



prelude

Teatro Niño Proletario's seventh creation is a hybrid proposal that presents as an audiovisual play or a face-to-face immersive installation. It invites us to contemplate and reflect on ways of seeing, visual perception and memory. What do we lose when we lose our sight? How are we seen? It is set in a historical moment marked by the consumption and extreme abuse of the body and the image and in a social-political context with serious human rights violations.

Prelude crosses testimonies from the montage's performers, artists who have lost or are losing their field of vision and victims of ocular trauma caused by the State of Chile, with the original text "Miedo a olvidar la luz" (Fear of forgetting light) by the poet Maximiliano Andrade.



To speak of the gaze is to empathize with different perspectives; it is to submit to a complete judgement of the senses and, at the same time, understand that it is only one form of human expression.

The disappearing light proposes two paths. On the one hand, darkness, the subsequent fear, and the anguish and feeling of being abandoned. On the other hand, an opportunity for compressing space and affections from sensations and tenderness. In this tension, writing must take the risk, get inside the gaze, the eyes and blindness with the utmost honesty.

Maximiliano Andrade
Poet

The sleep of reason produces monsters

The work of scenic visuality is to create images and what we want to communicate through them, but, above all, how we want them to be seen.

The stage is a space full of questions and possibilities that reorganizes itself in constant evolution, from the great void -the black-, which like an off-screen species allows me to capture images, even images of sounds. But what happens when the field of vision is black? What happens when we approach the abyss of not seeing? I have many questions because, more important than images, I work with people, with their bodies and their fragility. In the liminal space of the shadow, I witnessed how these bodies rebelled against those previously seen images. They gave us new, un-imagined images; they surprised us by redrawing their transits in space. By recovering the idea of inhabiting, they embodied again, losing themselves in the voices of the past to meet and bring us this new image as an act of spiritism. They were a medium in a trance in the dark, in the middle of the water, in the middle of nothingness.

What makes us a community? That which keeps us united to others, togetherness in shortages.

Catalina Devia
Teatro Niño Proletario





There is no memory without eyes

To Gustavo Gatica and Fabiola Campillay and the eyes they lost in this Chilean spring revolution. Nobody has been forgotten.

El estallido nos enseñó que tenemos que darnos cuenta que esta visión andThe social explosion taught us that we need to realise that this androcentric vision, this male vision is a way of looking at things that has opaqued or impeded us from seeing other realities. During the explosion, many authorities began to say that they had never seen the level of poverty that existed. During the pandemic that we're living through, they even repeated that they didn't know about or, more than that, they had never seen such overcrowding as that seen where the working-class lives. That reality has always been there; only their eyes have never seen it or wanted to see it. In addition, in the public media, politicians insist on saying that there is no recent memory of a pandemic, at least for a hundred years, but they have forgotten about HIV/AIDS. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been with us since the eighties, and it isn't over yet. Once again, they silenced and belittled the history and the ways collectives have managed to survive this pandemic, collectives who have, in turn, have left an archive of this survival. The heteronormative vision of politics prevent even "seeing" the existence of another pandemic in at least 100 years.

And it is serious indeed when the authorities of society don't see the reality; they don't know that we are watching everybody every day.

When this much-needed social revolution began in October 2019, protestors' eyes began to be the main organ of the body that the state's repressive forces mutilated in this outbreak of insurrection. Society had tired of the systematic policy of abuse symbolized by the 30-peso increase in the price of public transport (it's not 30 pesos, it's 30 years). And so when we all went out to demand greater social equity, they began —on top of gassing, drenching, burning and beating us— to shoot bullets at our eyes.

Feminists have taught us that violence is never naive but it is a vocabulary that we must learn to decipher. The anthropologist Rita Laura Segato tells us that we have to learn to read the vocabulary of violence and that clues to this lexicon are found on those bodies assaulted by violence. Capitalism and patriarchy construct a narrative through the bodies it harms and how it harms them. Attacks of violence against women's bodies and sexual dissidence have to be read as the language through which patriarchy speaks. We have to learn to decipher the horror with which this language works and how it can gouge out the eyes of people who are demonstrating for a more dignified life. The police have been mutilating our eyes since the beginning of the social explosion because they want us to lose not only our eyes but also our memory. They want to blind us so that we lose the memory of a country like ours, the most terrible and cruel experiment of economic neoliberalism. It is not just more than 400 eyes; it is the memory of a country held in those more than 400 eyes. This is because the eyes see. After all they have memory. Otherwise, it would only be light coming in activating sectors of the brain, transforming mechanical stimuli into biochemical responses. Seeing is more than the multiple chemical and physical connections of the nerve cells between the eye and the brain. In order to observe something, we need to have ideas, emotions and memories that associate the reality we see with the memory we have of that reality. We need memory to see. Seeing is more than biology; it is more than anatomy; it is more than depolarized neurons because it is also the memory of each of us. The eyes hold the memory of a country; what we see are the images constructed by our eyes and our memory. We will have to learn to see differently; we will look with the eyes of others in this revolution in order not to lose our memory.

Because there is no memory without eyes, there are no eyes without history, and there is no revolution that is not collective.

Jorge Díaz, transfeminist biologist.
Pandemic September and in memory, 2021.

Prelude

One day before.

One minute to understand. It dawns.

After the pain, the confusion, the darkness. It dawns.

Another life, another light.

To look and see, that was it.

Just love and not forgetting who we are, what we do. What moves us.

It is love and gratitude.

We breathe, look, touch, feel, understand.

The clouds, the sky, the wind.

The sea that commands.

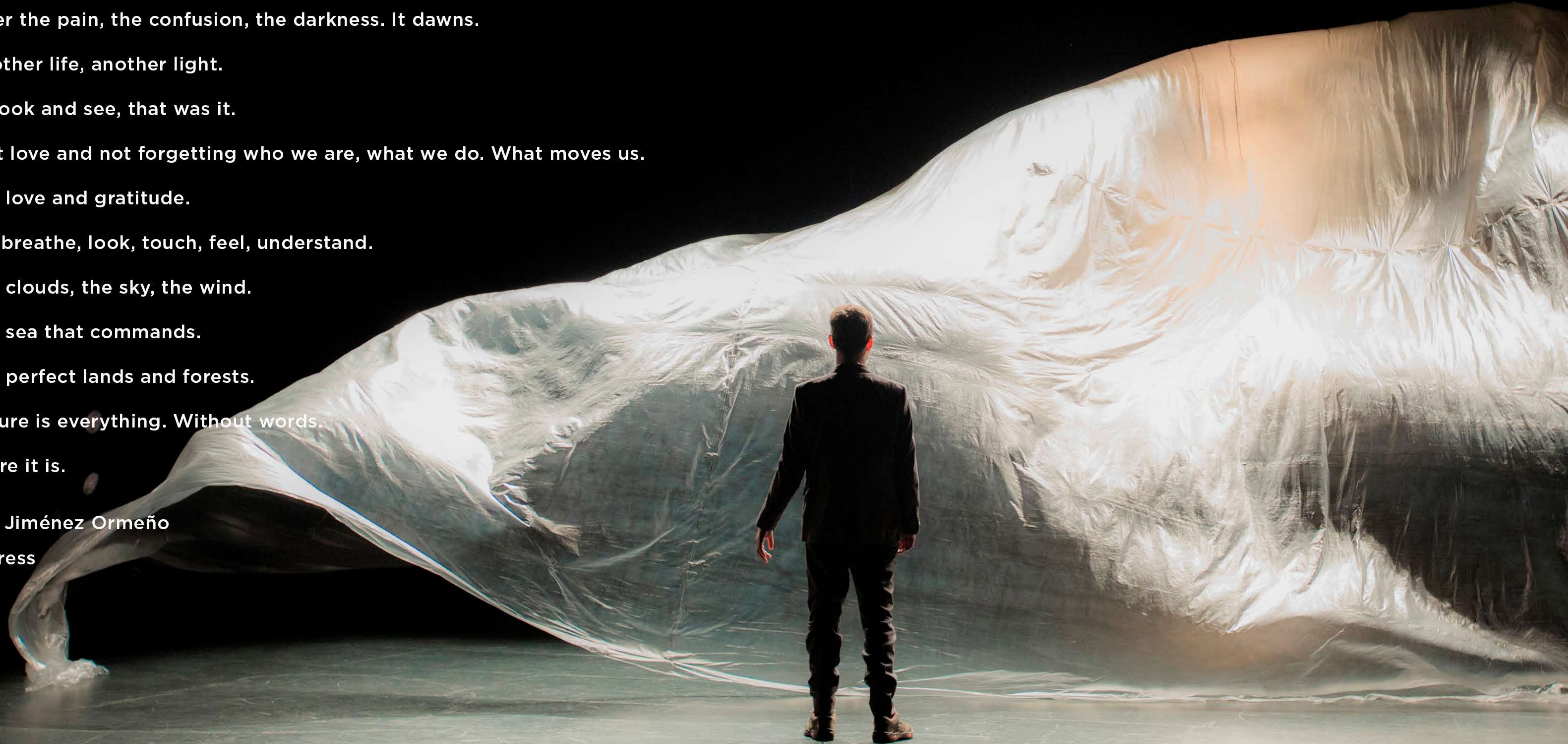
The perfect lands and forests.

Nature is everything. Without words.

There it is.

Luz Jiménez Ormeño

Actress



What is sight, surely, a deferred touch? asks the French philosopher Jean Luc Nancy. The question -which carries in itself the answer- makes me think of certain conceptions on the visual that seem to be firmly installed in our imaginary (with pretensions of) the West.

Modern western culture -that which timidly begins in 16th century Europe to become “universal” from the 18th century onwards- installs the optical sense as the main way of accessing an idea of the real, relegating the “other” senses to a second plane. As stated by John Berger, reality becomes visible when perceived through the gaze. In an anxious era where old models of perception coexist with new ways of being and existing in the world, modernity offers a simple and expeditious logic on access to the real: seeing is believing.

This same modernizing logic is transferred to Latin America. First, as part of the Hispanic colonizing project and then as a key agent in creating the different nation-states that make up the region today, Chile’s visual history is part of this dynamic. During the 19th century, the elites who governed (and still govern) the country saw in images an effective way to construct the idea of a Chilean nation. Chile would be what we see: its mountain range and sea, its coat of arms and flag, its copihues (national flower) and huasos (cowboys).

In this way, visual representations of “the national” took on a hegemonic function. Through them it was possible to evoke a sense of belonging and patriotism that seems to work effectively to date. Suffice to recall that they are learned as a fundamental part of the school curriculum. The images, in this sense, make visible the republic project’s practices of sovereignty over the inhabitants under its jurisdiction.

October 2019 marks the beginning of revolt that cannot be understood if not from multiple “gazes”. One of them is the role played by a series of new images that destabilized the canon of national hegemonic visibility. The images were not absorbed in the school this time, rather they were created in the streets and are led by that of dog with highly symbolic properties (mestizo, street, anti-police). From the opposite side of the street and mandated by the State, the police forces responded to the protestors by directly attacking their eyes, the organ that allows the gaze and the modern construction of the real.

The above not only adds to the sad list of human right violations that structure Chile’s history, from its past as the most distant and poorest Spanish colony of the 16th century, to the supposed Latin American oasis of the 21st century. What happened during the revolt also makes explicit the political power of images and their place in the construction of identities and narratives of belonging. Given that sight is the main channel of access to the real, its mutilation is also the denial of a new possible of that new reality. Personally, I refuse to think of the impossibility of that new reality.

Hugo Rueda
Historian.

See to belong





Images of a present time

Prelude was the word we came up with in 2017 to try and reflect on a staging that would talk about the gaze, sight and memory. About seeing and being seen. In a social context where the excessive barrage of images makes it almost impossible to live without being a machine that generates visual discourse. What is lost (or won, if it can be put that way) when our field of vision changes? What images does our memory select from the thousands saved in our brain's infinite archive in order to create a memory? How much truth is there in the idea of dark and sad blindness? What about theatre or a performing artist who cannot see or is losing their memory?

Some of our longtime friends and colleagues began to experience these changes first-hand. Their eyes, for different reasons, began changing the way they perceived the world. Their capacity to remember was changing. Their bodies accompanied less the immediate memory of the cerebral order. Others, on the other hand, faced the eternal inquisitive gaze of normality. The invisible eye of power is always circling our work.

Any possible artistic theory or point of view falls apart when reality explodes in front of our eyes. Only two years after choosing the word Prelude, the Chilean social explosion brought a refreshing avalanche of images of massive protest, colourful signs, Indigenous Peoples flags, with a strength never seen before. In addition, it returned brutality and the redness of blood to the people's memory. With more than 400 victims of ocular trauma and a non-existent justice, the history of Nunca Más (Never Again) was being repeated. Reread those words: NEVER AGAIN. Just as we heard during the darkest years of Chilean military dictatorship, the body was once again the battleground. We have seen eyes explode, Eyes. And no, we didn't see it coming.

The sanitary crisis, set up another layer in our ocular realities more than one year ago: virtuality. Having always been conceived as an act for the eye of a present audience the Performing Arts had to help evoke that memory, with millions of empty theatres, performances in our homes and in front of a digital lens. The whole world can watch you from behind the digital camera's black spot. Everything takes place with the speed of contemporaneity, in the present time. And where our cast evolved into "vulnerable people" who you couldn't see or touch. With less luck and more innocence, other colleagues died for trying to touch the stage lights again and see a scarce audience applaud for the last time.

Virus, time and power. Masculine nouns that become human people.

And so, we return to the eye. Our great challenge was not just taking a project forward. Now, it was trying to do it in an unknown format, avoiding a visible but mortal virus and trying to revive memory in the eye and the memory of a spectator exhausted by the light of screens.

Prelude was transformed into a challenge as sensitive as it was complex.

We have got together to constellate biographies and memories, trying to build images and scenes that were victims of the present time. This theatre cannot be repeated, we are sorry. These are unique takes, and they hold in themselves, and until audiovisual archives allow them, a testimony of a performance that tried to stage on screen. The record of a play with dead images of a present time.

The void created by the possible option of this reversal of the theatrical craft has forced us to expand Prelude to sound installation games, to a photographic exhibition, to an art box-object. The time of the senses is as complex as it is incomprehensible. We have given ourselves to this infinity without any intention of defining this process. Because like many artists worldwide, we had no previous experience of the risk of breathing together. How can we talk about the body without breathing together?

From the bottom of our hearts, we would like to thank everyone who has made this project possible by creating the spaces and respecting the extreme sanitary conditions needed to return to work.

All of my love to each of the artists who have trusted, who launched themselves at the stage without knowing if we would come out alive this time, who threw themselves in with their eyes tight shut.

I thank Fabiola, Marco and Benjamín, they have been the most enlightening gift.

This is Prelude, a rehearsal, a preview of something, a gathering, an announcement. We still do not know what it is. But that no longer matters. We'll see.

Francisco Medina Donoso
Performing Artist.

CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM

Director: Francisco Medina Donoso

Audiovisual Production: Daniela López Lugo

Assistant Director: Daniela Contreras López

Playwriting: Teatro Niño Proletario a partir del texto "Miedo a Olvidar la luz" de Maximiliano Andrade

Cast: Luz Jiménez, Jorge Becker, Rodrigo Velásquez, Graciela Reyes y Fabiola Campillai

Special Participation: Marco Cornejo y Bastián Cornejo

Research Team of Actors: Luz Jiménez, Jorge Becker, Rodrigo Velásquez, Graciela Reyes, Ema Pinto, Ivo Luz, Beatriz Souza

Voz en off caja e instalación: Ema Pinto

Stage Setting: Catalina Devia y Francisco Medina

Lighting and Costumes: Catalina Devia

Music: Daniel Marabolí

Photographic Exhibition: Paz Errázuriz

Photographic Records: Jorge Villa

Sound: Macarena Veas

Voice Recording and Editing: Carlos Barros

Graphic Design: Ornamenta Studio

Press: Marietta Santi

General Produccion : Erna Molina

Finances y Co-production



PROYECTO FINANCIADO POR FONDART NACIONAL, CONVOCATORIA 2019



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