



Smithsonian American Art Museum

Abstracts for

Encuentros: Artistic Exchange between the U.S. and Latin America

“*Ambas Américas*/Two Americas:
A Proposal for Studying the Nineteenth Century”
Katherine Manthorne

My paper proposes to interrogate the intellectual and geographic boundaries of artistic encounters across the Americas during the nineteenth century. In other disciplines and at various historic moments the “transnational turn” has taken on currency; however, art history has been slower to abandon its traditional organization around nation states or religions. The current mandate for globalism undermines the field’s foundations, but has yet to offer successful alternative paradigms. Utilizing transnational and hemispheric studies, the strategies suggested by this paper do not intend to displace national, identity-based categories, but rather, they aim to reiterate America’s connectedness across the hemisphere and around the globe. To achieve these goals, this paper summarizes briefly the historical and theoretical underpinnings for a hemispheric approach, from José Martí and Herbert E. Bolton until today. I then scrutinize the intellectual terrain of the art history of the Americas as it is currently studied. While the *Encuentros* program represents some of the best scholarship in the field, it is almost exclusively focused on the twentieth century. This gap underscores the fact that the nineteenth century, to date, is largely omitted from our field of inquiry. Since this was the era when many of the existing political and cultural relations between North and South America were established, how can we continue to leave it aside? This lacuna motivates us to consider models and methods that bring the art of *ambas Américas*—the two Americas—into dialogue from independence to the great international expositions at the century’s end. In doing so, we open up the possibility for new trans-American artistic conversations between John Singleton Copley and Rafael Ximeno y Planes; José María Velasco and Frederic Church; or Armando Reverón and Louis Eilshemius. To become more cognizant of hemispheric relations, and to make the nineteenth century integral to our discussions, these are our mandates.

“Contact Zones:
Places, Spaces, and Other Test Cases”
Deborah Cullen

Since the early twentieth century, Caribbean, Latino, and Latin American artists have been creating and participating in what I have come to think of as “contact zones”: sites such as workshops, artists’ collaboratives, and various publication ventures in which artists hailing from diverse homelands can find a welcoming space for expression and dialogue. Caribbean, Latino, and Latin American artists have played critical roles in international printmaking *talleres*; collaborative groups centered on artists’ books, zines, posters, and other forms of graphic production; and the creation of ephemeral circuits of expression such as mail, fax, and Xerox art. This history is not set apart, but rather it is intertwined within the larger histories of modern art.

These contact zones were (and are) at home in urban centers. Metropolitan exchanges reverberate significantly around the world, leading to important international developments. However, with the exception of a few key, oft-cited figures, the character and contributions of artists from the Caribbean and Latin America have long been overshadowed. Although recent scholarship has begun to discern more complex, dialectical exchanges, these artists’ legacies have often been essentially unrecognized. With the muting of their distinct voices within modernism’s lively artistic dialogues, we have failed to recognize that, in part, their collaborative spirit was a key element in the forging of these contact zones.

By focusing on linked histories, forged connections, and the convergence of key people and practices, this exploratory paper will emphasize the importance of collaborative and participatory undertakings that, I will argue, in many ways foreground the distinctive artists’ collaborative groups we see springing up throughout the Americas today.

“Inside and Out:
The Latino Presence in American Art”
E. Carmen Ramos

The category of Latino art is among the most unruly and difficult fields to define. This status derives from its inherently constructed and transnational dimensions. Generally referring to the art of American (i.e. United States) artists of Latin American descent, Latino art remains a contested label, embraced by some and repelled by others in favor of terms that acknowledge specific political, transnational, and regional connections (such as Chicano, Nuyorican, or Dominican-York) or those that foreground nation of origin. As a term, it emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a way to unite artists of related cultural and historical experiences against the exclusionary practices of U.S.-based cultural institutions.

Related to both Latin American and American art, Latino art has historically been construed as an ethnic discourse and set apart from these fields. In recent years, the field of Latin American art has increasingly incorporated Latino art into its realm, as exhibitions have advanced hemispheric approaches to the art of the Americas or reconceived national and regional art histories to include diasporists who have moved beyond national borders. While some exceptions do exist, the field of American art has been less receptive to such broadening shifts. As curator for Latino art at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, it is my task to make a case for Latino art’s acquisition, as well as its place in future exhibitions and permanent collection installations, in an unabashedly national “American” space. To this end I call attention to a crucial and underemphasized common denominator that unites artists who, willingly or not, are categorized as Latino—their location in the U.S. When looked at from inside the geographic space and place of creation, Latino art emerges as deeply resonant with the nationalist tropes and canonical artistic movements of the United States.

By creating dialogues between similarly themed works of art produced by Latino and other American artists, my talk seeks to model a more expansive approach to the field of American art. For example, what can we learn from juxtaposing two sculptures of “Native” American men: Luis Jiménez’s iconic *Man on Fire* of 1969, created during the height of the Chicano civil rights movement, and Ferdinand Pettrich’s *The Dying Tecumseh* of 1856, carved in the midst of Western expansion? By looking at the affiliations between these and other works—many in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum—I hope to move beyond mere inclusion, to complicate traditionally narrow definitions of American art. I argue for a reinvigorated national art history that can enrich the global frameworks of the future.

“Conflicted Affinities:
Francisco Oller and William McKinley”
Edward J. Sullivan and Max Mishler

Shortly after July 1898, Puerto Rican painter Francisco Oller executed a portrait of American president William McKinley. Based in part on a photograph, this painting shows McKinley (who the artist never met) in a formal pose, holding a map of the island of Puerto Rico inscribed with the date of its invasion by the United States (July 25, 1898) during the Spanish-American War. Oller (1833–1917) had developed a highly respected career in both San Juan and Paris since the 1850s. He was best known for his landscapes, still lifes, and scenes of daily life on the island. Oller’s most well-known work, *El Velorio*, which depicts a funerary custom in rural Puerto Rico, has been hailed as a masterpiece of realist painting in the vein of Gustave Courbet, the artist’s friend and informal teacher in Paris. Oller was also instrumental in establishing a unique form of impressionism in the Caribbean. He was an official painter to the King of Spain, and created portraits of many Puerto Rican intellectuals and politicians. After the island became a U.S. colony, Oller (whose strong interest in such social causes as abolitionism and universal education was well known in Puerto Rico) began to paint likenesses of the U.S. governors of the so-called Free Associated State. This painting of McKinley, the architect of the Spanish-American conflict (and former protagonist in the U.S. Civil War), represents a significant moment in Oller’s artistic development. Nonetheless, his motives for painting this portrait are unclear. This paper assesses the work’s significance within Oller’s career and attempts to unravel the role it played in articulating his less-than-transparent political affinities.

“The Transformed Landscape: Nineteenth-Century U.S. Photography and Mexican Landscape Painting and their Impact on the Forging of National Identity in Mexico”
Kirsten Einfeldt

When visitors entered the Mexican pavilion at the World’s Fair in Paris in 1889, they found themselves confronted with a vast imaginary realm of “the Mexican”: anthropological objects and their replicas joined with contemporary oil paintings and photographs of Mexico’s countryside and inhabitants—a vision of Mexico that in many ways subsists in the worldwide collective memory even today. The landscape, as well as the history of the young Republic, was omnipresent in this “Aztec Palace,” as commissioner and painter José María Velasco (1840–1912) named the Mexican contribution to the fair.

The contemporary photographs on view notably included a series commissioned by the Ministry of Development depicting the railroad line that ran from Mexico City to Veracruz on the Gulf Coast, as well as thirty-four photographs of the Mexican landscape. Among the latter, which had been commissioned by the National Mexican Railway Company (*Ferrocarril Nacional Mexicano*), several images by U.S. photography pioneer William Henry Jackson (1843–1942) stand out. These photographs from his working period in Mexico (1883–85) show lonesome landscapes mostly combined with views of trains, which pass by seemingly untouched slivers of land and cross canyons at breathtaking heights. As in earlier photographs of western U.S. landscapes and photographic commissions by the Union Pacific Railroad, Jackson brings the notions of development and progress—always in the setting of sublime landscapes—to the fore: the state of railway construction technology of his time, as well as the technical achievements of the recent medium of photography, are never less present in these photographs than the ostensible *sujets* themselves. One could say that Jackson’s images serve as documents of the transformation of nearly virgin landscapes into technically domesticated spaces, while at the same time representing “national landscapes.”

This paper will consider the impact of Jackson’s working technique, as well as his perspective on nature and technology, on the building of a national identity in the official discourse of Mexico. The reception of images such as Jackson’s by Mexican photographers and landscape painters of the 1880s and ’90s is important, especially considering the crucial role played by Velasco and his school in translating landscape and technology into images of progress and national identity. This detailed study of the relationship of late-nineteenth-century U.S. photography to the art and national discourse of Mexico will also consider the contemporaneous situation in the U.S.

“Exporting the New Deal to the Tropics?
The Legacy of Roosevelt-era Art Programs in Puerto Rico”
María Gaztambide

From the early 1940s to the mid-1960s, Puerto Ricans experienced what some historians have dubbed a “Quiet Revolution.”¹ During these two decades the island transitioned from a U.S. protectorate to a semi-autonomous commonwealth, shifting too from an agricultural to an industrial economy. This peaceful revolution was heralded by New Dealer and Roosevelt protégé Rexford Guy Tugwell (1891–1979)—the island’s last American governor, in office from 1941 to 1946—yet brought to fruition by Luis Muñoz Marín (1898–1980), the charismatic local leader who became the island’s first democratically-elected governor in 1948. In addition to enacting political and economic reforms through which the former “poorhouse of the Caribbean” became a nation with one of the highest per capita incomes in all of Latin America, Muñoz Marín’s government also fast-tracked programs that converted Puerto Rico’s disenfranchised urban classes and rural masses into democratic and civically empowered citizens capable of fueling economic transformation.

This paper centers on the role that the United States’ New Deal played in the conception and creation of several collaborative experiments that, in their use of cinematic, literary, and visual arts, established the infrastructure for a vigorous national art movement in the island. These initiatives included the hallmark *División de Educación de la Comunidad* (DIVEDCO, established in 1949), which served as a learning ground for much of Puerto Rico’s 1950s generation of artists; the lesser-known Photo File at the Governor’s Office of Information (established during Tugwell’s administration); and the Division of Film and Graphics within the island’s Commission of Parks and Recreation (established in 1946 under Muñoz Marín).

I propose to briefly revisit the ideology of Roosevelt’s New Deal—filtered to Puerto Rico largely by Tugwell—as well as the impetus behind its arts-centered programs of the 1930s (including the Farm Security Administration’s Historical Section Photo File and the Work Progress Administration’s Fine Arts Project) to unravel the little-known creative and philosophical connections that existed between these initiatives and the Puerto Rican projects of the 1940s through the 1960s. Moreover, I will bring to light the work and thought of several participants in these art programs such as Roy Emerson Stryker (1893–1975), an economist and photographer who headed the Information Division of the FSA and launched the documentary photography program at the agency; the photographers Edwin and Louise Roskam (1903–1985 and 1910–2003, respectively); and Jack Delano (1914–1997) and his wife, the graphic artist Irene Delano (1919–1982) who made their way to Puerto Rico and there helped to establish interdisciplinary arts programs that were rooted in the legacy of the New Deal but also mindful of the unique requirements of a new democracy grappling with the demands of political, social, and economic change.

¹ Charles T. Goodsell, *Administration of a Revolution: Executive Reform in Puerto Rico under Governor Tugwell, 1941–1946*, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1965).

“Luis Márquez in the World of Tomorrow:
Mexican Identity and the 1939–40 New York World’s Fair”
Itala Schmelz

In 1940, Luis Márquez Romay (1899–1978) was invited to be the artistic adviser for the Mexican pavilion at the 1939–40 New York World’s Fair. In the twenty years prior, Márquez had travelled throughout Mexico, compiling a remarkable record of Mexico’s diverse population, traditional attire, and handicrafts. These trips informed Márquez’s photographic style, which evolved from semi-ethnographic documents into staged productions. During this time, he created a refined and wide-ranging, albeit artificial, depiction of the indigenous way of life.

Márquez spent approximately five months in New York, where the Museum of Modern Art’s 1940 exhibition *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* triggered a wave of enthusiasm for all things Mexican. It was in this auspicious climate that Márquez, with a small group of dancers, a trunk full of traditional Mexican clothing, and his camera, injected his unique vision of Mexico into the fair—with one face to the future, the other toward a folkloric past.

Márquez made a comprehensive photographic account of his time at the fair and in New York City. Of particular interest are the portraits of his models wearing *Tehuana*, *China Poblana*, and mariachi costumes against the background of the iconic Trylon and Perisphere. Though these images may now seem anachronistic or out of place, Márquez established an uncanny yet amusing aesthetic relationship with this out-scale architecture of the future.

A few years ago, while doing research at the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas (IIE-UNAM), I stumbled onto these photographs, which aroused my interest. After studying them and getting to know their origin, I decided to exhibit them in the place where they were originally produced seventy years ago—what is currently the Queens Museum of Art in New York. The show opened last November, with a selection of 100 images that were digitally cleaned and restored in order to print them again in high quality. The show also features a small selection from Márquez’s personal collection of 3,000 Mexican folk costumes, as well as an assortment of archival materials from the 1939–40 World’s Fair to provide a broader historical context for Márquez’s visit to the “World of Tomorrow.” In August 2011 the exhibition will travel to the Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana in Mexico City.

In parallel to organizing the show, and in collaboration with Ernesto Peñaloza, head of the Luis Márquez Romay Photographic Archive, I have carried out systematic research in several archives and documentary collections both in Mexico and in the U.S. I have been able to reconstruct the historic and political moment, the negotiations with the authorities of the World Fair for the Mexican pavilion, as well as the steps taken and the acquaintances made by Luis Márquez during his stay in New York. This talk presents the conclusions of my research.

“Unity in Art:
Alejandro Otero and Ellsworth Kelly in Dialogue”
Mary Kate O’Hare

My talk considers a case study of exchange between two abstract artists of the mid-twentieth century, one South American, one North American: the Venezuelan artist Alejandro Otero and the U.S. artist Ellsworth Kelly. The methodological basis for linking South and North American abstraction lies in the express intentions of some of its practitioners, such as the Uruguayan Joaquín Torres-García, who early in the century called for “a means of unifying the art of all the peoples of our hemisphere” (“*para la unificación del arte de todos los pueblos de nuestro hemisferio*”) in order to establish a distinct, trans-American form of abstraction within the international constructivist tradition. Exhibitions and publications from New York to Buenos Aires and from São Paulo to Caracas in the first half of the twentieth century brought together works of South and North American abstract art in resonant dialogues. As I argued in the catalogue for my exhibition *Constructive Spirit: Abstract Art in South and North America, 1920s–50s* (Newark Museum, 2010), connections among artists could also exist on a more conceptual level, a dynamic that manifests itself in the formal qualities of the works themselves.

A relationship that continues to absorb me since opening *Constructive Spirit* is the personal and aesthetic ties that existed between Otero and Kelly, and this paper represents new thinking and research on this subject. Aware of each other’s work, both were part of the expatriate community of abstract artists working in post-War Paris. Many of these artists, including Kelly and Otero, participated in the *Primera Muestra Internacional de Arte Abstracto (First International Exhibition of Abstract Art)* held at Caracas’s Galería Cuatro Muros (Four Walls Gallery). The exhibition, organized by Otero and the Venezuelan journalist José Hernán Briceño, explored the idea of “Unity in Art.” This prospective “unity” not only communicated a desire to connect painting and sculpture with the architectural environment, but also conveyed a longing to connect abstract artists from around the world. Intellectually, Otero and Kelly’s works link together in evocative ways, from their shared interest in the connection between painting and architecture to the role that nature plays as a source for their abstraction. Looking beyond the limitations of geography or nationality, this talk suggests an approach to artistic dialogue between U.S. and South American artists that is grounded in the conceptual intentions that link specific artists’ work while also highlighting moments of direct exchange that are commonly left out of historical accounts.

“Ana Mendieta as Cultural Connector with Cuba”

Laura Roulet

Ana Mendieta was the first post-revolution, Cuban-American artist to receive permission from the Cuban Ministry of Culture to exhibit and create work on the island. Returning first out of a sense of emotional longing to reconnect with her family and birthplace, she quickly developed ties within the art community. Between January 1980 and July 1983, she traveled seven times to the island, expanding on her knowledge of Cuban culture, particularly pre-Columbian art and Santería, a syncretic Afro-Cuban religion combining elements of Catholicism with West African Yoruba traditions.

Mendieta’s second trip to Cuba in January 1981 coincided with the *Volumen I* (Volume One) exhibit, featuring the work of what would become known as *la generación de los ochenta* (the 1980s generation). The first generation raised under the Castro regime, these artists broke with the programmatic art promoted by the government in the 1970s. Mendieta befriended José Bedia, Juan Elso Padilla, Ricardo Rodríguez Brey, Flavio Garcíandía and Gustavo Pérez Monzón. Several of these artists, including Bedia, Rodríguez Brey, and Elso Padilla, shared an interest in Santería and pre-Columbian culture and, like Mendieta, they were incorporating rituals, materials and imagery from those sources into their art. Bedia remembers Mendieta as part of the first rapprochement between Anglo and Latin American artists, describing her as a “connector.” She served as a bridge for them, demystifying the North American art world, known only through magazines. She also helped them to secure artistic residencies in the United States. In turn, they facilitated her exploration of Afro-Cuban culture and helped her to scout a location for the Rupestrian sculptures.

My paper will focus on Ana Mendieta as a cultural connector between the two art communities that she worked within: the North American and the Cuban. Not only was she one of very few artists who traveled between these communities during the 1980s, but she also encouraged others to travel and take part in the interchange of ideas. She served as a personal and artistic bridge, acting as a tour guide for North Americans like Carl Andre, Lucy Lippard, Rudolf Baranik, and May Stevens, while also fostering an understanding of the New York art world among the ’80s generation of Cubans and later facilitating travel for them. She also operated between two worlds in terms of her formal, thematic artistic language: working within Euro-American avant garde movements such as post-Minimalism and performance art while at the same time incorporating Afro-Cuban sources into her syncretic work.

“Atlas and Archive: Juan Downey’s *Video Trans Americas*”
Sarah Montross

In the fall of 1976 the Whitney Museum of American Art hosted *Video Trans Americas*, a solo art exhibition by Chilean-born, New York-based artist Juan Downey. The multi-monitor video installation featured a complex compilation of footage from Downey’s extended excursions throughout Central and South America. Prior to his departure in the spring of 1973, Downey described *Video Trans Americas* in the following ambitious and utopian terms:

This automobile trip was designed to develop an encompassing perspective among the various populations which today inhabit the American continents, by means of a videotaped account, from the northern cold forests to the southern tip of the Americas—a form of evolution in space while unfolding time, playing back one culture in the context of another as well as the culture itself in its own context, and finally editing all the interactions of space, time and context into a work of art... The role of the artist is here conceived to be a cultural communicant, an activating anthropologist with visual means of expression: videotape.¹

With a Sony Portapak video camera Downey traced his movements through the American landscape. Along his journeys Downey videotaped local peoples and, at subsequent destinations, screened footage from previous encounters. In this way he aimed to connect remote populations of the Americas and inform them of shared cultural traditions and diverse living conditions by way of a newly-developed video technology which put the power of broadcasting in the hands of laypeople.

The Whitney exhibition that Downey designed following these travels merged themes of architecture, mapping, performance, politics, and travel into a unified presentation. His visual tracings amid pre-Columbian, colonial, and modern societies were transposed onto the concentrated space of the museum, allowing the viewer to make geographically disjunctive and anachronistic leaps from monitor to monitor. In addition, Downey devised a closed-circuit video system such that the gallery visitors were woven into the screening process of Downey’s vast visual mappings of the Americas.

This show marked the first instance in the history of the Whitney Museum’s New American Filmmakers series in which video and film were used in an interactive manner. The Whitney had only recently begun to support video as an artistic medium under the pioneering leadership of curator John G. Hanhardt, who considered Downey one of the foremost artists of this movement. Through an analysis of exhibition records and critical reception, this paper will analyze how Downey’s subjective visions of ancient and contemporary Latin American cultures entered into the collective imagination of the New York audience. Additionally this paper will address the critical issues of Downey’s aim to “return to my roots, to what was strictly Latin American” during a time when his home country was under the repressive control of Augusto Pinochet.² The Whitney exhibition not only marks a point of threshold between the artist’s video performances and his personalized form of ethnography, but it confirms Downey’s significant role during the explosive early years of video art installation in New York.

¹ Juan Downey, “Video Trans Americas,” *Radical Software*, Volume II, 1973: 5.

² Juan Downey, “Entrevista a Juan Downey” in 6th Festival Franco-Chileno de Videoarte, Instituto Chileno-Franés de Cultura, Santiago de Chile, November 1986.

“Border Crossings:
Chicana and Chicano Artists in Mexico”
Karen Mary Davalos

Chicano art history, and even its parent discourse of American art criticism, examines art attributed to Mexican Americans for its use of vernacular *barrio* aesthetics, incorporation of Catholic iconography, and allusions to Mexican muralism, indigenous civilizations, and the Chicano Movement (the crusade for social and civil rights between the late 1960s and 1970s). While these are accepted as the main referents for Chicano art, scholarship rarely explores specific influences beyond the sixteenth-century Guadalupan portrait. Mexican influences, for example, are presumably so clearly demarcated that one only needs to consider the presence of the visual vocabulary of indigenous civilizations in Chicano art or the ways in which Chicano artists champion art for the people, echoing the sentiments of the Mexican muralists, who, through the *Manifesto of the Union of Mexican Workers, Technicians, Painters, and Sculptors* (1932), denounced easel painting as bourgeois and apolitical.

This art historical approach has produced several disadvantages and left gaps in our understanding of the multitude of influences on Chicano art. In response, this paper investigates the specific ways that Mexican art shaped the work of three Los Angeles Chicano artists: Judith Baca, David Botello, and Margaret Garcia. It begins with an analysis of the artists’ travels to Mexico where their aesthetic experiences transformed how they approached artistic production upon returning to their Los Angeles studios. The paper goes on to consider the ways that Garcia, and also Baca, facilitated the travel of Mexican art and artists into the United States.

The three artists I discuss demonstrate various methods of artistic exchange across the U.S.-Mexico border. While attending Taller Siqueiros in 1977, Baca developed specific techniques and compositional strategies for public art. In fact, Siquieros’s polyangular perspective informed the *Great Wall of Los Angeles* and subsequent murals by Baca and her arts organization, the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC). Likewise, Botello learned about acrylic paint and indigenous revivalism when he traveled to Mexico City in 1970. He later became a leading producer of indigenist iconography in the Los Angeles art scene as well as in the large-scale urban plans he created with Goetz Studios and Art Gallery, the first Chicano commercial gallery in Los Angeles. Similarly, Garcia learned to value saturated colors from seeing *arte popular* and Mexican portraiture during her travels to Mexico in the early 1970s and 1980s. Her portraiture is now known for its intense coloration and expressive style, both of which the artist saw in the *arte popular* of Oaxaca. In the 1980s, she explored the unknown forces and tensions within the paintings of Remedios Varo, and a similar dynamic or presence also can be found in Garcia’s work.

Chicano art is typically presented as a regional and traditional form of cultural affirmation rather than as an international art form with aesthetic links to at least two North America countries. By analyzing the travels of Chicano artists in Mexico, a more cosmopolitan understanding of the artists and their work is possible. An investigation of Chicano artists’ travels in Mexico uncovers the bi-national nature and postmodern hybridity of their work. It engages with rather than ignores the contested, appropriated, and negotiated qualities of Chicano art as different artists are drawn to specific Mexican aesthetics, techniques, and styles, which they then apply in new contexts in the Los Angeles setting. This approach ultimately suggests a complementary formulation of Mexican, American, and Chicano art.

“Good Neighbors:
The Taller de Gráfica Popular in the U.S.A., 1936–45”
Alison McClean

My paper will examine the activities of the Mexican printmaking collective the Taller de Gráfica Popular (People’s Graphic Workshop) and its influence on printmakers in the U.S., as well as the extent to which its actions conformed to or challenged the aims of Roosevelt’s Good Neighbor Policy towards Latin America during World War II. As an organization committed to the production of visual propaganda in opposition to fascism, the TGP could easily find common cause with U.S. policy during the war years. However, its members’ close ties to the Communist Party and antipathy toward economic and cultural imperialism (most vehemently demonstrated in their enthusiastic support for President Cardenas’s expropriation of U.S. oil interests in 1938), meant that the TGP, while often exploiting the opportunities afforded by the Good Neighbor policy, also acted to engage and encourage those artists within the U.S. who sought to challenge their country’s social and political policies.

From its origins in the League of Revolutionary Artists and Writers in the mid-1930s, the TGP had been active in the U.S. The collective participated in the first American Artists Congress in New York in 1936, and its members continued to exhibit and publish in the U.S. as a group or as individuals until the workshop was blacklisted by the State Department in the early 1950s as a “Communist-front organization.” The TGP was supported in its activities north of the border by the former director of the Bauhaus, Hannes Meyer (then living in exile in Mexico City), who was active in organizing anti-fascist groups in Mexico. Meyer encouraged the TGP to make use of the opportunities available in the U.S. through the Good Neighbor policy in order to generate resources to support its activities at home. As well as facilitating the exhibition and sale of the group’s works in the U.S. through collaborations with the Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students League, Associated American Artists, the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the Pan-American Union, Meyer also encouraged the TGP to recruit new members from the U.S. by advertising in the American press for short courses and internships at its Mexico City workshop. Among those artists recruited, several, including Jules Heller, Max Kahn, and Charles White, returned to the U.S. to open their own workshops, while others, such as Elizabeth Catlett and Mariana Yampolsky, chose to remain in Mexico as permanent members. The TGP was especially successful in recruiting African American artists; in addition to White and Catlett, the workshop also included John Wilson and Margaret Taylor Goss Burroughs among its list of “guest artists” from the U.S. As well as examining the wider influence of the TGP on printmaking and socially-committed art in the U.S., my paper will also consider the particular appeal of the workshop to African American artists and its contribution to the emerging campaign for Civil Rights.

“The Pan-American Promise of Modern Art:
José Gómez Sicre and Caracas’s El Taller Libre de Arte”
Michael Wellen

In February 1948, politicians, dignitaries, and intellectuals from thirty different countries gathered in Caracas to celebrate the inauguration of novelist and diplomat Rómulo Gallegos as Venezuela’s new president. Gallegos was the country’s first democratically elected president of the twentieth century. A week of public celebrations, parades, concerts, and art exhibitions marked the inauguration—*TIME* magazine described the festivities as “the biggest week in Caracas since Bolívar threw out the Spaniards.” José Gómez Sicre, head curator at the Organization of American States (OAS) in Washington, D.C., attended and brought with him an exhibition of modern art from North and South America. In the spirit of the celebration, Gómez Sicre and several local artists founded El Taller Libre de Arte (The Free Workshop of Art). The Taller offered a workspace for emerging artists, many of whom had graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts, Caracas. It provided studio and exhibition space for artists including Jacobo Borges, Carlos Cruz Diez, Mateo Manaure, Alirio Oramas, Alejandro Otero, and Jesus Rafael Soto.

Although the Taller was short-lived—it closed in 1952 as waves of political and artistic change swept the capital city—in this paper I consider the role the workshop played as a center for Pan-American artistic encounters, and I discuss how artists and intellectuals at the Taller used modern art to promote utopian ideas of cooperation between the U.S. and Latin America. In particular, I focus on Gómez Sicre’s role as co-creator of the workshop by analyzing his open letters to the Taller, which he published in the Caracas newspaper *El Nacional*, and describing the connections between the modern art exhibition he brought to Venezuela and his plans for the Taller. I argue that the workshop represented Gómez Sicre’s first attempt to build a Pan-American network through which he could disseminate his ideas about modern art. Gómez Sicre believed that while Europe had historically been the location for major art movements, in the aftermath of World War II, the Americas would emerge as the leaders in modern art and culture through spaces such as the Taller. He imagined a flow of modern art between U.S. and Latin American cities, with Washington, D.C., as a key destination in the circuit. His efforts in Caracas were similar to the projects he developed in D.C., and he envisioned building similar workshops in other Latin American cities. Because Gómez Sicre’s involvement with the Taller was criticized by U.S. government workers during the McCarthy Era and, later, also by Latin American art critics, I conclude by considering the political effects of the Taller and the ways in which the inter-American politics of the 1950s dramatically reshaped Pan-American ideals for modern art.

“Chicago Effect:
Teresa Burga before and after the School of the Art Institute”
Dorota Biczal and Emilio Tarazona

At the end of the 1960s, due mostly to the pressures exerted by the radicalized student body, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) went through a decisive transformation. The 1968 Democratic Convention and the activities of the Weather Underground as well as the overall climate of the country also contributed to this upheaval, however, much of the demand for change came from foreign students, such as Peruvian Fulbright scholar, Teresa Burga (born Iquitos, 1935), one of the leading voices of her class. In 1969, SAIC revamped its curriculum, opening up narrowly defined departments, introducing seminars in new media, and allowing students to create their own courses of study with faculty consultation.

Burga came to Chicago as a leading member of *Arte Nuevo* (1966–69), a crucial Peruvian vanguard group, which had crystallized around the prominent critic and theorist, Juan Acha. Her 1968 arrival in Chicago coincided with the military coup of the general Velazco Alvarado in her native country and, at that point, the profound impact that her master’s studies at SAIC would have on her career could not be foreseen. Exposure to new ideas and theories, promoted in Chicago by visiting artists such as Joseph Kosuth, Robert Barry, Vito Acconci, and Dennis Oppenheim, introduced a radical shift in Burga’s own practice, leading her to abandon her experiments with pop art in favor of endeavors based around the utilization of text and new communication media. Her first ventures into this new realm took place on the pages of the *70* magazine, the key platform developed to host a variety of experimental, ephemeral, and utopian proposals that did not find an outlet in the city’s scene, dominated by the popular Chicago Imagists.

Paradoxically, however, upon her return to Peru in 1971, the ambitious and pioneering proposals that Burga had developed did not find resonance on the Peruvian scene under the cultural policy of populist nationalism. In this paper, we will focus on three of Burga’s mature projects, the installations *Autorretrato. Estructura—Informe 9.6.72 / Self-portrait. Structure—Information 9.6.72* (1972); *Cuatro Mensajes / Four Messages* (1974); and *Paisaje Urbano / Urban Landscape* (1978), in order to trace how they conform and depart from the models proposed by the North American conceptualists. We hope that by tracing the particular “Chicago effect” in Burga’s work through a critical analysis of body, language, and public space, we can uncover a unique and viable proposal that had been obscured by the dominant views of the two crucial milieus of its emergence.

“Stanley William Hayter and Chilean Printmakers:
New York, Paris, Santiago, 1940–55”
Valerie Fraser

At the beginning of World War II English printmaker Stanley William Hayter moved from Paris to New York where he re-established his studio, Atelier 17. Hayter’s collective ethos and passionate belief in the value of art as a means of understanding the world was infectious, and an impressive roster of artists spent time in his New York studio including Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Alexander Calder, and Le Corbusier. This paper will look in particular at a number of Chileans who worked with him in the U.S. including Nemesio Antúnez, Enrique Zañartu, and Roberto Matta, all of whom, like Hayter, moved away again in the late 1940s and early ’50s, in part because of the political shifts that, for anyone with left-leaning inclinations, made the U.S. a less comfortable environment than it had been during the 1930s and early ’40s. Hayter went back to France where he was joined by Zañartu who helped him re-establish the Atelier 17 in Paris. Antúnez returned to Santiago and set up the Taller 99 along similar lines, although he retained close links with the U.S. and returned in the 1960s for a brief period as the Chilean embassy’s cultural attaché in Washington. A further strand this paper will explore is the relationship between the ideas that shaped Hayter and Antunez’s print workshops and the theories of the art critic, anarchist, and poet Herbert Read. Translations of Read’s work, in particular of the lectures he delivered while Norton Professor at Harvard in the 1950s, were enormously popular throughout Latin America and were frequently reprinted during the 1960s and ’70s. Read, a friend and admirer of Hayter, placed great value on collective action, artisanal expertise, and areas of creative activity traditionally marginalized by critics and art historians including the art of children and of the mentally ill, notions which resonated with the philosophies of the Atelier 17 and Taller 99.

This paper relates to the research project “Meeting Margins: Transnational Art in Latin America and Europe 1950–1978” which explores an alternative model to the traditional narrative by which, after World War II, New York replaces Paris as the world’s artistic center of gravity. Our research is revealing the ways in which, on the contrary, innovative artistic ideas and strategies were taking place in and between all sorts of apparently marginal locations, sometimes largely unaware of, sometimes in deliberate reaction to the political dominance of the U.S.

“The New York/Bogotá Nexus:
Geometric Abstraction in Colombian Art of the 1950s and 1960s”
Ana Franco

This paper focuses on the rise of abstract geometric art in Colombia and the role played by New York artists and institutions in its development during the 1950s and 1960s. It examines the works that Edgar Negret (b. 1920) and Eduardo Ramírez (1922–2004), the pioneers of geometric abstraction in Colombia, produced in New York between 1957 and 1964. By discussing Negret’s series of sculptures entitled *Magic Machines* (1957–63) and Ramírez’s series of *White Reliefs* (1959–63), the paper seeks to understand how these works were informed by the Colombians’ dialogue with contemporary American artists and the extent to which this transnational dialogue informed the reception of their work in New York and Bogotá.

Negret’s *Magic Machines* are an homage to New York City and its dazzling dance of neon lights, traffic signs, ships, and subway trains. The series resulted from his dialogue with the two generations of artists that dominated the New York art scene in the 1940s and 1950s. Negret’s use of geometric abstraction and industrial techniques (aluminum sheets assembled by nuts and bolts) to express the mechanical dimension of the sculptures parallels the practices of artists such as Robert Indiana, Ellsworth Kelly, and Jack Youngerman, who in the late 1950s rejected the highly expressive and emotional content of previous art. At the same time, the magical dimension evoked in the series’ title derives from Negret’s interest in Native American art, and connects him to the aesthetic ideals of the 1940s abstract expressionists and the Indian Space painters.

Ramírez’s *White Reliefs* are also symptomatic of the late 1950s and early 1960s rejection of highly expressive and gestural art. His use of monochrome (white on white) wooden compositions incised with geometric patterns stands in close relation to Louise Nevelson’s white constructions of the same years. However, unlike Nevelson’s intricate sculptures, Ramírez’s reliefs employ a reduced geometric vocabulary. This restrained sensibility echoes John Cage’s ideas about silence and spirituality, and in this respect Ramírez’s works are akin to Agnes Martin’s white paintings and Ellsworth Kelly’s white reliefs.

Between 1959 and 1964, Negret and Ramírez held several solo shows in New York and participated in collective exhibitions throughout the city. Of considerable importance was their participation in a series of exhibitions in the 1960s that featured the latest developments in geometric abstraction in New York, including *Purism* and *Modern Classicism* at the David Herbert Gallery and *The Classical Spirit in Twentieth Century Art* at the Sidney Janis Gallery. This trend, labeled at the time “Purism” or “New Classicism,” was interpreted as a reaction against the excesses of gestural abstraction and a revamping of the elements traditionally associated with classical, as opposed to romantic, art.

Negret and Ramírez’s New York activities were given extensive coverage in Bogotá’s newspapers and magazines. These articles frequently quoted reviews of their shows by New York art critics, and local critics were quick to adopt the labels of “Purism” and “Neo-classicism” to describe their works. Significantly, during the 1960s the artists themselves organized exhibitions in Bogotá that echoed the New York shows and attempted to create a Colombian contingent of “Purists,” standing against the excesses of “romantic” art.

Ultimately, by studying the work of Negret and Ramírez, this paper discusses the New York–Bogotá nexus with an eye toward understanding the rise of modernism in Colombia and the larger history of encounters between Latin America and New York in the postwar years.

“Havana-New York:
Los Once and Abstract Expressionism in Cuba, 1953–63”
Abigail McEwen

The culmination of modernism in Cuba spanned the decade of the 1950s, conceptually bridging and defining cultural politics from the dictatorial coup of Fulgencio Batista in 1952 to the socialist revolution in 1959. During this period, in which Cuba envisioned itself as the future “New York of the Caribbean,” a new *vanguardia* generation promoted modernist values of abstraction and expressive freedom in Havana, taking visual and promotional cues from their North American peers. Indeed, as the international paradigm shifted from the School of Paris to the New York School during this time, Cuban art attained an unprecedented synchronism with the rest of the world. Abstraction, as both a visual form and an ideological platform, came to signal a new horizon of possibility for art as a means of social and political transformation.

This paper examines the history of Los Once, a group of eleven painters and sculptors who pioneered gestural abstraction in Havana and modeled their practice in large part on the work of the New York School. The group staged fifteen exhibitions between 1953 and 1963, culminating in *Expresionismo Abstracto*, which effectively brought to a close the decade-long trajectory of Cuba’s *vanguardia* and its sweeping modernist vision. A number of the group’s principal members—among them Guido Llinás, Hugo Consuegra, and Raúl Martínez—traveled to New York in the early 1950s, immersing themselves in the cultural life of Greenwich Village and witnessing firsthand the evolution of artists such as Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, and Robert Motherwell, in whose work they found powerful, visual stimulus for their own experiments in avant-garde form. The emergence of gestural abstraction in the work of Los Once through the later 1950s reflects both the international aspirations of Havana’s avant-garde, who sought to align their practice with the North American *zeitgeist*, and the politicization of modernist aesthetics in Cuba, where abstract expressionism became almost immediately identified with liberal values of democracy and freedom.

Taking the history of Los Once as a paradigmatic case, this paper explores the contingencies of the highly self-aware avant-garde apparatus and mentality that emerged in Cuba in the late 1950s and the strategic interests of the group’s decision to adopt abstract expressionism as its characteristic form. Los Once occupied an improbable historical position: they represented the final gestation of Cuba’s historical avant-garde, with a utopian vision tied to the promise of social revolution, yet they acted in a world defined by Cold War politics, chastened by the failures of the European avant-garde, and dominated by the “triumph” of American painting. The international alignments of abstraction, and the competing neo-colonial claims on it, politicized this art from the beginning, bringing new pressures to bear on the question of what a vanguard modernism could mean during Havana’s season of revolution. At the center of this investigation lies a concern to historicize both the aesthetics of Los Once and the international politics of Cuban abstraction, whose critical fortunes became a barometer of cultural beliefs in the project of modernism itself.

“The Diaspora Muse”
Luis Camnitzer

Born in Germany, then raised and educated in Uruguay, Luis Camnitzer came to New York in 1961 on a Guggenheim Fellowship and has lived here permanently since 1964. In this personal and often humorous essay, Camnitzer reflects upon his early negotiation of New York City and its art scene so as to highlight the shared challenges and decisions faced by artists from Latin America living in cultural centers. His memories touch upon the divergent individuals and institutions that shaped the New York art world in this period: from Leo Castelli to Lucy Lippard, from MoMA to the Galería Sudamericana. Ultimately, the experience of “limbo” that is the “diasporic’ state”, as Camnitzer has called it, necessitates that the artist very consciously define his or her own cultural identity, artistic purpose, and intended public. Camnitzer relates his own struggles with these choices and considers the opposing dangers of nostalgia and assimilation, the periphery and the mainstream.