

weekendpass

The power of the human face

'Muchedumbre' illustrates how Pinochet still haunts Chileans

EXHIBITS

Augusto Pinochet died almost 10 years ago, but the ruthless dictator's ghost still haunts the people of Chile. "My whole youth was overshadowed by violence, lies and fear," says Chilean photographer Jorge Brantmayer, who lived through the Pinochet era (1973-90). "Dictatorship castrated our whole generation."

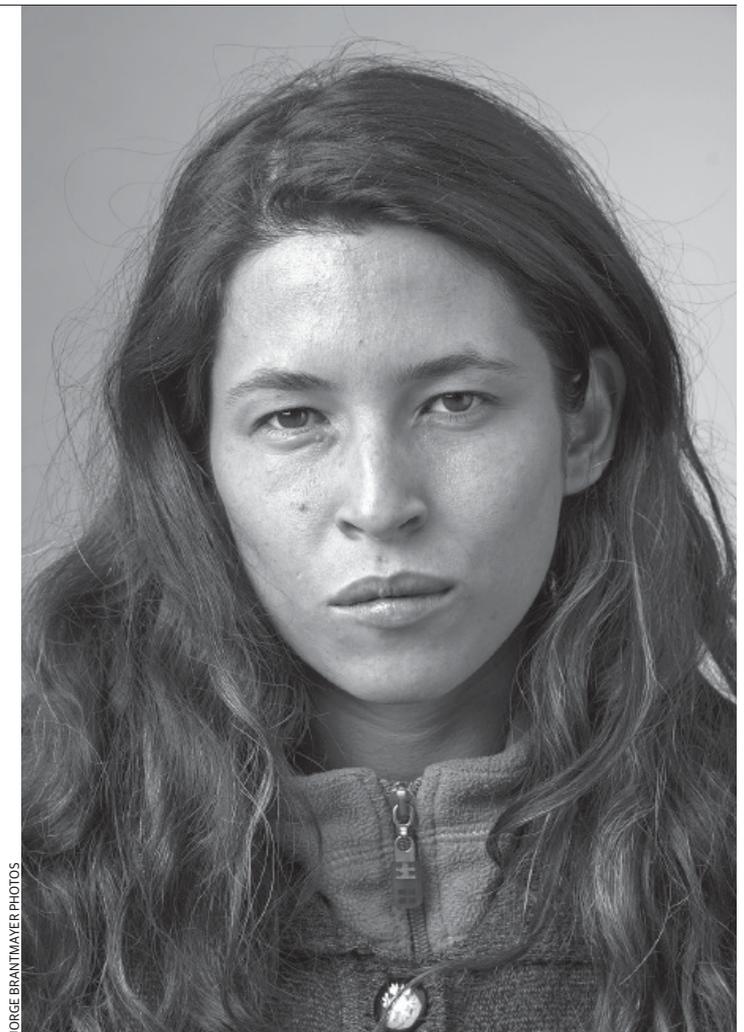
Brantmayer's solo exhibition, "Muchedumbre," opening Thursday at the Art Museum of the Americas, puts us face to face with those still tormented by Pinochet's reign.

As a college student in Santiago in the '70s, Brantmayer became fascinated with "the geography of the human face," and how individual faces can tell the story of an entire people. That is the central idea behind "Muchedumbre" — the Spanish word for "crowd" — which presents black-and-white portraits of Santiago residents taken since 2010. "If we see misery, greatness, loneliness, anger, rebelliousness and rage reflected on the faces of these people," Brantmayer says, "it is because it is present."

ELENA GOUKASSIAN (FOR EXPRESS)

Natalia Vera, student

In the past few years, protests have become prevalent in Santiago, many of them stemming from student demonstrations, which soon joined with those of trade unions, retirees and everyday people highlighting "the need to improve health, education and welfare institutions," Brantmayer says. Vera was photographed at the University of Chile's college of education, "historically one of the most contentious and fighting university schools."



JORGE BRANTMAYER PHOTOS



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Third page's the charm.

page three

Local news that's... well, slightly askew.

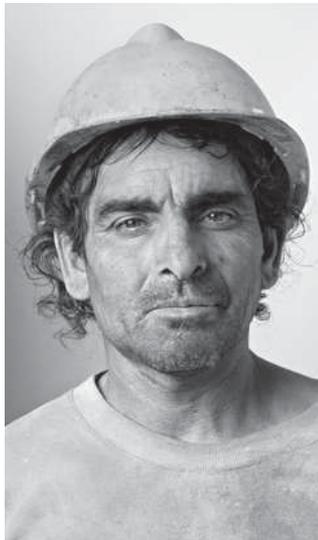
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Malva Hernandez, teacher

Under Pinochet's paranoid leadership, thousands of people and their family members (including children) disappeared under suspicion of anti-establishment activities, often being forcibly interned, tortured or killed. Hernandez holds a photograph of her son, one of the so-called "disappeared."



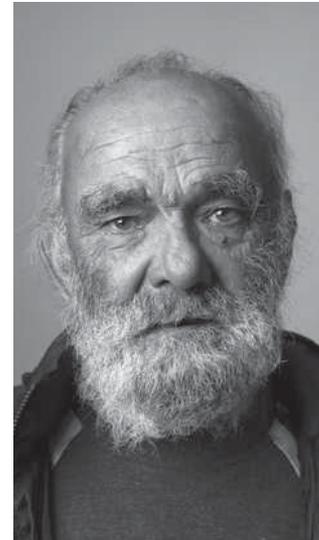
Hugo Rojas, construction worker

Brantmayer found Rojas at a construction site in southern Santiago. "I was surprised that when I asked him for his written authorization, I noticed he couldn't read or write," the artist says, adding that he found it strange that there were still illiterate people "in a country like Chile."



Jose Munoz

"This photograph has never yet ceased to amaze me," Brantmayer says. It's a portrait of a man dressed in drag at an LGBT rights demonstration. Brantmayer was struck by the fact that Munoz had shown up to the demonstration alone and lacking the flamboyance that he had associated with drag at such gatherings.



David Rodriguez, retired

Photographed "at dawn in a homeless shelter where they offer breakfast to the poor ...," Rodriguez embodies the image of the phrase 'old, poor and alone,'" Brantmayer says. "My interest is to highlight the state's and families' neglect of the elderly."



Mauricio Zuniga, student

"Mauricio is an albino child. As almost everywhere else, in Chile albinos are segregated," Brantmayer says. "The beauty of this child has always prevailed in the 'Muchedumbre' exhibit, becoming an icon for the project."

Art Museum of the Americas, 201 18th St. NW; through Oct. 9, free.

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