Cecilia Vicuña

“Water Writing: Anthological Exhibiton 1966-2009”

September 1 - December 4, 2009
Cecilia Vicuña

“Water Writing: Anthological Exhibition 1966 - 2009”
September 1 - December 4, 2009

2009-10 Estelle Lebowitz Artist-in-Residence Exhibition

Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series
Mabel Smith Douglass Library
8 Chapel Drive
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Institute for Women and Art
Rutgers University Libraries

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
THE INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN AND ART

The vision of the Rutgers Institute for Women and Art (IWA) is to transform values, policies, and institutions, and to ensure that the intellectual and aesthetic contributions of diverse communities of women in the visual arts are included in the cultural mainstream and acknowledged in the historical record.

The mission of the Rutgers Institute for Women and Art is to invent, implement, and conduct live and virtual education, research, documentation, public programs, and exhibitions focused on women artists and feminist art. The IWA strives to establish equality and visibility for all women artists, who are underrepresented and unrecognized in art history, the art market, and the contemporary art world, and to address their professional development needs. The IWA endeavors to serve all women in the visual arts and diverse global, national, regional, state, and university audiences.

Founded in 2006, the Institute for Women & Art is actively engaged in:

- Exhibitions and public programming organized by the award-winning and nationally recognized Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series, founded in 1971 by Joan Snyder, and other sponsored events through the US and abroad (http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/rul/exhibits/dana_womens.shtml).
- Educational and curricular development led by The Feminist Art Project (TFAP) website and the soon-to-be launched FARE: Feminist Art Resources in Education for K-12, college students and their teachers (http://feministartproject.rutgers.edu/).
- Research and documentation facilitated by the Getty and New Jersey State Council on the Arts-funded Women Artists Archives National Directory: WAAND, as well as the archival collections found in the Miriam Schapiro Archives on Women Artists (http://waand.rutgers.edu/).

IWA Staff:
Ferris Olin and Judith K. Brodsky, directors, Institute for Women and Art and curators, Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series
Nicole Ianuzelli, project manager, The Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series and Institute for Women and Art
Connie Tell, project manager, The Feminist Art Project

Special Thanks:
Eileen Behnke, IWA Graduate Assistant
Maria Giancola, IWA Undergraduate Assistant
Theresa Kissane, IWA Undergraduate Assistant
Leigh-Anyia Passamano, IWA Graduate Assistant
Kelly Worth, Administration, Rutgers University Libraries
Tamiyah Yancey, IWA Undergraduate Assistant

The Institute for Women & Art (IWA) is a unit of Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and a center of the Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic & Public Partnerships in the Arts & Humanities. In addition, the IWA is a consortial member of the Institute for Women's Leadership. The IWA gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Rutgers Academic Excellence Fund, the Maria and Henry Leon Memorial Fund, Judith K. Brodsky, Ferris Olin, and anonymous individual donors. IWA programs are also made possible in part by funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Co-sponsors of the Series include Associate Alumnae of Douglass College, the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes, Department of Art History, Institute for Research on Women, The Feminist Art Project, Global Initiatives, Women Artists Archives National Directory, and the Women’s and Gender Studies Department.
Preface: Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin

This exhibition of the work of Cecilia Vicuña continues our curatorial efforts to bring internationally-known and established artists and their work to the attention of the University community and the public. Cecilia Vicuña was selected as the 2009-2010 Estelle Lebowitz Visiting Artist-in-Residence. Her work as both a visual artist and poet combines word and image in an artful relationship. Because Vicuña's ideas are centered around the precariousness of existence—to the point where she creates sculptures that she actually calls “precarious objects,” it is illustrative, as well, of the University’s Global Initiative Program, the 2009-2010 theme of which is “Ecologies in Balance? Thinking Through the Crisis.”

The exhibition is an overview of four decades of creative work and includes site-specific installations, poetry, a compilation of video and photographic documentation of Vicuña’s performances, and early paintings that have not been seen since the late 1970s. These early paintings include homages to Chilean women poets and an arresting self-portrait in which Vicuña portrays herself with her symbolic vicuña nestled in her arms.

One of the site-specific installations Vicuña created for this exhibition was Melinko Lauen / Water Cry / Cascada Que Llora, which was installed in the rotunda immediately after the entrance to the library. She surrounded the circular space with wool dyed in yellows, oranges, and rusts that were hung from the top rails of the enclosing translucent panels. Intentionally longer than the height of the rotunda, the yarns pooled on the floor. The warmth and metaphoric associations which this installation engendered and engaged everyone who entered the library.

In addition to the exhibition itself, Ms. Vicuña’s film Kon Kon, providing a global context to her local actions, was screened. The artist also met with many students as well as giving the Lebowitz public lecture, “A Tongue within Tongues.” Her encounters with students and the public were magical performances of her evocative poetry uttered in her hypnotic voice.

The Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series is pleased to have sponsored the exhibition and collateral programs. The Series, a program of the Institute for Women and Art, in partnership with the Rutgers University Libraries, represents our ongoing mission to recognize the aesthetic and intellectual impact of women artists on the cultural landscape. Cecilia Vicuña and her work embody the active way in which art can engage the world and life, itself, through the individual imagination.

The IWA operates as a center of the Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic and Public Partnerships in the Arts and Humanities. Series co-sponsors include Associate Alumnae of Douglass College, Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, Center for Latin American Studies, the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes, Global Initiatives Program, Institute for Research on Women, Office of the Dean of Douglass Residential College and Douglass Campus, The Feminist Art Project, Women and Gender Studies Department, Spanish and Portuguese Department, and the Women Artists Archives National Directory. These events are made possible in part by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

We thank Nicole Ianuzelli for mounting this exhibition and designing this virtual catalog. We also wish to thank Connie Tell, Sandra Sewing, Allison Lindblom, and our interns for their assistance. We are very grateful to Dr. Tatiana Flores, Department of Art History, for her insightful interview of the artist. Above all we thank the artist for sharing her vision and her presence with us.

Judith K. Brodsky and Ferris Olin
Curators, Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series
Directors, Institute for Women and Art
Tatiana Flores:
*The exhibition of your work at Rutgers is structured as a retrospective, and it includes a compendium of your visual production from the 1960s to the present. People who are more familiar with your poetry and performance may be surprised to find that you were once a painter. Could you please discuss this early work: how it came about, who are your subjects, and why did you stop painting?*

Cecilia Vicuña:
I was born into a family of artists; people had been artists in both my maternal and paternal families for many generations, from the European and the indigenous sides. I grew up naturally playing with clay and with paint, and my mother says that I was painting before I could speak, and then I would be speaking to the signs. I painted until the late 70s and I continue to draw even now. My last exhibition in Chile was an exhibition of poem-drawings very much like *Instan*. I never gave up drawing and writing as connected art forms, but I did stop painting. My first paintings from the early 60s were abstract suns and totems. Like the drawings in the sand, which precede my precarious work in *Con Con*. But years after that, when I was twenty, I was in New York for the translation of my first book of poetry into English. I was walking down the street when, all of a sudden, I saw a vision, an image I called *una calcomanía*, a transfer in the style of the colonial saints, a sort of transgressive, awkward saint. I thought “wow, this is so beautiful!” I began to paint them, in a technique Leonora Carrington taught to a girlfriend of mine.

The idea in these paintings was to reflect the way in which the colonists forced the indigenous to work in the churches and monasteries creating imitations of European saints. But the indigenous managed to transform those images, creating different versions: Pachamama as a mountain with the head of a Virgin. For a period of ten years I painted in the colonial style to express the fact that five hundred years later we, as Latin Americans, were still under colonial domination. People still had to think in terms of the Western worldview, no matter how foreign this was to us. I did an exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in 1971: *Pinturas, Poemas y Explicaciones*, showing them along ruined furniture from the 18th century, garden plants and with my hilarious “explanations” next to the paintings. The show was a huge success in Santiago.

TF: *Do you find that exhibiting the paintings without that context detracts from them? How do they speak now?*

CV: Well, we shall see. It was the curators’ decision to include the paintings. I would never have thought to do so, but I am happy to explore. These paintings have not been exhibited since the 70s, they have been hiding here in my studio for almost forty years. I never thought it necessary to show them during all this time because, during the seventies, they had a lot of exposure: they were shown in Chile, then at the ICA in London. Also, the BBC made a film about them (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-7YE9vhVYk). I suppose the curators wanted to give a complete image of my work.
TF: And why is it that you stopped painting?

CV: Painting, as you know, is an ancient art. It is time consuming—very slow thing. In the late seventies I was living in Bogota and I was doing lots of things: I was working with indigenous communities, traveling through the Amazon, going up the mountains. So the way I lived didn’t allow for that slowness. I suppose my heart was resenting the time it required and painting left me. One day I noticed that I couldn’t paint any more. I was sad because I loved it. I tried to persist, but everything I painted was complete rubbish so I had to accept that painting left me.

TF: In 1971 you held a solo exhibition at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, the Salón de Otoño (Autumn Salon). It consisted of filling the galleries with bags of dead leaves, and you referred to it as a contribution to socialism in Chile. I am curious to understand your thought process and the context better. Would you please describe the significance of the dead leaves? How did you reconcile this work, referred to by the curator as “conceptual art,” a term that had previously been unfamiliar to you with your painting? And how did you envision socialism in Chile?

CV: Well, first of all, I don’t think the art of the otoño[^1] piece and the paintings can be reconciled. They are actually mortal enemies. They are at odds with each other because painting, as I said, is a colonial European art. I was fully conscious of this and was acting the slave. On the other hand, the autumn piece was coming from the complete freedom of my indigenous side. It is an art of dissolution as renewal, the core of my precarious work. Truly, I had no exposure to conceptual art; I didn’t know about it, but the curator, Nemesio Antunez, had recently been in New York where he saw conceptual art. Actually, I heard the phrase for the first time when he mentioned it. I wasn’t aware of the latest trends; I didn’t have that kind of orientation. I looked at art historical books that traced art all the way back to the Paleolithic. I had a good idea of what art was and intuited that the next thing, what needed to be done was to continue the art that was interrupted by colonialism. This meant to focus again, as ancient people did, on the life cycle.

TF: And how was this a contribution to socialism?

CV: Socialism was interpreted as another European invention and the Socialist Movement in Chile was anti-indigenous, like most social movements in Latin America have been. But I was a child of the 60s and Ernesto Cardenal’s writings were already there. Great anthologies of indigenous poetry had been published in Mexico, in Paraguay, in Argentina so I was exposed to indigenous thinking very early. I knew this was the real revolution: to pay attention to what our excluded side had to say about the connection of human beings to the cosmos, to the earth, to the life force itself.

TF: Are you implying that the statement that you made was a bit critical of the Allende government? I am curious to know a little bit more about your relationship to president Salvador Allende. I understand he was a family friend.

CV: He was a friend of my father and my grandfather. I met him too, but I was a young girl, not a part of that circle.

[^1]: Otoño/Autumn

Reconstrucción Documental Junio 1971/Agosto 2007
Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile, 2007
However, some of my older peers were part of his inner circle. My family was involved in the social struggles of Chile for many generations. Pablo Neruda was a close friend to my family, too. My grandfather was his lawyer. I grew up in a world where democratic socialism was seen as the natural progression of humanity. Despite poverty, Chile in the 70’s was a very advanced country in that it had a fantastic social security network to protect the workers, to have health care, education and all that, plus many diverse newspapers. Chile was an extraordinary place in the period that culminated with the Allende government. I was fully for Allende. I wrote a television series that asked children how to transform human consciousness. And in my paintings and exhibitions I wanted to further extend the view of socialism of the Popular Unity government.

TF: I am curious about the construction of socialism during the early seventies in Chile in relation to how it is manifested today with the government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela. You know, Allende is a great hero for Chávez. I saw a video by Juan Downey produced during the early 70s, which featured the streets of Santiago, and what struck me was how very similar some of the visual iconography was to how the streets in Venezuela look, with a kind of social realist aesthetic. And because I am originally from Venezuela, I am sensitive to how the skepticism of Chávez, from those who oppose his government, has translated into skepticism of Allende and his Chilean experiment.

CV: The fact that Chávez uses Allende to legitimize his abuses, does not make the two of them similar. A differentiation needs to be made because the Chávez government, from my perspective, is a disguised dictatorship where the freedom of citizens is removed through intimidation and manipulation. That was not the case with Allende. His was a truly democratic government that only lasted for three years. Half the population was against it. The tensions between what the government wanted to do and what was really possible were very much in evidence. The coalition that brought Allende into place was wide and with very many differences between them. You had dogmatic people but also dreamers. You had people who came from all over the world, especially from Europe and Latin American countries to contribute. Paulo Freire was working in Chile. I mean really great geniuses felt that Chile was the hope for the entire planet because a radical participatory democracy had not been experienced before. The spirit of freedom was palpable. There was not the pressure that you have now in the Chávez government where if you speak up you lose your job. It was a different kind of situation. It only shares the name of socialism but not the actual practice of it.

TF: Going back to the question of the indigenous, you mentioned that socialism was Eurocentric and that there was not too much consciousness of the indigenous during that time.

CV: Very little. Nevertheless, Allende is historically the only government in Chile that gave rights to the indigenous people. Of course these were revoked with Pinochet. Allende believed that the indigenous people needed to have their rights, but there wasn’t an awareness in Chilean society. Even today, you have very few artists in Chile who are really sympathetic with the struggle happening today. The indigenous people of Chile are in big trouble now because of globalization. Lands are being taken for mining, for forest destruction, for all kinds of polluting industries that disregard completely any kind of human right, or civil right, or cultural right.

TF: To what degree are the indigenous communities in Chile invisible? Though in Mexico, it is difficult to make these communities invisible, they still struggle to find a voice in their society.
CV: In Chile, it is pretty much the same. In my family that invisibility started with my mother. I only learned that I was half indigenous a couple of years ago when I did my DNA. Even though the immense majority of Chileans are mestizo, everybody who has indigenous blood is ashamed of it. Even among the indigenous people – and there are half a million Mapuche people – half of those don’t want to know they are Mapuche. They come to the city and immediately change their looks. But recently, in the last ten to fifteen years, there is a new movement among the young people and some older leaders to acknowledge and take pride in their own culture. The moment awareness is raised, however, political persecution follows, and many of these leaders have been put in jail. This is largely invisible in the Chilean press. You do not hear people discussing it. Human rights are being trampled but it’s not an issue. “Why are the Indians fighting the corporations?” people wonder. There is an internalized idea that progress means destroying everything, destroying the old ways, destroying the lands. There is no awareness that the indigenous struggle is not just for their own rights but for the future of the land itself.

TF: How did your own consciousness of the indigenous come about, given this context?

CV: I think it was a gift from the ancestors. We lived in the countryside. Even though my mother didn’t know she was indigenous, we lived as natives. I was barefoot and naked a lot of the time. In the photos I really look like one of these kids from the Amazon. My mother believed that we would only be strong if we grew up naked. I lived among the frogs and among the animals and I didn’t feel separated from nature. I remember as a little girl seeing cowboy films and I knew in my heart that I was an Indian. Later, when I started seeing wonderful art books about the revolution in the arts of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Europe, the discovery of so-called “primitive” art, I knew that that was the future.

TF: And how is it then that you live now in New York, in this intense urban environment, and how has that affected you as a person?

CV: Well, you see, when your country has been destroyed by a military coup, and people have gone into exile, the choice is non-existent. I was one of them, I came here to do a performance, and I met someone, fell in love and stayed. For me this is an indigenous territory covered with skyscrapers. I have made New York into my Manahatta. I am happy here because this is the Americas, it is still my land.

TF: The 1960s and 70s were remarkable in that there still existed the optimistic, or possibly utopian, notion that art could contribute to social change. This is made resoundingly evident in your glass of milk action in Bogota. Why do you think this attitude is no longer prevalent among the more recent generations of artists? What has changed in the world to contribute to this cynicism, and would you advocate for a more activist posture for younger artists?

CV: Lucy Lippard said: “The market killed art,” and I think this is the key. Many people have written about this. When Life magazine published that Jackson Pollock was selling his paintings for thousands of dollars, you had a whole new generation who began to think of art as a business. Then you had an explosion of art schools and art magazines. The idea of art as a self-centered career where you make a name for yourself and make money became the dominant view here and then spread all over the world. And that is the exact opposite of where I was coming from. I inherited an idealistic view, both from my European and my indigenous side, that art was a way of interacting with the life force. Because art is a way of getting deeper into the question of how perception works; how observation affects what is observed. Now, through quantum physics,
can see that the ancient view of the indigenous, and some European traditions, were grounded in an understanding now proven as completely real. The practice of art affects the body, nature, and everything else. What the present moment calls for is an awareness of the effects of our actions.

**TF:** One of my favorite pieces of yours is Parti Si Pasión, which you produced on West Street in Lower Manhattan, but it takes on a very bittersweet quality following the tragic events of September 11th. I was curious as to how the tragedy affected you, especially in light of you living so close to the site of the World Trade Center. Do you notice a change in your practice or in your world view since 9/11?

**CV:** Yes. First of all, it affected my health because now I have heavy metal poisoning, as do many who lived in this neighborhood. Aside from that, I think that after Sept 11th we are living in the fantasy that everything is back to normal. That event made it clear that our system, whereby many in the world live in misery while a minority owns everything is unsustainable! Now we are living in a period of major denial. For me, September 11th is not just about the Twin Towers, it is the date of the military coup in Chile. I’ve written a poem where I wonder where do the two September 11ths fit into my body?...double destructions. September 11, 1973 was the U.S. intent to destroy the Latin American dream of a democratic social revolution: the intent to destroy, once and for all, any form of participatory democracy. And now participatory democracy – where does it exist? It certainly doesn’t exist here. That is why that piece was so anticipatory, if you open up “participation” it means to take part in the pain, to have compassion for suffering. When that is denied, true democracy can’t exist. I was just in Provincetown, and was moved to tears by the Mayflower Compact. It is so beautiful to see the persecuted refugees who came here to create a new place for themselves. They had in mind a society, a civil body, where we all care for each other and create equal and just laws. I mean, that is the dream. The indigenous dream and the European dream. Yet, it has been corrupted, forgotten. America has gone into the business of power, the business of money. And the Compact remains a dream.

**TF:** I’ve recently been watching Ric Burns’ documentary on New York, and one of the things that struck me about the city was how it was founded as a place of commerce, from the very beginning. I became a little bit disillusioned with New York as much as I love it, given its strictly mercantile roots, and I am glad that you are able to move beyond that part of its history to the indigenous past. Maybe that’s a way for people who are not so driven by money to come to terms with it in a different manner.

**CV:** Right, because we are exhausting the earth at this moment. We are working very hard to self-destruct. So the only way out is to remember who we really are. Humanness arose from empathy. We can put ourselves in the shoes of the other. This is true humanity, and we have forgotten that, and when you relate to nature you have to be in the interaction with nature, which teaches you that. Because the cycle of life and death includes everybody, starting with the air you breathe, starting with your shit, with your food. So I think that we, as human beings, are moving towards a memory of the future that involves a reconnection with the past.

**TF:** Very consistent in your body of work have been the “precarios” which you have been assembling for three or four decades. Has there been any change in your practice from when you started elaborating them? Typically, as artists mature their work undergoes stylistic changes – at least that is what art historians have tended to analyze, even though the art of
the present is not as clear cut as examples from the past. So where do the “precarios” fit into your artistic practice as it has evolved over your life time?

CV: The precarios are very mysterious in that they were born mature. The first precarious acknowledged my awareness of being perceived by the other side. In other words, my precarious work was born the moment I saw that the light, the ocean and the sun were perceiving me as much as I was perceiving them. The work acknowledged that exchange. Since then it has expanded into a series of variations. I’ve done a precarious installation at the top of the Empire State Building, for example. They can happen in the most improbable places. They migrate or move, but the principle of responding as a witness remains. The major change is that during the early period I didn’t consistently take pictures. I only have a handful. I wasn’t aware that you needed to photograph or film the work. Now I am aware of that. I’ve recently done a film that is called Kon Kon which tells the story of how I started to work in one of the most sacred places in Chile, at the foot of the Aconcagua mountain, a place where people have been doing art for ten thousand years. When I did my first work there, I didn’t know any of this because ancient culture is invisible in today’s Chile. I discovered this history recently through research and conversations with archaeologists. For most Chileans our history begins with the European invasion, and that’s it. In this film, I connect to the sensibility, to the perceptions, to the way of feeling for the land that is a memory of place. The film is an offering to Kon Kon, (Con Con) so that Chileans may see that, however erased, this memory still lives.

TF: Could you talk a bit more about the process for collecting the materials for the “precarios”?

CV: When I am in these places, which could be New York streets – I gather a lot of my materials from New York streets – it doesn’t matter where I am; I can be in the most polluted place, in a garbage dump or a place that is sacred to me in Chile, but the process is always the same. I go into this state of emptiness, into a state of complete openness where the person, Cecilia, doesn’t exist anymore. Whatever piece of garbage is there I can feel it. When I gather them I feel their pain, they have been crushed; they have been demolished; they have been destroyed. And I connect with them.

TF: Would it be accurate to characterize the “precarios” as a document of a moment standing still?

CV: Perhaps. In most of my exhibitions I create pieces in the moment, at the place. I use museums as my studio. I rarely bring objects from the studio. I assemble them on the spot, often with materials I gather in or around the place itself. Some of the precarios are preserved and have survived for many years, which contradicts everything I’ve said. But contradiction and paradox are part of the process. I still have some of the objects of the early seventies; they were recently exhibited at the MoMA/P.S. 1. WACK! show (http://www.moca.org/wack/).

TF: I was making the connection of a moment standing still because then I wanted to ask you about how they function in relation to photography. You had already mentioned that you did not document them at first and then you started to.

CV: When I realized that the photographs created a new interaction, new relationships started with them, which mirror the work in nature. When I work at the beach, and I arrange the different objects in the sand that is already like a script. It is a
language for high tide to erase. When I place them on city streets they become part of the language of the streets. Photos capture that sense of the objects as a different kind of script. Printed in a book, this feeling is intensified. The objects themselves are very playful, they want to live in many dimensions, they like this peculiar space between writing and drawing, between writing and sculpture, between being and non-being.

TF: How interesting... When you photograph them, I know that other people usually take the photos, but do you have a lot of input into how they are taken, or do you let a kind of chance process take over, leaving it up to the person who is taking the picture?

CV: Both ways. When I have worked with people who have a true sensibility for them, they know telepathically what the objects want, so I don’t instruct a lot. But sometimes, if you have a professional photographer taking a picture, then I want it to be as clean as possible. I’ve been very lucky in that I work with people who usually get the feeling...

TF: Have you started taking photographs yourself?

CV: Very rarely.

TF: I am really struck by the dichotomy between your artistic practice and your writing practice, your poetry. Because as you mentioned, with the “precarios”, they were born mature. Perhaps in your visual art there isn’t a clear-cut trajectory as much as in your poetry. It seems to me from what I have read and from the discussions we’ve had that poetry, for you, began as more of an intuitive process; and then you became more rigorously researched and historicized, as is made evident in your work as co-editor of the Oxford Book of Latin American Poetry2. I was curious about how you conceive of the relation between objects and words?

CV: My writing has always been intuitive and educated at the same time. I think this is present in the line itself, in each poem. As a child I was simultaneously this wild creature I described to you and an avid reader. Our home had a great library with books in many languages and I grew up reading, reading all I could find. Reading and writing are so interconnected that the intuitive aspect of my work was always embedded. In time, this paradox increased. In performance, I improvise and combine wild sounds created in the moment with phrases on the page, which are structured as precise poetic compositions. So it’s not that I was first naïve and then I became educated. I have been both all along. If you read my works of the 60s and of today, you will see a big difference. But certain elements, a way of perceiving from the other side, are present throughout.

TF: And how do you conceive of the relationship between objects and words?

CV: That is a challenging thing to describe. If you read my book Palabrarmas3 where I see words in space/time doing and undoing themselves as if they were alive, bodily structures or non-objectified “objects”, you will see an early exploration of this

---

3. Palabrarmas, RIL, Chile 2005
relationship. I have a sense that sound contains time and space. In other words, materiality and energy are each aspects of the other. So the difference between them is relative. The way I assemble sculptural objects mirrors this double capacity. If you look at one of the little sculptures, you can see that they are not attached in a way that makes them stable. Everything is in precarious balance; everything is on the verge of falling apart. I deal with language in a similar way. With a poem in front of me, the text is present and yet, in performance, I dissolve it; Sometimes I don’t read the whole line, I read a quarter of the line; or just a word, just a sound. So the solidity of the text disappears.

TF: So would you say that the “precarios” are more akin to performance?

CV: Performance is part of the poem, and the poem is part of the performance. Poems and objects are states of being. The object is in the state of being an object but a few minutes before it was just a piece of debris and a few minutes later it will continue to be debris. The same is true of a word. The word is pronounced in your mouth, and the next instant, it is no longer there. I relate to the process of transfiguration, transformation, and dissolution in both poem and performance.

TF: Your installation at Douglass Library, like many of your installations using wool yarn has an enormous sensory appeal to the touch, but it is also characterized by delicacy and fragility. As viewers, our vision and touch are stimulated, but we also have to stand back. The wall poem, instead, the other installation, forces us to be active, to get up close to the wall, to read and interpret. I am curious as to how each of the site-specific works is so different as regards the role of the viewer. Are fragility and interactivity mutually exclusive? What about abstraction (referring to the installation) and representation (the poem)?

CV: The multiplicity of relationships that each one of the materials calls for is what happens in this exhibition. I created four site-specific installations for this show, and they are all different and require different types of engagement. To me, this is the way we relate to the world. We are multiple beings. We are here, but at the same time we are attending to the environment around us, to what’s happening in the street. We are simultaneously in many places and in many states and conditions. When I came to see the exhibition space, I related to each one of its corners in a different way. The materials and the space, the oculus and its quiet light, the way people move through the library, each called for a different relationship. These works are forms of interaction, whether you touch or you don’t touch, whether you think or feel with your gut, with your hair, or your hands. It’s all about exchange and interaction.

TF: The four installations are the wall poem, the yarn installation, the wall with the precarios, and the mandala. Could you talk about the mandala a little bit more?

CV: The mandala is a prayer for the consciousness of the world to change. Both in Tibet and in the Andes, you use thread to request a transformation. Tara, the goddess of compassion in Tibet, is called a “Thread Mansion” and in the Andes, offerings to Pachamama are usually made with wool because wool stands for the life force. The large wool installation under the oculus is called Water Crying or Melinko Lauen (waterfall medicine). In the Andes, woolly animals are born where the glaciers give birth to the springs. Water is the thread of life. The mandala extends and transforms the wool waterfall. To change our relationship to water, is to change consciousness. The mandala is made with pastels, dust, and thread, it is impermanent as a sand painting. If you were to pull a thread, it falls apart.
CV: I remember the moment I heard the word “feminism” for the first time. Sometime in the early 60s I thought it was the most wonderful thing in the world. At that time, women were burning their bras and there was a huge movement happening in the northern hemisphere while Chile was impervious to it. The idea spread through the entire world like wildfire. And so I was a little disappointed when I arrived in London in 1972 and attended a conference and found feminism had been reduced to a political issue. I thought, “My God... I thought feminism was meant to change humanity and the way people live on this planet.” I have stuck with that feeling, therefore, I have always been a feminist. In 1980, when I arrived in New York, Lucy Lippard invited me to participate in the Heresies Collective. In fact I don’t think I would still be in New York if it weren’t for the Heresies Collective, for Lucy, May Stevens, and all the artists who made me part of their community. Right now, feminism seems to be dormant. I see people thinking that it belongs in the past, but for me it belongs in the future. Its true form has not yet unfolded. When it does it will change the lives of everybody, not just women. Maybe it will have a new name, but if both men and women were to embrace the feminine within, admit to our vulnerability, then a new human culture would arise.

TF: Was there a coherent feminist movement in Chile?

CV: No. Feminism as a group activity had two moments in Chile. In the 40s when women created a big social movement that conquered the right to vote. That movement sort of dissolved. Later on women participated in the Allende movement but didn’t have a separate feminist wing. When the dictatorship came, women again worked for human rights in Chile. In the late 80s, an inkling of a theoretical movement arose. For a while there were feminist gatherings and congresses, but then it dissolved again.

TF: What would you say to young women artists today?

CV: I think that women need to believe in themselves fully and completely and cease to look for the approval of the art world, society, or their counterparts, whether male or female. When that happens a completely new art may unfold.

6. The Heresies Collective Archives are located in the Miriam Schapiro Archives on Women Artists, Rutgers University Libraries, New Brunswick, NJ.
Artist Statement

Art comes from not knowing, from allowing a deeper truth to come forth. Touching, sensing, playing with what arises as a relationship unfolds. Art is the witness, the testimony of this exchange.

Cecilia Vicuña, 2009

Following image texts by Cecilia Vicuña
Various publication materials, 1966-2009

_Poto del Canasto_, Chile, 1967
Color photograph of first precarious object, 10 x 8 inches
In this portrait, *Violeta* is cut into three pieces. When I painted it, I didn’t know *Violeta* had tried to kill herself three times before she finally succeeded in 1967. *Violeta* is the great mestizo artist who recovered the suppressed sound and poetry of the indigenous peasants of Chile. She set off a musical revolution with her compositions that sang the difference between the “true & false.” In this painting, she is weaving her last song, “Gracias a la Vida,” finished a few days before her suicide.
Angel de la Menstruación / Menstruation’s Angel, London, 1973
Oil on canvas, 23 x 19 inches

After the conquest indigenous artists were enslaved by the Church and forced to paint angels and saints using the imported technique of oil paint. But the indigenous artists found a way to subtly subvert the icons by creating unexpected variations, such as the Virgin Mary transformed into Pacha Mama: a mountain with a virgin’s head, or angels with guns. 500 years later I decided women needed an angel to pray for their delayed menstruations.
Gabriela Mistral, Chile, 1979
Oil on canvas, 24 x 19 ½ inches

Gabriela was the first poet from Latin America to receive the Nobel Prize (1945). Children in Chile don’t like Gabriela because she is presented as a severe school master, a woman in long black dress. The children are forced to learn her terrifying poems by heart, reciting them in school as if they knew what she was talking about. As a result, Chilean children have to dig into the depths of her writing to find the true Gabriela - the magnificent Diaguita - the indigenous mestizo who sees herself naked and surrounded by “mangos & pitahayas.”
La Vicuña, animal andino, (Self portrait), Bogotá, 1979
Oil on canvas, 55 x 46 ½ inches

The wild vicuña is born at the foot of the glaciers. Her golden fleece is a sun thread. It belongs to the Apus, the spirit of the mountains. In ancient times it was woven as an offering in a language the gods can read: a cumbi or vicuña textile.
María Sabina, Buenos Aires, 1986
Oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 19 ½ inches

Sabi, as she called herself, was a great poet-shaman. A wise woman who healed with words and songs she learned from “Teonanacatl,” the sacred mushrooms. She said: “I cure with language.” “Language makes the dying return to life.” “Language falls, comes from above as little luminous objects that fall from heaven, which I catch word after word with my hands.”
The cow
is the continent
whose milk
(blood)
is being spilled
What are we doing
to our lives?

Vaso de Leche/Glass of Milk, Bogotá, 1979
3 Color prints: 14 ½ x 22 inches,
14 ½ x 22 inches, 9 x 47 inches
5 films, 1980-2009
- *What is Poetry to you*, Bogotá, 1980, 24 min
- *Vaso de Leche*, Bogotá, New York, 1979/2008, 6 min
- *Cloud-net*, New York, 1999, 7 min
- *Dissolution*, Con con, Chile, 2009, 4 min
I set a loom in the street
looming above
a puddle of rain.

“We are the thread”
says she

“To weave is to speak”.

Thread in the air
cloud in the mud.

La sombra de un telar/The shadow of a loom, New York, 1993
Color print, 50 X 34 ½ inches
Ceq’e

Thread Suns
“there are
still songs to be sung on the other side
of mankind”
— Paul Celan

The ceq’e is not a line, it is an instant, a gaze,

A mental quipu
to measure and mediate
a thought, radiating
an earthly sun
another meridian
seen from above

a quipu that is not
time’s ritual measure
or from below

Ceq’e, New York, 1994
Color print, 19 ¾ x 30 inches
Corral, Chile, 1994
Color print, 33 x 44 ½ inches
Wall drawing (pencil), 85 x 153 inches

Words are nerves of light and sound.
They connect & disconnect as they
constellate.

Excerpt from Instan by Cecilia Vicuña,
Kelsey St. Press 2002
Basuritas, 2009
Site specific installation of precarious objects
Mixed media, 85 x 76 ½ inches

Collected debris from all over the world;
Chilean mountains/rivers and New York streets.

"Lengua e’palo"
"Mujer árbol que huye"
"Restos del jardín"
"Sol de Rari"
"Root script"
"Dancing plug"
"Enredo"
"Semiluna"
"Marta Rebolledo"
"Antena de calle"

Details
"Antena de calle"
"Lengua e’palo"
"Enredo"
"Mujer árbol que huye"
"Marta Rebolledo"
Pachatira Penden Lhamo / A mandala to change the consciousness of the world, 2009
Site specific wall drawing (thread, chalk & pastel), 86 ½ x 85 inches

Tara, the Tibetan mother of compassion, is also called “Thread Mansion.” Abstract weavings bring her to presence. Penden Lhamo, one of her incarnations, is the protector of this earth.

Pachamama or Pachatira, the mother of spacetime in the Andes is the life-force, a red thread.
Melinko Lauen / Water Cry / Cascada Que Llora, 2009
Site specific installation in the rotunda of Douglass library
Unspun wool, 2.6m (height) x 15.7m (circumference)

Thread of water, thread of life.

A river of hair is only held together by the fat between each hair.

*Melinko lauen* (Mapuche) is a reverse waterfall.

“Medicine of four waters,” the healing mist that rises from the waterfall.

“Ko” is not “water,” it is the divine in water, the complete cycle of water from ocean to cloud, springs to ice.

“Melin” is “four”

“Lauen” is medicine.

Healing is seeing from the other side, reversing our view.

The reverse waterfall is the mist rising from our love for water.
Exhibition Checklist:

Various publication materials, 1966-2009

_Poto del Canasto_, Chile, 1967
Color photograph of first precarious object, 10 x 8 inches

_Violeta Parra_, London, 1973
Oil on canvas, 22 ¾ x 19 inches

_Angel de la Menstruación/Menstruation’s Angel_, London, 1973
Oil on canvas, 23 x 19 inches

_Gabriela Mistral_, Chile, 1979
Oil on canvas, 24 x 19 ½ inches

_La Vicuña, animal andino, (Self portrait)_, Bogotá, 1979
Oil on canvas, 55 x 46 ½ inches

_María Sabina, Buenos Aires_, 1986
Oil on canvas, 23 ½ x 19 ½ inches

_Vaso de Leche/Glass of Milk_, Bogotá, 1979
3 Color prints: 14 ½ x 22 inches, 14 ½ x 22 inches, 9 x 47 inches

5 films, 1980-2009
- _What is Poetry to you_, Bogotá, 1980, 24 min
- _Vaso de Leche_, Bogotá, New York, 1979/2008, 6 min
- _Parti Si Pasión_, New York, 1981/2008, 7 min
- _Cloud-net_, New York, 1999, 7 min
- _Dissolution_, Con con, Chile, 2009, 4 min

_La sombra de un telar/The shadow of a loom_, New York, 1993, Color print, 50 X 34 ½ inches

_Ceq’e_, New York, 1994
Color print, 19 ¾ x 30 inches

_Corr al_, Chile, 1994
Color print, 33 x44 ½ inches

Wall drawing (pencil), 85 x 153 inches

_Basuritas_, 2009
Site specific installation of precarious objects
Mixed media, 85 x 76 ½ inches

“Lengua e’palo”
“Mujer árbol que huye”
“Restos del jardín”
“Sol de Rari”
“Root script”
“Dancing plug”
“Enredo”
“Semiluna”
“Marta Rebolledo”
“Antena de calle”

_Pachatira Penden Lhamo / A mandala to change the consciousness of the world_, 2009
Site specific wall drawing (thread, chalk & pastel), 86 ½ x 85 inches

_Melin ko Lauen / Water Cry / Cascada Que Llora_, 2009
Site specific installation in the rotunda of Douglass library
Unspun wool, 2.6m (height) x 15.7m (circumference)
Curriculum Vitae: Cecilia Vicuña

Born in Santiago de Chile, 1948; lived in Bogotá, from 1975 to 1980; lives in New York since 1980 and is a legal resident of the U.S.

Education:
1971    MFA, National School of Fine Arts, University of Chile, Santiago.
1972-73  Post Graduate Studies at the Slade School of Fine Arts, University College, London.

Awards and Honors:
2009  Estelle Lebowitz Visiting Artist-in-Residence at the Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series, a program of the Institute for Women and Art (IWA) at Rutgers University.
2005  Phipps Chair in Contemporary Poetry, University of Denver
2004  MacDowell Colony Fellowship
2003  Bellagio Study Center Residency, Italy, Rockefeller Foundation
2002  Hedda Sterne Foundation Residency, Springs, New York
1995-96  The Fund for Poetry Award, New York
1991  Bellagio Residency, Rockefeller Foundation, Italy
1985  Human Rights Exile Award, Fund for Free Expression, New York
1983  LINE II Award for Precario/Precarious, New York
1972  British Council Scholarship in the United Kingdom

Solo Exhibitions:
2009    La Noche de las Especies, El Gran Vidrio, Valparaíso, Chile
2008    Parti Si Pasión, Metales Pesados, Santiago Chile
2007    Otoño, Reconstrucción Documental, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile
2002    Dissolving, Threads of Water and Light, with César Paternosto, The Drawing Center, New York, NY
2001    Book No Book, an anthological exhibition of artist’s books by Cecilia Vicuña, Woodland Pattern Book Center, Milwaukee, WI
2000    Se mi ya, site specific installation, Galería Gabriela Mistral, Ministerio de Educación, Santiago, Chile
1999    Cloud-net, a site specific installation, Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center, Buffalo, NY
1997    K’isa, a site specific installation at the University of Massachusetts University, at Dartmouth, MA
1996    Precario, a site specific installation, at Inverleith House, the Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland
1994    Ceq’e Fragments, a site specific installation at the Center for Contemporary Arts, Santa Fe, NM
1992    El Ande Futuro, a site specific installation at the University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
1990    Precarious, a site specific installation at the Exit Art Gallery, New York, NY
1977    Homenaje a Vietnam, Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, Bogotá, Colombia
1974    A Journal of Objects, 400 Precarious Objects, Arts Meeting Place, London, UK
1973    Pain Things & Explanations, Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK
1971    Pinturas Poemas y Explicaciones, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile

Exhibition curated by Cecilia Vicuña:
2009    Painted Ideas: Visual Poetry from Latin America, Cecilia de Torres Gallery, NY (September-November)
Selected Group Exhibitions:

2009  
*Subversive Practices Art under Conditions of Political Repression 60’s -80s South America and Europe*, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, Germany, 2007


2006  
*Multiplication*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, Chile

*Del Otro Lado*, Centro Cultural Palacio de La Moneda, Santiago, Chile

2005  
*Gabinete de Lectura*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile

2004  
*Fishing in International Waters: New Acquisitions from the Latin American Collection*, Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

2003  
*Promoción Popular*, Centro Cultural Matucana, Santiago, Chile

2002  
*Rayuela/Hopscotch: Fifteen Contemporary Latin American Artists*, University Art Gallery, The University of Scranton, PA

2001  
*Abstraction, The Amerindian Paradigm*, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, travelled to IVAM, Institut Valencia d’Arte Modern, Spain

2000  
*Quotidiana*, Castello di Rivoli, Italy

*Transferencia y Densidad: 100 años de Artes Visuales en Chile*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile

1998  
*North & South Connected*, Cecilia de Torres Gallery, New York, NY

1997  

1996  
*INside the VISIBLE*, (curated by Catherine M. de Zegher), Institute of Contemporary Arts, Boston, MA

1994  
*ar-ti-cu-la-te*, Mary Delahoyd Gallery, New York, NY

1992  
*America, The Bride of the Sun: 500 years of Latin American Art*, (curated by Catherine M. Zegher and Paul Vandenbroeck), Royal Museum of Antwerp, Belgium

1991  
*Efecto de Viaje: Trece Artistas Chilenos Residentes en Nueva York*, (curated by Justo Pastor Mellado), Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile

1990  
*The Decade Show*, The New Museum, New York, NY

1988  
*The Debt*, Exit Art Gallery, New York, NY

1987  
*Latin American Artists in New York since 1970*, Archer M. Huntington Gallery, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

1986  
*Segunda Bienal de la Habana*, Havana, Cuba

1984  
*Latin American Visual Thinking*, Art Awareness Gallery, Lexington, New York, NY

1983  
*Chilenas*, Kunstmamtes Kreuzberg, Berlin, Germany

1982  
*Women of the Americas*, Center for Inter American Relations/Americas Society, New York, NY

1981  
*Latin American Video*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

1974  
*Ikon & Logos*, Alternative Museum, New York, NY

*INBO Bienal*, Cochabamba, Bolivia

Selected Performance Lectures:

2008  
“Heresies,” PS1, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

“Ecopoetics,” AWP, New York, NY

2007  
“Violeta Parra,” Viña del Mar, Chile

2006  
“El Corno Emplumado, Una historia de los sesentas,” King Juan Carlos Center, New York, NY

2005  
“What is Poetry to You?” Naropa University, Boulder, CO

2004  
“A (mis) translation of the Tao te Ching into Quechua Concepts,” Dactyl Foundation, New York, NY

2001  
“Gabriela en el MoMA,” Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

1997  
“A seminar with Cecilia Vicuña,” Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

1993  
“Rosario Castellanos, The Word is a Hard Look,” Poet’s House, New York, NY
1992 "Lo Precario," Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago Chile
1989 "The No," Latinoamérica Despierta Conference, Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA
1989 "Paracas, A Pre-Columbian Textile," Parsons School of Design, New York, NY
1987 "Cecilia Vicuña talks about her art," Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of Texas, Austin, TX
1979 "Cecilia Vicuña," Escola da Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
1974 "Art & Literature since the Chilean Revolution", Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, UK

Selected Performances and Poetry Readings:
2009 World Financial Center, A Musical Tribute to Pablo Neruda, New York, NY
2009 The Segue Series, Bowery Poetry Club, New York, NY
2009 A Festival of Poetry, Duke University, Chapel Hill, NC
2008 Naropa University, Boulder, CO
2008 PS1, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
2008 American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY
2007 King Juan Carlos Center, New York University, New York, NY
2007 NYSt Mark’s Poetry Project, New York, NY
2003 King Juan Carlos Center, New York University, New York, NY
2002 The Drawing Center, New York, NY
2001 The University of Cambridge Conference on Contemporary Poetry, Cambridge, UK
2001 Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
2001 Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, Belgium
1999 Art in General, New York, NY
1997 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
1996 Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, UK
1992 Inverleith House, Royal Botanical Gardens, Edinburgh, Scotland
1992 The Poetry Center, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, CA

Art and Poetry by Cecilia Vicuña:
2007 Sabor A Mí, Ediciones Universidad Diego Portales, Chile
2005 Palabrarmas, RIL, Chile
2004 i tu, Tsé-Tsé, Buenos Aires, Argentina
2002 Instan, Kelsey St. Press, Berkeley, CA
2001 El Templo, (translated by Rosa Alcalá), Situations, New York, NY
1999 Cloud-net, (art & poetry by Cecilia Vicuña and essays by Laura Hoptman, Surpik Angelini and David Levi Strauss), Hallwalls Contemporary Arts Center/Diverseworks ArtSpace/Art in General, New York, NY. Houston, TX, Buffalo, NY
1996 Word & Thread, (translated by Rosa Alcalá), Morning Star Publications, Edinburgh, Scotland
1994 La realidad es una línea, Kanaal Art Foundation, Kortrijk, Belgium
1994 PALABRARmas/WURWAPPINschaw, (translated by Edwin Morgan), Morning Star Publications, Folio 5/2, Edinburgh, Scotland
1984 PALABRARmas, Ediciones El Imaginero, Buenos Aires, Argentina
1983 Precario/Precairous, (translated by Anne Twitty), Tanam Press, New York, NY
1973 Saborami, (translated by Felipe Ehrenberg with the author), Beau Geste Press, UK
Poetry Books by Cecilia Vicuña:

2009  *V*, Antología de poesía, edición de Renato Gómez, trope, Lima, Peru
1990  *La Wik’uña*, Francisco Zegers Editor, Santiago de Chile, Chile
1986  *Samara*, Ediciones Embalaje, Museo Rayo, Colombia
1984  *PALABRARmas*, Ediciones El Imaginero, Buenos Aires, Argentina
1983  *Luxumei o el Traspié de la Doctrina*, Editorial Oasis, México
1979  *Siete Poemas*, Ediciones Centro Colombo Americano, Bogotá, Colombia

Books edited by Cecilia Vicuña:

1990  *The Cardboard House*, (by Martin Adan, translated by Katherine Silver), published by Graywolf Press, Minneapolis, MN
1988  *The Selected Poems of Rosario Castellanos*, (edited by Cecilia Vicuña and Magda Bogin, translated by Magda Bogin), published by Graywolf Press, Minneapolis, MN
1984  *Plan for Escape*, (by Adolfo Bioy Casares, translated by Suzanne Jill Levine), published by Graywolf Press, Minneapolis, MN
1983  *Altazor*, (by Vicente Huidobro, translated by Eliot Weinberger), Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, CT

Forthcoming:

*Spit Temple, Selected Performances by Cecilia Vicuña*, edited by Rosa Alcalá
*SOY YOS, Poesía reunida*, Lom editores, Chile (2009)
*Sabor a Mi*, Chainlinks, Oakland, CA and Philadelphia, PA (Fall 2009)

In Progress:

*Sudamerisa*, (travelogue of the Performance tour of South America with Jerome Rothenberg), Editorial Cuarto Propio, Chile (2010)

Selected Essays by Cecilia Vicuña:

2008  “Poetry and string theory, a conversation with James O’Hern,” *Riffing on Strings*, (edited by Sean Miller & Shveta Verma), Scriblerus Press, New York, NY
“K’isa/alongó,” *Crayon*, 5, Milwaukee, WI
“La No Guarida de lo Imperfecto” (An essay on Tribu No), in 2010, Santiago Chile
2005  “The Melody of Structures (An essay on Emma Kunz),” in *3 X Abstraction, New Methods of Drawing*, (edited by Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher), The Drawing Center, New York, NY
2003  “Ubixic, ‘its being said,’” a reading of a reading of the Popol Vuh, in "With their hands and their eyes", *Maya Textiles, Mirrors of a Worldview*, Antwerp Ethnographic Museum, Antwerp, Belgium
2001  “Juan Luis, in *Merodeos en torno a la obra de Juan Luis Martínez*, Ediciones Intemperie, Santiago, 2001
1998  “Impossible Weavings,” *Parkett # 52*, Zurich. Switzerland
“Sintáctica Enhebra, una lectura de Gabriela Mistral,” in *50 años de Gabriela Mistral*, Ediciones del Ministerio de Educación, Chile
1994  “Notes from a Journey,” in *Sulfur #34*, (s[ring]), Ypsilanti, Eastern Michigan University
1992  “The Invention of Poverty,” in America the Bride of the Sun, Royal Museum, Amberes, Belgium
1989  “Andina Gabriela,” in Una Palabra Cómplice, Encuentro con Gabriela Mistral, Revista Isis, Vol XII, December, Santiago, Chile
1984  “Metafísica del Textil,” in Tramemos, Año II, #31, (November), Buenos Aires, Argentina
1983  “Quatro Donne,” in Latinoamerica, Anno V, # 13, Rome, Italy
1982  “Death and Defense: Guatemalan Women,” a conversation with Isabel Fraire, in Heresies, #15, New York, NY

Selected Group Exhibition Catalogs:
2006  Gabriel Pérez Barreiro, Editor, Blanton Museum of Art, Latin American Collection, University of Texas, Austin, TX
Gabinete de Lectura, Artes Visuales Chilenas Contemporáneas, 1971-2005, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile
2000  Quotidiana: The Continuity of the Everyday in 20th Century Art, at Castello di Rivoli, Charta, Italy
Transferencia y Densidad 1973-2000, (Chile 100 Años de Artes Visuales), Museo Nacional de Bellas Art, Santiago, Chile
1996  Inside the Visible, an elliptical traverse of 20th century art, in, of and from the feminine, (edited by Catherine de Zegher,) MIT Press

Selected Contributions to Anthologies:
2008  Letters to Poets, Conversations about Poetics, Politics and Community, (edited by Jennifer Firestone & Dana Teen Lomax), Saturnalia Books, Philadelphia, PA
2005  Antología de Poesía Chilena, edición de Julio Espinosa, Visor, España
The Wisdom Anthology of North American Poetry, (edited by Andrew Schelling), Wisdom Publications, Boston, MA
2002  MR / Magical Realism by Kamau Brathwaite, (winner of the Casa de las Americas Prize1998 for Literary Criticism), Savacou North, Sava
1996  Veinticinco Años de Poesía Chilena, (selección de Teresa Calderón, Lila Calderón y Thomas Harris), Fondo de Cultura Económica, Santiago, Chile
These Are Not Sweet Girls, Poetry by Latin American Women, (edited by Marjorie Agosin), White Pine Press
1991  El Placer de la Palabra, (selección de Maragarite Fernández-Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini), editorial Planeta, Mexico
Being America, (edited by Rachel Weiss), White Pine Press, New York, NY
1989  Cartas al Azar, Una Muestra de Poesía Chilena, (selección de María Teresa Adriasola and Verónica Zonddek), Ediciones Ergo Sum, Santiago, Chile
1987  Blasted Allegories, (edited by Brian Wallis), The New Museum and M.I.T. Press
1986  Fire OverWater, (edited by ReeseWilliams), Tanam Press, New York, NY
The Renewal of the Vision, (edited by Marjorie Agosin and Cola Franzen), Espectacular Disease, London, UK
1984  Piesne Pre Chile, Slovensky Spisovatel’ (Antologie de la Poésie Chilienne), Praga
1978  La Novísima Poesía Latinoamericana, (selección de Jorge Boccanera), editores Mexicanos Unidos, México I
Forthcoming:

- Mujeres Mirando al Sur, Ediciones Torremozas, Barcelona, Spain
- Poetas Hispanoamericanos en Nueva York, SIAL, Madrid, Spain
- Exhibition Under Construction: After Arcades, (edited by Mark Nowak & May Joseph)

Selected poetry publications in magazines:

- 2009 Bombay Gin, Naropa, Colorado
- 2008 Crayon, Brooklyn, NY
- 2007 Naked Punch, London, UK
- 2005 Knit-Knit, New York, NY
- Tse-Tsé, #16 Buenos Aires, Argentina
- 2004 Indigenous People's Journal of Law, Culture & Resistance, UCLA, Premier issue
- Rattapallax, New York, NY
- Plagio, Santiago de Chile, Chile
- Coyote #8, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- 2003 Guaraguao, Barcelona, Spain
- The Literary Review, Volume 46 Number 2 (winter), Farleigh Dickinson University, NJ
- Creación, Chile
- 2002 Neue Sirene, Zeitschrift fur Literatur, #16 (December), Munich, Germany
- Ecopoetics, Buffalo, NY
- Chain, Hawaii
- 2001 Sibila, Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Open City, New York, NY
- XCP #8, Minneapols, MN
- 2000 Sulfur #45, Ypsilanti, MI
- 1998 Mandorla, #6, Mexico City, Mexico
- 1997 Review: Latin American Literature and Arts, # 54, (spring). New York, NY
- 1996 Revista Universitaria, # 51, Santiago de Chile, Chile
- 1995 Chain / 2, (spring), Buffalo, NY
- The American Poetry Review, (May-June)
- 1994 RIF/T, An Electronic Space for New Poetry, Buffalo, NY
- Shambala Sun, Boulder, CO (July)
- 1990 Rolling Stock, # 17-18, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO
- 1989 Hora de Poesia, # 65-66, Barcelona, Spain
- Heresies, # 24, 1989, New York, NY
- Quimera, # 94, Barcelona, Spain
- 1988 Kritica, # 28, Santiago de Chile, Chile
- 1987 El Espiritu del Valle, # 2, Santiago de Chile, Chile
- American Poetry Review, (March-April)
- 1986 The Raddle Moon, # 4, British Columbia, Canada
- 1985 Review: Latin American Literature and Arts, # 34, New York, NY
- 1984 LAR, 1984, Madrid, Spain
- Hora de Poesia, # 31, Barcelona, Spain
- 1982 Palimpsesto, # 1, Rome, Italy
- Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos, # 382, Madrid, Spain

35
1981  Heresies, # 13, New York, NY
1980  Eco, # 219, Bogota, Colombia
1978  Acuarmantima, # 18, Medellín, Colombia
1976  El Nacional, # 389, Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico
1972  Extramuros, Caracas, Venezuela
1968  Mundo Nuevo, Paris, France
1967  EL Corno Emplumado, # 25, Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico

Critical Bibliography on Cecilia Vicuña:
2008  El Libro Censurado de Cecilia Vicuña, por Pedro Pablo Guerrero, Revista de Libros, El Mercurio, Santiago, Chile 6 (Enero)

Women Artists at the Millenium, (edited by Carol Armstrong and Catherine de Zegher), MIT Press, Cambridge, MA

2003  “Cecilia Vicuña and César Paternosto,” Art Nexus #48, (April June)
2001  Carles Peris, Aborígenes, El Paradigma Amerindio en el Ivam, en Cuadernos del Periódico Mediterráneo, Valencia, (28 Octubre)
2002  Jose Zalaquett, Semiya, Cecilia Vicuña, Año de Semillas, Revista Que Pasa, Santiago (25 Marzo)
2000  Catalina Mena, Cecilia Vicuña, La Heroína de la Subjetividad, Las Últimas Noticias, Santiago, Chile, 26 (Marzo)

2006  Laynie Brown, Devotional Practice: Writing and Meditation, Talisman
Blanton Museum of Art Latin American Collection, (edited by Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro), Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, Texas
Contemporary Art & Anthropology, (edited by Arnd Schneider & Christopher Wright), Berg
2005  Justor Pastor Mellado, Historias de Anticipación, en Transferencia y Densidad, catálogo, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago, Chile

1999  Jacqueline Barnitz, XXth Century Art of Latin America, University of Texas Press
1999  Frances Richard, “Cecilia Vicuña at Art in General,” Art Forum, (October)
M. Catherine de Zegher, “Cecilia Vicuña’s Ouvrage: Knot a Not, Notes as Knots,” in Inside the Visible, an elliptical traverse of 20th century art, in, of and from the feminine, (edited by M. Catherine de Zegher), The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London


1994


Lucy R. Lippard, “Cecilia Vicuña: Hilando la fibra común”, in Arte Internacional, #18, Revista del Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, Italy

1993

Lawrence Rinder, “Cecilia Vicuña”, catalog text for the one person exhibition El Ande Futuro, University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA

1992

Carin Kuoni, “Nuchterheit und Idealismus: Exit Art...” in Kunstforum #118, Berlin, Germany


Eliot Weinberger, “Basuritas/Little Litter”, in Poliester #3, Ciudad de México, Mexico

1991

Calvin Reid, “Multi-Site Exhibitions, Inside-Outside,” Art in America (January)

1990


Julia P. Herzberg, “Re-membering Identity: Vision of Connections”, in The Decade Show, New Museum, New York, NY

1987


1986


1984

Lucy R. Lippard, Get the Message? E. P. Dutton, New York, NY

1981

Milan Ivelic y Gaspar Galaz, La Pintura en Chile, Universidad Católica de Valparaiso, Chile

1974

Antonio Romero, “Pinturas de Cecilia Vicuña”, El Mercurio, Santiago de Chile, (24 Diciembre)

Selected Recordings and Video Documentation:

2006 Vi la Ida, a performance de Cecilia Vicuña, Museo Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago, DVD, 50 min, Chile

2005 Red Coil, four performances for sitelines, video, 68 min, New York

kNot a QUIPU, an interview with Cecilia Vicuña by Sabrina Gschwandter, DVD.

2004 The bright light of confusion & doubt, a CD, Cecilia Vicuna in performance: poetry & chants, sona sounds, New York, NY

2002 Cecilia Vicuña at the California College of Arts and Crafts, The Poetry Center & American Poetry Archives. video

Cecilia Vicuña & Jerry Rothenberg at the California Polytechnic State University, Pomona, CA

2001 Four Days in Buffalo (Cecilia Vicuña at SUNY) by Christine Zinne, video

Cecilia Vicuña at Woodland Patterns Book Center, audio recording, CD

Cecilia Vicuña at the Goethe Institut in Santiago,Chile, video

1999 Performance and Interview by Pedro Pablo Guerrero at “La Orquesta de Cristal”, Santiago, Chilevideo

Seed Speaking, a Miller Lecture at the University of Illinois, Urbana, audiotape


1995 Cecilia Vicuña Reading at St. Marks Poetry Project, Thin Air Poetry Video Catalog

1994 A Performance by Cecilia Vicuña, in Rif/t, An Electronic Space for New Poetry


Cecilia Vicuña at Bard College, an independent video documentary by George Quasha

1991 Nemesio Antúnez entrevista a Cecilia Vicuña, en Ojo con el Arte, Channel 9 TV Chile.

1990 Cecilia Vicuña reading at Exit Art Gallery, POET VISION, a video documentary, Rohm and Haas, Philadelphia, PA

1974 María Santiago, (Cecilia Vicuña’s pen name) l6mm, 20 m. color documentary , BBC2, London, UK.
Film and Videoworks by Cecilia Vicuña:

2009  
*Kon kon*, a documentary poem, 54 min, Valparaíso, Chile  
*Dissolution*, a visual poem, 3 min, Chile/New York  
*Camanchaca*, a visual poem, 10 min, Valparaíso, Chile

2008  
*Vaso de leche*, Bogotá, New York 1979-2008  
*Parti si pasión*, New York, 1981-2008  
*Orgon Azul*, New York, 2008  
*Paracas*, 16mm, 18 min color animation. New York, 1993, (transferred to digital video)  
*Three Fragments of Three Performances* in New York

2003  
*Instrumento de Luz: a poem in time/space*, DVD, New York

2001  
*Red Thread*, DVD. 6 minutes

1999  
*¿Qué es para Usted la Poesía?*, 16mm, filmed in 1980, 24 min color, Bogotá, (transferred to video)

1998  
*Cloud-net*, VHS. New York, NY

1997  
*Caleu está soñando/ The Thread at Play*, video. Chile/ New York: The Touchstone Center

1981  
*Trabajos*, video, 10 mins. New York, NY

Selected Web Links to Cecilia Vicuña:

Cecilia Vicuña’s homepage:  
http://www.ceciliavicuna.org

Micheal Leong’s (PhD, Rutgers), poetry blog about Vicuña’s campus visit:  
http://michaelleong.wordpress.com

Other Selected Websites A-Z:

http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/vicuna/  
http://helios.hampshire.edu/nomorenicegirls/heretics/#women4  
http://hueders.wordpress.com/  
http://icomoschile.blogspot.com/2009/03/leer-la-niebla.html  
http://jacketmagazine.com/32/p-osman.shtml  
http://maven.english.hawaii.edu/celebrate/vicuna.html  
http://splerature.blogspot.com/  
http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/linebreak  
http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Vicuna.html  
http://www.alligatorzine.be  
http://www.amnh.org/programs/specials/cbc/  
http://www.audibleword.org/auditoria/vicuna.htm  
http://www.blantonmuseum.org  
http://kelseyst.com/authors_artists.htm  
http://www.lagioconda.art.br  
http://www.latincollector.com  
http://www.hreffo.org/Issue16/Non_fiction/non_fiction_christine.htm  
http://www.ubu.com/ethno/poems/vicuna_word.html  
http://www.wordswithoutBorders.org  
http://www.worldofpoetry.org/cv_i2.htm  
http://www.wps1.org/new_site/component?option=com_alphaccontent/Itemid,187(section,98/cat,115(sort,15(limit,30(limitstart,30/}
The exhibition has been organized by the Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series, a program of the Institute for Women and Art (IWA) in partnership with the Rutgers University Libraries. The IWA operates as a center of the Office of the Associate Vice President for Academic & Public Partnerships in the Arts & Humanities. Series co-sponsors include: Associate Alumnae of Douglass College, Brodsky Center for Innovative Editions, Center for Latin American Studies, the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes, Department of Spanish and Portugese, Global Initiatives (2009-10 theme, “Ecologies in the Balance? Thinking Through the Crisis”), Institute for Research on Women, Office of the Dean of Douglass Residential College and Douglass Campus, The Feminist Art Project, Women and Gender Studies Department, and the Women Artists Archives National Directory. These events are made possible in part by funds from the National Endowment for the Arts and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

This exhibition is also made possible in part by funds from the Estelle Lebowitz Memorial Fund. Estelle Lebowitz (1930-1996) was born and raised in New York. She attended the High School of Music and Art and Brooklyn College. Her work has been exhibited in Sommers Town Gallery, Sommers, NY; Coster's Gallery, Highland Park, NJ; The Gallery at Busch Campus Center, Piscataway, NJ; and the Mary H. Dana Women Artists Series, New Brunswick, NJ; Art Library at Rutgers, New Brunswick, NJ. In her artist's statement she wrote,”My work(s) may be described as women's feminine objects with overtones of nature. They are semi-abstract images that are mostly fantasies, influenced originally be Impressionism and brought into Modernism by my own style and technique. Light and color are very important in my work... and they each mean something.”

Lebowitz Lectureship:
2010-2011: Joan Snyder
2009-2010: Cecilia Vicuña
2008-2009: Renée Cox
2007-2008: Berni Searle
2006-2007: May Stevens
2005-2006: Molly Snyder-Fink
2004-2005: Miriam Schapiro
2001-2002: Hung Liu
2000-2001: June Wayne, Siri Berg
1999-2000: Carolee Schneemann
INSTITUTE FOR WOMEN AND ART RUTGERS ADVISORY COUNCIL, 2009-10

Grimanesa Amoros
Betsy Barbanell
Joan Bartl
Anonda Bell
Elizabeth Cohen
Karen Dandurand
Harriet Davidson
Marianne I. Gaunt
Mary S. Hartman
Mary Hawkesworth
Lisa Hetfield
Dorothy L. Hodgson
Marjorie Martay
Joan Marter
Leslie Mitchner
Muriel Moss
Isabel Nazario
Nell Painter
Joanna Regulska
Martin Rosenberg
Ernestine Ruben
Anne Swartz
Courtney Taylor
Farideh Tehrani
Jorge Daniele Veneciano
Cheryl A. Wall