

Artist Thread In Focus

Museo de la
Solidaridad
Salvador
Allende

Carnegie
Museum of Art

Museums

Introduction



Öyvind Fahlström, *Chile F*, 1973, Courtesy of Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende

Introduction

Located in Santiago, Chile, the Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende (MSSA) is a museum of modern and contemporary art and community activism, named for the former president of Chile. It was founded in 1971, a year after Allende—the first democratically-elected socialist president in the world—came into power. In a socialist government, wealth is distributed equitably among all people, and the government provides services like healthcare and education. Riding this wave of change, and in celebration of democracy, the founders of the museum wanted a museum for the people of Chile. The MSSA model was unique in that it nurtured a relationship between art, its creators, and the public. Artworks were donated by artists from around the world.

In 1973, Allende was forcibly removed from power by the dictator Augusto Pinochet, and many of the museum's organizers were forced to flee the country. It was reorganized from abroad in 1975, operating from Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa, and took on the name Museo Internacional de la Resistencia Salvador Allende (MIRSA). Its new collection—made up of more than a thousand donations—traveled for 14 years and become a symbol of solidarity with (or, support of) Allende, and a space for renouncing the Pinochet dictatorship and other oppressive governments around the world. In 1991, after Pinochet was voted out of power and the government returned to democracy, the museum again opened in Chile under the name MSSA. Currently in the Republica neighborhood of Santiago, it remains actively committed to art, politics, experimentation, and education.

“The Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende has been and continues to be thought of as a museum without walls, alive, decentralized, and buoyant.” —MSSA founders

Terms

Collection The collection of unique objects or projects that belong to a museum, also referred to as its permanent collection.

Contemporary Art Art made in the present and the relatively recent past, usually of an experimental or cutting-edge nature. Some scholars date the rise of contemporary art to 1947, after World War II, while others date it to the 1970s. Contemporary art spans media from video to sculpture to performance, and almost anything else imaginable. Its themes are wide-ranging and not easily summarized but include identity, politics, the body, migration, technology, contemporary society, time, memory, and the environment.

Critical Pedagogy A teaching philosophy that encourages students to critique structures of power and oppression. MSSA supports and enacts critical pedagogy throughout its programs.

Curator The origin of the word “curator” is “care.” In a museum context, a curator’s role is to organize and care for exhibitions, objects, and even public programs.

Exhibition A display of works within a museum, usually organized around an artist, a type of object or artwork, or a theme.

Mission Statement A statement declaring the purpose of an organization and how it serves its visitors.

Modern Art An art movement largely in Europe and the United States, which took place between, approximately, the turn of the 20th century and the 1970s. This movement was a response to the Industrial Revolution, when changes in manufacturing, transportation, and technology transformed the way people in Western Europe, America, and eventually the world lived, worked, and traveled. Whereas before the 19th century, Western Art was often commissioned (that is, sponsored and paid for) by wealthy patrons and the church, and focused on religious or mythological themes, after the 1860s, artists began producing work based on personal experiences and ideas. They explored themes ranging from dreams and the subconscious (in Surrealism) to expression through color and form (in abstract art). The spirit of modern art might be summarized as one of throwing aside tradition in favor of new ideas and experimentation.

Terms

Museum An institution devoted to the care, study, and display of objects. Contemporary art museums show everything from videos to performances and beyond, and often serve as spaces for political activism and community engagement, extending the meaning of care.

Museums and Colonialism Colonialism is the practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and taking economic advantage of its people and resources. Many museums have ties to colonialism, whether they were funded by wealth earned from colonial projects like slave plantations, or their objects were stolen from Indigenous communities and other cultures around the world. Today, there are increasing demands to restore museum property to its rightful owners, and movements like “Decolonize this Place” are calling on museums to address their histories and transform their practices.

Provenance The history of the ownership of a painting or other work of art.

Repatriation The return of cultural property, including stolen art, to its country of origin or former owners (or their heirs).

Social Practice Art that is collaborative and often involves the participation of people.

Connect



Anonymous Chilean Women, *Untitled*, ca. 1973–85, Courtesy of Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende

Connect

- What do you think of when you hear the term “museum”? Feel free to consider any type of museum, including art museums or natural history museums.
- What might museums look like, sound like, or feel like?
- What adjectives come to mind? These might include anything from “boring” to “peaceful” to “exciting.”
- What might be the purpose of museums?
- What can you find out about the history of museums where you live?
- What kinds of things do you think belong in a museum?
- Who do you think museums are for? Who should they be for?
- What do you think should be the relationship between a museum, the town or land where it located, and the people who live there? What might be the relationship between museums and politics?
- What might be the relationship between museums and care?
- How might a museum affect the way a work of art is valued or perceived? If something is hung in a museum, does it seem more valuable than if it were hung in your bedroom or found on the side of the street? Why or why not?
- The MSSA’s collection was donated by artists from around the world. What do you think about this? Does this change anything about the value of the objects?

Exhibition of Community & Care

Create #1

According to the MSSA team, MSSA “aims to provide ways to reflect on building new sensitive and expansive societies and common spaces of care, with joy and vision for the future.” Working as a group, create a mini exhibition of community and care, whatever those terms mean to you, with objects made and donated by the group and the surrounding community.

Goals for this Create

- Consider the role of museums in relation to objects
- Consider the role of museums in relation to communities
- Practice collaboration
- Think about exhibition design and implementation

Materials

Anything you can access! The museum should comprise objects made by hand, including drawings and small sculptures, or any found objects related to the themes of community and care.

Terms

Didactic Labels Exhibition texts, usually written by curators, that contain information about the artists, the objects, and the overall exhibition.

Wall Text Text that describes the artists, artworks, and major themes within an exhibition, and is displayed on the wall.

Connect

- What comes to mind when you think of the word “community”?
- What comes to mind when you think of the word “care”?
- In what ways might a museum offer forms of care? This might include care for the objects within the museum, care for the museum workers, or care for the surrounding community or environment.
- If you could design your own museum, what would it display? You might think about objects, or you might think about the museum as a space for performance or community projects, or both.
- Where might the collection inside the museum come from?
- Where might your museum be located?
- What might the museum look like?
- What might the museum feel?
- Who might your ideal visitors be? How might your museum be designed to welcome them?
- What might your museum be called?

Create

- 1 Working in a group, plan an exhibition around the themes of community and care.**
- 2 Brainstorm**
 - In what ways will your exhibition address the theme of community?
 - In what ways will it address the theme of care?
 - Where will the exhibition be located? This might be in a corner of your classroom or another space at school or in your community.
 - What will you show in your exhibition?
 - This might include anything from drawings or small sculptures to found objects like stuffed animals or flowers.
 - You might feature the work of an organization that offers forms of care where you live, for example, Planned Parenthood or a local soup kitchen.
 - Or, your exhibition might feature performances, group conversations, or small acts of care—for example, someone might lead a guided meditation.
 - When will your exhibition take place and how long will it last? Choose dates and times. Consider who will be present during those dates and times to welcome visitors, if needed.
 - Who would you like your audience to include?
 - How might you make your exhibition as welcoming and community oriented as possible?
 - How will you attract your audience?
- 3 Create a call for donations to the exhibition.** The works should be donated by members of your group and, if possible, the surrounding community. If asking for works from outside your group, brainstorm:
 - How will you frame your request for donations? What will you ask for exactly?
 - What form will your request take? Will you send an email? Create a poster asking for the donation of works?
 - If exhibiting objects, make sure to specify when the works are due and how long they will be exhibited. If you'd like, you can return them after the exhibition!
- 4 Begin to gather your donations.** If you are returning them at the end of the exhibition, make sure to keep track of what belongs to whom.
- 5 If the exhibition will include performances or conversations, decide where and when those will take place.**

6 Optional Create invitations for the exhibition. You could send these digitally, by email, or pass them out by hand. Include the exhibition dates and location, and the dates and locations of performances.

- Will you have an exhibition opening? That is, a party or reception celebrating the exhibition and the artists? If so, include the date, time, and location of the exhibition opening on your invitation.

7 Install your exhibition.

- If you are showing objects, decide how they will be displayed. Will they be arranged by category? For example, drawings in one area and sculpture in another?

8 Optional Create didactic labels and wall text, including:

- An introduction to the exhibition: One to two paragraphs describing what the exhibition is about, including main themes, and why it matters.
- Object labels: One label per object, including the name of the artist, the title of the work, the year it was made, and the media (in other words, what it is made from).
- An exhibition checklist: A list of all the works in the exhibition, with the name of the artist, the title of the work, the year it was made, and the media (materials). Exhibition checklists also often include thumbnail images of the artworks.
- You might type your texts and print them out or write them out by hand.

9 Open the exhibition!

10 Is there a way you can encourage the audience to participate?

- Consider leading tours of the exhibition, where you engage visitors in conversation about the works on display.
- Or you might want to create activities around the exhibition. For example, you could ask visitors to make drawings or write poems in response to artworks, and post these in a public space for everyone to see.

11 Be sure to thank your participants whether verbally at the exhibition opening, or in handwritten or emailed thank you notes.

12 Reflect

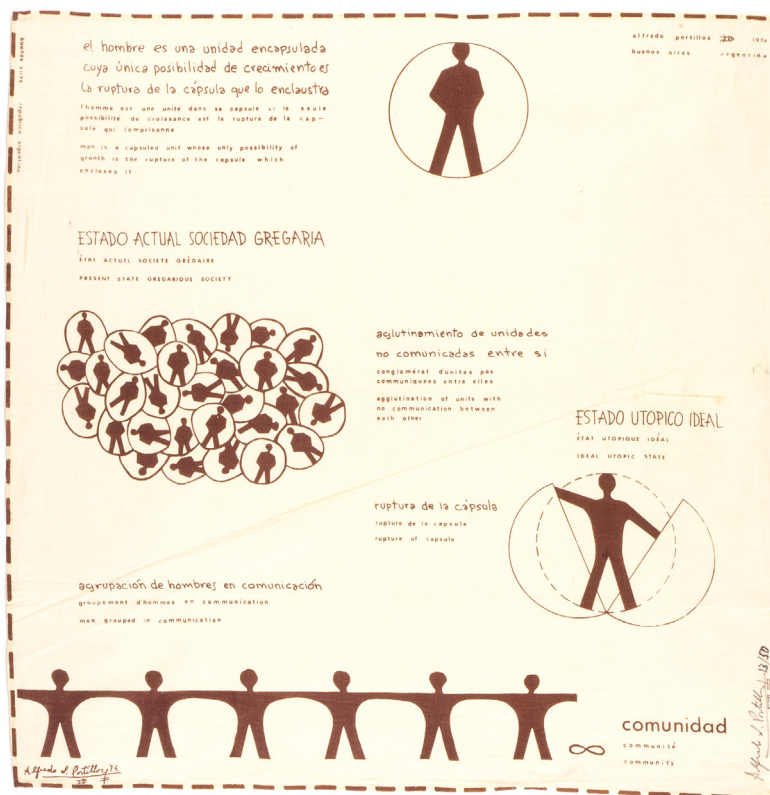
- How did it feel to create this exhibition?
- What were some highlights about the process?
- What might you do differently next time?

Solidarity

Introduction

From the beginning, Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende (MSSA) was a politically engaged museum. Founded under the progressive leadership of President Salvador Allende, it was known as a “People’s Museum,” a place for the Chilean people. When, in 1973, President Allende was forced from power and replaced by dictator Augusto Pinochet, many of the museum’s organizers went into exile, meaning they had to leave the country to avoid being imprisoned or killed for their opposing political beliefs. The museum was reorganized from abroad as a space of active resistance against Pinochet’s rule. Today, the museum functions as a space where community involvement and activism thrive. This section invites you to consider acts of solidarity past and present, and ways you might engage with political solidarity in your own life.

“Art is not something that can be put off until world revolution is achieved.”
—Poster from MSSA Collection



Alfredo Portillos, *Untitled*, 1974, Courtesy of Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende

Terms

Political Resistance A form of action, often expressed collectively (that is, with others) that opposes forms of oppression and works towards political and social change. Acts of resistance can be violent or non-violent, illegal or legal, public or private. During the years it operated outside of Chile, MSSA took on the name Museo Internacional de la Resistencia Salvador Allende, or MIRSA, which translates roughly in English to the International Museum of the Salvador Allende Resistance. It functioned as a site of resisting Pinochet's government as well as oppressive regimes around the world.

Political Activism Work done to bring about political or social changes towards a greater good. Political activism has always been a core part of MSSA's mission, as it has worked to support justice and freedom for people in Chile and beyond.

Political Prisoner A person imprisoned for their political beliefs or actions. After Augusto Pinochet took over Chile, his government arrested at least 30,000 people with views opposed to his own.

Democracy A form of government in which power is placed in the hands of the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through the right to vote.

Karl Marx A German philosopher who argued that capitalism created sharp divides between business owners and workers, and who advocated for a society without social classes. Karl Marx is well known for writing the Communist Manifesto, a declaration in favor of communism.

Marxism A political and economic theory where a society has no classes and every person within the society works for a common good.

Marxists believe that a society's material and economic conditions—that is, how much wealth members of a society have, and how their material needs (including housing, clothing, food, and everything else a person needs to live) are met—affects everything from social relations, to politics, to law, to art. They believe in abolishing the class system.

Social Class A group of people within a society who possess the same socioeconomic status.

Dictatorship A form of government in which one ruler has absolute power. Dictators, such as Augusto Pinochet, rule by force, without the consent of the people. Dictatorships are the opposite of democracies, in which leaders are chosen by the people for the people.

Terms

Augusto Pinochet A Chilean general who, with the support of the US government, took control of the Chilean government by force in 1973. He was responsible for killing over 3,000 people and torturing over 40,000 more for expressing political beliefs opposed to his. He ruled until 1990, when the Chilean government was restored to democracy.

Salvador Allende A Chilean physician and socialist politician who served as the 28th president of Chile, from 1970 until his death in 1973. The first Marxist to be elected president in Latin America, he worked to expand education and improve the living standards of the working class.

Solidarity A group of individuals united in their commitment to challenging and abolishing injustice, oppression, tyranny (that is, oppressive rule by a figure or group of figures in power), or social vulnerability.

Latin America A region including South America, Central America, Mexico, and the islands of the Caribbean.

Chile Officially called the Republic of Chile, Chile is a country in the western part of South America. It is the southernmost country in the world, and the closest to Antarctica, occupying a long and narrow

strip of land between the Andes Mountains to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west.

Socialism A political and economic system in which individuals can generate and control wealth, and the government redistributes much of this wealth among the people. In socialism, the government plays a large role in providing social services, including health care and education. This leads to greater equality among people.

Communism A political and economic system in which wealth is owned and shared equally by the people.

Capitalism A political and economic system in which wealth is controlled by individuals or corporations and unevenly distributed across the population. Those in favor of capitalism argue that this system creates competition, which leads to better products and services for everyone. But in reality, capitalism can generate stark divides between rich and poor, rewarding those who start out with money or resources, and leaving behind those who start out with less.

Junta A military or political group that rules a country after taking power by force.

Terms

Coup d'état A sudden decisive exercise of force in politics, especially the violent overthrow or alteration of an existing government by a small group. In 1973, the United States, under President Richard Nixon, supported a coup d'état led by military general Augusto Pinochet to remove Salvador Allende from power. The military established a junta that repressed left-wing movements, especially communist and socialist parties and the Revolutionary Left Movement (MIR). Pinochet rose to supreme power within a year of the coup and was formally declared President of Chile in late 1974. The Nixon administration recognized the junta government and supported it in consolidating power.

Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR, Revolutionary Left Movement)

A Chilean far-left party founded on October 12, 1965. At its height in 1973, the MIR numbered about 10,000 members and associates. The group emerged from various student organizations that had originally been active in the youth organization of the Socialist Party.

Unidad Popular (Popular Unity) A left-wing political alliance in Chile (including the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Social Democrat Party, and other politically progressive parties) that helped Salvador Allende get elected in 1970.

Connect



Ernest Pignon-Ernest, *Chili résistance (Chilean Resistance)*, 1977, Courtesy of Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende

Connect

- Look at the image on the left.
- What do you notice about this image—including colors and composition (the way the image is arranged on the page)?
- What do you think this image might be about?
- What is this person wearing around their wrist?
- Why might this person be making a fist?
- How might this image reflect Chilean politics?
- How might this image relate to the idea of political resistance?
- What can you find out about the history of Chile, including President Salvador Allende and dictator Augusto Pinochet?
- What can you find out about the role of the US government in forcing Allende from power?
- Why might a group of people want or need to create political resistance?
- What might resistance accomplish?
- What might be the relationship between resistance and justice? Between resistance and power? Between resistance and community? Between resistance and race, gender, or the environment?
- Political resistance might take the form of protests, letter-writing, or civil disobedience. It might be violent or peaceful. It might be enacted by individuals or groups. Can you think of examples of political resistance from history or that are happening today?
- Can you think of resistance leaders from history or who are active today?
- In what ways might resistance movements change history?
- In what ways might you have engaged in acts of resistance in your life?
- Think of a political movement you care about. It might be anything from Black Lives Matter to the fight for transgender rights, to support for Ukraine.
- What kinds of images come to mind when you think of this movement?
- What phrases or slogans come to mind?
- If you were to create resistance around an issue, what might that be?
- How might you use images and social media to build that resistance?

Patch of Resistance

Create #1

Working individually or in groups, create a patch or series of patches in support of a political movement you care about.

Goals For This Create

- To consider political resistance movements past and present
- To think about textiles and design in relation to political resistance
- To practice sewing

Materials

Square canvas (approximately 4 in. x 4 in.), scratch paper and pencils, sharpies or felt markers, hot glue or Elmer's (note: if you use Elmer's, you won't be able to iron on the patch).

Optional embroidery floss and embroidery needle (to decorate the patch), needle and thread (to sew on the patch), iron (to iron on the patch).

Terms

Textile Another word for cloth or fabric, or anything made from plant, animal, or synthetic fibers. Textiles have been around in the form of clothing for at least 25,000 years.

Embroidery The art of forming decorative designs with a needle and thread.

Patch A piece of material used to mend or cover a hole or a weak spot. Also, a piece of cloth sewed on a garment as an ornament or insignia (that is, an official emblem). Patches have been used in the US military since the mid-19th century. They've also been used by firemen, policemen, factory workers, and other members of the working class. In the 1960s and 70s, they were used by bikers (motorcycle riders) and hippies (people, mostly youth, who rejected the mainstream and corporate culture of their parents' generation). Later, in the 1980s, with the birth of punk rock, patches became emblems of rebellion against authority, nonconformity, and DIY (Do It Yourself) culture.



Anonymous Chilean Women, *Untitled*, ca. 1973–85, Courtesy of Museo de la Solidaridad Salvador Allende

Look

The above *aripillera*—a narrative embroidered textile—was created by unidentified Chilean women. It was among the many objects donated to MSSA from around the world in solidarity with Salvador Allende and the movement opposing Pinochet's dictatorship. In it, a person is shown with his hands tied, and the Chilean flag around his wrist.

- What do you notice about this textile?
- What might the artist or artists who made it be trying to say about power? About Chile? About resistance?
- What do you think about the fact that this was made by a woman, or group of women?

Connect

- What comes to mind when you think about textiles?
- What textiles do you see in your environment? This may include everything from the clothes you are wearing to bedsheets to curtains. What do you know about what they are made of?
- What comes to mind when you think about patches? Think about patches as something used to repair holes, as well as something used as official emblems. What might be the relationship between patches and power? Between patches and care?

Create

1 Choose a resistance movement that your patch will represent. You might choose a movement that is recognized globally, such as Black Lives Matter or trans rights, or you might think of something more local or community-centered to focus on.

2 Sketch some possible designs. Consider how the design will relate to the resistance movement.

- What colors come to mind?
- Will your patch include recognizable figures or objects, or will it be more abstract?
- Will the design include text?

3 Create your patch.

- On a piece of canvas, draw the outline of your patch. Choose a simple shape, such as a square, triangle, circle, heart, or star. Hint: To make a perfect circle, trace the bottom of a cup or mug.
- Sketch your design inside the outline.
- Consider leaving space for a border around the design.
- Fill the design in with sharpies or other felt markers.

4 Optional Add embroidery.

- Thread your needle
- Thread a roughly 12 in. strand of embroidery floss through the eye of the embroidery needle and back, so that you have two strands of floss, roughly 6 in. each.
- Tie the strands together at the ends, making a double knot.
- Choose where you want to embroider. You might add a few accents of color to one of your designs, or you might outline one of the shapes or figures on the patch.
- Working from the back of the canvas to the front, press your needle through the canvas, pulling the embroidery floss with it until the knot reaches the back of the canvas.
- Make the first stitch pressing the needle back through the canvas, about half a centimeter from where it emerged.
- Continue making stitches by moving the needle in and out of the canvas.
- When you are done or want to change colors, tie a knot as close to the canvas as you can, on back of the canvas, and cut off the thread outside the knot.
- Repeat this process with other colors, as you wish!
- Cut out the decorated design from the piece of canvas.
- Using hot glue (or Elmer's if hot glue isn't available), spread glue over the entire back of the patch. (If you use hot glue, you will be able to iron your patch onto a piece of clothing.)
- Spread glue along the outer edge of the patch. This will keep the patch from fraying.
- You now have a patch!

5 Optional Attach it to a backpack or piece of clothing:

- Iron on the patch. (This will work if you used hot glue on the back of the patch.)
- Turn on the iron
- Place your patch where you would like it to go
- Iron over the patch
- Sew on the patch. (You may want to do this even if you ironed on the patch, for extra security.)
- Place thread through the eye of a needle
- Tie the ends of the thread together to make a knot
- Place the patch where you would like it to go
- Working from the backside of the patch, press your needle through the fabric you are attaching the patch to, through the backside of the patch, and out onto the front of the patch.
- Press the needle back down through the patch and the fabric it is attached to.
- Keep making stitches in this way until the patch is firmly attached to the piece of clothing or backpack.
- Tie a double knot as close to the backside of the fabric as you can get.
- Cut off the loose ends of thread.

Museums

Solidarity