



La Revolución Silenciosa (The Silent Revolution)

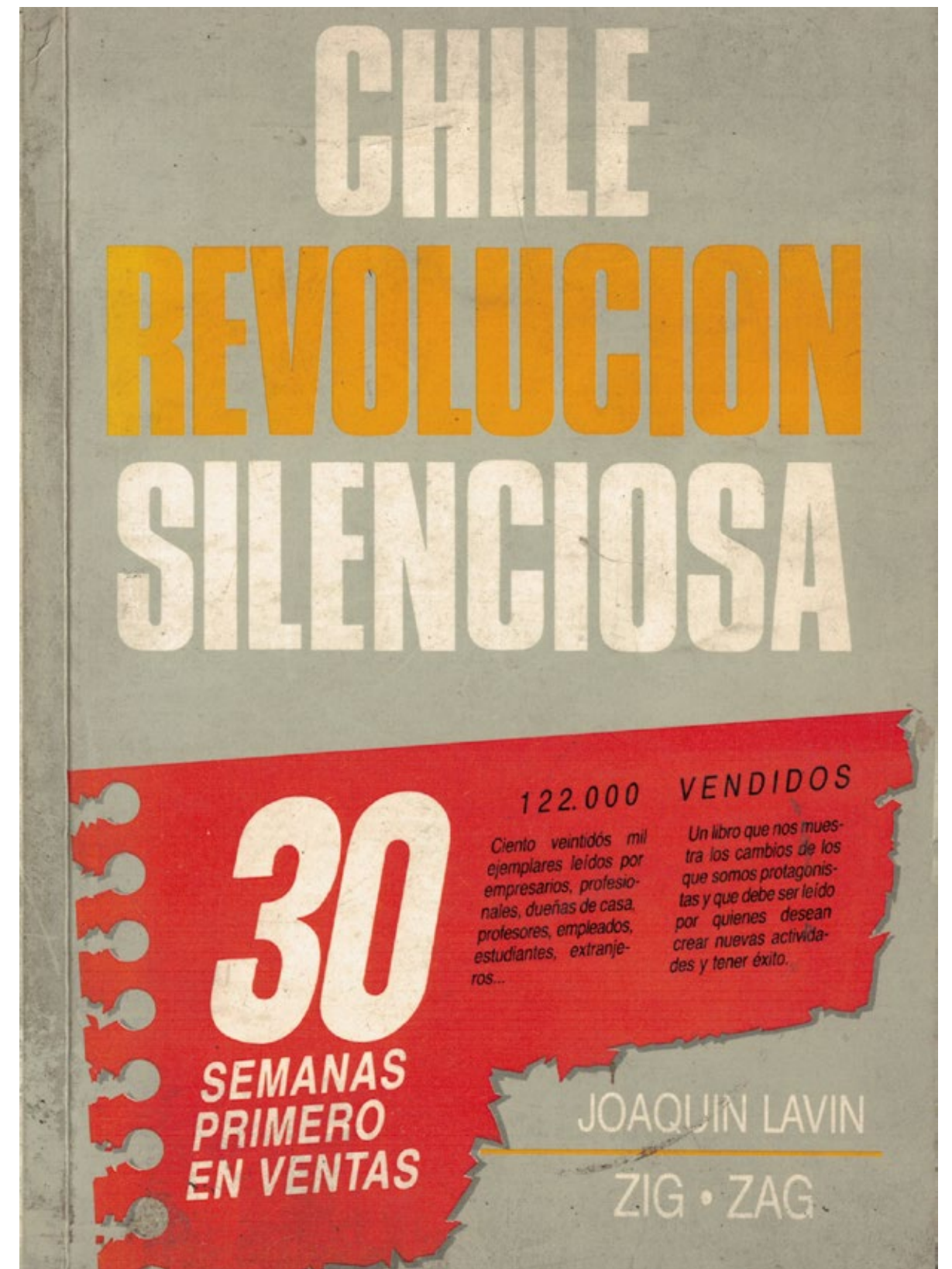
Asiel Timor Dei

Anonymous painter (Master of Calamarca), seventeenth century, oil on canvas, 105 x 130 cm., Calamarca, Viceroyalty of Peru.

Lavín, Joaquín. 1987.

Chile: Revolución Silenciosa (A Silent Revolution).
Santiago, Zig-Zag.

This book is an apology to the neoliberal reforms included in the 1980 constitution approved by the Chilean State during the dictatorship brought to power through a fraudulent plebiscite process. In 1999-2000 Joaquín Lavín was a candidate for the presidency of Chile and lost by 30,000 votes against Ricardo Lagos. My series La Revolución Silenciosa dates from 2001-2002.



On *La Revolución Silenciosa*

This series proposes a critical review of the phenomenon of the painting of apocryphal angels and archangels in the Colonial era (one of the photographs incorporates, as well, elements from *casta* painting). I understand this painting, which is filled with harquebusier archangels and would have been unthinkable in the Baroque Europe of the same age, as evidence of the iconographic concessions implied by the evangelization of the New World. The proliferation of these angels is anything but coincidental in a territory where the winged deity Viracocha possessed the ability to invoke the rain through thunder, which explains the general rule that many of these archangels grip their harquebuses as if aiming for the sky—but not God. It must be noted, as well, that it was the indigenous people themselves who established guilds of painters who, just like in medieval Europe, devoted themselves to producing images for churches and convents as a collective enterprise, with no notion whatsoever of the modern artist's concept of authorship—the opposite of what ultimately came to pass in Renaissance Europe. This Latin American Mannerism is not the product of a finished proposition but of a “difference” in the broadest sense of the term: the pre-perspective character of its paintings is not a question of styles but simply a mere technical deficiency compared to the European model. The difference is the result of the will to copy (because in terms of technique, and not motifs, what the clergy asked of the indigenous painters were copies). That difference may be the product of the emergency, the hardships and the syncretism brought on by the hurried imposition of Catholicism. And it is this difference, which resulted in a prolific Latin American iconography that might lead us to conclude that Latin American art might never again boast the formal originality that characterized it from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. This is a paradox that is possible, though not necessarily true and certainly not politically correct.

To return to our problem, the archangel, we should state that at present this difference comes about from a place of knowledge, and the desire to produce it—to reproduce it symbolically and, most importantly, to export that difference to the centers of power—and not from a place of ignorance and desire to be the same or to say so using works that were in line with the New World evangelization practices, to be

like the Catholic priests demanded.

I understand the Baroque, the *mestizo* and the syncretic as something that is still alive, and utterly contemporary (and I know that I am not the first person to say this). I understand the Baroque to be an extendible, elastic notion that cannot be contained by certain clearly anemic historiographic categories that would relegate the Baroque to a collection of chronologically ordered styles. There is no lack of people who have announced the coming of the Neo-Baroque Era, this time as a global phenomenon within the context of the cultural logic of latter-day capitalism in the twilight of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first, of its spectacular cultural industry and its movies filled with special effects that implacably test our perception of reality at every moment (it is telling, for example, that the cover of Omar Calabrese's book *Neo-Baroque* features an image from *Blade Runner*). I have decided to use, in an allegorical way, these special effects of “de-realization” —which, in turn, are of “re-realization,” of the real or of what appears to be real—to test this hybrid collective imagery that seems to be expanding inclemently like a metastasis of images around the globe.

With respect to the multiple meanings that these works may contain, I would like to mention two in particular.

In the first place, very rarely does the archangel wield a harquebus, as the archangels do in the paintings that these works cite. More often than not, it is a substitute object, created with elements that may be ubiquitous in another way, relevant to some or other aspect of Latin American political history, particularly the relationship with modernity. If we see a cross held as if it were a sword, finished off as a four-pronged peasant's rake, with a machete tied around it, then we may tend to think of specifically local phenomena such as the Nicaraguan Revolution and Liberation Theology. The conjunction of socialism and Christianity is something that is simply impossible in the real socialism of Eastern Europe, to say nothing of Asia. If we see an angel dressed as a soldier (and not a *guerillero* warrior), we will connect that image with the title of the series: *La Revolución Silenciosa*, the silent revolution that is also the title of a book by the neoliberal Catholic Chilean politician Joaquín Lavín. If we notice that the angel is holding a kind of Roman (or Boy Scout) standard, featuring camouflage fabric,

a broom, and a scythe (which looks like a sickle), we will think of symbols that can be associated with the socialist revolutionary aesthetic, but also with military coups, dictatorships imposed and supported by the United States, and the *right-wing capitalist revolutions* (as Chilean sociologist Tomás Moulian refers to them) that they brought with them. Needless to say, of course, revolutions, terror, the forcible imposition of ideologies and the absence of democracy can come from all parts of the political spectrum (to that end Pinochet's Chile is an emblematic and exemplary case).

In the second place, all the angels have the same face, just like the original paintings from the Colonial era that they cite. These faces, just like those of the originals, feature certain characteristics, the most salient of which is the ambiguity of gender. If one looks closely at the original paintings, it is hard to say whether the faces are those of men, women, or rather asexual beings, whose essence is empowered by another ambiguity, for they seem to be neither adults nor children. I have found, in the face of the model that I use as a kind of mask, a kind of contemporary and yet anachronistic version that manifest the same characteristics of de-localization (of gender, age, sex, and ultimately, humanity). In a sense, both the archangels painted in the Colonial period and these models seem inhuman or, even more interestingly, they seem to find themselves in the tension between the human and the inhuman, between nature and second nature, connecting themselves through a possible analogy to the contemporary world of the gendernaut. We find them here as a totally postmodern phenomenon, a postmodern form of understanding the construction of meaning, of gender, of sex, of identity, of body. The gendernaut is a subject that, by virtue of modern technology and medicine, builds, writes, defines and programs —both in and out of the operating room— a sexuality, an identity and finally a (post) humanity that is entirely personal and unique.

Demian Schopf, 2004.



A Nicaraguan guerrilla on the cover of the songbook "Corridos y poemas del Ejército Defensor de la Soberanía Nacional de Nicaragua" (Corridos and poems of the Army for the Defense of the National Sovereignty of Nicaragua.)

The Silent Revolution, Asiel Timor Dei

2001

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



Pride
Anonymous painter, eighteenth century, Cuzco, Viceroyalty of Peru.

The Silent Revolution, Soberbia (Pride)
2002
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



The Silent Revolution, Miguel Dei

2001

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



Gluttony
Anonymous painter, eighteenth century, Cuzco, Viceroyalty of Peru.

The Silent Revolution, Gula (Gluttony)
2002
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



The Silent Revolution, Uriel Lumen Dei
2002
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



The Silent Revolution, Curva

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



Castle Painting (from a black man and a spanish woman a mulatto is born: 1-black, 2-spaniard, 3-mulatto). Nueva España (México), XVIII Century.

The Silent Revolution, Caste Angel

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper, 105 x 130 cm.



The Silent Revolution, Miguel Dei

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



San La Muerte (Saint Death) is an **apocryphal saint** (not recognized by the church) that takes the form of a skeleton. This figure is venerated in Paraguay, Northeastern Argentina (mainly in the provinces of Corrientes, Chaco and Formosa) and southern Brazil (specifically in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul).

The Silent Revolution, San La Muerte (Saint Death)
2002
Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
100 x 190 cm.



The Silent Revolution, Timor Dei

2001

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



The Silent Revolution, Jerudiel Auxilium Dei

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.



A traditional Mapuche poncho.

The Silent Revolution, Angelus Australis

2002

Archival pigment print on 310 grs. canson rag cotton paper,
105 x 130 cm.