

Chilean Pavilion at the 54th Art Biennale of Venice

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Fernando Prats

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Ambitious project by artist Fernando Prats will represent Chile at the 2011 Venice Biennial

The work of Fernando Prats in the Arsenals of Venice will show the powerful reality of our geography, with topics such as the earthquake and the eruption of the Chaitén volcano.

The Chilean Pavilion at the 54th Art Biennale of Venice is the result of a joint collaboration between the National Council of Culture and the Arts (CNCA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through its Cultural Affairs Bureau (DIRAC) Image of Chile Foundation and ProChile.

Fernando Prats is the artist selected for the Chilean Pavilion at the forthcoming 54th Art Biennale of Venice. His project "Gran Sur" (Great South) will be installed in the Arsenals of this ancient city, the most visited spot during the event.

The assembly consists of three art pieces: an intervention around the impact of the volcanic eruption in Chaitén (2008); a series of works alluding to the earthquake in south-central Chile (2010); and an installation in neon lettering that reproduces the advert that the Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton may have posted circa 1911, calling for men for his expedition to Antarctica.

Prats produces images originating from smoke, through which he manages to sediment natural phenomena such as water propelled by a geyser or the surface of an immense glacier. His technique has been praised by notables such as the French theorist Paul

Ardenne who recently included the work of Fernando Prats in the current exhibition at the Espace Louis Vuitton in Paris, highlighting him for initiating “a new way of painting.”

The Chilean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale is a significant element within the policies of internationalization of the visual arts from Chile. In recent years, our presence has both increased and improved. The previous edition in 2009 became a milestone, featuring the work of artist Iván Navarro in the first Chilean Pavilion at the Arsenals.

Considering the importance of this international display, a joint effort was made between the National Council of Culture and the Arts (CNCA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Cultural Affairs Bureau (DIRAC), the Image of Chile Foundation, ProChile, The Naval Force of Chile and the Department of Tourism. Also, the Joan Prats Gallery and the Publisher Polígrafa from Barcelona have joined in as well as the Embassy of Chile in Rome.

The work of Fernando Prats convinced the jury to represent Chile in this Biennial, considering both the quality and seriousness of his work and also because of his emergence into the international visual arts arena. Fernando Prats will be working with the Spanish theorist Fernando Castro Flórez as curator as well as the Chilean theorist and poet Antonio Arévalo as commissioner.

With this aesthetic proposal inspired in Chile, its geography and telluric conditions, Fernando Prats seeks to exalt the subject capable of taking a heroic stance. The “Gran Sur” project invites to reflect upon the role of geography in the identity of this country.

A central element of his exhibit in Venice will be the expedition that Prats himself carried out last March to the Antarctic territory aboard the Navy icebreaker, Almirante Viel. Commemorating the centennial of the mythical advert that the Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton would have posted in The Times, Prats installed on Elephant Island the text of said advert:

“Men wanted for hazardous journey. Small wages. Bitter cold. Long months of complete darkness. Constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honour and recognition in case of success”.

These words anticipate both the heroism as well as the eventual shipwreck will be later placed in the facade of the Chilean Pavilion at the 2011 Venice Biennale.

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