is a significant example of Indigenous contemporary art. Oyarzún uses traditional Mapuche art to produce the masks while integrating mainstream contemporary art language using LED signs and an installation setting. Furthermore, the artwork aimed to make Mapuche identity visible in an event shaped by colonial narratives of the nation, portraying the struggle of the Mapuche people for recognition within Chilean state. This demonstrates a political positionality taken by the artist regarding Indigenous identity and their place in the transnational art system.

Moreover, and relevantly for this research, *Werkén* was later acquired by the MINCAP collection by donation in 2018. As explained by Oyarzún, he was paid for the production of the artwork and the presentation in Venice. However, he was not paid for the acquisition of the artwork (personal communication, May 28, 2021). This was an agreement signed when he won the public contest; therefore, the donation was not a consequence of his will to donate. He also stated that the budget offered to the winning project for the Biennale was not enough for him to create the number of masks he wanted for the artwork. This shows how there are severe issues around precarity, even in a big event like this, funded directly by the government. As narrated by Oyarzún:

> I was not paid a *peso* for *Werkén*. *Werkén* was a donation; it was part of the contract regarding Venice. (…) I even lost money; I invested my own money to do *Werkén* the way I wanted it. What was the risk? The risk was that I travelled with all those masks, and if I was not able to bring them back, I was planning to burn them somewhere. And then re-make them here [back in Chile] (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021).

That said, it is interesting to notice how the functioning of this contest created cracks within the institution. When *Werkén* was chosen to represent Chile at the Venice Biennale, it was selected

by a panel of experts, none of them part of the government nor current museum workers. Consequently, *Werkén* travelled to represent the Mapuche people in the name of Chile as a nation-state. At the same time, the Chilean state does not recognise pluri-nationality or the Mapuche as a nation. Despite these contradictions, the circumstances around the Venice Biennale allowed a fast-track accessioning of Oyarzún's *Werkén* to the MINCAP collection, making the acquisition of one of the most notorious artworks of Mapuche contemporary art somewhat circumstantial. This situation makes it evident that not all acquisitions of non-hegemonic artists are necessarily a consequence of reflexivity. Similarly to the situation with the *molas* at MSSA, this artwork was not acquired following an institutional framework aiming to widen diversity representation but rather due to a very particular and exceptional situation.

Arguably, this case shows how the creation of acquisition committees that integrate external members might foster the acquisition of non-canonical artists. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the decision-making regarding acquisitions used to be strongly shaped by the director's authority in Chilean museums. But the incipient development of collection policies has raised the need for more democratised decision-making processes, which has pushed the organisation of more acquisition committees in the sector. And it is worth noting that these committees coincide with the acquisition of more underrepresented artists.

In this sense, while *Werkén* had a substantial impact on Chilean art and its visibility on international platforms, it is relevant to ask if it would have been acquired this quickly by a public institution if it was not part of Oyarzún's contract. Not only the message of the artwork made it unlikely to be accessioned to a public collection, but also the physical characteristics of the artwork. As noted by Oyarzún, the artwork's dimensions make it difficult to move and handle. In fact, according to the head of MINCAP's contemporary art collections Francisca Castillo, MINCAP does not have the capacity to take care of another large artwork after acquiring

Werkén because of the space it takes to store it in their current deposit (F Castillo, personal communication, December 17, 2019). This demonstrates how the resources available for public collections might have hindered the acquisition of artwork with these characteristics.

Figure 7: View of the MINCAP deposit. Picture taken during my fieldwork, on December 17th, 2019. According to MINCAP's head of collections, Francisca Castillo, many of these boxes store masks from 'Werkén'.

Based on what has been discussed, we can compare *Werkén*'s case and the acquisition of another Oyarzún's artwork, *Bajo Sospecha* (1998), this time by the MNBA[28]. While *Werkén* entered the collection rather circumstantially, *Bajo Sospecha* was acquired by a more established process by the MNBA twenty years after being created. The acquisition of this artwork was proposed by MNBA's contemporary art curator Paula Honorato after including it in an exhibition at the museum titled *El Bien Común* (2017-2018, 'the common good'). This

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[28] This artwork can be seen on: https://www.surdoc.cl/registro/2-5512

exhibition, according to Honorato, aimed to challenge how the idea of Nation has shaped a sense of community in Chile (Honorato, 2017, pp.18-19). In *El Bien Común*, the main room hosted two key artworks: Oyarzún's *Bajo Sospecha* (1998) and Pedro Lira's *La Fundación de Santiago* (1888, 'the Foundation of Santiago')[29].

Pedro Lira (1845-1912) was a Chilean painter considered one of the most significant of his time. He was deeply involved in developing the MNBA in its early years, supporting the establishment its first official building. *La Fundación de Santiago* is a somewhat controversial painting and one of the most iconic pieces in Chilean art history. It represents conquistador Pedro de Valdivia at the top of Huelén Hill (re-named Santa Lucía Hill by the Spanish), pointing to Santiago's valley, announcing the city's foundation to his committee. At his feet, a representation of the Indigenous leader Huelén Huala looks up to Valdivia, pointing down to his land while being ignored by the Spanish soldiers around him. This painting was also presented at the Universal Exposition of Paris in 1889 and won the silver medal in the painting competition. *La Fundación de Santiago* is an iconic example of Chilean colonial ideology and its presence in Chilean art history. It highlights the dominance of the Spanish heritage of the country and the domination over Indigenous peoples as the root of national identity. It has been part of schoolbooks numerous times, and it was even printed on CLP$500 banknotes, in circulation until the year 2000 (Honorato, 2017, p.21).

Bajo Sospecha (1998, 'under suspicion') tells a different side of the story. It is based on Oyarzún's own experiences of racism and prejudice due to his ethnicity and the feeling of being constantly 'under suspicion'. In particular, Oyarzún draws on an event that occurred in 1998 when the police detained him in the street because he was suspected of having committed an

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[29] This artwork can be seen on: https://www.surdoc.cl/registro/2-1217

assault. The arrest was based on his 'dark skin, dark hair, and Indigenous features' (Honorato, 2017, p.25), as it matched the description of the person, the police were after. Oyarzún was released when the victims of the assault did not recognise him. *Bajo Sospecha* is an installation formed by three large biometric pictures of Oyarzún in black and white, exhibited along with a spoken portrait of himself with the description: 'he has dark skin, like an Atacameño[30], thick hair, overbearing thick lips, wide chin, thin forehead, as brainless' (translation is mine). This installation presents 164 portraits of Oyarzún's relatives or people with similar features (Carreras, 2016). This artwork also inspired a documentary released in November 2022, also titled *Bajo Sospecha*, about Oyarzún's work and his relationship with his Mapuche roots (Mosciatti, 2022).

The contraposition of Lira's and Oyarzún's artworks aimed to challenge Chilean racism and the way Indigenous peoples have been represented in Chilean art. The exercise was cited and discussed by many of my interviewees as a key moment in the Chilean contemporary art scene, especially after being exhibited in the MNBA, which embodies the tradition of the fine arts in the country. Moreover, it represents a dialogue between historical art collections and Indigenous contemporary art. The curatorship of *El Bien Común* not only makes a stand regarding racism in contemporary Chile but also challenges its history by articulating a dialogue between Oyarzún's work and a two-century-old artwork, asking what has changed since then.

The acquisition of this artwork was discussed by the MNBA acquisition committee after Honorato's recommendation to purchase it from the artist. As noted by my interviewees, the committee agreed to acquire it not only based on Oyarzún's importance as an artist but on how it interacted with the existing MNBA collection, which is, in fact, one of the criteria of the recent

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[30] Indigenous people from Atacama, located in northern Chile and Argentina, and southern Bolivia.

MNBA collection's policy for acquisition. This exercise demonstrates the impact of Indigenous contemporary art in filling collection gaps and challenging the hierarchical representation of social groups. It establishes a standpoint regarding *how* Indigenous peoples have been represented. Furthermore, this critique comes from a contemporary artist's first-hand experience, allowing a self-representation that was unlikely to happen in the period the MNBA collection was initially formed.

There are a few relevant elements to highlight in this acquisition process. Firstly, during my interviews, it was emphasised that Oyarzún's work was validated by his long-term career. The artwork itself, in fact, was a two-decade-old artwork, as it was first created in 1998. It was also acquired after being exhibited at the MNBA in the same year Oyarzún exhibited at the Venice Biennale, which shows that this was a peak moment in his career. This demonstrates that certain traditional narratives, such as career trajectory in the arts, still play a relevant role here. Moreover, the techniques used by the artist in this artwork, photography and installation, are embedded in mainstream contemporary art language, making it less 'risky' for the institution to justify its acquisition. In this sense, while I celebrate the acquisition of Oyarzún's work at the MNBA, the accessioning of his work as a non-canonical artist still depends on his capacity to adapt and to 'appropriate' an institutional language.

It is worth questioning if acquisitions like this could truly represent a moment of decolonisation of museum collecting. I argue here and in the rest of this chapter that the cases where Mapuche contemporary artists have been acquired in public collections have mostly been based on the agency of the artists 'interrupting' the sector from within, often supported by disobedient workers. But the institutional discourse of diversity, aiming to widen representation based on recognition, would be insufficient to address a systematic self-reflexive practice of diversity representation. I recall Thea Pitman's words when warning that 'simply opening the doors of

the museum to non-Western art but still embracing it within a Western aesthetic framework is a quick-fix solution' (Pitman, 2021, p.28), as these frameworks remain unquestioned.

That said, I would also like to highlight the agency of non-hegemonic artists appropriating institutional languages here. In our interview, I asked Oyarzún what it meant to him to be acquired by a public collection and if that represented any contradiction to him. He said:

> If you ask me what I think about *Werkén* being in the Ministry collection, I think it is fantastic. Why? Because they had made the artwork circulate. (…) I find it very positive that *Werkén* ended up in the Ministry because if that were not the case, nobody would have seen the artwork [in Chile], and now it has been exhibited four times here already! I find that incredible. I know that it implies that you become 'institutional'. I know that. Sadly, that is the destiny of artists after they succeed in their careers. And that happens everywhere. You might end up being institutionalised by the hegemony of the global arts or by the institutions of the country you are from… In any case, you become 'institutional'. **But I believe you can remain 'mentally' independent; I mean, you can keep working with that autonomy as an artist** (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021).

Oyarzún's reflections demonstrate an awareness of the consequences of his work being acquired by public institutions, but also the advantages of it. When asking him why it was important to him as an artist to have the visibility given by public institutions, he confidently said: 'Because that aligns with my utopia about the future of Chile. What utopia do I imagine? (…) I dream of a Chile that recognises itself as Mapuche' (B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021). In this sense, Oyarzún understands his work as an instrument to pursue social change and considers the 'institutionalisation' of it as necessary for this goal.

Finally, the analysis of Oyarzún's artworks' acquisition in public art collections in Chile highlights how the politics of collecting operate when acquiring Indigenous contemporary artists. Although

it puts artists at risk of institutionalising their work, the artists' autonomy as contestatory individuals allows the introduction of a critique through traditional museum methods and practices. It creates the opportunity for this critique to remain in the collection, set a precedent and establish reflexivity and accountability as part of the development of the arts. However, as I will continue to discuss in this chapter, it still represents the reproduction of traditional frameworks that could, ultimately, maintain hierarchical understandings of cultural productions.

8.3.3. Study case II: Seba Calfuqueo in MAC and MNBA collections

While Oyarzún offered an overview of a long-career artist exploring his Mapuche identity in a mainstream contemporary art scene, it also showed how his work still aligns with several institutional frameworks. In this section, I will explore a second case that allows an understanding of other challenges museums might face when acquiring Mapuche contemporary art in museums.

I will focus on the work of Seba Calfuqueo (born 1991), who has gained strong visibility in the sector in the last ten years. Calfuqueo is a younger artist, and their career has been propelled notably in the previous five years, with an increasing presence in global art circuits and markets, having exhibited in fifteen countries. For instance, only in 2022, they participated in exhibitions at the Denver Art Museum, USA (*Who tells a tale adds a tail, Latin America and contemporary art*, curated by Raphael Fonseca), at the Serpentine Galleries in London (*Queer Earth and Liquid Matters*, curated by Macarena Gómez-Barris, Jack Halberstam and Kostas Stasinopoulos) and at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris (*Reclaim the earth*, curated by Daria de Beauvais), to name a few. Calfuqueo's work explores the intersection of Indigenous struggle, gender, sexuality, social class and environmental justice. It embodies identities that not only are not often represented in museums but also erased narratives in history overall. Regarding Chilean collections, Calfuqueo donated artwork to MAC based on their relationship with the

museum in the early stages of their career. The MNBA recently acquired their work as well, after their having exhibited there a few times.

In conversation with Calfuqueo, they reflected how some colonial discourses carried by traditional museums in Chile, such as MAC and MNBA, had started to be questioned, making space for work like theirs. Calfuqueo identified *El Bien Común* in MNBA as a turning point in this regard, and also the fact that MAC constantly acquired contemporary, younger artists, pushing for emerging and contestatory debates (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021). Calfuqueo's donation to MAC was closely related to their relationship with former MAC director Francisco Brugnoli, who was their teacher in art school:

> I do think it is quite wrong to donate artwork with no monetary retribution. I do not think it is a good practice or a professional thing to do. I mean, because it breaks the value of your time, your energy, everything. So… I did it because of the affection I have for the museum, because of what MAC means to me, because MAC was my first big showcase for exhibiting, and Brugnoli was very, very generous with me. Like… He risked a lot with me. I mean, me being very young, he gambled, [he offered] space in the museum for a solo exhibition [for me]. So I did it from my sincerity and emotionality, as a gesture of 'gratitude' to the museum. And also with the hope that that artwork would be exhibited in the future as well, so other people can see it. (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

It is interesting to highlight this reflection as it demonstrates that collecting practices are not only shaped by hegemony and market dynamics. Calfuqueo explicitly acknowledges how their emotions come to play in their presence in public collections. They also show a clear awareness regarding the relevance of their relationship with the institutions that collect their work. This not only entails their relationships with the museum staff but also how they feel MAC is in line with their 'political, social, and artistic ideals' (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

While most collections that now hold Calfuqueo's work are private, they still highlighted the value of being in a public collection for them as an artist:

> I have a very pedagogical relationship with my work. I am also a teacher, so I am interested in my work being seen by students and young people, that is very important, and I know MAC and MNBA are two institutions that take care of that. (…) not just seeing it in terms of the institution itself but what that institution means to people. Because many people in Chile do not see art if it is not at MNBA or MAC. They just do not. Those are the only two museums people really know and that have that linking, and schools go there, etcetera (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

Calfuqueo's reflection demonstrates that the process of collecting does not only entail institutional decision-making. It is knitted into a much more complex network of relations and politics. From an institutional standpoint to the artists' positioning, the politics of collecting implies a dialogue of intentions. I argue that to make the most of that dialogue, museums require self-awareness of their position in the system. This is because of the same questioning of traditional categories and hierarchies. If museums question their own traditional authority and demonstrate a willingness to have horizontal communication with historically marginalised artists, they need to know what they are offering that other institutions or agents of the art system cannot. As noted by Calfuqueo above and Oyarzún earlier in the chapter, I think what museums can offer in this transaction is the promise of a socially engaged use of their collections.

As mentioned earlier, this dialogue also needs to be fair in itself. One of the key issues in museum acquisitions in Chile is how fairness is limited by the precarity of the institutions and the impossibility of paying artists for acquisitions, relying on donations. That being said, it is

helpful to look at Calfuqueo's artworks that are present today in public collections in Chile to explore these issues further:

Table 10: Seba Calfuqueo's artworks in public art collections in Chile

Collection	Artwork	Acquisition
MAC collection	*Vivienda predeterminada*, 2016	**Donated** in 2017 as part of the celebrations of the 70 years of the museum.
MNBA collection	*Welu Kumplipe*, 2018	**Bought** directly from the artist after being exhibited at the MNBA in 2018-19.

The artwork Calfuqueo donated to the MAC collection, *Vivienda predeterminada* (2016, 'predetermined housing')[31], makes a critical reference to a social housing project developed in 2011, funded by the Chilean Ministry of Housing, focused on Mapuche communities. The project mentioned above built twenty-five houses for 'Mapuche families willing to be inserted into "modern" society without losing their "traditions and customs"' (Calfuqueo, 2016). Calfuqueo critiques how this project appropriated elements of Mapuche traditional housing decoratively without addressing its cultural relevance. To do so, Calfuqueo's work reproduced the front side of these houses and installed it with instructions printed on the wall, which read as: 'Instructions: 1. Place yourself behind the structure, 2. Feel how the light comes through as if you were in a *Ruka*[32], 3. Do you feel like a contemporary Mapuche? 4. What place do you inhabit?' (Calfuqueo, 2016; translation is mine).

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[31] Images of this artwork can be found on the artist's website: https://sebacalfuqueo.com/2016/09/26/vivienda-predeterminada-2/

[32] Mapuche traditional houses.

In this artwork, Calfuqueo touches upon various struggles associated with Mapuche identity. They satirically questioned the *place* of Mapuche communities and how Indigenous struggle intersects with social class, while appropriating contemporary art languages related to installation. In our interview, Calfuqueo noted that their grandparents had migrated to Santiago to work as a baker and a maid. And thus, they are interested in how working-class and Indigenous identities intersect. On their website, Calfuqueo notes that:

> The history around the Mapuche resistance has been symbolized in great *toki* (military leader) and Mapuche leaders that took part of this history. The migration processes of other stories from the countryside to the city were never made visible by the construction of the otherness, the Indigenous within the city. (Calfuqueo, 2020).

In this sense, Calfuqueo's work reflects the complex dynamics around contemporary Indigenous identity. It is not just a critique of a history of marginalisation but also an exploration of the role of Indigenous peoples in Chilean society today. Furthermore, I am interested in exploring why this particular artwork was donated. As narrated by Calfuqueo and Brugnoli, the decision was based on a conversation they both had about it. Brugnoli noted that he usually suggests artwork he finds relevant or emblematic to each artist negotiating a donation, but ultimately, they decide what to donate. Calfuqueo mentioned that the key elements in the decision were that this artwork had been exhibited at MAC, and also its dimensions. They noted that it was impossible for them to store the artwork in their house, and they could not afford a storage unit, which shaped their interest in donating this particular piece (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021). This demonstrates how this artwork, which explores a relevant intersection between Indigenous communities and social class struggles, is now part of a public collection but for rather –again– circumstantial reasons. MAC as an institution still does not

have a collection policy, and the sustainability of collecting practices that ensure the acquisition of this kind of artworks is uncertain.

On the other hand, as narrated by Calfuqueo and Cortés, the MNBA had an intention of acquiring Calfuqueo's work for a few years before it actually happened. Cortés had invited them to exhibit in 2017 an artwork titled *Apümngeiñ*[33] (2015)[34], which was an intervention in the MNBA hall. *Apümngeiñ* was the first intervention at MNBA that denounced violence against Indigenous peoples. And although it organically dialogued with former representations of the Mapuche people in the collection and Cortés pushed for its acquisition, it was not passed by the acquisitions committee. The reason was mainly that Calfuqueo was a young artist and did not yet have a consolidated enough career to be acquired by the MNBA.

The year after, in late 2018, Cortés invited Calfuqueo again, this time to be part of *De Aquí a la Modernidad*, along with a group of other Indigenous contemporary artists. On this occasion, Calfuqueo presented a video performance titled *Welu Kumplipe* (2018), which translates as 'he should keep his promise to us'[35]. The artwork refers to a documentary made by Chilean cinematographer Raul Ruiz titled *Ahora te vamos a llamar hermano* ('Now we are going to call you brother'), filmed in 1971. In that year, Allende's government was promulgating an 'Indigenous law' that contemplated land restitution to the Mapuche people, which then was repealed by the dictatorship. In *Welu Kumplipe*, Calfuqueo draws on a speech given by a young Mapuche man in the documentary, translated in collaboration with Cristian Vargas

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[33] In this artwork, Calfuqueo used an emblematic artwork of the MNBA collection titled *The Palin Player* (1880), by Nicanor Plaza, which represents a Mapuche boy playing *palín*, a traditional Mapuche game. Around this artwork, Calfuqueo installed resin black horses (representing the colonisers, who introduced horses in Latin America) stepping on synthetic black hair on the ground (representing Indigenous people), forming the phrase 'Apümngeiñ', which translates as 'we were annihilated' (Calfuqueo, 2015).

[34] Images of this artwork can be found on the artist's website: https://sebacalfuqueo.com/2015/02/11/pezamen/

[35] Images of this artwork can be found on the artist's website: https://sebacalfuqueo.com/2018/03/14/welu-kumplipe/

Paillahueque, which Calfuqueo re-enacts, to reflect on the unfulfilled promises to Mapuche people in Chilean history.

Welu Kumplipe was proposed for the MNBA collection in 2019, and its acquisition was made official in mid-2021. As narrated by Cortés and Calfuqueo, the main difference between them pushing the acquisition of *Apümngeiñ* in 2017 and finally acquiring *Welu Kumplipe* in 2021 was how the visibility of Calfuqueo's work increased in those years, notably in global markets, along with the prices of their work. Since 2018, and to the time of writing, Calfuqueo has participated in two biennials, eight solo exhibitions and twenty-nine group exhibitions in fifteen countries: Chile, USA, UK, France, Italy, Germany, Colombia, Peru, Spain, Austria, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, and Sweden. This increasing visibility of their work put pressure on the MNBA and their chances of acquiring Calfuqueo's work, becoming the first under-40-year-old artist acquired by the museum, along with the work of visual artist Cheril Linett[36].

It is relevant to notice *which* artwork got acquired in this context. Calfuqueo noticed that there was a horizontal dialogue with the museum staff on this occasion as well and that they had discussed which artwork would be better for the MNBA collection. Calfuqueo reflected on how their visibility in international spaces also shaped the value of each of their artworks:

> It was also important where that artwork had been exhibited outside of Chile. That was very important to them. I mean, since I started exhibiting abroad in important spaces, the treatment that institutions give to my work has been very different. (…) One of the artworks they wanted to buy was a performance that I presented in New York and had never done in Chile. So that is very shocking as well. Because it was exhibited in the Performance Space New York, because

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[36] Cheril Linett is a Chilean performance artist and feminist activist. Although her work is not covered in this thesis, the acquisition of her work in 2021 by the MNBA also represents this moment of institutional change and consideration of strong younger artists having international visibility. It is also shaped by the solid feminist positioning of her work, which dialogues with the various feminist instances given in the MNBA, as explored in chapter 6.

it was done there, then it was considered more for acquisition than other artworks that have had much more circulation here [in Chile]. (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

Ultimately, the artwork Calfuqueo mentions above was not the one acquired. The conversation they had with museum staff led to acquiring *Welu Kumplipe*, not only because it had been exhibited at MNBA but also made references to Chilean history in a way that was easier to connect to other artworks in the collection. Calfuqueo reflected thoughtfully about this, noticing that *Welu Kumplipe* had the potential to dialogue with the existing MNBA collection:

> I was not interested in getting an artwork acquired that then would have no impact. I feel like many artworks being acquired, or that were acquired in the past, were not in line with the collections; they were not thought about based on what was before them and how that narrative was contextualised with what is being done now. That was not a debate before. (S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021).

This criterion was also mentioned when the museum acquired *Bajo Sospecha* by Oyarzún, based on its impact when confronted with Pedro Lira's La *Fundación de Santiago*. I consider this approach exciting and relevant in the Chilean context, as we know the acquisition budget is limited, and some sort of prioritisation must be in place. It implies that both artists and museum staff are considering the potential uses of the artworks acquired, and not only the name of the artist or the market value of the artwork. In both cases, I also highlight how this prioritisation was established in conversation with the artists.

That said, the only risk of this approach is to overlook intersectional issues. Although a big part of Calfuqueo's work reflects on gender identity and environmental justice, as well as Mapuche's struggles, none of these artworks were acquired by public collections in Chile at the moment of writing. Here, I am not suggesting this is on purpose, but precisely that this is what would

naturally happen if an intersectional framework were not on the table during acquisition processes. Prioritising a dialogue with the collection might push a tendency to fill specific gaps without addressing intersecting struggles.

8.4. Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter, I aimed to explore the politics of collecting by further analysing the case of Mapuche contemporary art and its presence in the Chilean art museum. By critically examining their acquisition processes, I demonstrated how non-canonical artists have started to be collected but remain as isolated cases in the sector. I have also highlighted the agency artists have in this dynamic and how this has posed exciting challenges to museum staff aiming to widen diversity representation in collections. This has also allowed me to acknowledge museums as open systems, recognising how various dynamics and discourses shape museum collecting.

Chapter 9: Conclusions

9.1. Chapter introduction

I have divided this final chapter into five parts. In the first one, I present a reflection regarding 'transformative collecting' as a key conclusion of this thesis. The second will present my main research findings while revisiting my research questions to explore how these were answered. Then, the following section will discuss how the findings mentioned above represent a contribution to academic knowledge. Considering this, I will next present the limitations of this research and how it shaped the mentioned outcomes while also discussing recommendations for further research. And lastly, I will present some final thoughts regarding this research's outcomes.

9.2. Towards transformative museum collecting

In chapters 7 and 8, I have attempted to characterise what I understand as 'transformative collecting'. This is collecting practices that aim to conduct and promote social change through acquisitions, critiquing not only historical absences and 'gaps', but also questioning traditional methods and categories that have perpetuated hierarchies in cultural production. I argued, also, that transformative collecting is fundamental to the pursuit of diversity representation in museums. This is because aiming to foster diversity without questioning the structures that have reproduced inequality in diversity representation would result merely in an increase in the 'minority quota'. Transformative collecting allows not only widening diversity representation but also calls for fundamental institutional change.

Overall, and considering both Oyarzún and Calfuqueo's cases, there are various learnings from their acquisition processes regarding the politics of collecting. Their recent acquisition

demonstrates a change in collecting practices in Chile, as their work is being considered for permanent collections. Nevertheless, their analysis also showed that these acquisitions were not always based on a 'transformative' standpoint embraced by the institution as a whole. These acquisitions often relied on the artists' capacity to critique the institution while appropriating the institution's language. As mentioned earlier, I recognise in both Calfuqueo and Oyarzún the same critical discourse of diversity that I found in disobedient museum workers, where diversity representation comes from a social justice standpoint and a critique of the traditional system of the arts overall.

That said, this encounter of disobedient artists and workers was challenging due to the precarious structures that framed their relationship. As I have explored throughout this thesis, several interconnected factors are mediating the accessioning of non-canonical artists to collections. Namely, workers' activism, changes in cultural policy and in artistic practice, global debates on social justice in the museum sector, and many other elements, were influential in this process. In this sense, it is helpful to understand museums as open systems, as this addresses how these internal and external factors shape museum collecting.

Ultimately, this dynamic explains why transformative collecting is still rare in the Chilean museum sector. The analyses held in this thesis demonstrated that precarity in the museum sector is a crucial issue to tackle to widen diversity representation. However, I also highlight the contestatory agency of certain workers and artists in still pursuing change through their practice. I argue that this has been by virtue of three elements they have adopted: critical positionality, an awareness of intersectionality, and fostering dialogue. In this sub-section, I will argue how these three elements can support transformative collecting, even in the precarious circumstances that Chilean museum workers find themselves in today.

First, by critical positionality, I mean an awareness of each agent's position in the collecting dynamics. Particularly, museum professionals require this awareness when negotiating with artists as mediators and carers of collections. But also, they need to understand their positionality regarding the arts sector as a whole. Although this is something that museum workers do rather intuitively in practice, increasing debates regarding their role in the practice of collecting specifically could be beneficial in the decision-making process. This positionality goes beyond their role in the museum and often concerns *who* they are. As noted by some of my interviewees, Indigenous professionals such as the workers of the Museo Mapuche de Cañete (as indicated in chapter 7) will necessarily have a different relationship with Indigenous artists. This does not mean the non-Indigenous museum workers cannot build this relationship. Still, the differences will be based on their experiences, which must be addressed by increasing reflexivity and accountability.

The second element is intersectionality, which offers a framework that allows an understanding of systems of oppression as interconnected. But this should not be understood only on the level of the artwork's content. The way the artists' background influences their visibility in the sector needs also to be addressed. While museums have widely discussed their role in supporting and promoting diversity in society as one of their core values, they require further work in promoting this in the art system through their practices. This implies, for example, promoting practices that ensure equality of opportunities, reducing pay gaps and unpaid labour.

Lastly, I believe that one of the most relevant strategies to address intersectional struggles in museum collecting is dialogue. As discussed in this thesis, the collecting practices have historically been held by few workers, and the decision-making has been considered to require specialised knowledge. Although I am not questioning the need for this knowledge, I argue that decision-making cannot be based only on it and requires further dialogue and collaboration with

other sector agents. As demonstrated in previous chapters, museum workforces in Chile are strongly upper-class, and this tendency has only recently started to change. Focusing the decision-making on the staff's knowledge represents the risk of biased knowledge and underrepresentation of minorities and non-hegemonic groups. Dialogue between communities, non-canonical artists, and arts professionals can potentially reduce this bias.

By understanding their positionality, the intersecting struggles of contemporary society, and collaborating with other agents (such as artists, communities, etc.), museum staff will find themselves in a much more self-aware context to build fairer decision-making regarding museum acquisitions. Furthermore, I would like to note here that widening diversity representation without pursuing institutional change is a pointless endeavour. As demonstrated throughout this thesis, diversity representation is shaped by traditional museum structures that continue to operate and impose a hierarchy on cultural production. While Indigenous contemporary artists have started to challenge this in their practice, embracing it requires overall changes in the institution and museum practice. This can only be achieved by permanent institutional revisionism, accountability, and a will for transformation.

9.3. Key findings: Revisiting my objectives and research questions

The first relevant finding to acknowledge here relates to my first research objective, which was to 'characterise collecting strategies in public art museums in Chile'. As noted throughout this thesis, Chilean museums' collecting practices are widely unresearched, especially art museums. One key finding of this research was a first approach to characterising Chilean museum collecting as shaped by the sector's precarity, which led museums to collect mainly based on donations and often 'intuitively' due to the lack of collection policies. The research also found an incipient trend to formalise collecting practices through the recent creation of

collection policies in the last few years. I argued that the increasing professionalisation of the sector had shaped this and emerging research-based collecting in the museum sector, notably influenced by the rise of critical curatorial practices in Chile.

A second significant finding is the characterisation of two co-existing discourses about diversity in the Chilean museum sector. Notably, I characterised an institutional understanding of diversity, shaped by the notion of 'recognition' of non-hegemonic cultural groups. The characterisation of this was enabled by my second objective, which was to 'appraise cultural policy documents to recognise institutional standpoints regarding diversity representation in museums'. Secondly, I identified a self-reflexive, critical discourse of diversity that addressed diversity representation as connected to social justice. This latter discourse was strongly present in 'disobedient' workers and Indigenous contemporary artists' understandings of the museum's social role in today's Chile.

A third core finding of this research was the characterisation of a new, disobedient workforce in Chilean museums. This workforce was marked by workers of working-class backgrounds in the field. I also found that these workers pursued most acquisitions in art museums that aimed to widen diversity representation. These acquisitions were not shaped because the workers followed institutional guidelines but by their own sense of injustice and activist standpoints. This particular outcome aligned these workers with the aforementioned critical discourse of diversity, which also allowed me to address my third objective, which was to 'discuss issues around the social role of museums in the contemporary Chilean context regarding diversity representation'.

Moreover, the self-reflexive stand of these disobedient workers allowed me to analyse how their own experiences of marginalisation shaped acquisitions that fostered diversity representation. This is a fourth key finding. Specifically, I discussed how feminist activism in the museum sector had encouraged a broader awareness of the underrepresentation of other social groups, such

as Indigenous peoples. This allowed me to fulfil objective number four, 'identify gaps of under-represented groups in public art museums' collections.' In conversations regarding absences they have recognised in collections based on their own positionality, workers discussed how they have framed what they considered gaps in collections. Consequently, this also supported objective five, 'assess cases of relevant artworks by non-canonical artists accessioned in art museums' collections since 1990', as interviewees acted as gatekeepers for me to find key cases of artworks acquired in my study cases.

The above conversations also allowed me to 'recognise the challenges museum workers face when attempting to widen diversity representation in museums' (objective six). These challenges represent a fifth relevant finding regarding how precarity in Chilean museums hinders their capacity to foster diversity through collections' acquisitions. These findings allowed me to answer my main and subsidiary questions, as discussed in the following sub-section.

9.3.1. Questions and answers

Considering the findings mentioned above, it is relevant to return to my research questions. My primary research question was: How have Chilean public art museums addressed diversity representation in their acquisitions from 1990 - 2020? A general answer to this is that there have been two main approaches regarding diversity representation shaped by the two diversity discourses mentioned in the previous sub-section.

The first diversity discourse, the 'institutional' one, represents an initial attempt to address diversity in museum collections and their acquisitions. As discussed earlier in this thesis, the end of the dictatorship in Chile influenced a recognition of diversity and inclusion as a central value in the country's project of a new liberal democracy. This pushed several influential policies

and programmes that aimed to address, for example, gender inequality and Indigenous cultural rights. That said, although this approach has been increasingly present in Chilean cultural policy, its impact on collecting practices has not been particularly influential. While the institutional discourse has opened the path for more conversations regarding diversity in the arts, the precarity of the cultural sector has meant that this approach has rarely had a relevant impact on actual museum practice.

In this sense, I highlight the second discourse, based on workers' self-reflexive positionality and understanding of diversity representation as linked to social justice. As this discourse is concentrated on museum practitioners, it is often connected to concrete museum practice. Museum workers have recognised that simply 'including' artists from non-hegemonic groups implies that cultural hierarchies would remain unquestioned. Thus, they have also aimed to challenge traditional museum categories through their acquisitions. I have characterised this as 'transformative collecting practices', associated with the critical discourse of diversity. This has been possible, often, due to the collaboration between museum workers and non-canonical artists that have intervened in the arts scene, such as Indigenous contemporary artists. Therefore, transformative collecting practices have addressed diversity representation from a critical standpoint by challenging not only 'gaps' in collections but the broader traditional museum structures that have reproduced cultural hierarchies in the first place.

Thus, considering this research's main question, I argue that transformative collecting has been *the most significant* way museums have addressed diversity representation. Nevertheless, this has not been a predominant practice in the sector. As noted in chapters 7 and 8, many of the 'transformative acquisitions' I could find were somewhat circumstantial. These were not common practices, and the consideration of non-canonical artists for acquisitions was very recent. In the same way, the few policies that supported this kind of acquisition were released

in the last five years, demonstrating that for most of the period studied (1990-2020), these practices were generally absent in the sector. Unfortunately, it must be concluded that public art museums *have not* addressed diversity representation thoroughly in their collecting practices.

My subsidiary questions hinted at why this has been the case. The main reason was the precarity of the sector. This was highlighted while exploring subsidiary question one, 'what challenges do Chilean art museums face when attempting to widen diversity representation in collections?'. This question highlighted a severe lack of funding and organisational issues that hindered museums' capacity to address diversity representation. I identified that museums had very small or non-existent budgets for acquisitions, which made them reliant on donations and 'intuitive collecting'. As argued in chapter 5, museums' chances to address diversity representation are minimal in contexts where museums have no funding available to conduct research regarding collecting priorities or even select thoroughly what is accessioned.

The above also overlapped with my second subsidiary question, 'what are art museums' collection strategies in Chile in the post-dictatorship period, and how does it relate to their context?'. This question also allowed me to identify a third strategy, 'research-based' collecting, as a response to the first two. This third strategy came in hand with a rise in collections policy development, acquisition committees' formations, and a general awareness of collecting as political. This widespread phenomenon was extremely recent, developing in the last five to ten years. Lastly, my third subsidiary question, 'how do museum workers understand museums' social responsibility regarding diversity representation, and how does this influence their practice?' was primarily explored in chapter 6 and significantly contributed to the characterisation of the 'disobedient workforce' that advanced most of the transformative collecting practices I was able to identify in the sector.

9.4. This research's main contributions

Having explored the main findings of this research in dialogue with my research questions and objectives, I consider that the main contributions this thesis offers to academic literature are its characterisation of how art museums in Chile collect today. Echoing the discussion in the introduction of this thesis, research regarding how power dynamics shape contemporary museum collecting is relatively limited. The few cases available concentrate on museums in the Global North, and research on how Latin American museums collect is largely absent from academic scholarship. Moreover, the characterisation of Chilean museums' strategies to deal with their precarious structure, discussed in chapter 5, might be relevant for other countries in the region and, therefore, can contribute to academic knowledge, museum practice, and policy development relating to Latin American cultural organisations.

Furthermore, as this thesis focused on diversity representation, this research also contributes to global discussions regarding the decolonisation of museums and museum practice. The perspective offered in this thesis, shaped by the particularities of the Chilean context, aims to foster further dialogue in the global museum sector regarding the challenges of fair diversity representation. As demonstrated in this thesis, diversity can be understood as a constructed and historicised discourse that is therefore shaped by each context. When approaching the institutional uses of diversity, it is worth acknowledging that diversity will be shaped by institutional history and each institution's specific aims and mission. Consequently, the heavy concentration of debates regarding diversity representation in museums of the Global North hinders the opportunity to explore how these dynamics operate elsewhere.

At the same time, and although grounded in the various theories explored in chapters 1 and 2, this thesis aims to explore existing museum practices that offer concrete examples of

transformative collecting. This has allowed me to identify museum workers in Chile as a crucial motor for institutional change in the sector. This distinction between the institutional aims and workers' motivations is another crucial contribution of this research. The characterisation of a 'disobedient' standpoint demonstrates how local politics operate in a contestatory manner in Chilean museum practice. Furthermore, I argue that in a context where institutional precarity hinders opportunities for institutional change, disobedience is potentially the only strategy possible for museum workers to pursue social change and, ultimately, to build a socially responsible museum.

9.5. Limitations of this study & recommendations for future research

The exploratory character of this research focused on the Chilean museum sector from a broad perspective and responded to the lack of previous research in the country, particularly regarding collecting practices. Consequently, this research aimed to offer a first approach to the Chilean museum context. This implied several limitations that, at the same time, correlate to potential future research. I explore both of these in this section.

Firstly, I recognise some limitations due to my sampling rationale. For instance, I only researched cases of public collections in Santiago as they were considerably more accessible. This meant that this thesis did not address the scene of regional or private museums in Chile. This is a significant limitation as certain regions have a greater presence of Indigenous cultures compared to Santiago, and therefore this might influence their discourses of diversity. For instance, the Araucania Region, where Wallmapu is located, concentrates most of the Mapuche population; thus, other approaches to addressing their representation could operate in museums in that region. Similarly, private museums might be influenced by the market

dynamics differently. In this sense, future research focusing on regional museums might contribute to further discussions regarding diversity representation in Chilean museums.

Secondly, I would also suggest that more research on single-case studies are necessary. While I was interested in analysing the Chilean museum sector as an open system, this might have hindered my opportunities to look at each case more in-depth. Future research aiming to investigate individual cases might offer further insights regarding the internal dynamics of museums in shaping museum collecting. For instance, the case of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAC) became less visible in this research as the museum team had fewer official documents and procedures that could be comparable to other museums (for example, they had no collection policy). Conducting research on MAC as a single study case could allow researchers to adapt their research design to the museum's needs. I believe, for example, that this will require more in-situ research, which I could not conduct.

Thirdly, while this thesis focused on diversity representation, I acknowledge that many forms of diversity were not addressed in this research. Again, this was due to the exploratory character of my research design, which meant that my data shaped how I addressed diversity. This led to a focus on cultural diversity and Indigenous representation, gender equality, and social class as the principal axes of diversity in this thesis. Further research can and should be conducted regarding representing other dimensions of diversity, such as sexuality, religion, disabilities and migratory status, and their potential intersections.

A fourth significant limitation is that this research could not address the role of audiences in relation to diversity representation in museums. As this research focused on collecting practices, it is pertinent to notice that these were significantly disconnected from audiences in general. In the early stages of this research, and notably in the preliminary study, I asked my

participants about their views on participation and democratisation of the area of collections. This notion was received as an alien concept by most of them. Their responses mainly reflected the options of widening access to collections and forming acquisitions committees (when they were not yet in place). Nevertheless, the possibility of opening this conversation to communities was not considered in any of my cases.

At the same time, this was partly due to the sector's precarity. As noted by my interviewees, participation and community engagement were a permanent challenge due to a budget and workforce shortage. Workers on education and community programs were often on temporary contracts and the whole area tended to be project-focused, without forward planning. Moreover, while there is significantly more research regarding the educational role of museums available in Chile, I believe this could establish a further dialogue with other areas of museum practice, fostering a holistic understanding of museums. This highlights a need for further conversations in this regard in future research.

Additionally, this thesis did not explore other key elements of museum collections, such as conservation, storage and deaccessioning. Some of these were mentioned when relevant to collecting practices, but the focus on acquisitions notably shaped the data in that regard. As I have noted before, research on the area of museum collections, in general, is considerably scarce in Chile. Therefore, and understanding this research's limitations, further research in this area is urgent.

Lastly, I must mention that this research faced several challenges and practical constraints due to external circumstances that are worth mentioning here. For instance, my research design was considerably shaped by the Chilean social protests of the *estallido social* of 2019 and the COVID-19 pandemic. These situations occurred at the end of the first, throughout the second,

and during part of the third year of my PhD research. This required my research design to adapt to the given situation constantly. Both the *estallido social* and the pandemic limited my capacity to explore collections in person and travel in general. This influenced my methods to focus on semi-structured interviews strongly. Broader access to collections' deposits could have allowed me to find other exciting cases of transformative collecting. Consequently, I suggest that future research in this area could benefit from more in-person research.

9.6. Final thoughts

As I wrote this thesis, Chile continued to change tremendously. The *estallido social* triggered a complex social scenario that is impossible to represent here thoroughly. Since I started this research, the Chilean government has put in place several projects aiming to address the social inequality denounced during the protests of 2019. Notably, a process of constitutional change is still in progress. Gender equality and Indigenous rights have been at the core of this process, although they have also been some of the most controversial elements in discussions regarding the new constitution. At the time of writing, Chile still needs to constitutionally recognise Indigenous nations in its territory, demonstrating that further work for cultural recognition is still a pending task.

Moreover, this thesis has aimed to contribute to a general lack of research in Chilean museums. As a Chilean researcher, I have experienced how this has consistently limited chances of development in Chilean cultural institutions, whose workers nonetheless continue to pursue change. Although I have highlighted these workers' disobedience as a key motor of transformative and socially engaged practices, I have also discussed how this disobedience is not sustainable. Public cultural institutions must still ensure the conditions for workers to conduct institutional and social change. Lastly, I acknowledge how the above has hindered

opportunities for broader and more critical representations of the diversity that characterises contemporary Chilean society. I understand this as a social justice endeavour. Therefore, this thesis has also been framed by this desire for transformation and the pursuit of social change in the cultural terrain.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide (Preliminary Study)

Part 1: The Collection

- Introduction to the collection (how it started, its history, what kind of artworks it holds, who works with them, who is part of the collections' team)

- Who is involved in the decisions about acquisitions for the museum? Has this changed since the foundation of the museum?

- Do you consider the post-dictatorship period (1990-now) to be different from the previous periods regarding collecting practices? How and why?

- Is there a current acquisitions policy / criterion? How was this formed?

  ➢ If not, do you think it is needed?

- Which factors influence more strongly the current decisions over acquisitions?

  ➢ Do you think cultural policy influences acquisition practices?

  ➢ Do you think the opinion/will of museum workers make a difference?

- Is there any information available about the rates of diversity representation in the current collection (gender, indigenous peoples, migrants, people with disabilities)?

  ➢ If yes, what are the results? Is the data accessible publicly?

  ➢ In which context this data was collected/analysed?

  ➢ If not, why?

    ➢ Considering the current documentation of the collection, is it possible to analyse rates of representation?

- Are there/ or have there been any inclusion or diversity programmes in the museum?

  ➢ Which kind of communities have they prioritised? Why?

> ➢ Has this had an impact on the collections department?

- How does the collection department relate to the curatorial one?

> ➢ Have there been any conflicts between these two departments, linked to the kind of artworks available in the collection (in terms of inclusion & minorities representation)?

Part 2: Social responsibilities of the museum

- As a museum professional, what do you think are the social responsibilities of the museum?

> ➢ And the collections department in particular?

- How do you think the notion of inclusion has changed in Chilean museums since 1990?

> ➢ has this had an impact in the collections department?

- Considering the recent social events in Chile, do you think this is going to trigger changes in the institution?

> ➢ If yes, of what kind?

> ➢ Do you think this calls for more participative spaces in the museum?

> ➢ And regarding the collections department in particular?

> ➢ Have this social movement brought something to the table that wasn't on the agenda of the museum before?

> ➢ Does the museum consider any short-term changes regarding social demands?

> ➢ What are the constrains do you think the museum will face in order to achieve these plans?

- Do you consider citizen instances, such as open forums potentially beneficial for museums? If so, why and how?

- What do you think would be the role of museum professionals in an increasingly democratized and participative cultural environment?

    ➢ What should be the relationship of museum professionals with audiences? Funding bodies? The Ministry?

Part 3: Challenges

Considering what has been discussed here:

- What constrains do museums face when trying to develop inclusive practices?

- What challenges represents to democratize the museum in general and the collections department in particular?

- What needs to be changed for museums to become more socially responsible institutions in Chile?

Appendix B: Cultural Policy Documents Analysed

A. ***Propuesta para la institucionalidad cultural chilena* (Proposal for the Chilean Cultural Institutionality)** – 1991, Ministry of Education.

This document reports the first formal assessment of the cultural sector after the end of the dictatorship. It explores the various deficiencies of the sector in the early 1990s and proposes the creation of the national council of arts and culture. The document has a strong technical language, focusing on legislation and the creation of funds for incentivizing art production. Because of this, it does not explore issues regarding social justice and other rhetoric discussions that will appear later in Chilean cultural policy. The document strongly highlights the role of a democratic/participative approach in culture from early in the projections of cultural institutions in post-dictatorship Chile (Garretón *et al*., 1991, p.4). Additionally, this document notably emphasizes how the aim of the government is not to influence the contents of arts and culture but to ensure its development, which resonates with issues of censorship during the Dictatorship (which is reinforced in the next document (Ivelic *et al*, 1997, p.11). Lastly, regarding diversity, this document mostly approaches indigenous cultures as 'local' phenomena (that occurs only in certain regions) or intangible cultures (Garretón *et al*., 1991, p.35).

B. ***Chile está en deuda con la cultura. Comisión asesora presidencial en materias artístico-culturales* (Chile is in debt with the culture. Presidential advisory commission in artistic and cultural matters)** – 1997, Ministry of Education.

This is a second report that insists on the need for a national council of arts and culture but goes into more detail than the first one. This one looks at each sector separately (media, music, performing arts, literature, visual arts, and folklore). It also proposes a more complex project for the future council, which then became the guidelines for the creation of the CNCA. Notably, this is the first document that mentions plurality and cultural diversity as a key aim of cultural institutions (p.14).

C. ***Chile quiere más cultura. Política cultural 2005-2010* (Chile wants more culture. Cultural policy 2005-2010)** – 2005, National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA).

This is the first formal national cultural policy since the end of the dictatorship, and it was released two years after the creation of the CNCA in 2003. Compared to the previous documents, this one is less technical and expresses clear principles and values that cultural institutions should promote, notably

highlighting ideas of cultural development and national identity (CNCA, 2005, p.3). An interesting element of this document is that, within its principles, it is highlighted the role of the state in ensuring freedom of speech, but it is not mentioned how to address issues of social justice, and inequality is only mentioned regarding audiences (mostly social class inequalities) (CNCA, 2005, p.14). This means the document holds an openly supportive discourse towards diversity, but hides (or does not explicitly explore) the difficulties for marginalised groups to access to mainstream arts, reproducing inequalities regarding cultural rights.

D. **Cultural policy 2011-2016** – 2011, National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA).

This policy was created within one year into the first right-wing governmental period since the end of the dictatorship, and the document has slightly more conservative tones. The policy mostly repeats most of the values of the previous document, with a notable reinforcement of the idea of cultural participation. In fact, the document itself claims that participatory instances were key to identify aims and challenges for this policy (CNCA, 2011, p.14), which is different from previous ones that stated participation was needed but was not applied this approach to the policy methodology. This is a very reiterative document, often vague, and its language is quite business-like. Inequality is not addressed much, and the idea of Nation comes up more often in this document compared to the other documents considered here.

E. ***Política Nacional de Cultura 2017-2022. Cultura y desarrollo humano: derechos y territorio*** **(National Cultural Policy 2017-2022. Culture and human development: rights and territory)** – 2017, National Council of Culture and Arts (CNCA).

This is the last policy released by the CNCA before becoming a ministry (MINCAP). This policy document shows a much more critical approach to culture, openly addressing the struggles of the CNCA facing issues such as cultural diversity and cultural participation. Compared to previous documents, this one focus less on issues such as legislation and strongly focuses on debates around social justice and culture. For the first time in Chilean cultural policy, this document aims to identify "social agents" that should be involved in the cultural sector, or on whom the cultural policy should focus. In this matter, the document notably highlights vulnerable social groups, including indigenous peoples and migrants (which are mentioned for the first time in Chilean cultural policy here) (CNCA, 2017, p.9). This document

openly states that indigenous peoples were the main focus, and highlights that this policy was built collaborating with these groups (CNCA, 2017, p.36).

F. **National Policy of Museums** – 2018, National Sub-directorate of Museums, MINCAP.

This is the first (and only) policy document focused on the museum sector in Chile, which was developed in the context of the creation of the MINCAP. It mostly addresses issues of precarity in the sector and it was based on a participative methodology with museum workers throughout the country. This policy resembles the first two documents considered here, as it is quite technical and not too focused on values or qualitative data regarding the aims of museums. Rather, it focuses on institutional needs gathered in research developed between 2014-2015. Nonetheless, it is relevant to notice that this piece of research is a crucial source, and institutional research focused on museums is extremely scarce in Chile.

Appendix C: Final interviews summary

Institution	Interviewee	Interview overview
MNBA	Gloria Cortés Aliaga Curator of Modern Art and Director's Assistant. Date: 21/04/21 Duration: 02:04:09	The interview focused on contestatory practices in museum workforces. She discussed extensively the case of Seba Calfuqueo, who is currently in process of selling his artwork to the museum. Gloria explained why she recommended acquiring his work and the resistance she faced from authorities and other workers from the museum and the Ministry. She also described how she worked with the artist in the process of acquisition.
MNBA	Paula Honorato Curator of Contemporary Art and Director's Assistant Date: 25/05/21 Duration: 00:57:41	This interview was focused on the contemporary art collection of the museum. Paula explained how she developed a method to identify "gaps" in the collection, in order to recommend acquisitions. She also told me about the acquisition process of Calfuqueo's work and why she was against it. At the same time, she also told me about the acquisition of Oyarzún's work based on her recommendation, comparing both cases of artists exploring indigenous identity. She mostly based the difference between these two artists on the "quality of their work" and their career's impact (Calfuqueo is in his late 20s while Oyarzún is in his 50s).
MSSA	Caroll Yasky Collections Coordinator Date: 16/04/21 Duration: 01:00:10	This is a follow-up interview where we discussed a few cases I found by analysing the acquisitions' spreadsheet mentioned in section 2.3. She also talked to me as former head of collections at MAC, and the process of acquisitions in 2011 there, while she was in charge of the collection.
MSSA	Claudia Zaldívar Museum Director Date: 29/04/21 Duration: 01:00:10	This is one of the few interviews I had with museum directors, and it was a very interesting one. Claudia had experience working in cultural departments in the government, so we discussed how museums and their collections related to general aims and events that happened in the sector since the 1990s. In that sense, the interview was not too focused on the MSSA, but more on the sector broadly.
MAC	Francisco Brugnoli Museum Director Date: 13/05/21 Duration: 00:53:41	This interview was conducted the day before Francisco retired, after 20 years as director of MAC. He discussed the relevance of collecting in his directorship, where over 800 artworks were acquired in a 20-year period.

GGM	Florencia Loewhental GGM Director Date: 05/05/2021 Duration: 00:50:37	Florencia talked to me about the history of the collection, why it was decided to create a collection at all for the gallery, and how acquisitions (all by donation) relate to exhibitions in the gallery. We discussed broadly how curatorial practices have therefore a key influence in the formation of this collection.
SEAV	Varinia Brodsky Head of SEAV, MINCAP Date: 24/06/2021 Duration: 00:47:20	Varinia was contacted due to her role in developing an open call for artworks acquisition for the MINCAP, as a response to the COVID crisis and its impact on the arts sector (see 1.2., D.3). We discussed why the Ministry chose this strategy to support artists, and the protocols for choosing the artworks that were acquired.
CNACC	Soledad Novoa Director of National Centre of Contemporary Art Cerrillos (CNACC) Date: 02/06/21 Duration: 00:40:25	This interview focused on the sector more broadly, discussing the role of contemporary art collections in general. We discussed what it means to work in a contemporary art centre without a collection. She also talked to me as a former curator of modern art in the MNBA, and as part of the acquisition committee for the 2011 project at MAC.
N/A	Seba Calfuqueo Contemporary Artist Date: 22/04/2021 Duration: 01:02:51	Seba is a young contemporary artist that explores his indigenous ancestry in most of his work. We talked about the process of acquisition of his work at the MNBA, his donation to MAC and, overall, his impression of the representation of indigenous contemporary artists in Chilean museums. He also discussed how his work's presence in public collections/exhibitions was linked to his presence in international art spaces in the last few years.
N/A	Cristian Vargas Paillahueque Independent researcher and curator Date: 23/04/2021 Duration: 01:47:44	Cristian is writing his MA thesis focused on contemporary Mapuche art and a scene of young contemporary artists of indigenous ascendency in Chile. Cristian has worked with Seba Calfuqueo and curated a few exhibitions with him. We talked about their collaborative work and also Cristian's perspectives on how indigenous peoples are represented in Chilean museums and historical collections.
N/A	Bernardo Oyarzún Contemporary Artist Date: 28/05/2021 Duration: 01:11:41	Bernardo talked to me about the process of acquisition of his work for the MNBA and the donation of Werkén to the MINCAP, after he participated in the Venice Biennale. He was very critical of the contemporary art sector in Chile, and had notably more complex experiences compared to Seba, since Bernardo started to work as an artist in the 1990s, when the sector was quite unarticulated.

N/A	Mariairis Flores Independent researcher and curator Date: 15/06/2021 Duration: 01:04:34	Mariairis is an art historian, independent curator and researcher. She has collaborated with Seba Calfuqueo since the early stages of his career and continues to do so. We discussed how she perceived the relationship of Seba's work with cultural institutions and also her role as curator.

Appendix D: Data extracts in Spanish

This appendix gathers the quotes and extracts that I have translated from Spanish into English throughout the thesis. This includes direct quotes from policy documents I have analysed, which were only available in Spanish, and the original extracts from my interviews. The aim of this appendix is to offer the original sources to readers who can also read Spanish for more transparent access to the data. The quotes here are organised based on their order of appearance in the thesis. Due to the length of this appendix, I have only added the original in Spanish here, so please refer to the associated page number for my translations of these quotes.

- P.101. Source: CNCA, 2005, p.12.

La necesaria cohesión social que el país requiere para compartir metas nacionales de interés común parte por el respeto de esa diversidad y el reconocimiento de la igualdad de derechos y oportunidades de todos los chilenos y chilenas.

- Pp.102-103. Source: CNCA, 2017, p.53.

Desde el respeto de los derechos humanos, la política cultural nacional deberá identificar los nudos críticos y las medidas pertinentes que permitan avanzar en la inclusión, el diálogo para la Convivencia y el pluralismo. La política cultural es pensada, por tanto, como herramienta para la salvaguarda de los espacios públicos (simbólicos, materiales, mediáticos) que posibiliten la expresión de diferentes identidades culturales, pensadas como un valor para el desarrollo humano dentro del proyecto social.

Así, el Estado junto a la ciudadanía deberán esforzarse en generar estrategias para avanzar en la inclusión social de grupos vulnerables; la promoción de la asociatividad de los grupos migrantes y su vinculación al entramado social de los territorios; la identificación y desarrollo de espacios de encuentro entre las culturas; la prevención de cualquier forma de discriminación por aspecto, origen, religión o nacionalidad; y la visibilización de la migración, del migrante y de sus expresiones culturales como un aporte y contribución al país.

- P.104. Source: CNCA, 2005, p.15.

La descentralización de la política cultural implica también un reconocimiento de las especificidades y características culturales de las distintas regiones de Chile. Esto lleva aparejado la implementación de programas acordes con dichas particularidades, y la necesidad de potenciar el desarrollo de las identidades locales que dan vida y personalidad a las regiones.

- P.107. Source: CNCA, 2017, pp.1-2.

Si bien hasta hoy el Estado se ha ocupado de establecer de manera transversal derechos civiles, políticos y sociales, se trata de una tarea que aún presenta algunos desafíos, especialmente en términos de aquellos grupos que, ya sea a partir de su situación socioeconómica o su identidad sociocultural, han sido excluidos de estas garantías. Grupos que en mayor o menor medida escapan de esa noción homogénea de ciudadanía y requieren de herramientas de acción política que den cuenta de esa diferencia, de sus necesidades y, más importante aún, de sus potencialidades. (…) [Esta política es] Un proyecto que, en primer término, de cuenta de la ciudadanía en su diversidad cultural, reconociendo y valorando el aporte activo de los ciudadanos en la construcción cultural, a través de mecanismos concretos de participación, desde los territorios, en la formulación de problemáticas y propuestas de acción e implementación.

- P. 110. Source: C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021.

Está mirando como... Sin quererlo, se está apoyando más el consumo cultural que el desarrollo cultural del patrimonio. (…) Y ahora se ha tratado como de nivelar. Con el [MINCAP]... Porque siempre yo veo, y claro, la opinión pública lo toma, como dicen, '¡oh, le bajaron el presupuesto a las instituciones culturales!' Pero siempre ha sido como nivelar... Al patrimonio con las artes (…) y todavía no se consigue.

- P.111. Source: S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021.

(…) sucedió hace unos años, están rematando, no me acuerdo si era en Sotherby's o en Christie's, una pintura de Charton de Treville que era una vista a Valparaíso, que evidentemente desde el punto de vista de la historia del arte tiene que estar en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. Yo no tengo cómo ir a pujar al remate ¿te fijas?, no tengo cómo, la perdí no más, ¿te fijas? Y así un montón de cosas. O por ejemplo, no sé, si un artista legítimamente, que está sacando unas obras para venderlas en una galería extranjera, yo debiera tener ahí los recursos para decirle 'no, no, eso no se puede ir pa fuera, yo te la compro, que se quede acá' ¿te fijas? Hay todo un amarre de manos administrativo que hace muy difícil aquello.

- P.112. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

los relatos del arte también son súper temporales, como podis tener cinco años de carrera, pero tener una producción increíble y mucho más potente que un artista que tiene cuarenta, cincuenta años de carrera. Entonces, como que acá eso está muy delimitado, como que se ingresa a la colección solamente cuando te estái muriendo, y no está bien po.

- P.112. Source: C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021.

Esta dinámica muy precarizada de las artes en general en Chile. Es como 'oye te invito a exponer, o expone tu obra en esta institución, porque vay a ganar el capital simbólico de exponer en este lugar y te va a servir para tu curriculum'. Pero no hablemos ni de plata, ni hablemos de derechos de reproducción de obra, ni de exhibición, ni nada de esas cosas. Y eso igual también está incluido, como que la idea de que están haciendo un favor... Y no solamente le pasa al mundo indígena, quizás más, pero que es transversal a las artes en Chile

- P.113: F Loewenthal, personal communication, May 5, 2021.

¿Qué es lo que está produciendo el Estado? ¿Qué es lo que están produciendo los artistas con los recursos del Estado? Y... Y observar si hay una identidad, si hay un desarrollo especial, qué sé yo. Y ahí hacer, claro. Ojalá hubiera un museo de arte contemporáneo, que pudiera hacer eso, que tuviera recursos, que tuviera poder de adquisiciones.

- P. 114. Source: S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021.

Estuvimos a punto de adquirir un increíble Vergara Grez, que además, (…) yo sabía, no porque fuese yo, sino porque me dedicaba a estudiar arte chileno, por qué tenía que ser esa obra, que era una obra que había estado en la Bienal de São Paulo el año sesenta y cinco ¿te fijas? Y claro, lo que pasó fue que, entre convencer a quien había que convencer para comprar esa obra, cuando la fuimos a comprar, ya se había ido al extranjero. Después, la persona que la quería vender me vuelve a llamar y me dice '¿sabes qué? El coleccionista que se la llevó la quiere revender', o sea, empezamos la especulación, y ya me la vendía tres veces más cara que el precio original. Para hacerte el cuento corto (…) nosotros no la tenemos, por no haber sido capaces de tomar rápidamente una decisión (…) como los sistemas administrativos son tan complejos, se pierde la oportunidad.

- P.115. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

¡Es que no existe esa persona! En Chile, al menos. O por el contrario, ese perfil no responde a lo que ese cargo necesariamente requiere (…) Y en eso las autoridades siempre se equivocan. Como que te designan un montón de responsabilidades y no tienes ni la experiencia, ni la expertiz, ni la capacidad veces, ni las ganas de asumir una diversidad de roles que no van con tu línea de trabajo o con, con lo que sabes necesariamente hacer. Entonces, los concursos públicos tienen también esa falencia, que tu ves, lees los perfiles y dices 'No, ¡esto no es!'.

- Pp.115-116. Source: C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021.

Por ejemplo, a nivel nuestro, estamos convocando a este cargo de registro, encargado de registro. Y te juro, y bueno, no hay formación profesional específica para ello en Chile. Y llega de todo. Todo tipo de currículum. Bueno, eso tiene que ver con también con la, con la falta de trabajo, pero, pero no hay profesionalización. Entonces, sólo lo ves en el Museo Histórico, que ahí es como que existen todos esos cargos, pero ni siquiera en Bellas Artes tienes como un encargo de registro, es como que el encargado de la colección hace todo. Entonces estamos como años luz de la toma de conciencia de parte de las autoridades, de la necesidad de, de profesionalizar el área y de, una vez que se profesionaliza, de generar como la legislación necesaria para que se pueda trabajar bajo los parámetros necesarios. Entonces, eso, bien como deprime mi visión al respecto.

- Pp.116-117: Source: C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021.

Muchos profesionales jóvenes se han ido a estudiar afuera (…) han llegado, ponte, curadores, han llegado gente de colecciones, han llegado conservadores… Y el tema está mucho más globalizado. Y yo creo que todo este grupo está, esta generación, hay muchos investigadores que eso es muy alucinante, mucha, mucha gente y muchas mujeres, ¿ah? ¡Muchas mujeres! (…) Mi generación, yo tengo 52 años, no teníamos esa posibilidad. O sea, o éramos, cuando yo salía, yo estudié teoría e historia del arte. Podía ser académica. Podía ser crítica (…) Y... Y se acabó. (…) yo fui la primera que estudió Gestión Cultural. O sea, imagínate. (…) El 96 me fui a estudiar a Barcelona, hice unos cursos alternativos cortos, pero... O sea, toda la, la, la, la oferta de especializacion empezó... Empezó después, empezó en la generación de ustedes. (…) La especialización y la gente, se ha creado a partir de los trabajadores. ¿Si? y al final las instituciones son los equipos.

- Pp.124-125: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

Porque el artista confía también en que, no sé, eso le va a dar un prestigio o también una obra que... Por ejemplo, yo lo hice, eh, esa donación porque no tenía dónde guardar esa obra, y es muy terrible hablarlo así, ¿no? como que igual es un poco la situación que viven los artistas acá en Chile po. Como no hay espacio, o sea, para tener una, para tener un taller hay que tener plata, para tener una bodega hay que tener más plata y así sucesivamente. En unas instituciones que no te pagan por exhibir (…) no te pagan por nada básicamente.

- P.125. Source: E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019.

Eran alrededor de 200 artistas, algunos muy disímiles del otro, pero sabíamos que en el fondo ellos estaban donando como exposición, pero teníamos un par de autores que eran así… (…) Muy sobresalientes, entonces…

- P.126. Source: P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019.

Núñez, por ejemplo, el año 2015 hizo su muestra… Bueno estaba cumpliendo 85 años, no me acuerdo del nombre de la exhibición, pero donó toda la exhibición, ¡toda!… (…) Nosotros ya contábamos con algo como 200 obras de Núñez, porque Núñez… Bueno, fue director del museo y es un generoso; llega con camionetas [risas] y deja colección para donación…

- P.127. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

a mí eso me permite poder tener una estabilidad económica, poder seguir produciendo, pudiera seguir haciendo cosas. Y creo que esa es la responsabilidad del museo, generar eh... generar una sustentabilidad

- Pp.127-128. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021.

Es como lo que se merece. Si más o menos. Es muy curioso, muy curioso cómo opera, y por lo tanto, en rigor, eso no es coleccionismo. Eso es acopio (…) coleccionismo no hay. Porque no, no hay una, no hay rigor, no hay sistema, no hay razonamiento, no hay nada.

- P.129. Source: P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019.

Yo creo que hay mucho de instinto al principio, de guata, de ver que en el fondo no existe ningún espacio en donde los artistas contemporáneos puedan mostrar (…) entonces, ¿qué pasaba con las vanguardias?

- P.129. Source: E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019.

Yo creo que todas las compras acá han más intuitiva, ¿cachai? Como… Un poco los artistas que estaban en boga o cosas así (…) No hay política de colecciones que tu puedas como… Consultar en alguna parte…

- P.129. Source: F Loewental, personal communication, May 5, 2021.

La intuición, en el fondo, tiene que ver con el conocimiento que uno tiene, la experiencia que uno tiene y en la medida en que uno va desarrollando ese conocimiento y esa experiencia, la intuición mejora. O sea, no es lo mismo la intuición de un cabro que acaba de salir de la universidad que una persona que tiene 30 años de experiencia.

- P.130. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021.

Y eso uno podía tomarlo como una intuición. Pero era... Era algo que se lo daba también el conocimiento de muchos referentes, de mucha información, pero además una cuestión muy personal, que no se puede medir, que no se puede tampoco clasificar ni racionalizar.

- P.136. Source: F Loewenthal, personal communication, May 5, 2021.

No creo que tenga que depender de mi opinión, pero sí creo que tiene que estar en conocimiento y tiene que tener un programa y tiene que tener una... Objetivos, no sólo en el tema de las colecciones, sino también en el tema de las comunicaciones que se hacen en la institución, en la programación, qué línea tiene... Lo que hace un director es un poco tener como una visión un poco más periférica de todo, y después los equipos se tienen que ir como, tiene que haber un diálogo, por supuesto, entre lo que necesita el, el encargado de las colecciones, pero con objetivos planteados.

- P.137. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Finalmente, la voz final es la autoridad que está más arriba, es que define y toma la decisión final. Entonces por mucho que lo equipo estemos trabajando en una línea, si él permite que ingrese una exposición, ya sea de la otra curadora o ya sea una exposición externa, incluso, que, que vaya en contra de esa línea o incluso de los de los como principios éticos que ha definido el equipo... Es una decisión que del director o de la autoridad que esté en ese momento.

- P.137. Source: C Yasky, personal communication, December 23, 2019.

Yo creo que era bastante como una decisión autónoma, no creo que haya consultado mucho… A alguien [risas] (…) tanto la Carmen como Balmes, son personas que estuvieron como, formaron parte del museo, (…) Entonces, como que esta como apropiación y personificación de 'el museo soy yo', es como muy, muy fuerte. Y son, provienen como de formaciones…. La Carmen, por ejemplo, es galerista, y Balmes artista. Que terminaron siendo directores pero que no es como ahora que hay más profesionalización.

- P.138. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021

Tampoco hay formación en las direcciones de museo, o por ejemplo, que si existen en otro, en Argentina en eso están mucho más avanzados que nosotros, ¿no? Si hay como ciertas preparaciones de gestión de museos. Los directores, a mí me da una pena enorme ver cómo llegan con así unos planes de trabajo maravilloso, con un entusiasmo que tú los ves al segundo año en depresión absoluta, porque son incapaces de poder llevar a cabo sus planes. Por lo mismo, por, por la falencia de los equipos y por, por la burocracia administrativa que te come cualquier posibilidad de crecimiento.

- P.143. Source: CNCA, 2012, p.3.

Se entiende por valor estético contemporáneo, la pertenencia de una obra a una práctica artística de "Arte Contemporáneo" esto es, aquella en la que se desarrolla un ejercicio crítico y reflexivo frente a su propio medio de producción (las artes visuales), su coyuntura histórica, social y política. Esta producción experimenta sobre distintos soportes y materialidades, poniéndolos a su vez en tensión, en crisis, e incorporando cualquier objeto o material posible como naturalmente propio.

- P.147. C Zaldívar, personal communication, April 29, 2021

Y nosotros ahora que estamos haciendo la política, tuvimos la discusión que tú me estás preguntando. Que decíamos, ya, qué pasa, pucha, tenemos un comité que es par. ¿Quién decide si no estamos de acuerdo? Entonces yo digo, 'la directora po'. Porque es el representante legal. Entonces me dice otro, 'pero Claudia' -me dice- 'claro, tú eres buena onda, tú eres historiadora, tú cachai de lo que estay hablando. Pero hueón, puede llegar otro director que pongan, no sé, que sea un político', cachai. Entonces ¿le damos ese, ese, ese rol al director? Cachai, entonces, dijiimos no, no se lo vamos a dar.

- P.160. Source: P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021.

¿Vacíos de acuerdo a qué? ¿Desde qué punto de vista yo digo "aquí hay vacío"? Lo que tomé como punto de referencia son las obras o las series de obras que habían sido consideradas en la reflexión crítico-historiográfica del arte en Chile. O sea, de qué manera la colección, eh... Si yo la coloco en un espejo con la producción critico-historiográfica del arte chileno, podía dar cuenta de los fenómenos que ahí son abordados. Por lo tanto, ahí hay una relación con las Escrituras que no necesariamente es algo que tiene que ver con lo completo, como te decía, porque hay muchas figuras que son descubiertas muchos años después

- Pp.160-161. Source: S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021.

Yo soy historiadora del arte, así que todo mi mundo se ve deformado por, por mi formación. Entonces, para mí una colección de museo es aquella que está en diálogo con la historia del arte, con una escritura, con una reescritura, con una impugnación, lo que sea, pero tiene que ver con eso, ¿no? (…) Por qué consideramos que un artista, es también un artista, pero luego una obra ¿no? ¿Por qué cierta obra? ¿qué pasaba con esa obra? ¿Cómo podíamos dar cuenta de un período? Evidentemente, teniendo en consideración que iba a ser una mirada... Una mirada, no sé, incompleta, sin duda ¿te fijas? (…) ... Pero evidentemente cuando yo hablo del discurso de la historia del arte, la entiendo como un discurso que no puede ser omni-abarcador ¿no?, sin duda. Pero hay que partir de algo. Para reescribirla, para cuestionarla, para completarla, para lo que sea.

- P.161. Source: S Novoa, personal communication, June 2, 2021

¿cómo voy a enseñar yo como profesora que hago de historia arte en Chile, el nacimiento de la academia en Chile, si en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes tengo 6 pintura de los primeros directores de la Academia?

- P.162. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Y está, uno, llenar los vacíos históricos. Pero ¿qué entendemos por vacío histórico? Siempre está como la posibilidad de la fisura. Porque por una parte, una plantea que los vacíos históricos son aquello vacíos que están inscritos en la historia del arte, pero que no están en la colección. Y que, nombres hay para tirar a la chuña, ¿no? Y luego uno pudiera pensar que, generalmente somos la Eva o yo, que planteamos que los vacíos histórico precisamente son aquellos que no están inscritos en la historia del arte. ¿No? Entonces, ahí también nuevamente está esa pugna. ¿Qué es lo que se entiende por vacío histórico?

- P.173. Source: F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021

En nuestro museo hemos formado a la gente del museo. Ahora yo he contribuido a esto, pero no he sido el único. Nos hemos formado entre todos. Formando, digamos, gradualmente

- Pp.174-175. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Yo creo que a nivel de equipo es súper reciente. O sea, yo lo veo en los equipos de mediación, por ejemplo, que tal vez son los primeros equipos en abrirse a esa posibilidad, por razones obvias, porque vienen del, del ámbito educativo, de... ¿No? Pero creo que no tiene más de quince años. Y en el ámbito como de comisariado, de encargado de Colecciones, es tremendamente reciente. O sea, diez años, a lo más. Y en algunos casos, son... Son muy contadas los casos en que podemos encontrarlos en esos cargos. Eh... Yo creo que todavía falta ahí apertura. En los Museos de Arte, digamos, porque hay otros museos en los que sí, desde los inicios, están, han estado mucho más abiertos a otro tipo de, de, de miradas críticas, o de recambios sociales.

- P.175. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

El arte sigue siendo un mundo de la elite en Chile y en Latinoamérica en general, (…) si vienes de otros espacios, cuesta mucho que te validen. Porque no estudiaste en la misma, en los mismos colegios básicamente. Ni siquiera es por la universidad. Es que no naciste en las mismas redes (…) Se conocen todos. Entonces es impresionante. Estudiaron en los mismos colegios, o... ¿No? y eso así marca, una ruta en la que uno no puede entrar a competir siquiera

- P.176. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Y no nos dejaron entrar, y de la, de mis compañeritos, porque éramos muy pobres, y mis compañeritos no tenían ninguna, ningún tipo de relación con espacios culturales, a diferencia de mí, que yo tampoco tenía relación con esos espacios, pero eh... Mi papá y mi mamá amaban mucho, como la, desde la periferia misma, la historia, el arte. Entonces mi mamá me enseñó a dibujar. Mi papá me llevaba como enciclopedias de historia. Entonces era como la niña rara del curso. Ehm... Y a mí esa experiencia me marcó muchísimo. (…) Terminamos en el Museo Histórico Nacional, que era el lugar para esa infancia marginada, en donde el adoctrinamiento ¿no? Era necesario. (…) Y yo como que me, me propuse que ese espacio, yo iba a entrar ese espacio en algún momento.

- P.176. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021

Tienen como esa cosa rarísima, como que, dan por hecho de que si alguien hace arte es porque tiene plata, o sino qué está haciendo acá. O sea, cómo un roto va a andar haciendo arte, que es mi caso, un tipo ultra marginal, que vino de la nada y que empieza a hacer arte en esta escena súper compleja.

- P.177. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

En los primeros años de mi trabajo, yo tenía que tener tres pegas para poder hacer arte, o sea, como yo tenía una pega sólo para producir arte y eso es súper violento porque, eh, es verdad, cachai, otras personas de mi misma generación tienen todo ese capital de su herencia, que la herencia no solamente económica, sino también una cuestión cultural, política (…) yo me siento como un quiebre para esa, para esa herencia como del arte hegemónica, endogámica, muy terrible, eh... Pero al mismo tiempo yo me auto exploto, pero a un nivel brutal [risas], que yo no sé si es realmente tan sano ni es tan como bueno (…) Finalmente el sistema del arte es súper desigual y las instituciones no hacen nada como para para que eso cambie.

- P.177. Source: anonymised.

Y por lo mismo, yo sentía que había una necesidad de abrir los espacios institucionales a otra, como a otra, a otras personas (…) porque yo había trabajado tanto para entrar allí, y sentía que me merecía también ocupar ese espacio. (…) Pero me ha afectado inmensamente. Es una de las peores experiencias laborales en la que he tenido en mi carrera….

- P.180. Source: E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019

Yo creo que si efectivamente creo que hay que abrir la puerta a otros relatos. No se ser tan hegemonizante, no seguir perpetuando las desigualdades.

- Pp.180-181. Source: P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021.

Entonces obviamente que en el museo te tienes que hacer cargo, porque el museo es un símbolo del Centenario. Entonces, ¿qué estás celebrando? ¿Qué nación estás celebrando? ¿Centenario de qué? Hoy en día el museo de todos. El museo tiene que ser un espacio de representación de la comunidad donde pueda esa comunidad reflejar aquello que no ve de sí misma, aquellas cosas que son sus conflictos. aquí tú trabajas para un público general. Desde el que viene de la calle y pasa al baño y resulta que entonces son experiencias super distintas, desde ese tipo de público hasta el público especializado. Entonces trabajar para todo eso públicos a la vez, es un desafío súper interesante.

- P.181. Source: E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019.

Yo creo que un poco poner eso en relieve y manifestar eso, manifestar la exclusión de las mujeres, manifestar la exclusión de la población indígena, como te digo, el departamento de colecciones también está levantando investigación. Creo que ese tipo de cosas, y exponer ese tipo de cosas, si te hace darte cuenta de un rol social del museo, [no son] políticas digo de inclusión solamente, sino también de justicia social, cachai. No quiero utilizar la palabra inclusión porque no creo que le esté haciendo un favor a alguien como se suele tratar la inclusión, sino que es una responsabilidad social de que el, es justicia social que el museo también tenga representado a las 'diferentes personas que habitan Chile'. Ese es el rol, creo, de un museo nacional hoy.

- P.182. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

El museo realmente se tiene que hacer cargo de su labor de pagar a los artistas por las exhibiciones, [o] pensar programas educativos (…) que muchas veces son personas que están sin contrato, en pasantía eterna, que solamente perpetúan esta idea ordinaria del museo, que no le pagan ni a los trabajadores po, cachai entonces, como no sé, el museo, primero tienen que solucionar su problema administrativo de pago, luego preocuparse de lo que van a proponer como instituciones al mundo.

- P.183. Source: C Yasky, personal communication, December 12, 2019.

Yo creo que es documentar bien las obras y difundirlas, generar acceso, e investigar. Yo creo que eso es, acceso, investigación, catalogación… Y bueno, conservación obviamente.

- P.183. Source: F Castillo, personal communication, December 17, 2019.

¿Inclusión? Bueno… Ahí es una cosa que como que se me escapa. (…) Somos más como un servicio (…) para mí personalmente, creo que es indispensable mirar la colección como un bien público, y por lo tanto es de todos y todas los ciudadanos de Chile, y por lo tanto cualquier persona que esté

interesado en conocerla, hacer una exposición, una curatoría, una investigación, como tú que estás haciendo tu tesis… Es nuestro deber al final del día ponerla al servicio de cualquier ciudadano que quiera conocerla.

- P.186. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

La institución ha tenido que subirse a estas discusiones porque no la tenían ni, ni por si acaso presupuestada. O sea, como que no... Como que han tenido que agarrar nomás el hilo de lo que como el mundo está cambiando y diciendo que eso igual está bien, porque las instituciones se mantenían en un pasado (…) Las instituciones siempre proponían miradas del pasado desactualizadas de lo que está pasando hoy en día. Y considerando todo lo que está pasando, eso es una muy mala decisión.

- Pp.190-191. Source: E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019).

Como que también hemos hablado también que a raíz del estallido social tenemos que preguntarnos por nuestras formas de adquisición, porque sabemos que tenemos vacíos. Entonces es también cómo se hace cargo el museo de un período de crisis social, y que también está cuestionando directamente la inclusión de lo Mapuche en el Estado actual, y la paridad.

- P.195. Source: E Cancino, personal communication, December 18, 2019.

no creo que lleguemos a un consenso de que… Creo que podemos decir "vamos a introducir, o a hacer inclusión de otros artistas", llevar el discurso de esa forma, pero si decimos vamos a hacer un museo decolonizado, comunitario, y toda la cuestión… No, ahí se nos va un poco al carajo todo (risas) y cualquier esfuerzo político que tratemos de hacer… Es una negociación.

- P.199. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Sí, pero tiene un costo, Cata. Y tiene un costo para la institución y para los trabajadores. Y ese costo es muy alto (….) Yo no me imagino 20 años más en el museo (…) yo no me puedo proyectar así en el museo y porque también es muy agotador. Es muy agotador estar en esa resistencia y en esa negociación permanente. Yo he envejecido. No sólo me enfermé, envejecí todos los años que no había envejecido antes.

- P. 209. Source: V Brodsky, personal communication, June 24, 2021.

A mí me tocó levantar la política de artes de la visualidad en el período anterior, que es 2017 2022. Y una de las cuestiones que logramos detectar en ese momento es que no había ningún tipo de trabajo, referencia, ni indicadores, que hicieran, que abordaran el ámbito de mujeres. O sea, no existía esos

instrumentos, porque en el fondo no había nada que se había abordado de manera concreta. Hoy día, a cinco años de que yo ingresé en esa, en el Ministerio, yo como que como orgullosamente puedo decir que en la próxima políticas si van a existir esos índices.

- P.211. Source: P Navarro, personal communication, December 20, 2019.

Por supuesto esa presión vino desde afuera, teníamos ganas, pero no nos dábamos el tiempo, pero de repente se hizo algo tan necesario, con todos los reportajes que empezaron a aparecer sobre cómo era la representatividad de género en las colecciones, etc., nos hizo hacer el trabajo.

- P.216. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Es que de pronto adquieren otra categoría. ¿No? Y el solo hecho de que hayan estado en el museo (…) yo haya escrito un texto... Ehm... Entonces se les empieza a invitar. ¿No? Entonces le empiezan a invitar a otras exposiciones, ya no... Ya no es una persona como cuestionada necesariamente, como que de alguna manera se insertan en un sistema y se las acepta, y eso pa mí es un ejercicio hasta un poco cínico. Como, ayer estaba diciendo que esta persona, esta artista o esta artista no tenía ninguna como categoría para ingresar al museo y en el momento en que ingresa al museo... ¡Magia! (risas) Pero hay ahí otra vez esta como la responsabilidad institucional. Que una tiene como trabajadora de museo. ¿Cachai? de cuanta relevancia y cuanta repercusión pueda tener lo que tú haces al interior del museo sin esa conciencia de, porque a mí todavía me pasa un poco eso, como que todavía no soy lo suficientemente consciente (…) Como... Eh... A mí todavía me cuesta entenderlo, asumirlo y de alguna manera, tal vez moderar esa responsabilidad que tengo como, como profesional institucional, ¿no? Como curadora del museo.

- P.217. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Cuando yo llego al museo, el primer encargo que se me hace, obvio, es como, bueno tú vienes con este libro, haz una exposición de mujeres artistas, y yo digo bacán, okay, démosle, esto es mi sueño, trabajé mucho por esto y me meto a la colección y digo… no puedo hacer esto, no hay mujeres, (…) primera vez que yo podía mirar la colección así también tan in-situ y ehm... Y con esa... Con esa preocupación como, guau! Es que realmente lo que yo había detectado a nivel historiográfico se replica en el museo, no hay mujeres.

- P.219. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Compramos el año pasado, unas tablas maravillosa de la, de la Aurora Mira, pero que eran puertas de muebles, eran puerta de armarios, puertas del mueble de la cocina que estaban pintado y firmado por

la Aurora Mira. Dijimos bueno, ehm... Y fue una discusión también porque, ¿es obra? ¿es una obra de arte, estaba pensada para un circuito? No. Es una obra del espacio doméstico, pero es el espacio en donde la mujeres artistas estaban realizando su producción, porque no había otra forma de hacerlo. Entonces las compramos, porque quieríamos como… Ir abriendo los campo de problematización de lo que significa 'una obra'.

- Pp.222-223. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Entonces hemos estado en esas discusiones como un punto base, pero eso requiere cambio estructurales ¿No? porque no, no es sólo como la voluntad que pueda tener la Eva o pueda tener yo, sino que eso implica incluso como modificar SURDOC, por ejemplo y... Y eso no, hasta ahora no, no ha resultado, o sea, las personas del Centro Documentación no nos han dejado abierta la puerta a esa discusión. Hemos intentado, por ejemplo, que se incluyan categorías como dentro de autor que ellos tienen poder seleccionar e relacciones sexo genérica, y me preguntan ¿pero para qué? Y yo bueno, porque queremos saber quién está detrás de esta producción, si es una mujer, si es un nombre, si es una figura, un sujeto disidente, porque eso condiciona también esa misma producción. al final tuve que abandonar porque no, no era viable, ¿cachai? Pero no era viable justamente porque estas estructuras están ahí para, para mantenerse a sí mismas de alguna forma, ¿cachai? (….) Están diseñadas para mantenerse en ese nivel canónico que te impide como... Introducir fisuras.

- P.226. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Obras que podían hablar de algunos de los temas que estábamos discutiendo, que era, por ejemplo, los territorios negado, y que efectivamente eran negados. No estaban en la colección. No. (…) Afrodescendientes y del mundo andino, y en la sala, que una sala chica estaban todas las obras que teníamos sobre el mundo afrodescendiente y el mundo andino, y con mucha participación de artistas contemporáneos. Porque si no teníamos cinco obra en, en esa sala. Y era ella bien brutal. Entonces aquí hay un vacío que llenar. ¿Cómo lo llenamos? Porque tampoco tenemos mucha información. No sabemos... Hay identificado, por ejemplo, un artista de origen indígena en el siglo XIX, que es Pedro Churi, que es súper emblemático, porque además se le cataloga como Mapuche y al parecer era aymara. Entonces es como también esa racialización como trasversalizada ¿no? "Es indígena, entonces Mapuche". ¡No! Hay otras etnias que participan de la cultura en Chile, pero no hay ninguna obra de Pedro Churi. Y, y en mi caso como historiadora feminista del arte tampoco indagado sobre artistas que están fuera de la academia y que vengan a lo mejor del mundo más popular, o menos formal, de mujeres que hayan podido venir de espacios indígenas, por ejemplo, o mujeres afrodescendiente que hayan participado en talleres de pintura. No, no he indagado en eso.

- Pp.233-234. Source: C Yasky, personal communication, April 16, 2021.

Y me parece que lo que brinda es una, una riqueza a la colección, que se ve reflejado en otras, en la diversidad de obras que tiene la colección. Pero esto ya es como, mucho, traspasa como ese límite del arte, digamos tradicional. Y eso es lo que me gusta. Las arpilleras también, ese sí que es un origen popular, de producción popular. Y creo que es válido porque, porque tienen esa connotación política, ¿no?

- P.249. Source: CNCA, 2017, pp.47-48.

(…) los pueblos indígenas señalaron que su patrimonio cultural es un todo indivisible, sin distingos entre lo material e inmaterial; que se encuentra vivo, en constante recreación, comprendiendo lo tradicional y lo contemporáneo; que se transmite de generación en generación; que se encuentra amenazado por intereses económicos y científicos, y que, por tanto, requiere de revitalización y protección.

- Pp.250-251. Source: M Flores, personal communication, June 15, 2021.

Hay un artista Mapuche que trabajó como a finales de los 80, y ella expuso, trabajaba telar, pero también desde una perspectiva contemporánea. Y ponte ella... Cuando dio, tenía una entrevista en prensa, entonces se destacaba el hecho de que ella fuese Mapuche. (…) la googlié un poco más, y encontré que aparecían exposiciones, pero como ya como en esta línea de en el fondo indígena, no arte contemporáneo. Entonces también era muy interesante, no ahondé mucho más. Pero en el fondo, pensar ese tránsito. Como ella, que partió de una manera, porque había estudiado en la Escuela de Bellas Artes de la Chile, devino al final como... Artesana po. Pero yo también creo que quizás porque no había un contexto de recepción, eso., en ese momento.

- P.251. Source: C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021.

En los años 90 era muy difícil que los indígenas ingresaran a las universidades, más difícil de ingresar a los indígenas a universidades y a facultades de arte. Entonces, como históricamente el mundo indígena... De hecho, yo y muchos de muchos de mis amigos que trabajan en el circuito del arte somos los primero indígenas de nuestra familia en llegar a la universidad, ¿no? Entonces, ¿qué es lo que pienso? Es que efectivamente, como que en esta generación tipo 2005 hasta ahora, o 2010 en adelante, es que también empiezan a llegar más personas indígenas a las facultades de arte. No digo que sea como el requisito, porque no lo es. Porque hubieron muchos otros anteriores que, que eran artistas indígenas, Mapuche, que no pasaron por la Universidad (…) [Pero es por esto que] se empiezan a ver más y eso genera la percepción de que solamente ahora se esté produciendo.

- P.252. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021

Como escribió hace poco un critico acá en Chile, que decía que había sido una obra como decolonial en la capital hegemónica del arte. Es como pensar inocentemente que uno no sabe eso. Como que el artista no lo sabe, es un absurdo cuando uno lo piensa así. (…) Y esa es la gracia que tiene el asunto finalmente.

- P.254. Source: F Brugnoli, personal communication, May 13, 2021.

El museo, es un museo de arte contemporáneo, que, ¿qué es la contemporaneidad, no? Es la actualidad. Y el museo lo que tiene en su colección, si uno revisa bien, ¿no? Los momentos que se incorporan más obras a la colección son cuando ha habido un cambio en nuestra sociedad. (…) Y si el museo no archiva esa actualidad está mal ¿no? la contemporaneidad es una constante ¿no? Hoy es contemporáneo. ¿No?, mañana viene otra contemporaneidad ¿te fijas? Y si yo no entiendo a ese flujo, estoy en una contradicción. (…) el Museo Contemporáneo tiene que correr un riesgo, ¿no? El artista corre un riesgo al poner su obra en escena. Y aquí hay que ser coherente con eso. Después de todo, somos un museo de arte contemporáneo.

- P.255. Source: P Honorato, personal communication, May 25, 2021.

Y mira la dificultad, como con respecto a estos criterios, tiene que ver mucho con un momento actual. En que se ha puesto de moda una línea de trabajos contemporáneos que son más, tienen que ver más que ver con el activismo que con el lenguaje. Entonces hay mucha obra como de segunda y tercera, desde un punto de vista artístico, que se justifica en su activismo, un activismo grueso. Es más bien grueso. Y ahí hay que tener cuidado, porque ahí es donde el mercado funciona con eso perfecto. Eh... Pero eh, es difícil esta esta línea, porque tú tienes que pensar en una obra que sea para el tiempo. Que, y que claro que no son una obra para el momento, para la coyuntura. O sea, ¿cómo abordar como el fenómeno que hemos vivido los último año en Chile, sin que haya oportunismo mercantil? Como, cómo separas el trigo de la paja. Entonces hemos tenido unas discusiones eternas al respecto.

- P.257. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

Calfuqueo fue otra. ¿No? Como poder ingresar artistas jóvenes a la colección, una categoría que no existía (…) Seba Calfuqueo no es un artista emergente hoy en día, o sea, ha participado en sus veintitantos años ya en tres bienales, está circulando a nivel internacional. Y hoy día lo podemos comprar, y yo te puedo asegurar que el año más va a ser imposible comprar a Seba con los precios y los presupuestos que tenemos hoy. O sea, también el museo tiene que tener una tarea de adelantarse

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y apostar por ciertas figuras, ya sea de artistas del pasado o contemporáneo. Que permitan trabajar estos vacíos o abrir nuevas discusiones crítica

- P.261. Source: C Vargas Paillahueque, personal communication, April 23, 2021

Si yo voy a un museo histórico y me muestran el mundo indígena únicamente en el período de descubrimiento, conquista, y de ahí no me lo muestran más, yo asumo que el indígena deja de existir en este relato positivista y lineal.

- P.262. Source: G Cortés, personal communication, April 21, 2021.

¿cómo lo abordamos? Yo no lo puedo abordar, no lo puedo sola, yo no estoy vinculada a esa lucha, no he vivido esa lucha, no soy parte de esa comunidad de lucha, soy parte de otras luchas.

- P.264. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021.

Pensando en colecciones, o sea, no era un aritista, y nunca lo fui, un artista de colección. No, al menos en Chile era impensado. Era totalmente impensado por el tipo de obra que hago básicamente, porque hay otros componentes también, que también es una escena clasista y racista también. Esto lo digo así con letra mayúscula.

- P.267. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021

a mí no se me pagó un peso por Werkén. Werkén es donación, que estaba dentro del contrato cuando uno iba a Venecia. (…) Incluso perdí, puse plata de mi bolsillo para poder sacar Werkén. Y, ¿y el riesgo cuál era? El riesgo era que me iba no más con esa cantidad de máscaras y si no podía traerlas, las quemaba allá no más. Y después las armaba de nuevo acá.

- Pp.274-275. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021.

Si me dices ¿qué te parece que Werkén esté en el ministerio? Lo encuentro fantástico. ¿Por qué? Porque ha circulado la obra (…) Encuentro que al final fue super positivo que Werkén llegara al Ministerio. Si no hubiese sido así, no, nadie la habría visto. Nadie podría haber visto Werkén todavía en Chile. ¡Y ya se ha mostrado ya cuatro veces!, como digo. Entonces, lo encuentro increíble. Sé que, que por ejemplo, el hecho de que uno se vuelva institucional, sé que lamentablemente es la suerte que corren los artistas, después de, después de que hacen carrera. Y eso pasa en todos lados. O son institucionalizados por la hegemonía del arte mundial o son, o son institucionalizados por el país que traían, donde uno vive, qué sé yo... La cosa es que como sea, se vuelve institucional. Yo creo que el

tema es que uno mentalmente sea independiente, o sea, sigas tratando de, de trabajar con esa autonomía.

- P.275. Source: B Oyarzún, personal communication, May 28, 2021.

Porque va en acorde con esa utopía que tengo respecto al futuro de Chile, y ¿qué utopía tengo yo de Chile? (…) sueño que alguna vez Chile se reconozca como un país Mapuche.

- P.277. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

yo siento que que está muy mal, o sea, donar obra sin ninguna retribución económica. O sea, como que no una buena práctica, ni profesional, ni laboral. O sea, como que rompe la valorización de tu tiempo. De tu energía de tu... De todo. Entonces, eh, yo lo hice por el cariño, básicamente al espacio que significa para mí el MAC, porque el MAC fue como mi primera, mi primera gran vitrina de exhibición y Brugnoli fue muy, muy generoso conmigo. Como... Como él apostó mucho conmigo. O sea, yo siendo muy joven, él apostó, él, un espacio del museo solo, una exposición individual. Entonces, como yo lo hice dentro de mi sinceridad y de, y de mí, y de mi emocionalidad como un gesto de retribución al museo, como... Como un pago también de, de que, de que esa obra que fue exhibida también en un futuro también la vean otras personas.

- P.277. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

Yo tengo una relación muy pedagógica con mi obra. También soy profe, entonces me interesa que mi trabajo sea visto por estudiantes, jóvenes, como que esto es muy importante, y yo sé que el MAC y el Bellas Artes son dos instituciones que se encargan de eso, y que hacen esa pega, educa MAC, ¿no? (…) no mirarlo solamente en un término de la institución, sino también qué significan las instituciones para las personas. Porque hay mucha gente que en Chile no, si no va al Bellas Artes o no va al MAC, no ve arte. Y no ve... Son los únicos dos museos que la gente conoce realmente y que es el, que tiene un vínculo y que los colegios van y que, etcétera.

- P.284. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

también era importante en donde había sido exhibida la obra fuera de Chile. Eso le importa mucho. O sea, yo desde que desde que empecé a exhibir afuera en espacios como de relevancia, o sea, el trato que de las instituciones hacia mi trabajo es muy diferente (…) Otra de las obras que querían comprar era una performance que yo había exhibido en Nueva York y que no había hecho nunca en Chile. Entonces también es fuerte eso de, de porque fue exhibida en el performance space en Nueva York,

porque se hizo allá, cachai, como que tiene un peso más fuerte que obras que acá han tenido mucha más circulación.

-   P.284. Source: S Calfuqueo, personal communication, April 22, 2021.

No me interesaba tampoco ingresar una obra que no iba a producir nada, no iba a... O algo y yo siento que muchas de las obras que se están adquiriendo o que se adquirieron en el pasado, no están en relación a las colecciones, no están pensándose qué hubo antes, que, cómo se relato se contextualiza con lo que está haciendo ahora... Como eso, siento que eso probablemente no se debatía.