

DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

DRCLAS NEWS

HARVARD UNIVERSITY • WINTER 2001 NEWSLETTER



Art in the Americas

Many Voices, Many Visions

BY STEPHEN KINZER

IS THERE SUCH A THING AS LATIN AMERICAN ART? CAN THE ENERGIES OF THOUSANDS OF CREATIVE visionaries, expressed in every kind of medium over a period of centuries and across a geography as varied as any in the world, be considered in a single category? To tie them all together with a string of adjectives would of course be impossible, but certain strands do run through much of the continent's art, as Mary Schneider Enríquez suggests in her article, "Latin American Art: From Inside Out." (p. 10).

During the centuries when the Aztec, Maya and Inca empires were at their peak, their artisans produced some of the finest "primitive" art of all time, as pointed out by Elizabeth Benson and Jeffrey Quilter in this issue's articles on Dumbarton Oaks, the Harvard-affiliated pre-Columbian art center. Together with the art of Africa and the Pacific Islands, these early creations have bequeathed to us many of the profound archetypes that shape modern consciousness. Much of twentieth-century art can, in fact, be

This Special Issue on "Art in the Americas" celebrates the opening of Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection at the Fogg Museum and the growing interest in Latin American art around Harvard. Above, "Catching Stones" by Connie Lloveras, DRCLAS Latin American and Latino Art Forum.



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viewed as an effort to recapture the emotional power that ancient cultures expressed in their paintings, carvings and artifacts.

This issue of *DRCLAS NEWS* examines many facets of visual art in Latin America and by Latinos in the United States. In the lead essay, Tom Cummins shows how European settlers brought their artistic ideas with them to the New World and then began to reshape them.

The continent's first art academy, the Academia de San Carlos, opened in Mexico in 1785. Ever since then, artists in Latin America have faced a dilemma of whether to embrace the art of Europe or to confront the social, political and natural reality they find around them. This is hardly a question specific to visual artists. Latin American society has always asked its intellectuals to play a greater role than their counterparts in other parts of the world are asked to play.

Classicism and conscious attempts to imitate European styles dominated much of Latin American art until the beginning of the twentieth century. In the years that followed, many of the continent's leading artists, liberated politically as well as spiritually, spent extended periods in Europe. There Mexico's Diego Rivera absorbed the principles of impressionism and symbolism, Argentina's Xul Solar became fascinated by Kandinsky, Malevich and Klee, Cuba's Wifredo Lam was embraced by Picasso, and Brazil's Tarsila do Amaral met Leger, Brancusi, Gris and De Chirico. Others, like Argentina's Martín Blaszkowski and Brazil's Lasar Segall, were actually born and grew up in Europe. All brought the Old Continent's artistic perspectives with them to the New World.

The modern art that developed in Europe had an especially strong impact on Latin American artists because it proposed a new way of seeing reality, explored by James Cuno's and Patricia Cisneros' writing on "Geometric Abstraction." (p. 6). The appeal of this modern art was comparable to that of the magic realist literary style that emerged several decades later. Movements like cubism, expressionism and surrealism were attempts to see past surface reality, something Latin Americans have always sought to do. They proved ideal tools for interpreting the combination of beauty and horror, loss and possibility, that Latin America has always represented.

Much of Latin America's greatest art has used European artistic innovation as a tool to address native themes. This combination gave birth to an entirely original sensibility. One of its most spectacular manifestations was the drive to create public art, especially murals (see Richard Mora and Solomon Zavala on its latest manifestation in graffiti art on p. 43). As early as 1923, a group of artists including David Alfaro Siqueiros declared: "We reject as aristocratic the painting known as 'easel work,' along with the entire ultra-intellectual cadre, and we exalt expressions of monumental art for being useful to the public." Even

Siqueiros soon found himself drawn back to easel painting, but the passion that lay behind his commitment resounds to this day. Half a century later, in the 1970s and 80s, artists fleeing the brutal repression that descended over much of the continent would seek to convey their experiences and feelings in ways that might help the world understand their peoples' suffering and, perhaps, contribute to the cause of peace and reconciliation.

For Latin American artists, understanding the continent in which they lived has always been an artistic as well as political challenge. In the 1930s Rufino Tamayo wrote: "Our people, which is of Indian and mixed blood, is not

a festive people; instead, it is profoundly tragic, and its preference is for a balance of sober colors, as is always the case with those upon whom sorrow weighs heavily. White, black, blue, and soft earth tones are the colors that ought to characterize our painting, because these are the colors preferred by our people. Never will

full colors distinguish our painting. Warm tones, yes, but muted, sober, solemn."

Today, as Latin America emerges from its worst nightmares, many of its artists have the freedom to choose how to express the unique panoply of emotions that makes their culture so rich. They are still seeking, and will always seek, a balance between what the world shows them and what they see and feel around them.

Stephen Kinzer is a cultural correspondent for the New York Times who has written extensively about Latin America. He is co-author with Stephen Schlesinger of Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala, recently re-issued by DRCLAS/Harvard University Press, and author of Blood of Brothers: Life and War in Nicaragua.

DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER FOR LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES

Director John H. Coatsworth
Executive Director Steve Reifenberg
Publications Director June Carolyn Erlick
Conference Coordinator Neida M. Jiménez
Design kelly design

61 Kirkland Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel: (617) 495-3366
Fax: (617) 496-2802

E-mail: <drclas@fas.harvard.edu>
<<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~drclas/>>

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Latin American Art

Politics, History and Aesthetics

BY TOM CUMMINS

"esta pintura está cargada en género de pinturas de devoción y allí vale y aquí no"

Description of an American painting from the Inventory of Felipe II

AS AN ART HISTORIAN, I FIND IT hard to believe that there could be many places in the world today where there is more at stake about art than there is Latin America. In fact, Latin America, since its beginning in 1492, has been a struggle over images, whether they are licit or illicit, proper or improper, orthodox or heterodox, esteemed or not. One can never get very far away from the political, religious, economic, and cultural intensity that circulates around images, in particular concerning their creation/destruction. Columbus, of course, was never convinced that what he saw was anything different than what he already knew. But even after the revelation that the Americas were something new and therefore unknown, it became part of the Old World and known through presaging and then mirroring the great iconoclasm of reformation Europe.

In 1519, scarcely a year and half before the first acts of Protestant iconoclasm in Zurich, Cortes on his march from Veracruz to Tenochtitlan stopped along the way to pull down and destroy the Mexican religious images and sculptures so as to set up in their place paintings and sculptures of Christ and the Virgin Mary. Cortés' actions marked a very different iconoclasm than that called for by Zwingli and other Protestants. For Catholic Spain in the pagan New World, images were not in and of themselves at issue, rather what and how they represented was the problem. The disputation that Cortes initiated on the mainland established a



defining debate in Latin America, a distinction between what was a truthful (Christian) and a false (Satanic) image, the distinction between latria and idolatry.

Thus, new images replaced or competed with old ones, giving rise to remarkable works of art by native artists whose abilities were compared

to Michaelangelo and Berruguete by the soldier chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo. One need only look at a feather painting of the Mass of St. Gregory made in Mexico City in 1539 as a gift for Pope Paul III to understand what Bernal Díaz was referring to (Figure 1). Here one sees the talents and artistry of pre-

Figure 1:
Convent School
of San José
**Feather Painting
of the Mass of
Saint Gregory**
Mexico City, 1539

Columbian Mexico turned toward creating an image that explicitly acknowledged the capacity of the Aztecs to recognize the fundamental mystery of transubstantiation. Equally, Andean artists, trained in European techniques, painted portraits of the Inca kings that were sent to the Spanish King, Philip II, who saw them hung in a royal chamber next to Titian's great portrait of Charles V. At the same time, bonfires set in the main plaza of Mexico City by order of the city's first bishop consumed numerous Aztec screen-folds of bark and hide that pictured both sacred and historical knowledge. Or, the golden image of Inca sun god was captured by the grand-nephew of Ignacio de Loyola and sent to Spain where it seems to have been melted down, perhaps to help finance other, more local wars. In its place, the great solar-shaped gold and jeweled monstrosities stood on the altars or were processed through the streets of the great baroque cities of Peru and Mexico (Figure 2).

A sense of this history, as sketched above in anecdotes, is necessary in order to understand why Latin America has such a remarkable and varied but conflicted artistic legacy, a legacy that today is often at the center of international politics, ethnic struggle, public policy, national identity, and religious focus.

Cultural patrimony, for example, is

a current issue in Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Bolivia and many other nations, that often revolves around pre-Columbian and colonial works of art. The recognition of the public importance for these works of art is, however, more than just some abstracted notion about guarding national treasure from the international market in antiquities, although it is

Latin America, since its beginning in 1492, has been a struggle over images.

that too. One need only visit a looted archaeological site to realize how much information is irretrievably lost as a result of the search for a fine Maya pot or a Paracas textile (Figure 3) for the market place, placing the archaeologist and collector at odds, with the art historian somewhere in between. Yet, economic conditions often place local peoples in situations such that looting is a critical means of survival.

Pre-Columbian and colonial works, however, can be something much more than just some source of income, and this value brings local traditions and beliefs into conflict with the forces of the art market. In communities for which images have an honored place of veneration, their

loss is not just about patrimony, a transgression of the nation. It is a loss of aura that can not be replaced, and such a loss gravely wounds the community's sense of being, leading toward further erosion of any communal integrity. I remember experiencing this anguish first hand. I was sitting alone in the bishop's archive in Cuzco during the early afternoon of an Andean summer day. Engrossed in reading a document concerning the commissioning of a seventeenth century painting, I barely paid attention to the noise coming up the stairs, but looked up when two men burst into the room asking for the bishop in a mixture of Quechua and Spanish. I had never met the bishop and had no idea where he was and said so. The horrible story unfolded in words of grief that the principal painting in their town's chapel had been stolen (most surely by someone from the community itself) and they needed to report its loss to the bishop, who would surely help. The painting had protected the community, probably for centuries much like the painting I had been reading about, through its miraculous intercession and now it was gone. They had no photograph of it and could only describe in the vaguest terms what it looked like. The chances of recovery were slim and in fact it never was found. The painting had now entered another different tournament of value in which its aura shifted from that of a long venerated patron of a small out-of-the-way Andean village to being admired as an original painting of the Cuzco school as it first appears in a gallery somewhere in Lima or elsewhere.

Stories such as this are common in the Andes and elsewhere, but it is not only small communities in which art works find themselves at the heart of the community. Many modern Latin American nation states have embraced their artists, asking them to give visual articulation to the nation's aspirations, history, and dreams. Mexico is certainly the foremost example. Diego Rivera, José Orozco, and David Siqueiros have given Mexico a rich corpus of mural and oil paintings that

From the Editor

You are holding in your hand a special treat, **DRCLAS NEWS** in living color. It's a one-time-only (at least for now!) feature of this special issue on Art in the Americas. We felt that it wouldn't be fair to write so many words on Latin American and Latin@ art without sharing some of the visual joy with our readers.

Some of you have asked when and if we are going to change the name of this publication. **DRCLAS NEWS** isn't really news, although one might say that the explosion of information and thinking about Latin America around Harvard IS the underlying news of the publication. And some of you have pointed out that it is no longer a newsletter, but some sort of hybrid.

There have been a few suggestions: **ReVista**, **Puentes**, even just "**L**" for Latin America. But until we find something that really captures the flavor of this publication, we'll stick with **DRCLAS NEWS**! Please keep your suggestions and feedback coming. Write me at <jerlick@fas.harvard.edu>.

And meanwhile, enjoy the color!

Jane C. Erikson

MUSEO DE ARTE RELIGIOSO, COLECCIÓN ARQUIDIOCESIS DE POPAYAN, COLOMBIA



express its historic struggles and triumphs. Placed in public buildings, the murals also express a strong adherence to the ideological aims of the Mexican Revolution and the PRI, the Institutional Revolutionary Party.

The relationship between politics, history and aesthetics, in fact, has been a major concern throughout Latin American 20th century art, as critique, protest or affirmation. Moreover, this relationship is not only manifested in the kind of realism deployed by the Mexican muralist but in many different forms and styles as in Brazil with Andrade and the Antropofago movement, in Uruguay and Torres García's reworking of Andean Pre-Columbian motifs (Figure 4), or more recently in Colombia and Doris Salcedo with her recent haunting conceptual pieces that articulate the quotidian aspects of *la Violencia*.

The relationship between state and artist is not always an easy one, especially when the state commissions a work. Often the conflict elicits open public debate about the relationship between the individual and the state. I remember very well the discussion that erupted in 1988 in Quito over a mural painted by Oswaldo Guayasamín (1919-1999), Ecuador's leading artist. Guayasamín had been

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COLLECTION MAURICE BIDERMAN



From left:
Figure 2:
Monstrance of gold, gilded silver, pearls and silver
18th century

Figure 3:
Masked figure from a Paracas-Nazca Shroud
wool and cotton
100-BC-100AD

Figure 4:
Joaquín Torres-García
Physique
1929

commissioned to paint murals in the Palacios de Gobierno y Legislativo depicting the history of Ecuador from Pre-Columbian times to the present. Guayasamín's painting style is heavily influenced by both the Mexican muralists and Pablo Picasso, especially Picasso's work in the thirties. Like Picasso and Rivera, Guayasamín was closely affiliated with the Communist party. Many of Guayasamín's paintings deal thematically with the social causes of human pain and suffering by focusing on the gestures of hands and faces to achieve a heightened expressive style. One can easily recall Picasso's *Guernica* when looking at many of Guayasamín's paintings. All this was openly known when he was selected to paint the murals in two government buildings.

Hence it came as no surprise that his compositions for them emphasized ethnic, class, national and international struggles. One segment of the mural provoked national discussion and international displeasure. It depicted a skeletal head wearing a helmet that ominously looked a World War II German helmet with the letters CIA next to it, so that there could be no doubt as to what the image referred.

Already controversial within Ecuador, this image became the center of a political firestorm when it was reported that the Secretary of State of the United States demanded its removal before he would accept an invitation to participate in the inauguration of Rodrigo Borja, Ecuador's new president. Of course the image was meant to be offensive and few Ecuadorians, as I remember, were enthralled by it. At the same time, however, it was hard to refute the CIA's intervention in Ecuador's sovereign-

ty given Philip Agee's revelations in *Inside the Company: CIA Diary* published in 1975. What therefore really came to be the focus of debate was not so much the subject matter but whether the state, once it had decided to commission the artist, should act as censure over the individual expression by that artist. A Television program called *Libertad de Expresión* offered public debate on the issue as did editorials in the newspapers. The general feeling revolved around the issue of tolerance toward political expression, especially of oppositional views, even in public places and paid for by public monies.

Like the religious painting of the small Andean village, the Guayasamín mural became the center of the public's attention, defining in some sense its core values. The decision was to keep the mural as it was not because everyone embraced Guayasamín's politics, but rather the idea of free expression was represented.

Now, I am not so naïve as to suggest that some utopian moment of democracy was achieved, nor that there was not a political need to demonstrate the possibility to withstand U.S. pressure, even if it were symbolic. But what is in part interesting to me, is how central painting and sculpture in the cultural and political debates in Latin American and the role that artists had and still have in them.

Tom Cummins is associate professor in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture and director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the University of Chicago. He was a visiting professor in the Department of Art and Architecture, Harvard University, fall 2000.

Geometric Abstraction

A New Perspective on Latin American Art

BY PATRICIA PHELPS DE CISNEROS

VISITORS TO HARVARD UNIVERSITY'S FOGG MUSEUM this spring will have a chance to explore the universe of constructivist art, a poetics of visual forms by Latin American artists who for nearly a century have been producing masterful and rigorous works. Today these works from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection will share the museum walls with their equals from around the world, and will initiate a promising dialogue among artworks, ideas, and institutions that will illuminate their import for both Americas.

We are proud to be the first participants in the opening of a dialogue about Latin American art that this center of learning has undertaken and to contribute to its time-honored and distinguished tradition of teaching and research in the field of art. *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection* exhibition seeks to highlight a vital aspect of our continent's vast and diverse creative accomplishments. We are referring to Latin American geometric abstract art—an art that, as part of the universal cultural patrimony, belongs as much to the region as to the legacy of modern art.

With the exhibition, we would like to encourage visitors to become acquainted with abstract constructivist art, one of the most important but least well-known creative endeavors in recent Latin American history. Although abstract constructivism coincided with the development in Latin America of important figurative movements, it has not received the same attention from critics and spe-

cialists as have, for instance, Mexican muralism and its derivatives. We hope that after seeing this exhibition, viewers will discover in these works the formal rigor and sensibility that characterize geometric abstraction, which belongs to such a productive tradition on our continent.

The Fogg Museum exhibit comprises three fundamental groups of geometric abstraction, belonging to the three formal and conceptual movements that emerged simultaneously in three geographical and cultural locations in Latin America. These are Venezuelan kinetic and neo-concrete abstraction, Brazilian concrete and neo-concrete abstraction, and Argentine and Uruguayan abstraction.

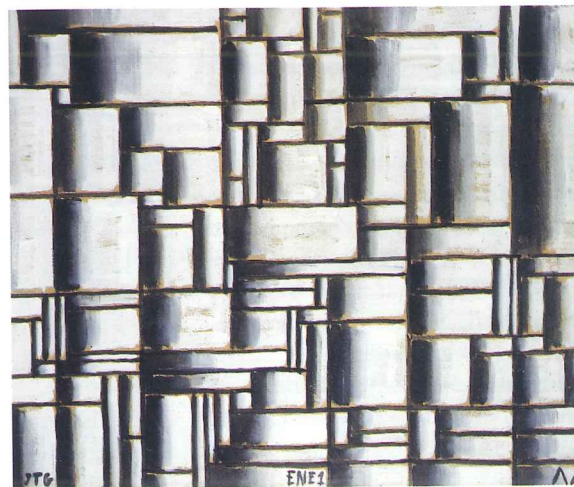
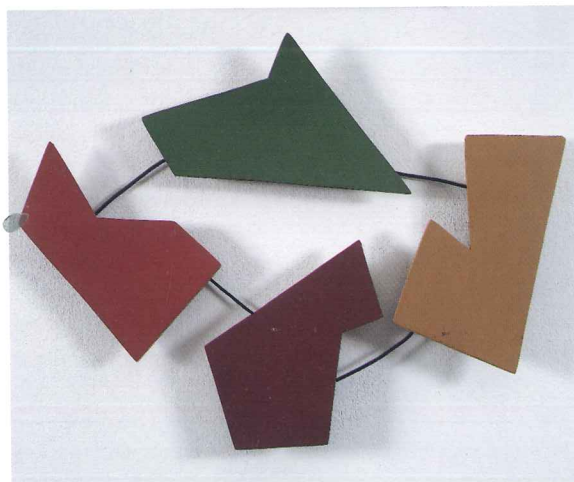
Our goal has been to achieve one of the most comprehensive anthologies of the genre from many Latin American countries, not only from Venezuela, the Fundación's native country. The selection of the works, guided by our educational mission and our desire to convey the region's culture, has entailed a creative, intel-

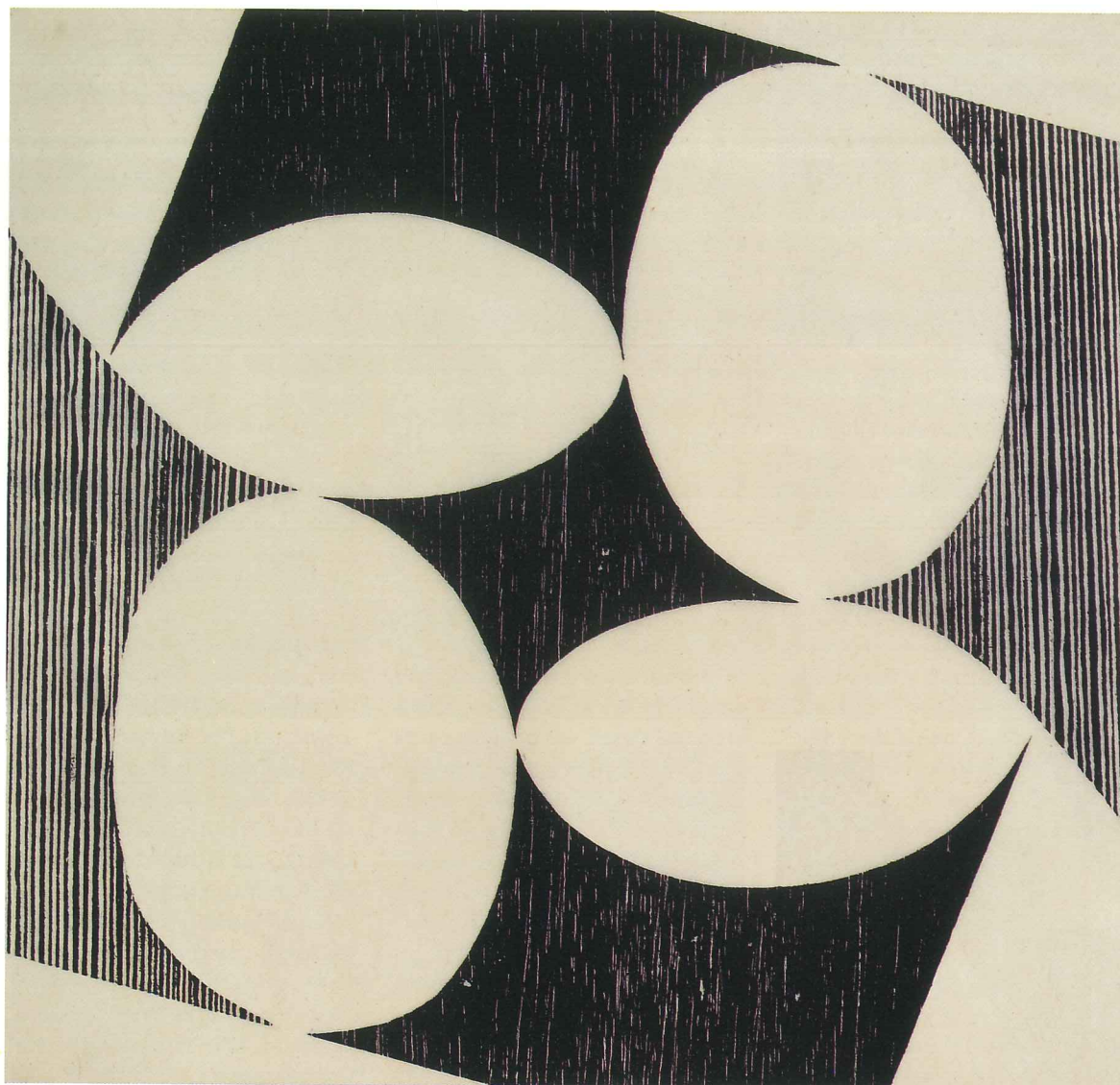
lectual, and practical pursuit that has brought us into daily contact with a great artistic legacy.

Patty Cisneros is a member of the DRCLAS Advisory Committee, the DRCLAS arts subcommittee, and the Founding President of Fundación Cisneros in Caracas, Venezuela. This article was written in conjunction with Rafael Romero Díaz, Director, Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. A longer version of this essay appears in the exhibit catalog, which is available from the Fogg Museum.

left:
Raúl Lozza
Relief
1945

right:
Joaquín Torres-García
Construcción en
blanco y negro
1934





Lygia Pape
Sem título
Serie "Tecelares"
1959

From the Cisneros Collection

An Overview

BY JAMES CUNO

IN THE MIDDLE DECADES OF THE last century, geometric abstraction achieved truly international stature. From The Netherlands, Switzerland, France, and the United States to Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, and Venezuela, painters and sculptors were drawn to a similar vocabulary of forms: lines, squares, triangles, and circles painted in pure primary or secondary colors or sculpted in steel or aluminum.

Latin American artists traveled to Paris or New York, while European

artists traveled from Germany and Switzerland to Latin America. Although abstraction was the common currency, it was inflected with local character indicative of the degree to which the local culture, be it of Amsterdam or Buenos Aires, had embraced modernism in all its artistic, social, political, and economic aspects.

The Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection of Caracas, Venezuela, comprises one of the world's most important collections of Latin Amer-

ican geometric art, with works of the highest quality by the most influential artists of the various movements from Brazil to Venezuela. It is thus with great excitement that the Fogg Art Museum of the Harvard University Art Museums has organized and now presents this exhibition from the Cisneros Collection.

Harvard shares a history, however indirect, with the geometric abstraction movement. Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius came in 1937 to teach in and serve as chair of the Univer-

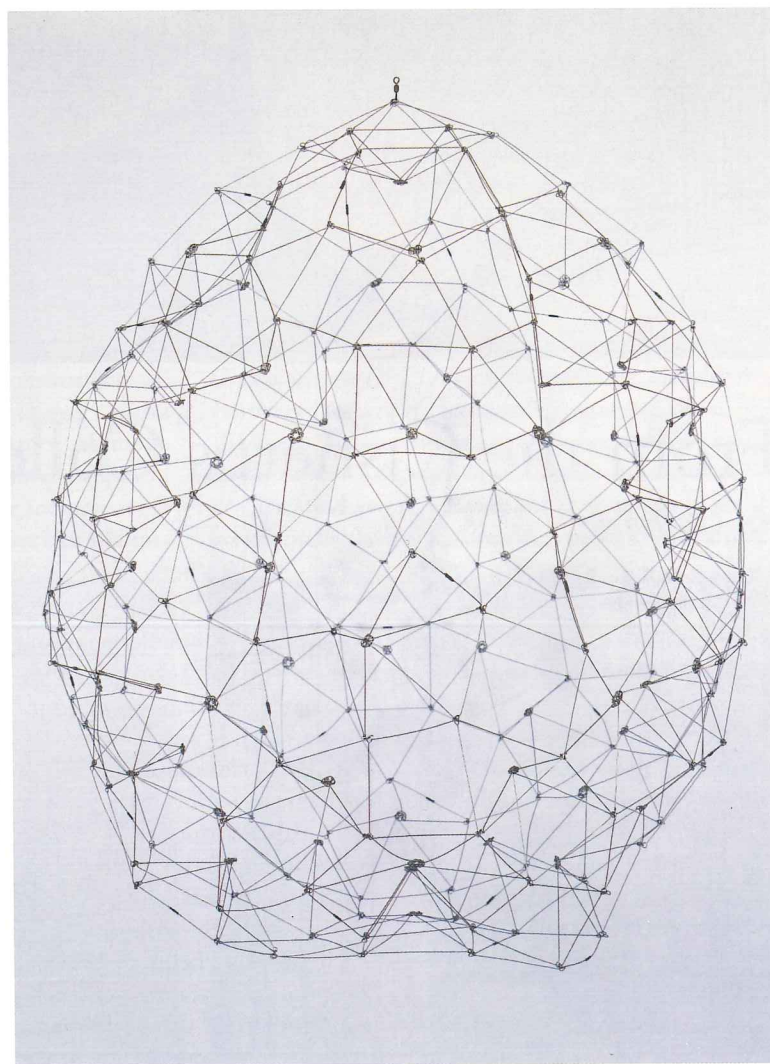
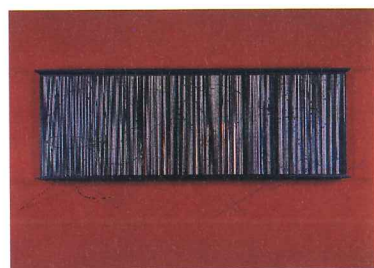
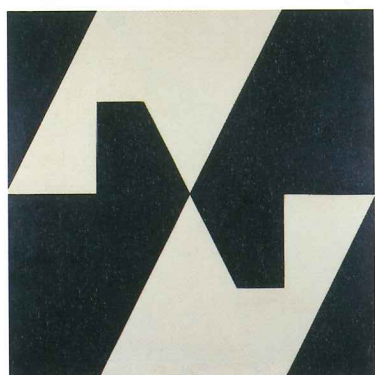
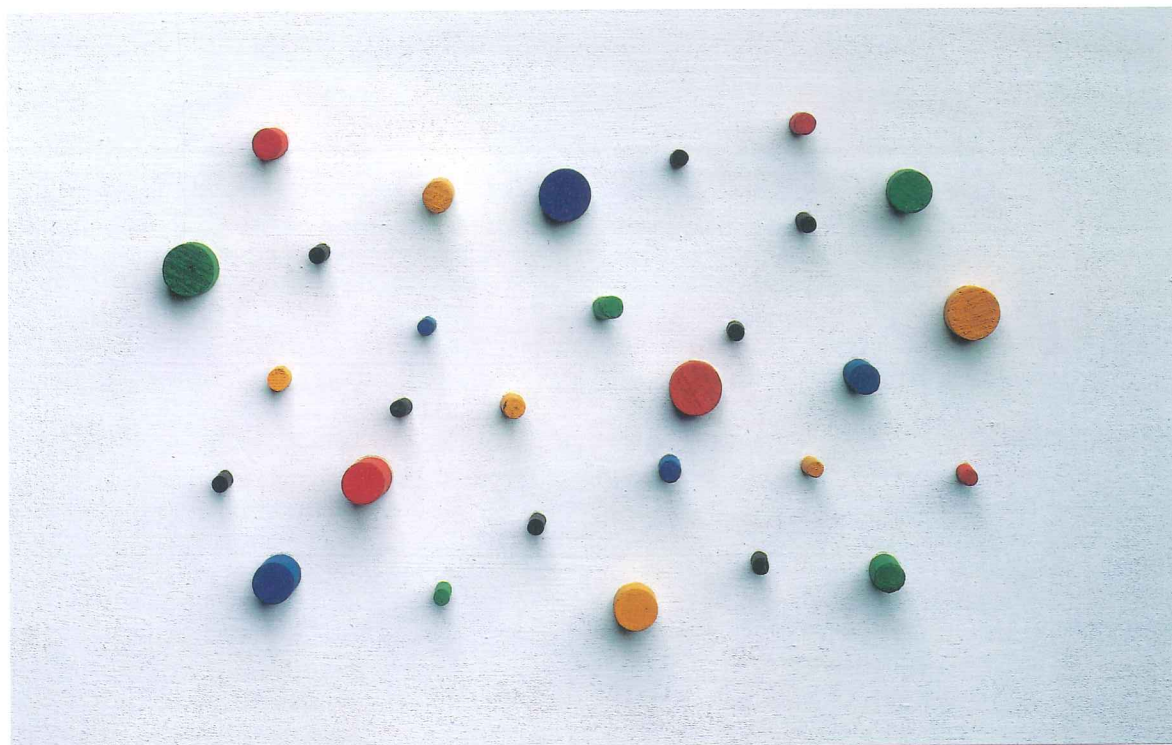
Clockwise
from top:
Carlos Cruz Diez
**Proyecto para
un mural**
1959

Gego
Esfera
1976

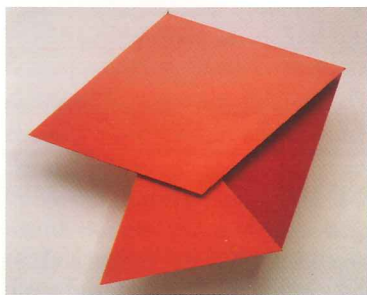
Sérgio De Camargo
Relevo branco
No 362

Jesús Rafael Soto
**Escritura verde,
rojo, azul**
1978

Lygia Clark
Sin titulo
1957

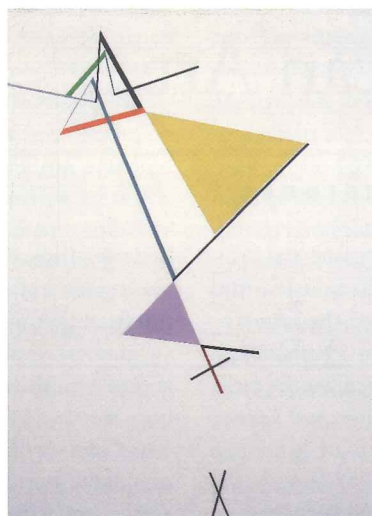


ALL ART (THIS SPREAD): PATRICIA PHELPS DE CISNEROS COLLECTION, CARACAS, VENEZUELA



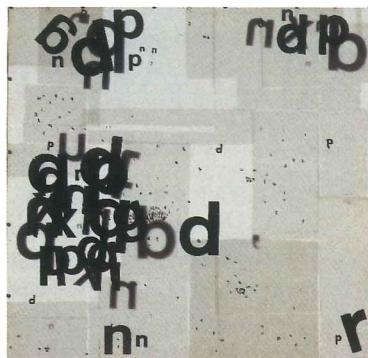
sity's architecture department. He had long embraced and contributed to the advancement of abstraction in architecture and design. His work, together with that of other Bauhaus artists, is well represented in Harvard's Busch-Reisinger Museum, and thus provides a context for consideration of the works in the Cisneros Collection. The Busch-Reisinger is also home to a collection of abstract works by artists who were especially influential in the development of geometric abstract art in Latin America, including the Hungarian László Moholy-Nagy, the Russian El Lissitzky, the Swiss Max Bill, and the Dutch Piet Mondrian.

The Fogg Museum, on the other hand, has important abstract paintings and sculptures by the Americans David Smith, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Franz Kline, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, and Ellsworth Kelly. These either advance geomet-



ric abstraction or counter it, with soft edges or—in the case of Pollock—with an intense linearity.

For all of these reasons, and because we have a concentration of renowned scholars of geometric abstraction in the Fogg's associate curator of modern art, Harry Cooper, the Busch-Reisinger's curator, Peter Nisbet, and Harvard's Joseph Pulitzer, Jr. Professor of Modern Art, Yve-Alain Bois, we jumped at the chance to work with our colleagues from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection to present the current exhibition. Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, who along with her husband Gustavo serves on the DRCLAS advi-



from left:
Hélio Oiticica
Relevo espacial
1937

Tomás Maldonado
Desarrollo del triángulo
1951

Mira Schendel
Untitled
Objeto gráfico
1973

sory committee, has had the vision to build a collection of Latin American geometric abstract art and to advance an international appreciation of the tradition it represents. Over the years she has dedicated her resources and energies to sharing her collection with museums and to provoking universities to include modern Latin American art in their curricula.

The exhibition, highlighted by a two-day symposium on 20th century abstract painting in Latin America, is bringing a new perspective on Latin American art to Harvard and museum visitors.

James Cuno is a Harvard University Professor of History of Art and Architecture and the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard Art Museums.

New Perspectives On Latin American Art

"New Perspectives on Latin American Art from the 16th Century to the Present" is a series featuring art experts and historians from North and South America. The ongoing lectures help put in intellectual context a two-day symposium on March 9 and 10 and the exhibition *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art* from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection at Harvard's Fogg Art Museum.

Tom Cummins, associate professor, Department of Art History, University of Chicago, and visiting professor, fall 2000, Harvard Department of History of Art and Architecture, opened the lecture series with his talk on "Incas and Mulattos at the Spanish Court: Looking at Royal Presence" this fall. Natalia Majluf, director of the Museo de Arte de Lima, Peru, talked on "Art in the Absence of Criticism: Francisco Laso and the Failure of the Public Sphere in 19th Century Peru.

Gustavo Buntinx, an independent scholar, SUR-Casa de Estudios del Socialismo, Lima, Peru, "The Return of the Sign: The Resymbolization of the Real in Carlos Leppe's Performance Work" (March 7) and James Oles, assistant professor, Art Department, Wellesley College, "Allegories of Conflict: Mexican Art and the Second World War" (April 11) are scheduled for the spring semester.

The series is sponsored by the Harvard University Art Museums, the Department of History of Art and Architecture, and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.

Support for the series was provided by Estrellita Bograd Brodsky, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, and Angeles Espinosa Yglesias. The Art Museums' support for these lectures was provided by the M. Victor Levin-trett Lecture Fund.

Latin American Art

From Inside and Out

BY MARY SCHNEIDER ENRÍQUEZ

WHILE RESEARCHING THE GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION exhibition that I am guest curating at the Harvard University Art Museums, I realized the extent to which the western perspective on 19th through 20th century Latin American art homogenizes the artistic achievements of individual nations. Moreover, I noted that the problem of how Latin American art is defined and received is as much at issue inside as outside the region. Although the artists who conceived of Geometric Abstraction in Argentina, Venezuela and Brazil achieved momentous change with their new visual languages, their accomplishments have gained relatively little attention beyond the surrounding region. Not surprisingly, each nation tends to focus upon its own cultural history, measuring its achievements against those of its neighbors. Hence, Mexico, Peru and Brazil project themselves as independent voices, not as the single artistic body, as the world has defined them.

Over the last ten years, in particular, the place of Latin American art within international art movements has been widely discussed. Art from Latin America, long deemed exotic for its unusually bold palette and startling subject matter, was first relegated to the margins of art history as the largely incomprehensible "other." Later it was embraced as warranting special interest because of these unusual qualities and received attention in dramatic museum exhibitions.

In the mid-1990's, increased globalization in the art world amplified the dialogue about Latin American art. Artists from Latin America became regular participants in the international exhibitions incorporating talents from throughout the world. This resulted in part from a renewed interest in the international biennials, the growth of the world's commercial art fairs and the emergence of prominent, international curators who focused upon Latin American artists, among other worldwide talents, in their high profile traveling exhibitions. Finally, the emboldened art market, resulting from economic prosperity, led collectors to buy the artists shown in these exhibitions, at the biennials, art fairs and then in the New York, London and Parisian galleries and museums. As a result, the profile of Latin American artists outside the region rose dramatically in the final years of the century. In many instances, these Latin American born, international art "stars" conceived visual statements without reference to their cultural

heritage. Instead their art expressed the language of the avant garde and was indistinguishable in subject and medium from that of many international artists.

Simultaneously, over the last decades, a handful of historical exhibitions were mounted exploring the contribution of Latin American artists to world art movements. *The Cubism of Diego Rivera* at the University of California, Santa Barbara and *The School of the South and Its Legacy, exploring the constructivism of Joaquín Torres-García*, at the University of Texas, Austin, are two—of many—shows that touched upon the role these artists played in the international vanguard.

Although Latin American art has recently gained exposure and recognition, issues persist surrounding the presentation and reception of art from this region. Guy Brett, one of the most respected art historians and curators in the field, summarized the nature of these enduring problems, "The centres of power always assumed the right to define and explain the rest of the world. The West assumes, consciously or unconsciously, it is 'the measure of all things.'...These assumptions lead to an unresolvable dilemma when it

The abstract visual languages explored in this exhibition shatter the commonly held U.S./European perspective on Latin American art.

comes to the presentation of art by Latin Americans.... If these presentations stress cultural similarity, they are positive in the sense that they acknowledge that Latin America is part of the mainstream of modern culture, but raise the danger of assimilating the work to a bland 'international art' which makes nothing of the context from which the art comes, and especially the fundamental gap between the living standards of the First and Third worlds. If on the other hand, the presentation stresses difference, it acknowledges that Latin America has a history, cultures, and present conditions different from those of Europe, but raises the danger of defining those differences in telluric, folkloric, essentialist terms. Both sets of alternatives lead inevitably to separate, restrictive categories for the artists.... No European artists are asked that their work give proof of their 'European identity,' but this is always the first thing expected of a Latin American. This restrictive categorization is so powerful, and the assumption of Eurocentricity so implacable, that it often hardly matters if the response of the West is to praise or condemn," Brett observes in his essay "Border Crossings," in *Transcontinental: An Investigation of Reality, Nine Latin American Artists*, (London: Verso).

Although the reception afforded Latin American artists has improved since Brett wrote this essay in 1990 and they no longer must prove their roots in visual terms, the Western view of art from the region remains largely fixed upon the visual language of bold or fantastic realism practiced by Mexican painter Frida Kahlo or Colombian artist Fernando Botero. This continues despite the prominence today of Latin American-born artists whose work lacks Latin American references, such as Gabriel Orozco from Mexico, Guillermo Kuitca from Argentina, Alfredo Jaar from Chile and Ernesto Neto from Brazil, among many others. Consequently, this is one reason among many, for the presentation of exhibitions such as the Harvard University Art Museum's Geometric Abstraction show. The abstract visual languages explored in this exhibition shatter the commonly held U.S./European perspective on Latin American art.

An example of the Mexican emphasis given Latin American art in the United States, was demonstrated in a recent *New York Times* article lauding the exhibited collection of Jacques Gelman, who is attributed with an "unerring artistic sensibility." The January 1 article "Two with Unerring Eyes for Art's Visionaries," mentions Gelman's "unerring eye," a statement substantiated by the fact that he bought the work of "...some of the finest artists Latin America has ever produced, among them Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, José Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Rufino Tamayo...." All are from Mexico and the article implies first, that Mexican artists top the list of the regions most talented and second, because all of these artists explored figuration, that this is the visual language of the Americas. Although these implications were, perhaps, not intended by author Stephen Kinzer, given the relatively few articles on Latin American art and collections in this prominent newspaper, the average reader has few visual references with which to contrast the author's statements.

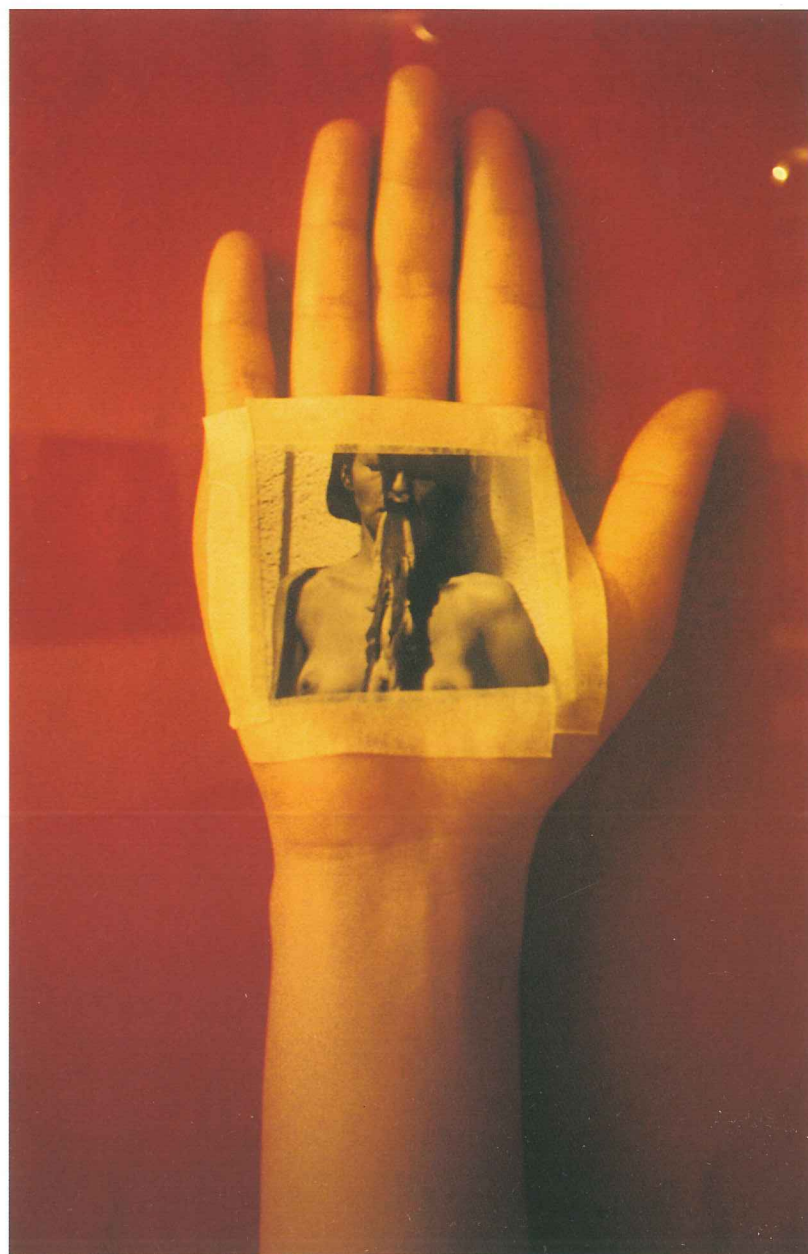
Having touched upon the international reception of Latin American art, I would also like to comment on the region's perspective on its art history, an issue largely overlooked by the Western approach to art from Latin America. Vast differences in visual languages and traditions exist in the art of Latin American countries. To speak of the visual culture from the region as a unified body, in which Chilean, Guatemalan or Brazilian art combined presents a varied, but single voice, ignores the multiplicity of approaches existing between the cultures of each nation. Similarities are evident based on historical influences but differences abound. We would not dare group 20th century European art under one heading, seamlessly combining Italian and German art as a single expression, without recognizing the history and tradition of each country. The same approach must be taken with art from Latin America.

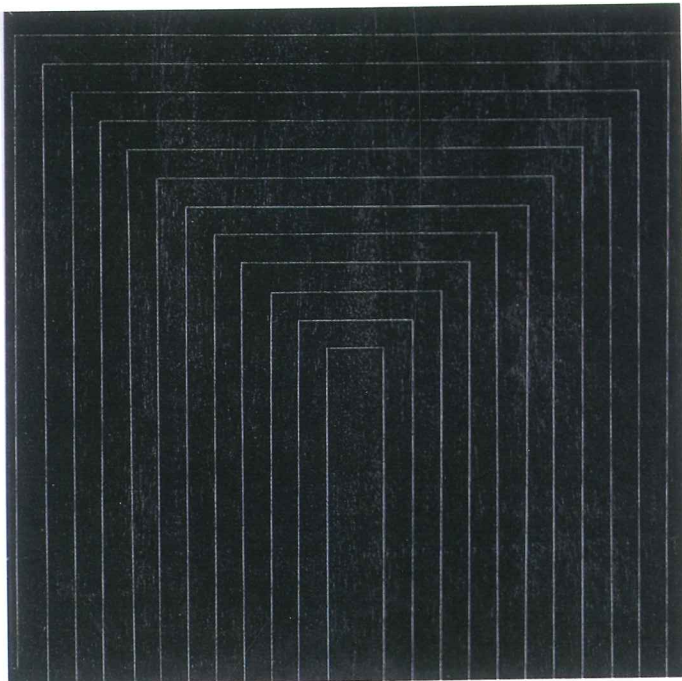
During the 20th century, in particular, art movements varied dramatically between Latin American countries based in large part on the artist's level of education, afflu-

ence and international exposure, both from travel abroad and from contact with European artists in the Americas. Mexico, for example, pursued a national, social-realist movement supported by the national government beginning in the 1920's. Artists were invited, under the auspices of the newly formed Ministry of Education to paint murals upon the walls of public buildings presenting easily readable images to explain the tragedies and triumphs of the Mexican Revolution. This engaging political propaganda educated a largely illiterate public to the successes brought by the bloody civil war, while celebrating the visual arts and the muralist painters.

Not long after, beginning in the 1940's, artists in Argentina, Venezuela and Brazil propounded visual languages dramatically different from the readily legible realism employed in Mexico. Independently and in fact, at odds with the Argentine government, groups of artists,

Eugenia Vargas
Detalle
1993





Top left:
Lygia Pape
Sin título
1959

Center left:
Maria Izquierdo
El gato sabio
1943

Bottom left:
Adriana Varejão
Azulejaria 'De Tapete em Carne Viva'
1959

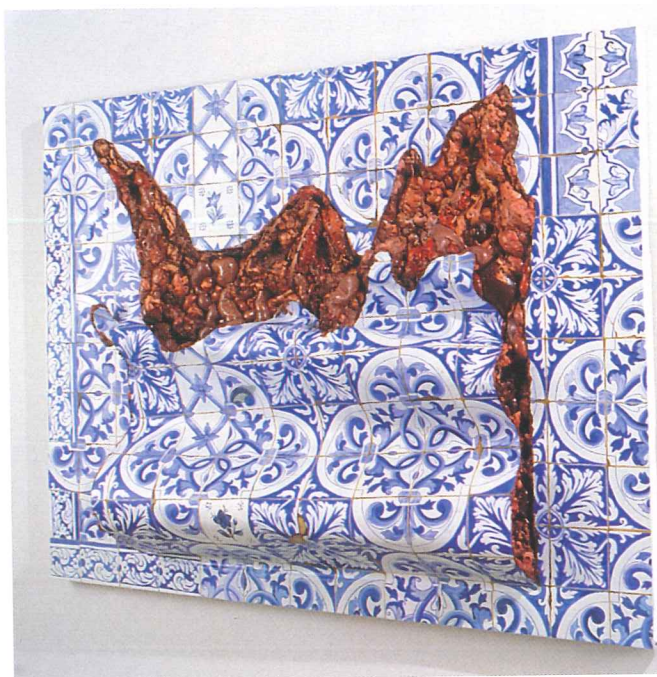
Top right:
Ofill Hechavarría
Ahogado desahogado
1994

Center right:
Juan Iribarren
Sin título III
1994

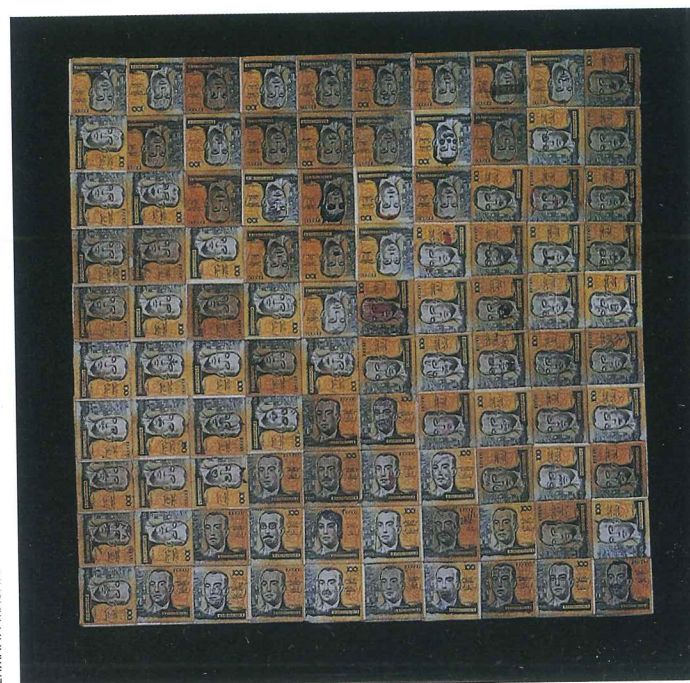
Bottom right:
Jac Leirner
Blue Phase



GALERIA NINA MENOCAL, MEXICO D.F.



LEHMANN MAUPIN



ALL ART UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED COURTESY OF PATRICIA PHELPS DE CISNEROS COLLECTION

writers and poets organized a wholly abstract means of expression. They began by publishing a journal of the arts called *Arturo*, then splintered into several groups, each professing specific aims in written manifestos. Poetry, sculptures, paintings and performance pieces were produced by this generation of artists, employing a non-figurative language.

Similarly, by the early 1950's, artists in Venezuela and Brazil were creating abstract expressions on canvas and in three-dimensional form. In both countries, the talents who lead these new visual directions had spent time studying, painting and/or sculpting in Europe and returned to their countries armed with the technical tools and determination to explore further these modern means of expression. Their hunger to create was encouraged upon their return home. Both nations underwent a period of economic prosperity in the 1950's. Especially in Venezuela, prosperity fueled the explosion of public commissions. Painting, wall reliefs and sculptures that imparted a sense of movement and the modern pace of life, dotted public spaces in Caracas, triumphantly symbolizing Venezuela's modern state.

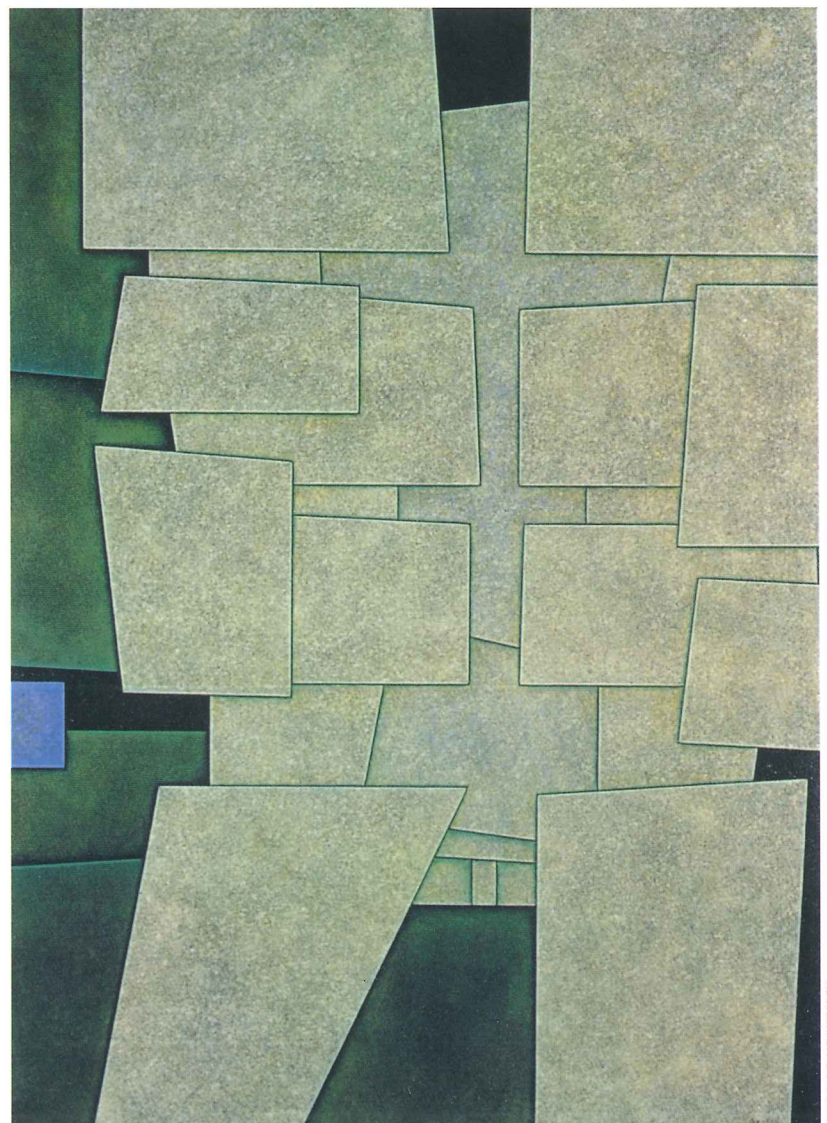
In Brazil, concrete abstract sculptures and paintings also figured in the public environment, but were primarily embodied in the newly created capital city, Brasília. This planned city built of coolly abstract architecture opened in 1960, a testament to their economic and cultural progress.

During the 1960's, as Brazil's environment continued to change, the extraordinarily progressive, neo-concrete movement arose propelled by artists who ruptured the definition of art. Their artistic expressions evolved from pieces of organic form and moving parts to audience participatory expressions that no longer privileged an untouchable, unique art object, but encouraged the movement and actions of the viewer in a multi-sensory experience. No longer would the viewers observe a static piece displayed in a museum setting; instead the audience became integral participants in the life of Lygia Clark and Helio Oiticica's expressions, wrapping each other in netting or entangling their limbs in a labyrinth of elastic bands. These brief art history examples illustrate the fact that distinctive visual expressions evolved from nation to nation.

Top left:
Guillermo Kuitca
Sin título
1992

Right:
Gunther Gerzso
Tiacullo
1979

Bottom left:
Guimar Mesa
¿La Salvadora?
1993



MUSEO DE MONTERREY

MUSEO DE MONTERREY

To group them summarily, dilutes and belittles their particular qualities and ignores the diverse contexts from which they evolved.

Having said this, I must add that, having spent seventeen years extolling the achievements of 20th century Latin American art, I, too, have summarized the art of the region in my efforts to broaden its audience. My graduate education in Latin American art at Harvard University was "Mexi-centric," as is the case for many who study the region from the United States, and I have found myself comparing the art of other nations to Mexican visual trends. After all, Mexico's art history is better known in the U.S. than that of most Latin American countries, as is Mexican culture in general, due to proximity, the growing immigrant population and to the number of scholars and exhibitions in the field active in North American institutions.

Moreover, although I lived in Mexico nearly ten years, I learned relatively little while there about modern and

contemporary art from the rest of Latin America. What I absorbed focused primarily upon artists who moved to Mexico. These artists included Cuban talents Jose Bedia and Sandra Ramos who immigrated in the late 1980's, and a handful of South Americans, such as Chileans Eugenia Vargas and Carlos Arias, who gained considerable attention through exhibitions in Mexican museums and galleries. The art historians, curators and artists with whom I worked closely in Mexico tended to focus more on Mexican, U.S. and European art than on the art of Peru, Argentina and Colombia, for example. But until the mid 1990's and the internationalization of the art world, and with it the appearance of traveling international curators, many of whom worked in Mexico, the country's museums and galleries focused mostly upon local talents. Given the Mexican government's steadfast support of the nation's art institutions, despite economic downturns, the emphasis on national art is expected.

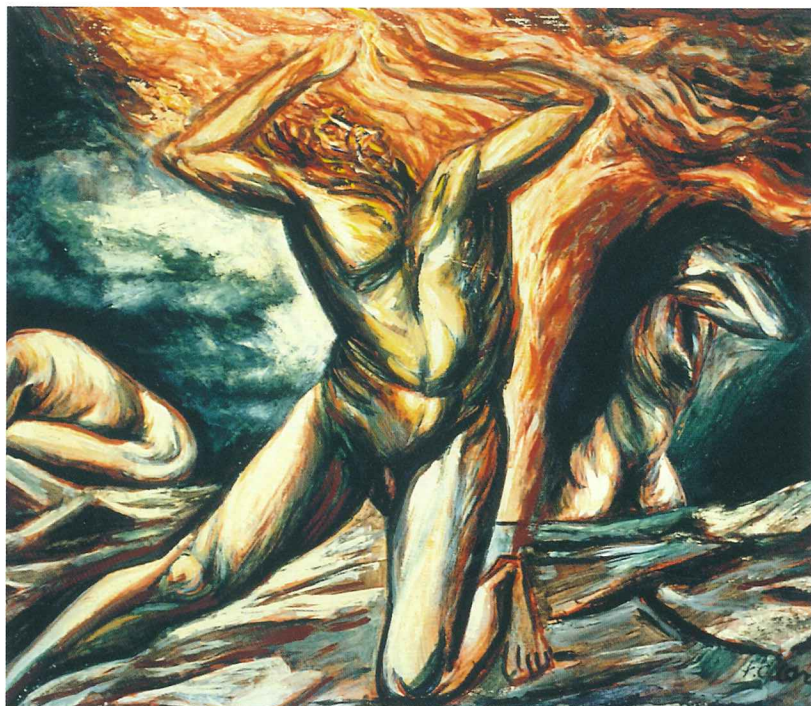
Within Latin America, although an awareness of the cultural accomplishments throughout the area exists, a national and at best, regional emphasis predominates. A recent trip to Venezuela while researching the Geometric Abstraction exhibition confirmed my thought. Historically, the vast distances separating artistic capitals before the advent of modern communication systems and particularly, the Internet, precluded the fluid interchange of artists and ideas. But, most important, just as each nation in Latin America focuses upon its economic development, comparing their progress to others in the region, the same competitive, nationalist pride infuses each country's cultural achievements. Even in today's globalized world with unprecedented exposure to the ideas and art of the region, through cyberspace and biennials in São Paulo and Havana, the artistic traditions of Chile or Venezuela are focused upon chiefly within their borders.

Overall, the western art establishment has chosen to overlook national differences in its move to include Latin America in the world scene. Twentieth century Latin art has been embraced for its bold and lively means and themes, hence it remains largely unknown, save for a few dominant expressions. Now that it has achieved a place within the international establishment, art from Latin America requires the rigorous academic scrutiny of western universities and museums to address the complexities of its many visual languages and cultures.

Mary Schneider Enriquez, Harvard AB '81, MA '87 in fine arts, is guest curator of the current exhibition, "Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection" at the Harvard University Art Museums. In addition to this exhibition, she has curated shows with the Smithsonian and the Americas Society focusing on Latin American art. She is also an art critic who contributes frequently to ARTNEWS and Art Nexus magazines. She serves as an Advisory Committee member of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.

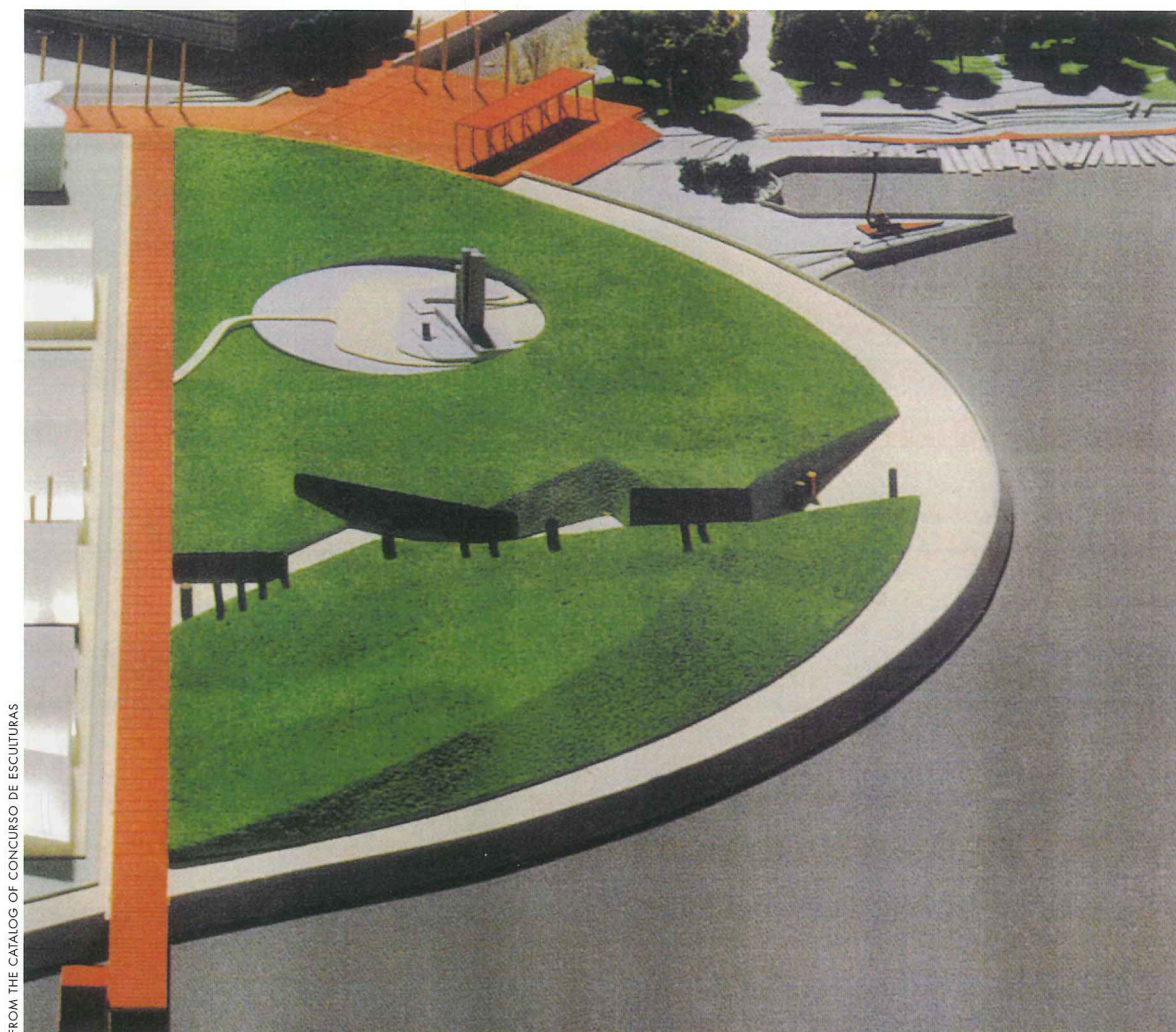
Top:
José Clemente Orozco
Prometeo
1944

Bottom:
José Bedia
*¡Ay total! Hasta
cuándo?*



ALL ART (THIS PAGE): PATRICIA PHELPS DE CISNEROS COLLECTION





FROM THE CATALOG OF CONCURSO DE ESCULTURAS

Project of Baudizzzone,
Lestard, Varas Studio
Associated Architects:
Claudio Ferrari and
Daniel Becker
**Proyecto Concurso
Nacional de Ideas
Ciudad Universitaria**

El Parque de la Memoria

The Art and Politics of Memory

BY ANDREAS HUYSEN

DEBATES ABOUT MUSEUMS, MONUMENTS, and memorial sites provide the cultural dimension of the politics of memory. Legal and cultural aspects of this struggle reinforce and need each other. That is why the debate about a memory park on the banks of the La Plata in Buenos Aires within striking distance of the infamous military torture chamber during Argentina's "dirty war" is tightly linked to claims against military officials in the courts and in the public sphere.

What interests me particularly is the fraught question of how to represent historical trauma, how to find per-

suasive means of public remembrance, and how to construct monuments that evade the fate of imminent invisibility. How can one counteract any monument's inherent tendency to domesticate or even freeze memory? How can one guarantee that it stands as a persuasive effort to take responsibility for the past rather than serve merely as a symbolic, non-committal gesture?

The *Parque de la Memoria* gains its symbolic weight in the context of ongoing legal struggles, the pursuit of justice, and the attempt to articulate a national memory of the state terror. At the same time, its design speaks powerfully to the issue of the simul-

taneously global and local horizon of contemporary memory culture.

The designs for the *Monumento a Las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado*, a project of Baudizzzone, Lestard, Varas Studio and the associated architects Claudio Ferrari and Daniel Becker, may provide some answers to these questions about public remembrance and historical trauma. The Varas design model, which won first prize in a competition, strikes me as one of the most interesting and potentially satisfactory solutions to these difficult problems.

Art in general—and public art in particular—increasingly reflects the

rather difficult and fraught attempt to take responsibility for the past. Whether through museums or parks or individual creations, memory art seeks to become the art of the witness with the artist/creator/curator as secondary witness, the witness to lives and life stories of people forever scarred by the experience of violence.

This demand to take responsibility for the past has pushed the discourse of memory toward a discourse of rights, restitution, and justice in an international field. This is the situation in which the seemingly innocuous landscaping plan for the Buenos Aires memory park almost inevitably becomes a major bone of political contention.

Indeed a global dimension always exists to such local controversies about the past, whether or not they make it into the international news circuits. All have followed upon recent political transitions or upheavals (Chile, South Africa, Argentina, Yugoslavia, Rwanda). For most if not all of these debates, the politics of Holocaust commemoration, so prominent in the global media and in the countries of the Northern Transatlantic, have functioned like a motor energizing the discourses of memory.

As an observer from a distance, I am not in a position to analyze the local controversy and public debate about the redesign of the *costanera norte* and the university environs in Buenos Aires in detail. But clearly, this debate goes to the heart of Argentina's inescapable need to deal publicly with the legacies of state terrorism during the military dictatorship. As such, the debate about the Memory Park has become part of a complex local history of cover-up and amnesty, public protest and continuing legal struggle, and the nature of the park and what is to be commemorated in it has itself become a bone of contention.

Nowhere do the politics of public trauma manifest themselves more intensely than in debates about concrete interventions in the built urban environment. Once embodied in monuments or memorial sites,

remembrance of traumatic events seems less susceptible to the vagaries of memory.

The creation of an urban memorial site to a national trauma such as the Parque de la memoria is a residue and reminder of a shameful national past and a political intervention in the present. By resisting the desire to forget, it becomes an agent of national identity today. Memory, after all, is always of the present even though its ostensible content is of the past. Still one might ask: how can there be a memory consensus about a national trauma that pitted one segment of society against another, that divided

It is a space for
reading—reading the
names on the walls
and reading the past.
Only time will tell how
the *Monumento a las
víctimas del terrorismo
de Estado* will be
accepted and used by
the public.

the national body into perpetrators and victims, beneficiaries and bystanders? The task just seems too daunting.

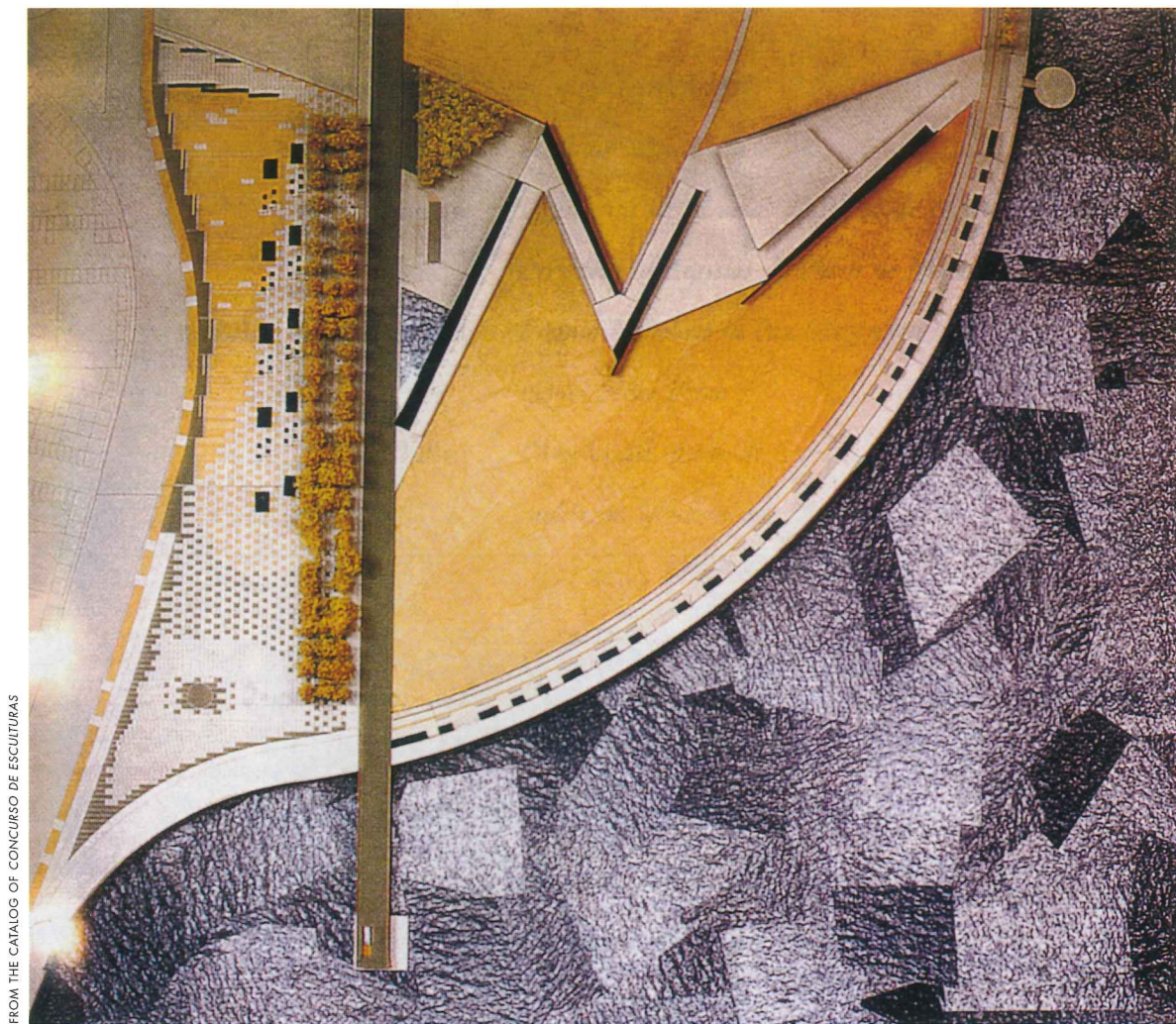
There are several closely connected reasons why the monument's design is so persuasive and moving. The reasons are topographic, political, aesthetic, and, yes, global. In its stylized simplicity of design it offers a place of reflection—reflection on the relationship between river and city, history and politics. The park is located in the immediate neighborhood of the ESMA, the notorious torture chambers of the military dictatorship, and it faces the river that carries such symbolic and historical

significance for all porteños—residents of Buenos Aires—and for the city itself. That traditional meaning of the La Plata as a source of life is now overlaid by the fact that the river became the grave for hundreds of desaparecidos—its earthy brown, opaque waters a symbol of the unretrievability of drugged and tortured bodies, dumped from airplanes and swept out to the sea.

The monument cuts deep like a wound or a scar into the elevated grassy surface of the park that faces the river in the half round. Visitors will enter the monument underground from the city side of the wall, and move through the zig-zag structure until they are released toward the river and the shoreline walkway. The overall design is classically modernist in its geometric configuration and felicitously minimalist in its lack of ornamentation and monumental ambition. It is thoroughly imbued with an aesthetic sensibility, but never approaches the risk of aestheticizing traumatic memory.

What I have described as a wound cut into the earth is framed along its zig-zag trajectory by four non-continuous walls which will carry the names of the disappeared. There will be 30,000 name plaques, sequenced alphabetically and by year. Many name plaques will remain empty, nameless, thus commemorating, if indirectly, the voiding of identity that always preceded disappearance.

These walls with their inscribed names will document the extent of state terror and provide a site for mourning—personal and familial, as well as social and national. Naming names is of course an age-old and venerable strategy of memorialization. However, the naming at stake in this monument is not of the traditional heroic and triumphalist kind. We are not remembering heroes of war or martyrs for the fatherland. We are remembering students and workers, women and men, ordinary people who had a social vision at odds with that of the ruling elites and the military, a vision shared by many young people across the globe at that



**Model of the
Monument to the
Victims of State
Terrorism**
Project of Baudizzone,
Lestard, Varas Studio
Associated Architects:
Claudio Ferrari and
Daniel Becker

FROM THE CATALOG OF CONCURSO DE ESCULTURAS

time, but which led to imprisonment, torture, rape, and death only in a few countries of the world. Thus the memory park in Buenos Aires is more than a national monument. Memory of past hopes remains part of any imagination of another future. Thus the monument becomes part of the global legacy of 1968, perhaps its darkest and most tragic part.

The Varas monument traverses a space between two lines, the straight line of the pedestrian pathway separating the monument and the park from the city and the round line that forms the other walkway along the shore. The monument can then also be read between two lines, on one side of which you have the city and on the other the river. Memory of the desaparecidos intervenes in between: between Buenos Aires and the La Plata river, but the space between the lines, the memory space, will always

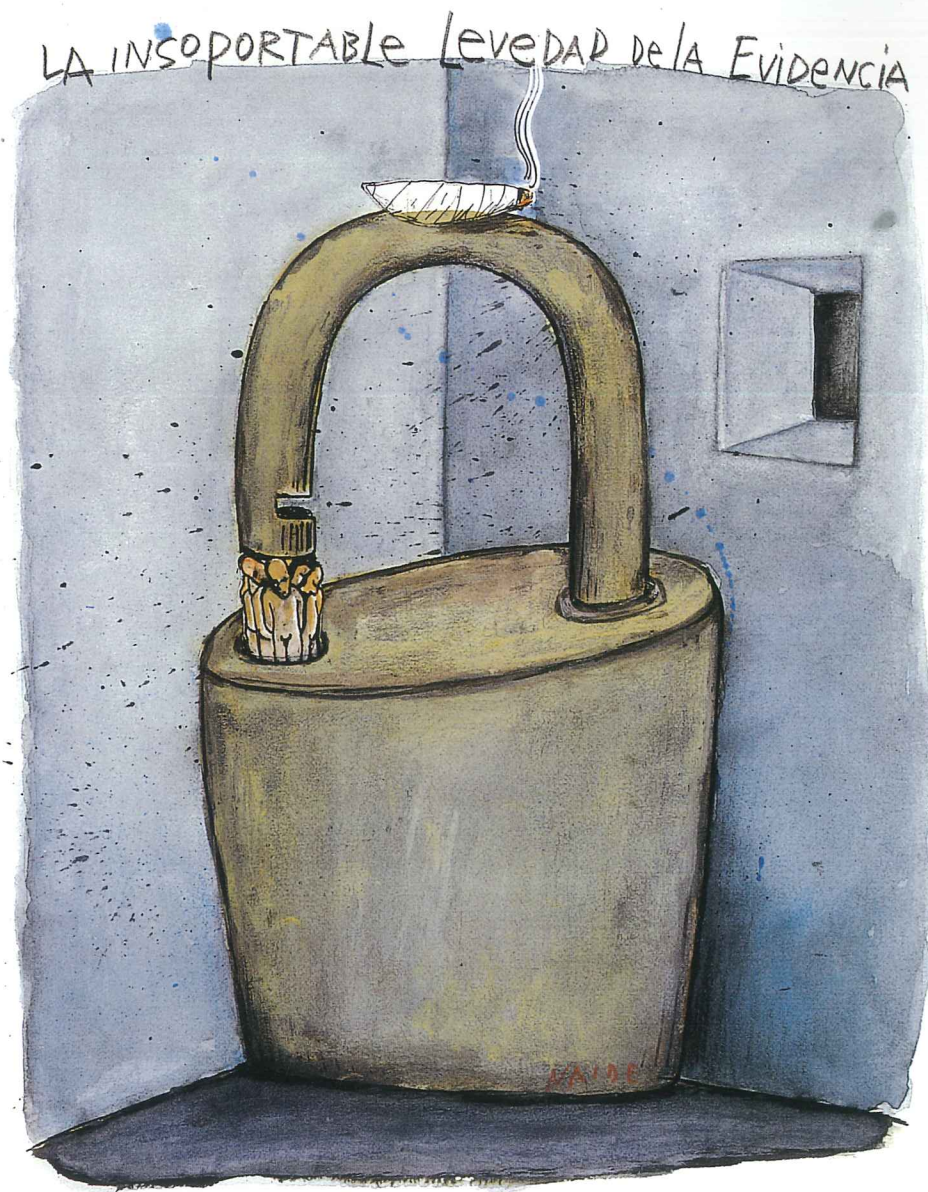
be fragile and depend on interpretation. But it is a space for reading—reading the names on the walls and reading the past.

Only time will tell how the *Monumento a Las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado* will be accepted and used by the public. While I don't quite share James Young's hyperbolic argument that the main benefit of any monument or memorial project may indeed be the public debate it unleashes, I agree that such public debate is an essential component of success for any memorial project to take hold in the public sphere and to become part of a national imaginary. But the innumerable monuments in 19th century style that litter the boulevards and public spaces of the city of Buenos Aires, as of most European cities, remind us that nothing may be so invisible as a monument, as Austrian novelist Robert Musil once said. Aesthetic appeal, for-

mal construction, and persuasive execution remain the sine qua non for a monument to maintain a visible presence in the urban public sphere. To me, the Varas project fulfills those criteria. But it will be up to the Argentine public to embrace it and to make it fulfill its ultimate purpose.

Andreas Huyssen is the Villard Professor of German and Comparative Literature and Director of Columbia University's Center for Comparative Literature and Society. He is the author of After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism (1986) and Twilight Memories: Marking Time in a Culture of Amnesia (1995). His work—which includes several other books and edited volumes—has appeared in translation in Spanish, Portuguese, Turkish, Chinese, Japanese, and other languages.

Naide
*La Insoportable
 Levedad de la
 Evidencia*



Emotion, Nation and Imagination

Does Art Represent Place?

FIVE COLOMBIAN-BORN U.S. BASED ARTISTS EXHIBITED their works in a group show entitled *Colombians: Between Emotion, Nation and Imagination*, sponsored in part by the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and the Colombian Consulate in Boston. The exhibit at the Cambridge Multicultural Arts Center, curated by Shaari Neretin and Angela Pérez Mejía, sought to explore the interplay between national identity, the production of art, and the viewing of art. Given Colombia's political situation, it was a provocative subject matter for artists and viewers alike. The content of the art work ranged from Colombian landscapes painted on raw wood brought from Colombia to political car-

toons to fanciful word play between Spanish and English. Participating artists were: Elsa Borrero, cybachrome prints; Ana Uribe, acrylics and oils; Josefina Jacquin Bates, silk-screen prints; Jairo Barragán (Naide), political cartoons and acrylic paintings; and Jorge Olarte, mixed media sculptures. Luis Camnitzer, visual artist and art critic gave a gallery talk focusing on art and national identity. At first, the exhibiting artists represented themselves foremost as artists, but they all said they were delighted to be exhibiting in this group show with other Colombians. As one artist initially stated: "I am more emotional [about making her art] than national." Perhaps the two are not mutually exclusive.

—Shaari Neretin

The Twilight of the Pontiffs of Art Criticism

...and the Rise of Art History

BY CARLOS RINCÓN

LATIN AMERICAN BOOKSTORES—just like their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere—always promote their favorite and bestselling books by keeping them in the public eye. Indeed, the displays in bookstore windows and on prominent merchandise tables often determine the profile of the seller.

Today, in Mexico City and Buenos Aires, bookstores often showcase works about art and art history. A decade ago, these books gathered dust on hard-to-find shelves. The same shops now feature recent works on contemporary artists, panoramic studies that propose a master map for artistic production with recently discovered scope and variety, and catalog-books of exhibits that translate into a new level of visual expectations in Latin American societies. Browsing the bookshelves, one now readily finds the complete works of Alejo Carpentier with his essays on art and the two volumes of art-focused *Los privilegios de la vista* by Octavio Paz. In a culture where books that don't sell well go out of print quickly, the browser can still find the second edition of Damián Bayón's *Pensar con los ojos. Ensayos de arte latinoamericano* (*Thinking with Eyes; Essays on Latin American Art*), a 1993 reprint of his 1982 collection of essays and interviews.

What one doesn't find, however, are the works of Jorge Romero Brest and Marta Traba, art critics whose prolific activity contributed decisively to laying the groundwork for the hegemony of modern art in Latin America. In a hyperbolic way, the two functioned as agents of the maelstrom of cultural modernization. They were present day after day with a stream of art reviews, constantly putting forth aesthetic and epistemological criteria.

They were always looking at ways of painting and reading specific works, with a practice of art history somewhere between irritation and exasperation set down in personal journals and art theory like bricolage. Thus, from the 50s until the 70s, they were the driving force behind mainstream Modernism, serving as a catalyst, even as directors of Museums of Modern Art, to articulate heritage and canon.

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symbolic worlds.

So what does it indicate that the writings of Brest and Traba are not found in Latin American bookstores? Is it perhaps an indication of the way the reorganization of cultural capital is experienced in the art field by the Spanish-speaking countries of the Americas? Now that these positions are no longer cutting-edge, today's consumer demand, booksellers' decisions, and the politics of publishing houses relegate their work to the back of the shop. Beyond the bookstores, audience expectations have also undergone a clear shift in their attitudes towards exhibition practices as well as in the ethos of aesthetic practices themselves.

The question is not only that of an act of positive codification of cultural memory. The positions and art narratives of Romero Brest and Traba

might have put on the agenda a productive conversation in the context of contemporary debates. Therefore, the apparent lack of interest in their work is a great paradox. They are shuffled aside precisely at a time when art history has become the predominant focus for capturing and theorizing the heterogeneous multiplicity of artistic production within the many non-synchronicities in today's Latin America. One might look for answers in the fact that art history discourse has begun to differentiate itself from that of art criticism in Latin America, precisely at the point when art criticism has been able to become an object of historical study. In this way, one can encounter the discursive logic and historical determination of certain arguments.

Read retrospectively, the essays of Carpentier, Luis Cardoza y Aragón, Octavio Paz and José Lezama Lima, as well as the texts of Gabriel García Márquez, and the extensive activity and ample publications of Marta Traba, make up part of the body of work from which two generations of writers created ways of talking and writing about art in Latin America. Political activists such as Mário Pedrosa and professional liberals such as Brest also contributed to this conversation. The lack of interest in this body of literature could derive from shifts in structures of feeling, perception and experience that condition the emerging parameters. The expansion of cultural industries has ended up to a large extent secularizing and internationalizing symbolic worlds. The market has taken over the networks and dynamics in the area of culture. But the important thing is that writers, as well as critics, have managed to establish a discourse, a surface

of mediation. Michel Foucault talks about a similar discourse in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, "We must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical functions is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies ... because of its inherent multiplicity, no discourse is all encompassing nor finite, none ultimately 'correct.'"

The archeology of the beginnings of this discourse on art and art criticism in Latin America gives us a surprising picture. Carpentier's 1928 trip as a stowaway from Cuba to France forms part of the region's literary legend. In 1926 Carpentier was recognized as the youngest editor in all of Latin America directing a most prestigious magazine. After spending several months in prison during the dictatorship of General Gerardo Machado on charges of participation in an alleged "communist conspiracy," he boarded a transatlantic steamer, using the press credentials of his friend, surrealist poet Robert Desnos, who had recently attended a conference in Havana.

A lesser-known aspect of Carpentier's history is that the beginnings of the discourse on art are marked by his groundbreaking and idiosyncratically imaginative avant-garde stories. They were written in crucial connection with a group of writers and ethnographers grouped around Georges Bataille in the magazine *Documents*, which "delight(ed) in cultural impurities and disturbing syncretism," as noted by James Clifford, author of *The Predicament of Culture*.

In Havana, during the twenties, Carpentier had tried to decipher and aesthetically evaluate santería ritual, sacred artifacts and religious altars, as well as the Afro-Cuban music that was springing up in the urban environment. The first real post-slavery generation was encountering the worlds

of tourism and the record industry. In the Cuban music known as *son*, the same rhythmic combinations could be found as in Stravinski, reflecting an aesthetic of Cubism, as Carpentier thought. Writing about art from Paris and defying the blatant cultural conservatism of the Cuban elite in *Social*, the magazine read by members of the sugar and tobacco aristocracy, he

The discourse about art was practically exclusive to writers as lords of symbolic order. The powers of analogy formed the basis of the writers' privilege to discuss art.

raised the question of authority: how one acquires and maintains it and at what or whose cost. Carpentier took two separate tacks. On the one hand, he denied the specialized authority of the traditional critic of art. On the other hand, he placed his texts within yet a larger constellation, explaining the vibrant energy released by the multitude of para-aesthetic strategies of the avant-garde group.

Carpentier took advantage of this legitimation to advance agendas constructed from a field of potential alternatives with clear cultural political and territorial focus. He wanted to serve as a transatlantic bridge, to provide information processing about artists and artworks selected from the avantgarde scene, and to give the Latin American world a cultural and aesthetic sense of heterogeneous identities. In turn, this created the opening of spaces for recognition of the type of art practiced by Latin Americans. Ultimately, what counts is not the destruction of all traditional forms of representation in the name of the future, but the redefinition of the concepts of art and of artwork through

the production of Latin American art. Art entwined with life, to the mnemotic convulsions of its societies and cultures, as a symbolic guarantee of identity.

With the real conflicts and crisis of Latin American societies, the acceleration of history and the emergence of a new mediatic culture, these agendas of criticism were forced to change. But in spite of the ways that Latin American cultures could imagine their dark or brilliant future, two elements remained constant over a period of some 50 years. The discourse about art was practically exclusive to writers as lords of symbolic order. At the same time, their readings of specific works and artists, art tendencies, artistic practices or exhibitions did not want to be confused with art criticism, but sought to resolve problems of representation, narrative and aesthetics in their own fashion.

The powers of analogy formed the basis of the writers' privilege to discuss art. To analogize is to put forth an illustration of a reality by means of a more familiar reality that is similar or parallel to it in some significant way.

In 1983 García Márquez began an article about the painter Alejandro Obregón by telling a personal anecdote. One day a friend asked Obregón to help him look for the body of a boatowner who had drowned that afternoon. He and the man had been fishing in the man's boat near Baranquilla when the accident took place. After saying that they spent all night looking in vain, García Márquez continues, "Suddenly Obregón saw him: he was submerged up to his crown, almost sitting in the water, and the only things floating on the surface were the errant strands of his hair. 'He looked like a jelly-fish', Obregón told me. He grasped the bundle of hair with two hands and with the colossal strength of a painter of bulls and storms drew the drowned man up, eyes open, huge, dripping with the slime of sea-anemones and manta rays, and flung him like a dead shad into the bottom of the boat."

Choosing narration and a figura-

tive style makes them the medium for talking about the unrepresentable—the Real Thing itself—in other words. The highly condensed text uses a surprising turn of phrase unexpected by the reader. Nothing more nor less than Obregón's analogic definition of art. "Obregón has recounted the episode to me over and over because I ask him to do so every time we get drunk together; his account gave me the idea for a story about drowned men. The episode is perhaps the instant in his life which most resembles his art. That is the way he paints—as if he were fishing drowned men up out of the darkness," recounts García Márquez.

Also unexpected is the resolution of the oppositions between the painting understood as window and the work of art understood as mirror, between art and life. According to

García Márquez, in Obregón's house in Cartagena, the entire sea comes in through one single window. In this house, one finds daily life and the "other life" painted everywhere. It is significant that the only painting mentioned by García Márquez is a free unicorn that Obregón drew one night on a wall that was later destroyed. The writer limits himself to evoke bulls, condors, barracudas, a wreath-crowned woman, that is, the heraldic representations that make up Obregón's mythology, energized in an emblematic manner. In this way, he rejects criticism as an activity related to aesthetic pleasure, with the techniques to transmit that pleasure to others, to make plausible a scale of values, the appreciation of formal qualities. García Márquez' narrative essay is more a poetic attempt to return those elements that would

escape in Obregón's art to the usual parameters of art criticism.

With visual culture emerging as a subject, the minimum common denominator of the renewed cross disciplinary history of art in Latin America is the premise that the visual experience, "visual literacy" is "not fully explicable in the model of textuality," to use a phrase by leading visual representation theorist J. T. Mitchell. Thus, the range of research activities has expanded at institutions such as the Institute of Aesthetic Investigations at the Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the Julio Payro Institute at the University of Buenos Aires. The success museums experienced as a mass medium and the new exhibition practices added new demands to those of preservation.

The success of museums as a mass medium and new exhibitions prac-

Alejandro Obregón
Untitled



DUNCAN COLLECTION, NEW YORK

"With the emergence of visual culture as a subject, the minimum common denominator of the renewed cross disciplinary history of art in Latin America is the premise that the visual experience, 'visual literacy' is 'not fully explicable in the model of textuality.'"

—Carlos Rincón

Carmen Aldunate
Two Figures
1978



JACK S. BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, GIFT OF BARBARA DUNCAN, 1994

tices added new demands to those of preservation. Now an exhibition can only be justified if it raises provocative questions that can be illustrated through a particular configuration of objects. Cultural life provides a pressure that has stimulated new themes and ways of looking at things.

At the same time, there has been a revision of tools of language and interpretative methodology implemented by art historians who have worked on Latin America and developed crucial research to situate Latin American visual production within the context of art in the rest of the world. In this way, the question "what is an image" has led to the theoretical understanding of the Ixtila in pre-Cortés México, completely differs from the phenomena which is understood in the West as "image." The strengthened interest in objects in and

of themselves is coupled with an intercultural perspective to examine cross-cultural exchanges and western conventions of representation and their colonial significance. The accent has been placed on the multivalent signifying power of early hybrid images.

Also, parallel with postmodern enthusiasm for the sublime, the aesthetic category of the marvelous "lo maravilloso" has been put forth. The notion of fetishism, part of an iconoclastic rhetoric that operated "as a metalanguage for the magical thinking of others" (Jean Baudrillard), has undergone self-subversion. And if appropriation was the favorite buzzword of the artistic elite in the 80s in the United States, understood along the lines of Duchamps-Warhol, the most pertinent terms of cannibalism and translation ("antropofagia" and "traducción") are those now explored

in Latin America to establish the theoretical foundations and workings of these operations.

In an article entitled "Marta Traba's Criticism Shook Up the Circles of Power," an ERET Agency journalist described in 1969 the effect of her short stay in a Latin American capital: "It created a real commotion in the intellectual world that shook it at its very foundations....she didn't hold back in the least bit from criticizing the 'hot-shots' of the arts or letters and against the 'parricides' who in their haste to scale the ladder of fame don't care about anything except getting rid of those above them." Today the question is not one of obsolete standards nor of narcissistic defense strategies. The fears and anxieties that arise in the work of the new art historians have other social and cultural relevance. Among the major artistic events of the last few years in Latin America was the exhibition organized in Lima to document the iconological processes associated with the cult of Santa Rosa de Lima. In these images, mysticism and politics are intermingled. Scandal arose when one picture of the saint selected by the historian organizing the exhibition was ordered down and thrown out by church authorities. The portrait in question was a recent one that showed another small feminine figure in the background—the emigrant "saint" Sarita Colonia, who today is also the object of a widely spread popular religious cult. It's not necessary to say that, having been expelled from the museum, this image of Rosa de Lima with Sarita Colonia is easily found on the Internet.

Carlos Rincón, vice-director of the Latin American Institute of the Free University of Berlin, was the DRCLAS Santo Domingo Visiting Scholar in Spring '00. He is the author of La no simultaneidad de lo simultáneo: posmodernidad, globalización y culturas en América Latina and Mapas y pliegues: ensayos de cartografía cultural y de lectura del neobarroco, which won the Colombia National Essay Prize in 1997.

A Life of Art

Searching for Peace

BY IVONNE A-BAKI

ART IS A VERY ENHANCED FORM OF EXPRESSION: through it, the artist captivates its public through the senses, but also conveys a message that appeals to the mind. Art is therefore a means of communication, and communication holds the key to conflict resolution.

What is the relation between art and conflict resolution? I can only refer to my personal experience. My artistic work has always been the resolution of an inner conflict, a peaceful one but intense nonetheless. On the other hand, you know that sometimes diplomacy, which is just formal government efforts at conflict resolution, is called an art, and I would venture to say it is the art of the improbable. So there's always been a connection between the two that I can now experience first-hand as the Ambassador of Ecuador to the United States who is also an artist, or the other way around. To me, the link goes deeper than formalities; in my personal experience, the two have been intertwined.

Both my passion for art and my search for peace grew out of my experience in Lebanon, while I was raising a family in the midst of the war.

Perhaps it was the impending sense of doom, the anguish of a mother fearing the ultimate loss of a child, or the sleepless nights as war raged on, that made me realize the value of peace and the need to devote one's life, if necessary, to achieve it. I dreamt of the simple, precious things in life that I could not entirely enjoy, and peace became almost an obsession, a life-defining objective.

I realized that I could neither let myself become a helpless victim of tragic circumstances nor another link in a vicious cycle of hate and destruction. There had to be another way, one that would lay the ground for a permanent peace—and peace of mind.

I took a hard look at my reaction: there was nothing extraordinary in my aspiration, so it had to be shared, at some level, by everyone else. If war is never unavoidable, then why did politicians insist on escalating confrontation, rather than defusing it and promoting understanding?

I felt that the cause of peace was one that should have universal support, despite strong differences of interests and perceptions. Yet, despite numerous proclamations in favor of peace, action did not follow discourse—and the price paid was very high.

Whatever the reasons for the apparent deadlock, I perceived that at the grassroots level there was a genuine desire to lead peaceful lives, but years of conflict had left scars and, perhaps even more troubling for the prospects of peace, a complete lack of direct communication. How could this barrier come down, when every gesture from the opposite side was regarded with contempt and suspicion?

Almost surreptitiously, the answer came to me disguised as a hobby. I had started painting as a way to maintain my sanity in a senseless war, and the levity of art in such grave circumstances helped me relax and gain new perspectives on almost everything. Soon, I discovered the power of art. As an artist, I realized I was free to express my thoughts and emotions, even those that I could not voice as a woman in the Middle East.

People of all walks of life and from every background appreciated my paintings and understood my message, although I am afraid many would not have let me utter a word on the issue of women's rights in a more conventional environment. As an artist, they even asked me to interpret the paintings and elaborate on my message! I also noticed that people from Europe or America could appreciate the paintings and somehow relate to them, despite having no experience in the Middle East.

Later on, I developed my artwork further in France, not because of the extraordinary architecture of Paris, the art-filled museums and galleries or even the classes at La Sorbonne, but because I embraced my inner emotions and was able to pour them onto a canvas with more precision. My art still reflected my convictions and sent a strong message about women's empowerment, but I felt that my impact was limited in the area I most coveted: conflict resolution.

So, just as I had gone to France to develop artistically, I went to learn from the best about conflict resolution: Harvard University. At the JFK School of Government, all my instinctive ideas for conflict resolution found a theoretical framework and my approach to art and conflict resolution, to my surprise, was not shunned but rather very much well received.

Although academic life was very rewarding, I kept pushing for a more practical involvement in conflict resolution. My objective has always been working for peace, not learning about it. As a result, I became more actively involved in a non-official capacity in several conflicts in which Harvard played a "facilitating" role.

Perhaps the most important one was the Ecuador-Peru peace process and the encounters between representatives of civil society of both countries. True, there was a break-



Ivonne A-Baki
Social Injustice

through after the Cenepa confrontation in 1995 that opened the doors for the official negotiations, as well as for increased participation in non-official encounters (previously, it could have been much harder to engage some high level participants in an exercise regarded as futile if no official negotiations were possible).

In any event, those initial encounters confirmed my perception that we could get along fine, just as long as we were careful to generate some confidence and establish a rapport in the first contacts before discussing contentious issues. The important thing was to keep the lines of communication open. A good way to let the guard down and establish contact always seemed to be art, which reinforced my deeply held convictions.

I painted a series dedicated to peace between Ecuador and Peru entitled "Beyond Boundaries", and of course their appreciation always prompted the general acclamation of peace as a common goal. I knew then that we could work together to secure a lasting peace.

As the network of participants expanded, it grew to include personalities in both countries that were connected to or would later become policy-makers. However, by that time our dialogue had transcended entrenched official positions. Officials; we had already established personal relationships and built the confidence that would be needed for the final stages of the negotiations.

I personally became a more active participant in the

final stages of the process, and it was clear that we benefited from our previous informal contacts. The process itself was exhausting, as it needed to be inclusive, at least in Ecuador, in order to prevent representative groups within society from walking away or resorting to the old habits of demonizing the peace process.

There were certainly tense moments in the negotiations, particularly as the most sensitive issues were intentionally left for the last

phase, and by then there was a growing sense of impatience. It was in those moments that our personal relationships and even friendships forged in both non-official encounters and official negotiations would prove essential. We were sensitive to each other's constraints and political realities and could be confident that we were all truly committed to peace.

Finally, one of the most intractable disputes in the Western Hemisphere was solved peacefully through negotiations. The Peace Accords were signed in October 1998. Since then, trade between Ecuador and Peru has blossomed, and there is increasing cooperation at every level. It is worth

noting that despite some political turmoil, not one significant party from either country has rejected the Accords.

As Ambassador of Ecuador to the United States, I am now officially trying to solve conflicts, fortunately always peaceful ones. I am sometimes struck by the question: How can I find time for my art, in the busy schedule of an Ambassador? The truth is that although I haven't really had time to paint, art for me is not an occupation but a dimension. It defines me and permeates to all my activities, so no matter how long it takes me to paint again (and I keep promising it will be soon), I remain an artist.

But I have deviated from the topic of this article, and perhaps spoken too much about my life. Please do not take this as the proverbial modesty of all artists; my intention has been to illustrate the best way I can how I have felt and lived the connection between art and conflict resolution.

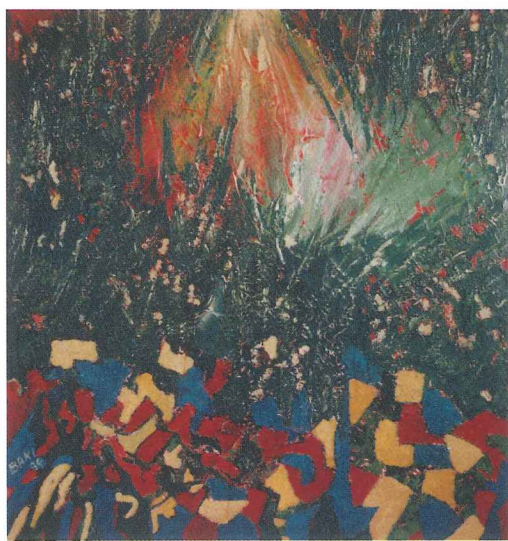
My experience has led me to conclude that those inclined to appreciate art can do so regardless of the artist's background, even if they don't agree entirely with the message conveyed. I sensed in a personal way that art could spread a message, even a revolutionary one, without the slightest threat of violence, for people will very seldom reject it entirely. At most, they will not be touched by the artistic work. Art is an area usually considered "harmless" by traditional politicians and "hawks": initiatives for cultural and artistic exchange are welcome, just as political contact is disavowed. I have found. But cultural exchange breeds direct communication among members of the civil society, which in turn gives way to a wider dialogue. Invariably, more communication leads to a better understanding and the realization that people share some basic values and have common goals they can build upon to solve their conflicts.

There is, however, much more to conflict resolution, and the process could falter at any time. Nevertheless, I do believe that art and cultural exchange could jump-start a process that requires skillful negotiators and a cooperative approach to achieve its ultimate goal. Art also creates the right atmosphere to foster the confidence and goodwill needed to prevail in the often tortuous and extenuating negotiating process.

My experience in the Ecuador-Peru peace negotiations validated my views, and was an extremely rewarding exercise. Yet there is much more that remains to be done in the conflict resolution arena, and I trust more and more people will become engaged in the search for peace.

I hope that the link between art and conflict resolution will become ever more evident, and someday we will all be able to enjoy art in a peaceful environment.

Ivonne A-Baki, Ambassador of Ecuador to the United States since 1998, is an artist who has had major exhibitions in Ecuador, Lebanon, France and the United States. She was a Edward S. Mason Fellow and holds a Master in Public Policy from the John F. Kennedy School of Government (1993), and since 1990 has been an Artist-in-Residence at Dudley House, Harvard University.



Ivonne A-Baki
Verde Amazonia

Exploring New Horizons in Latin American Contemporary Art

Time and Space: A Personal Saga

BY BARBARA DUNCAN

WHEN I FIRST TRAVELED TO Peru by boat with my family fifty years ago, the country seemed as far away from Argentina as Boston from Buenos Aires. My husband had been sent there by W.R. Grace, a New York-based company with diverse businesses around Latin America. Living in Lima from 1947 to 1955 gave me my initial exposure to the distinct cultures among the countries of this vast region. As we traversed the hemisphere by plane I looked at the work of the contemporary artists and learned new popular songs and rhythms with the guitar. In my mind the two arts complemented each other and it was a joyous new experience.

On returning to the New York area, I began to explore the relationship among some of the most notable artists of the postwar generation in each country in Latin America, something that was difficult at a time of unreliable phone lines, no faxes, no Internet, and only scanty airplane connections. I chose the postwar generation because it corresponded to the period I spent in Peru, when the big winds of change started to blow in Latin America. These changes resulted not only from the material advances in transportation and communication, but also from the different types of cultural, economic, and political factors that opened up Latin America to the postwar international order. Artists of this generation exemplified the changing atmosphere of the times and also had strong and identifiable personal styles.

Countries were too isolated from one another then for tendencies to coalesce into definable continental movements. The artists were interpreting contemporary art in a differ-



JACK S. BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, GIFT OF JOHN AND BARBARA DUNCAN, 1971

ent way than their counterparts in Europe or the United States. Despite the fact that many more artists were traveling back and forth, there was still something distinctive happening in Latin America.

At that time, it was hard to find out about the art and artists of Latin America. I gathered all the information I could from organizations such as the Pan American Union in Washington D.C., the library at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), New York, and a few galleries that repre-

sented Latin American artists in New York. The field of Latin American art, practically unrecognized in the United States, lacked institutional support and necessary networks.

As a result of my exposure to Latin American art and my growing interest in collecting, I completed a master's degree at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University. My thesis research was devoted to the unorthodox study of Latin American art, concentrating primarily on colonial art from the Viceroyalty of Peru and

Fernando de Szyszlo
Inkarri
1968

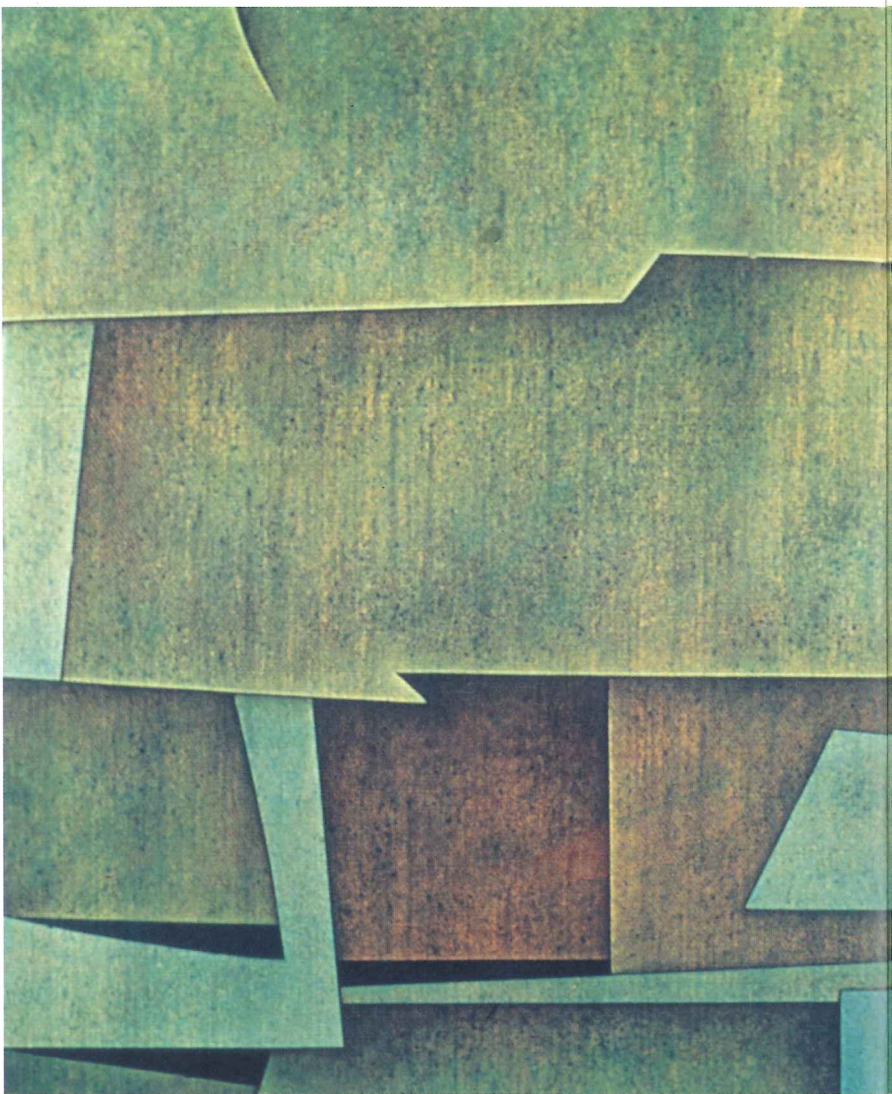
JACK S. BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN,
ARCHER M. HUNTINGTON MUSEUM FUND, 1976



Bolivia in the 17th and 18th centuries, and on the work of the Uruguayan modern master, Joaquín Torres-García.

In the mid-1960s, two major exhibitions of Latin American art showed at institutions on the East Coast. The first, *The Emergent Decade: Latin American Painters and Paintings in the 1960s* (1966), conceived by Thomas M. Messer, the director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, was a milestone in the launching of contemporary Latin American art. The second, *Art of Latin America Since Independence* (1966), was curated by Stanton L. Catlin, and co-organized by the Yale University Art Gallery and the Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery (now the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art) of the University of Texas at Austin. In conjunction with this second exhibition, Catlin and Donald Goodall, then director of the Huntington, organized a groundbreaking conference on Latin American art at Yale University. This event was key in enhancing future exchanges within the United States and Latin America about Latin American art.

These two exhibitions brought together elements of time and space into Latin American art. Instead of seeing Latin America as a collection



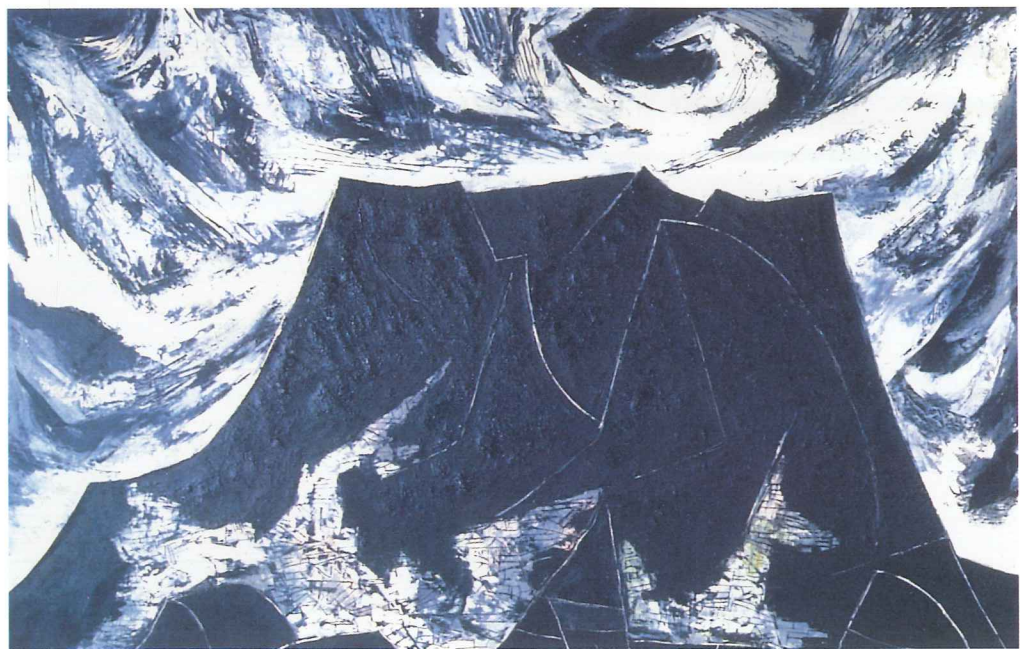
of disparate arts they unified and related distinct Latin American visions. As I looked at a decade's worth of art in these two exhibits, I was struck by the changing context of time, remembering when time seemed to stand still, and an artistic generation still spanned 25 years. The exhibits, together with the conference, established connection and communications that sped up the interchange in the world of Latin American art.

My professional involvement with Latin American art began in the late 1960's when I volunteered to work on the Museum of Modern Art's Latin American art collection. MOMA's Latin American collection was formed in the 1940's and was garnering renewed interest among the museum's staff, including William S. Liberman, Bernice Rose, Riva Castle-

man, and the International Council director Waldo Rasmussen.

In the late 1970s I curated several exhibitions on modern and contemporary Latin American art. One of these exhibits, Joaquín Torres-García (1874-1949), to honor the centennial of the artist's birth, took me to Uruguay where I selected works from the collection of Torres-García's family. In 1976, I traveled to Mexico to prepare with the artist Gunther Gerzso (1915-1999) the exhibition *Gunther Gerzso: Paintings and Graphics Reviewed*.

By the time I curated the exhibit *Recent Latin American Drawings (1969-76)/ Lines of Vision* for the International Exhibitions Foundation at the Center for Inter-American Relations (now the Americas Society), time and space were moving faster



JACK S. BLANTON MUSEUM OF ART, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN,
GIFT OF JOHN AND BARBARA DUNCAN, 1971

and drawing closer. Often, the hub through which information flowed was Miami or New York.

The information flow intensified sharply with the first major auction of Latin American art in New York, held on October 17, 1979, jointly organized by the Center for the Inter-American Relations and the Sotheby's Parke-Bernet. This auction was a Center benefit to develop greater interest in Latin American art and to cultivate a market for the field.

Inter-American gallery links were not as established as they have become today. Even the task of moving the works of art from one place to another was a promethean effort. Although most of the artists—many of whom I knew—were very cooperative, they were also apprehensive about participating in an innovative auction, since

the value of the works had not been internationally established.

A selection of the works was displayed at the Center for Inter-American Relations before the auction to promote a greater awareness of contemporary Latin American art among the New York public. The selection included many artists who have since attained international recognition. The auction was a success. The critic Rita Reif quoted Edward Lee Cave's impressions of the auction in the *New York Times*: "The standing room-only crowd witnessed the birth of a new market. There were collectors and dealers from throughout South America and from all over the United States."

Because of these efforts, U.S. art collectors became more aware of Latin American art. Thus, the new idea of auctions reinforced or even created fresh linkages with and within Latin America. The auctions created their own artistic "routes" and information systems, making exchanges of cultural information and opportunities easier.

Scholarship of curators and art historians dedicated to Latin American art is of lasting importance. Researched texts that can be used as academic references are vital for future generations. Technological advances such as fax, phone systems, cable television, and above all the Internet, are speed-

ing up the access to shared information. Thus giving artists—and others—a grounding in common reference points.

Accelerated travel and expanded communication have transcended former geographic barriers. An artist can be national or international or both. These new linkages have had an energizing effect. Whether working at home, in Europe, or North America, Latin American artists share a keen interest in the development of their own countries.

As we move forward in the 21st century, new visions and technologies will take Latin American art further beyond its own boundaries, a striking difference from when Peru seemed as far away from Argentina as Boston from Buenos Aires.

Barbara Duncan, a New York-based art historian, formed a collection of paintings and drawings which became the core of the Latin American art collection at the Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin, where she is now a consultant. As she has traversed time and space, she has also collaborated closely with the Center for Inter-American Relations, which later became the Americas Society. She is also a member of the DRCLAS subcommittee on the arts.

From left:
Fernando Botero
La Cathedrale
1972

Gunther Gerzso
Mansión del Agua
1965

Oswaldo Guayasamín
Quito Noir

Guatemala Diary

PHOTOESSAY BY LAURA BLACKLOW



**MAY 8
ANTIGUA**

In a deeply personal way, I feel like I am home again. Of all the places I have visited, Guatemala is the country I love and feel closest to. Certainly the most impressive aspect is the persevering Mayan people, who endured a 30-year civil war.



MAY 10

CHICHICASTENANGO

Despite wars with other native groups and centuries of brutal domination by Spain and the U.S., the Maya have maintained their culture. Only when forced to, have they incorporated other ideas, such as Catholicism, with their own beliefs. And so, at the Church of Santo Thomas, which is built atop an ancient pyramid, I see lay religious leaders sprinkling rum and flower petals around candles that represent the supplications of patrons, who recite Catholic prayers—a spectacle for the wealthy tourists.



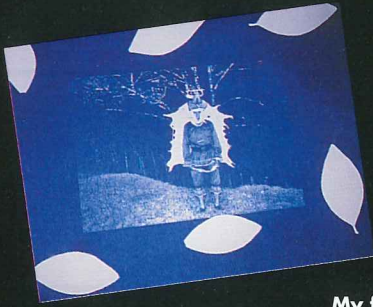
**MAY 9
GUATEMALA CITY**

I arrive at Out of the Dump, an after school and weekend program created by former Reuters photographer Nancy McGirr for youths so economically marginalized that most live in corrugated metal homes with dirt floors in the City Dump. Families often scavenge the dump for food and valuables, so Nancy's program pays them what the youths would normally earn, thus enabling a child to attend school and her photography program. Public school is not free; Out of the Dump pays for bus fare, books and even toilet paper.

Nancy has already set up the computer I brought, so now there are five on which the students learn Photo Shop and web design. These teenagers are warm and respectful; they know I will return after a week of traveling to teach a photo-printmaking workshop, so many are enlarging negatives in preparation.

Laura Blacklow is a photography instructor in the Department of Visual and Environmental Studies at Harvard. She has received awards for her art from the National Endowment for the Arts' Regional Fellowships, Massachusetts Artists Foundation and the St. Botolph Club. Blacklow has been involved in human rights work in Central America for 15 years. She received a DRCLAS Faculty Research Grant to collaborate with the Out of the Dump program.

For more information on Out of the Dump, see <www.outofthedump.com>.



MAY 15
GUATEMALA CITY

My friend Birgit Blyth joins me from Cambridge, and I meet up with recent Harvard graduate Zachary Towne-Smith, a volunteer at Out of the Dump. Everyone loves the Polaroid materials I brought, so we generate new color and black and white imagery from around the city. We create Van Dyke brown prints, cyanotypes, and Polaroid image transfers



JUNE 3
GUATEMALA CITY

We have gathered all the materials: photos, writings, diaries, and interviews to work collaboratively on a book that we hope to see published in 2001. As I say goodbye on this last day, I

think of their honest faces and astonishing images. I will want to stay connected with them for quite a long time.

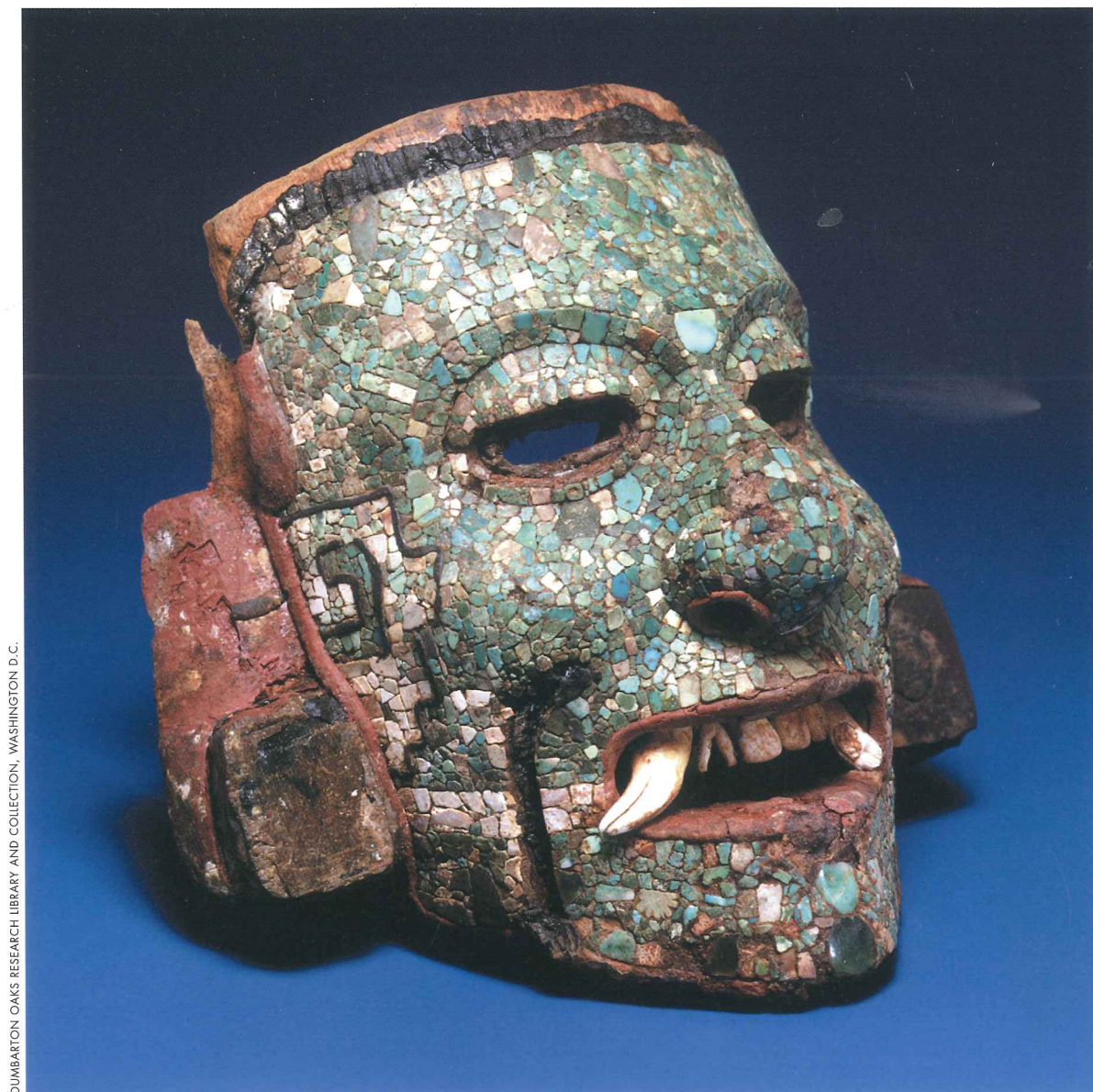
MAY 26
SANTIAGO ATITLAN

More than a year ago, the youths decided they want to share their photography knowledge with rural students, so they have been trekking to a Mayan village on Lake Atitlan. We join three Out of the Dump student/teachers on a trip to the homes of local pupils.

We interview and photograph elders, survivors of the 30-year civil war. I feel honored to be welcomed in their sparse homes. The Polaroids are a real hit, as we give them the positives and keep the negatives. The local students use the negatives to make blue prints, which they carefully embellish with water colors.



Mayan mosaic mask



DUMBARTON OAKS RESEARCH LIBRARY AND COLLECTION, WASHINGTON D.C.

Pre-Columbian Studies at Dumbarton Oaks

1980-Present

BY JEFFREY QUILTER

INTEREST IN PRE-COLUMBIAN ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY has grown in Latin American countries at a rapid pace. Dumbarton Oaks, a Harvard-affiliated institution in Washington D.C. houses an extensive collection of Pre-Columbian art, ranging from Andean textiles and feather work to Mayan limestone relief panels. It also contains the Pre-Columbian Studies Program (sharing space and resources with Byzantine Studies and Studies in Landscape Architecture and Garden History). While its col-

lection continues to serve as a premier example of ancient American art, expansion in Dumbarton Oaks' library and symposium programs has been dramatic.

In the early years at Dumbarton Oaks, Elizabeth P. Benson laid the foundations of the Pre-Columbian Studies Program to develop and grow over three decades (see related story on p.32). In addition to the care she devoted to the collection of Pre-Columbian art, during her eighteen years at the institution, she established the annual

symposia, held smaller meetings, and initiated our publications series.

In 1980, the torch was passed to Elizabeth Boone who served as Director of the Pre-Columbian Studies Program for the succeeding fifteen years. During her tenure, Boone maintained the high standards established by her predecessor in the care of the collections, organization of meetings, and selection of fellows. In 1995, Boone left to be succeeded by the author.

Through time, changing sensibilities and legal parameters shifted the focus of the program away from collecting objects to expanding its library. The change has been dramatic, from a few books in the personal library of Robert Woods Bliss to over 25,000 volumes, today. While many scholars still make a pilgrimage to "D.O.," as it is affectionately called, to examine objects, increasingly, the reputation of the Pre-Columbian library as one of the world's best and most user-friendly for scholarly studies is a draw for archaeologists, art historians, and many other scholars of the past. Library growth has been carefully tailored to focus on the geographical areas of interest to the Blisses (Mesoamerican, Intermediate Area, and Andes). The collections also include extensive works on the fauna and flora of tropical America, ethnographic and historical accounts on the more recent occupants of these regions, and publications on neighboring peoples and areas, such as the Amazon and North America.

The growth of the library, in turn, has increased the value of a Pre-Columbian fellowship. Although still restricted to only a few scholars per year, the program has become more defined. "Regular Fellows" are those holding the doctorate and who are usually working on an important project in an established scholarly career. "Junior Fellows" are graduate students writing their doctoral dissertations. These scholars are in residence during the academic year with a separate fellowship program for the summer months. To the fellowship program, Visiting Scholars and Short Term Residents have been added to provide opportunities to a wider range of researchers.

Although Mildred and Robert Bliss supported archaeological field research, Dumbarton Oaks has ceased directly sponsoring such endeavors. A small Project Grant program is maintained, however, to provide funds for emergency excavations of endangered sites in Latin America. This resource has helped to play a critical difference in retrieving information from important archaeological resources under imminent threat of severe damage or destruction. The rapid urban expansion occurring in Latin American countries has made this a particularly important program.

A growth in the number of scholars investigating Pre-Columbian subjects, has helped to expand the diversity of topics covered in symposia and other meetings. While maintaining its leadership role in the study of Pre-

Columbian art, the investigation of a wider range of social issues and processes has been explored in symposia. The subject matter may have broadened, but the program stays true to respecting the tastes and interests of its founders by serving as a place where the increasing number of social scientist archaeologists and humanist art historians can find common interests and discussions.

Fewer than fifty scholars attended the first Pre-Columbian conference at Dumbarton Oaks, on the Olmecs. Now, the annual symposium sometimes reaches attendance figures of 200. In addition to symposia, two Public Lectures are held yearly, and at least one smaller conference also is held. In the last several years, these different venues have supported the discussion of topics such as *Native Traditions in the Post-Conquest World* (1992), *Formative Ecuador* (1995), *Pre-Columbian States of Being* (1996), *Pre-Columbian Music* (1998), *Gold and Power in Ancient Costa Rica, Panama, and Colombia* (1999), and many other topics.

Growth presents opportunities, but also challenges. The quantity of books entering the premises, yearly, has put a strain on facilities. The development

of electronic media and communications provides new ways to record, store, and present information but are so new as to leave many issues uncertain, such as the longevity of files or web sites. Pre-Columbian Studies at Dumbarton Oaks is working to rise to the challenge of these changes, including the challenge of escalating interest in Latin America in pre-Columbian art and archeology. It is involved in larger institutional plans for expanding our facilities. A large-scale digitization project is under way as is an archives program seeking photographs and documents from retiring senior scholars. So too, attempts to increase our interactions with Latin American colleagues is an important objective as we approach the beginning of our fourth decade.

Whatever the future may hold, the outstanding Pre-Columbian art collection, its "jewel box" gallery, and the scholarly activities that take place around them will continue to play a critical role in advancing our knowledge of ancient America, its art, and its peoples in the context of a broad intellectual engagement with the diversity of human cultures and societies within a common human experience.

In addition to serving as the current Director of Pre-Columbian Studies and Curator of the Pre-Columbian collection, Jeffrey Quilter is an active archaeologist currently completing a long-term project at the Rivas Site, a large prehistoric ceremonial complex in Costa Rica.

Information on Pre-Columbian Studies is most easily found by starting at the general Dumbarton Oaks website < <http://www.doaks.org/> > and selecting choices on the gallery and program.

Growth presents opportunities, but also challenges.

Pre-Columbian Art at Dumbarton Oaks

A History

BY ELIZABETH P. BENSON

Right:
Olmec Jade Figure

Far right:
Huari Mirror



DUMBARTON OAKS RESEARCH LIBRARY AND COLLECTION, WASHINGTON D.C.

IN THE SPRING OF 1912, ROBERT Woods Bliss, a Harvard alumnus and U.S. Embassy Secretary in Paris, was taken by a friend to a shop on the Boulevard Raspail, where he saw, for the first time, artifacts from ancient Mexico. Within a year, he had purchased a remarkable object from the shop, a ten-inch-high figure of a standing man, carved from dark-green jadeite.

The story of the Pre-Columbian Studies program at Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, D.C., dates back to that purchase, which was the beginning of the Robert Woods Bliss Collection of the art of Latin America before the Spanish conquest.

That first acquisition was originally labeled "Aztec," the last of a long series of Mexican cultures before the arrival of the Spaniards, but in 1939 was correctly declared "Olmec," one of the earliest of the great Mexican civilizations, by Harvard anthropology professor Alfred Tozzer, an expert on the

Maya culture in Mexico.

Pre-Columbian studies have developed greatly since 1912, and the Dumbarton Oaks center has played a role in this development, thanks to Bliss's early interest and support.

After graduation from Harvard College in 1900, Bliss served in the civilian government established in Puerto Rico following the Spanish-American War. In 1903, he joined the Foreign Service with postings in Europe and later Argentina. He and his wife traveled to that post by going across the Isthmus of Panama and down the west coast of South America, then crossing the Andes on muleback. They did not see any Pre-Columbian art in these travels.

In 1920, the Blisses bought their home, Dumbarton Oaks, a historic house on the northern edge of Georgetown, built originally in 1801 on a land-grant property that once included most of Georgetown. Dumbarton Oaks is known to many people because it was lent to the State Department in 1944 for conversations leading to the creation of the United Nations. The house, now adapted to scholarly and public-exhibition use, is still surrounded by hillside gardens, developed under the aegis of Mrs. Bliss.

The Blisses gave the property to Harvard in 1940, along with a collection of Byzantine art and library; Dumbarton Oaks became the Harvard-affiliated Center for Byzantine Studies. Bliss then began to collect Pre-Columbian art more seriously. He acquired small carvings of greenstone or shell, larger stone carvings and polychrome vases from Mexico and Central America, as well as gold objects from Mexico, Central America, Colombia, and Peru, and textiles

from Peru. He had a good eye, as art historians like to say, and he knew the kind of thing he liked—beautiful objects made from fine materials. He did not seek a range of archaeological examples; he wanted the special piece. He collected from an aesthetic point of view, and he was evidently the first to do so. Nelson Rockefeller began somewhat later to collect with a similar attitude. Both collections grew in a period of interest in "primitive" art, an interest initiated largely by painters and sculptors in the early years of the century.

Knowledgeable and eminent people in the field gave Bliss advice. Tozzer, a classmate of Bliss's and an early advisor, was a curator at the Peabody Museum. Samuel Lothrop, a later consultant, had similar roles at Harvard. Another consultant was Matthew Stirling, of the Smithsonian Institution, who had excavated Olmec sites. In addition to collecting, Bliss supported Peabody Museum projects,



notably Lothrop's excavations of an early site at Venado Beach in the Panama Canal Zone. Bliss also served as a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History and of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, both of which were active in Latin American archaeology.

In the early years of Bliss's collecting, Pre-Columbian objects were rarely displayed in art museums. They belonged to, and were exhibited in, anthropological and natural-history museums. From 1927 until about 1940, however, the Fogg Museum at Harvard did devote a gallery to Maya art from the Peabody Museum collections. In 1929, in Paris, the Louvre showed an exhibit of Pre-Columbian art under the auspices of the Musée des Arts Décoratifs. An exhibit of Pre-Columbian objects at the Burlington Fine Arts Club, London, took place in 1930, the same year the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York displayed a show of Peruvian textiles. Three years later, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, showcased handsome Pre-Columbian objects, mostly lent by anthropological museums. In 1940, Bliss' first acquisition, the Olmec figure, was exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in "Twenty Centuries of Modern Art," and in "An Exhibition of Pre-Columbian Art" at the Fogg Museum. The aesthetic interest in this art had begun.

Bliss, wanting his collection displayed in an art museum, approached the National Gallery of Art, in Washington. Despite some skepticism, director David Finley and chief curator John Walker thought "that it might be an interesting experiment" to show the objects. In 1947, it was installed on extended loan, and it remained on exhibit at the Gallery until 1962. It must have been a successful experiment.

In the late 1950s, the Bliss objects came to my attention while I was assistant registrar at the Gallery. I had been painting fairly seriously, and I first became interested in the Bliss objects visually. The Gallery was primarily a place for paintings—as it still



Mr. and Mrs. Bliss sit in the rose garden at Dumbarton Oaks.

In the early years of Bliss's collecting, Pre-Columbian objects were rarely displayed in art museums.

is—and, at that time, no one there was seriously interested in such a collection. Its care fell largely into my hands. Bliss continued to acquire, and he would bring objects to the Gallery that he had bought or was considering buying. They were kept in the Registrar's storeroom until they might be put on exhibition. Bliss would call ahead and then come into the office, saying "I have a new temptation." He would take an object from the pocket of his overcoat, or his chauffeur would follow him with a picnic basket, and some object of jade or gold would emerge.

In those days, little awareness exist-

ed of how something had come out of the country of origin or how long it had been out. Those questions were not asked, and few people were concerned with them. Bliss, however, never purchased anything in the country of origin. One of his objects, a small Aztec sculpture, carved from a jadelike stone and known as "the birth goddess," had reportedly been brought to Europe from Mexico City by one of Emperor Maximilian's soldiers in the 1860s.

A tall, erect, immaculately groomed gentleman, Bliss had a delightful, slightly wicked sense of humor and a nice sense of humanity. He was appreciative and aware. When people are sometimes negligent about small civilities, I still recall a moment when I was wrapping a treasure of his, and, as I was about to tie a knot, Bliss put his finger on it to hold the string. A little thing, but not everyone does that or even notices the need.

The collection was left to Dumbarton Oaks on his death, where it

joined the Byzantine center and the newly installed library of books on landscape architecture and the history of gardens, collected by Mrs. Bliss. The wing that would house the Pre-Columbian Collection, a "jewel box" designed by the noted architect Philip Johnson, was under construction when Bliss died in April 1962.

When John Thacher, the director of Dumbarton Oaks (another Harvard man, trained at the Fogg), asked me to come set up the collection, I gladly did. Thacher, Smithsonian exhibition staff member James Mayo, and I worked on the installation, with approval from Johnson and assistance from Harvard-educated Michael Coe, a Yale anthropology faculty member. Coe was the invaluable advisor to the collection and, slightly later, to the scholarly program. The galleries were scheduled to open in the late fall of 1963, on a day that turned out to be shortly after the November 22 assassination of President Kennedy. The

opening was much more subdued than it might have been.

Coe gave the first Pre-Columbian public lecture at Dumbarton Oaks, speaking about an Olmec greenstone carving in the collection, which had a later Maya incised text on the back. After the lecture, several people asked if it would be published. I spoke to Coe about the possibility of a Dumbarton Oaks publication, and he replied, "I'll publish it, if it's part of a series." So, the publication program was born with the series "Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology."

The first Dumbarton Oaks Pre-Columbian conference, "Dumbarton Oaks Conference on the Olmec," in 1967 focused on the collection's strong Olmec examples, with new information provided from field work by Coe and a University of California team. It was not until the 1960s that new Carbon-14 dating techniques proved how early Olmec was (c. 1500-300 B.C.). The publication of the conference the following year inaugurated a series of publications of annual conferences (now called symposia). The second conference and publication concerned Chavín, the Andean culture contemporaneous with the Olmec. New work was being done then by Peruvian archaeologists at Chavín's major site.

A program of Pre-Columbian Fellows began in 1970, and their investigations led to further Dumbarton Oaks publications.

When we were setting up the Pre-Columbian program at Dumbarton Oaks, I felt strongly that we should generally follow Bliss' taste and interests, that the main focus should always be the interpretation and study of the

art of the great Pre-Columbian cultures. This was not simply to appreciate and honor his memory. Art history had been little used in Pre-Columbian archaeological studies at that time; George Kubler was virtually the only art historian in the field. The application of art-historical methods opened new pathways. Other approaches such as ethnography and the study of folklore were rarely used at that time to interpret archaeological material, but they have now become important resources in the field. I believed in using all possible methods, as long as the art that Bliss had cherished as art since 1912 should always be the highlighted center of study. I liked to think that he would approve of what we were doing.

In the 1960s, Mrs. Bliss, a woman of delicate good looks and a perceptive manner, still lived in Georgetown and came often to Dumbarton Oaks, spending most of her time there in her beloved Garden Library. She was careful not to interfere with the workings of Dumbarton Oaks, but we—Thacher, Coe, and I—consulted her about many things. She, too, had a good eye and, although she had not previously expressed interest in the Pre-Columbian collection, she could look at objects with perception, and she was responsive to projects that we wanted to undertake.

I had come to Dumbarton Oaks to stay only temporarily, but it was a very alluring world, and it was exciting to be curator of the collection and to set up the programs and develop them. It was exciting, too, to see changes in the field, which had come about, in part, because of the attitudes and activities of the program. I stayed at Dumbarton Oaks for nearly 18 years, during a period of change, growth, and transition, when there was a growing focus on Pre-Columbian objects as art.

Elizabeth P. Benson still works on Pre-Columbian art projects, including the organization and catalogue of "Olmec Art of Ancient Mexico," an exhibition held at the National Gallery of Art in 1996.

Left:
Mayan Jaina figure

Right:
Inka Gold figurines



ALL ART (THIS PAGE); DUMBARTON OAKS RESEARCH LIBRARY AND COLLECTION, WASHINGTON D.C.



JUSTIN KERR

Building Bridges of Cultural Respect

Art and Outreach

BY ESTRELLITA BRODSKY

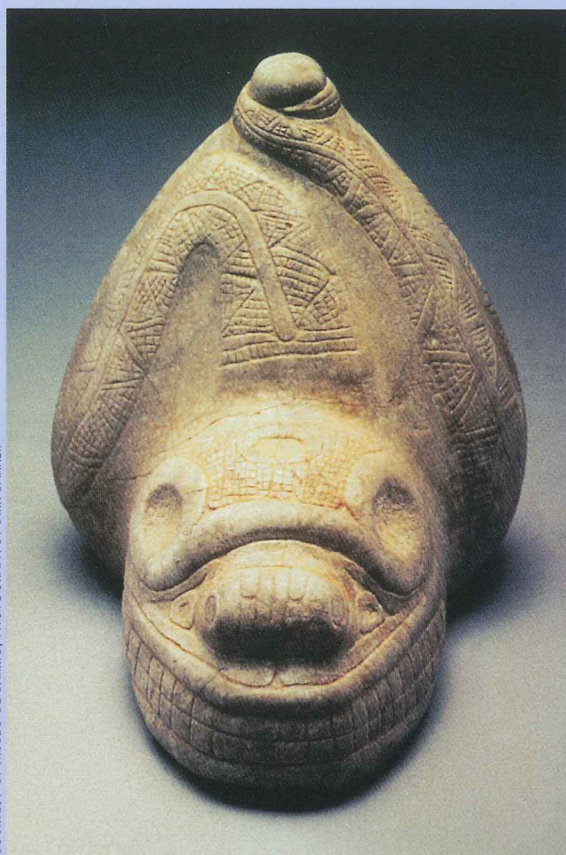
WITH A RECENT MASTER'S DEGREE IN ART HISTORY and a thesis on French Impressionist artist Gustave Caillebotte, I had set out to search for a position in the art field. Knowing that my family was from South America, a friend suggested I try a small museum in East Harlem, El Museo del Barrio, which had just expanded its mission to include the art of all Latin America. I met with the director, who thought I might be interested in working on an exhibition on Taíno the museum was just starting to develop. I wasn't quite sure who or what Taíno was, but enthusiastic about Latin American art in general, I said yes.

Three years and many long nights later, I discovered that I was not alone in having been unaware of the fact that the Taíno were the pre-Columbian people from the Caribbean, originally Puerto Rico, Cuba, Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. The exhibition I helped organize was the first in the United States to comprehensively study this legacy shared by so many Americans.

It was a huge undertaking for a small museum to bring over 130 artifacts from all over the Caribbean, including Cuba, and from Europe. We highlighted the fascinating culture of the Taínos that flourished between 1200 and 1500. The children and adults who visited the exhibition were moved by the experience often noting how little they had known about their own history and how proud they were to see the sophistication and beauty of their ancestral culture. And others with tremendous knowledge about European and Asian cultures could now see the work of people geographically much closer to our North American continent.

I grew up in New York City in a Spanish speaking household at a time when it was not very common. My parents instilled in me a great pride in our Latin culture. However, the pride I grew up with is not necessarily typical of the present-day first generation Americans. Often this generation has little knowledge of the countries from which their parents have come. I have found that by sharing an understanding of different cultures through the arts, everyone gains a greater self-awareness and an ability to empathize and adapt to a whole array of different experiences. Both first generation Americans and their peers become stronger and more confident through that knowledge.

My experience at El Museo demonstrated how effective outreach into the community could be in forming new bonds of respect and pride between people of different heritages. The comments written by visitors reflected that response: "Before entering the museum I was unaware of how deep my Puerto Rican history was, I've



Three-pointer in the form of a Serpent Stone
(Dominican Republic)
Museo Arqueológico
Regional Altos de Chavón

COURTESY OF MUSEO DE BARRIO, PHOTOGRAPH BY DIRK BAKKER

never been so intrigued. I also realized that I've been taking my culture for granted. Thank you." And another visitor from a Dominican background wrote: "Thank you. At long last I have been able to participate in an experience that both defines me as a Dominican American young woman from a mestizo ancestry and a member of a culture that has gone unheard. It was both an educational and emotional experience for me." And finally: "You made us all proud! It's a wonderful thing our culture is being shown and loved by everyone."

Recently there has been a lot of discussion about the role and importance of museums. Museums in the United States have always been educational partners and continue to be so. They offer an opportunity for students and adults to leave their environment, ask questions about what art is, how it was made, why it is valued and in a museum. But perhaps the most important issue is how art expresses universal emotions and the imagination we all share, across all financial and cultural barriers – it expresses what makes us human. The great museums of the United States were founded in the late 19th and 20th centuries based on the concept that museums should be educational

resources. The buildings were to impose dignity and align themselves to the origin of democratic thought, a way of sharing imperial and aristocratic treasures of the past with a broad public.

In a slightly different way, museums of the 21st century enhance our sense of self and create the possibility for a shared consciousness. They have become institutions that reach out and embrace diverse ideas and communities. Museums continue to be vital to our intellectual and cultural life. As the mix in America's heritage changes, museums have actually become dynamic places where the exchange of ideas and understanding takes place as well as the housing of art.

The Taino exhibition functioned in that way, reaching out to schoolchildren, community members, and even presidents. I would like to end with a quote from a thank you letter from Jacques Chirac for the exhibition catalogue from El Museo:

The Taino civilization has always been a passion to me, as both fascinating and upsetting. A political, economic

and religious society of great richness, it developed an artistic production of great quality. Its quick disappearance, after the Spanish invasion, was no less dramatic. It is thanks to the extraordinary character of these too long ignored and underestimated civilizations that I have been encouraged to go forth to establish a Museum of "Arts Premiers" in Paris.

What a wonderful way to demonstrate how a common appreciation for the art and culture of a proud yet often forgotten Taino people could form a bond between the President of France and a resident in East Harlem.

Estrellita Brodsky is the vice chairman of the board of trustees of El Museo del Barrio in New York City. She is presently working on a Ph.D. from the Institute of Fine Arts concentrating on Latin American Art. She is also a member of the DRCLAS subcommittee on Latin American art. Through this role, she helps to continue to build bridges of cultural respect.

Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico

Toward a New Museum Model

BY MERCEDES TRELLES

AS A HARVARD STUDENT FROM Puerto Rico researching my doctorate in art history, I tended to think of museums as places to preserve, study and exhibit unique objects. Now, as a curator for the *Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico*, I've learned first-hand that the museum has become a more complex institution.

During the 19th century, U.S. museums were thought of as palaces of learning, institutions where immigrants and the working class could acquire much needed culture. Now, in the 20th century, the erection of a museum can raise the value of real estate for miles around it. Certain museums like the Guggenheim Bilbao have demonstrated that building a museum can be a gigantic tourism magnet, revitalizing a town's economy. No longer a purely disinterested venue, museums have become the site where culture and learning meet with economic investment.

Although Puerto Rican art has developed considerably over more

than three centuries, the island's major museums did not have as their principal mission collecting, caring for and exhibiting Puerto Rican art. Island art has suffered from a lack of investment, and San Juan was badly in need of a major art museum. A few institutions,

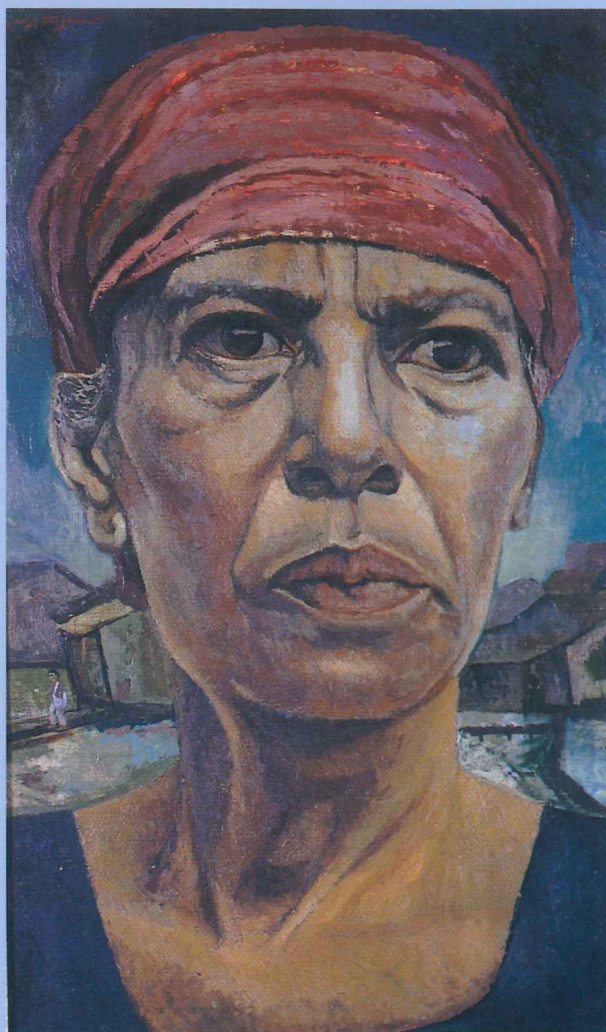
Exhibiting Puerto
Rico's greatest
paintings together
by collection instead
of chronological order
liberated the viewers.

as well as private patrons, however, had fostered art and artists, collecting their works and providing a space for meeting and learning. To these the museum dedicated its inaugural exhibition, *Treasures of Puerto Rican Painting*, which I curated.

By bringing the collections under one roof in this exhibit, I found the term "Puerto Rican art" contributed to the promotion of an eclectic and rich identity. The construction of *The Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico* (MAPR), funded by the Government Development Bank of Puerto Rico in 1997, was in itself an affirmation of that identity and a commitment to the promotion of art. MAPR combines a newly restored early twentieth century building designed by William Schimmelpfening with a modern, five floor annex. Architects Otto Reyes Casanova and Luis Gutiérrez conceived a museum with two façades, symbolizing both tradition and innovation. Realizing the museum's potential to attract tourism to the Island, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company was actively engaged in the planning stages of the building.

The museum's inaugural exhibit brought together some of the most distinguished paintings of our histo-

COURTESY OF THE MUSEO DE ARTE DE PUERTO RICO, FROM THE ATENEO PUERTORRIQUEÑO COLLECTION



COURTESY OF THE MUSEO DE ARTE DE PUERTO RICO, FROM THE COLECCION DE CULTURA PUERTORRIQUEÑO

ry, chronicling the history of collecting in Puerto Rico. Collectors do not enjoy a good reputation. Many common citizens see them simply as wealthy individuals thirsting for possessions; many artists resent them. Few people understand that to collect is to preserve, as well as to impart an order, no matter how personal, unto the vast array of materials that is available for collection. Thus, the history of institutional collections such as that of the Archbishop's Palace, which holds a great number of works—primarily church commissions—by the 18th-century painter José Campeche contrasts with collections such as the *Museo de Arte Contemporáneo*, inaugurated in 1984 and dedicated to post-war art.

I found that exhibiting Puerto Rico's greatest paintings together by collection instead of chronological order, as is the norm, liberated the viewer's imagination, prompting reflections on how taste has shaped what we consider to be Puerto Rican art. Thus, although Puerto Rican scholars associate religious painting with the 17th and 18th century, I discovered there were many religious paintings throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. A similar thing occurred with portraiture, which abounded throughout our history, but was not considered worthy after the early 20th century. These shifts indicate the development of new genres—landscape and still life in the nineteenth century, regionalist pictures in

the early twentieth century—which were thought to better embody Puerto Rican reality. As we approached the field of contemporary art, whole styles of painting—like abstraction, or schools of artists working in New York rather than Puerto Rico—were given short shrift in favor of figurative painting.

The *Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico*, which has presented a lively exhibition schedule since its inauguration, contributes greatly to the cultural life of the Island. It has featured a show of Pepón Osorio's installations, which deal with Latino culture in the United States, as well as a collective exhibition of installations by young artists. This year the museum will open a major, two-part exhibition, *Art in Puerto Rico through the Ages*, charting the development of Puerto Rican art while placing it within a socio-historic context, as well as several travelling

Left:
Augusto Marín
El nido
1961

Right:
Rafael Tufiño
Goyita
1953



COURTESY OF THE MUSEO DE ARTE DE PUERTO RICO

Pepón Osorio
*De Puerta en puerta:
 En la barbería
 no se llora*
 1994

exhibitions, such as *The Spiritual Adventure of Modern Art: Kandinsky as the Russian Avant-Garde*.

The once downtrodden neighborhood of Santurce, where the museum is located, is slowly showing signs of regeneration, as art galleries, restaurants and stores begin to open their doors. Attendance figures since the

museum opened on July 1, 2000 have climbed to 85,000, an unprecedented number in the Island and tourism season is just beginning.

Perhaps the time has come for the new model of museum, part palace of culture, part economic investment, to make its entrance into Latin America. Puerto Rico, which maintains a

distinct, Spanish speaking culture yet has a longstanding political relation to the United States, could just be its testing ground.

Mercedes Trelles, a Harvard doctoral candidate in art history, is the curator of the Museo de Arte de Puerto Rico.

Transforming Schools Through Art

From Boston to Argentina

BY LINDA NATHAN

WATCHING ALBERTO, A 17-YEAR-OLD STUDENT AT the Boston Arts Academy (BAA), at work in the art studio is like witnessing a birth. English is not Alberto's first language. No one in his family has ever gone to college. Although he is in the 11th grade, he reads only at a third- or fourth-grade level in English. But Alberto—not his real name—is an outstanding artist. The images he captures using paint, pen, clay, and even

photographic film transport viewers to other places, different times. His work is breathtaking.

His gift for art, and the opportunity our school—where I am headmaster—offers him to develop and refine that gift, has given him the confidence to push forward in a much more painful arena. Alberto wants to be literate.

The Boston Arts Academy was designed as an environment where young people like Alberto can succeed —

not just as artists, but in academics as well. Students are admitted by audition in music, visual art, dance, or theatre without regard to their previous academic record. They need not have had years of lessons; they are judged on their potential — the passion behind their eyes. This is our challenge: to take such students and produce graduates who are both artists and scholars.

Focusing on the arts gives us a unique advantage to achieve this goal. Art pushes us to change the status quo. It forces us to look at the world — and at ourselves — from different points of view. The usual notion of teacher as expert and student as blank slate works poorly in the arts classroom. In the studio, students achieve best when teachers are coaches, not pedants.

Rigorous study of the arts adds a human dimension to education. When we think and teach about line, color, contrast, value, or rhythm within a social context and ask about the artist and society, we transform the classroom. Why do we find a piece of art beautiful? What is beautiful about impressionist painting or ballet or African masks? What is the culture and history that surrounded that piece of art? Who creates art and why? What are the social purposes, if any, of art? These questions become uniquely captivating for all students. As we pursue them we begin to empower ourselves to change our schools.

How well have we done? Our first seniors will graduate in June 2001, so we are just beginning to see the results. My intuition and experience tell me that our students are flourishing as artists and growing as scholars far beyond what they had thought possible for themselves. Of our 50 seniors, fewer than half, I believe, would be graduating this year from a traditional high school.

Our labors have also borne fruit, in an entirely unexpected way. Last year educators from Argentina and Brazil visited the school. They were struck by our efforts to empower our students to “own the word,” as the great Brazilian educator Paolo Freire put it. Talking to our students, they saw the “light behind the eyes.” They sensed the BAA students’ passion for practicing their art and their love of being in a school that respected that passion.

Would it be possible to start a Boston Arts Academy elsewhere? Were some of our educational practices exportable? Last August a BAA colleague and I went to Argentina, visited schools, and met with teachers, principals, educational leaders, politicians, leaders of NGOs, artists, university professors, and bankers. We went not as experts, with the answers for their educational woes, but rather as colleagues who have worked in an educational landscape also littered with problems and have made significant progress. We discovered that our work at the Boston Arts Academy was absolutely transferable. We found tremendous interest in our ideas for creating educational success for students previously deemed uneducable.

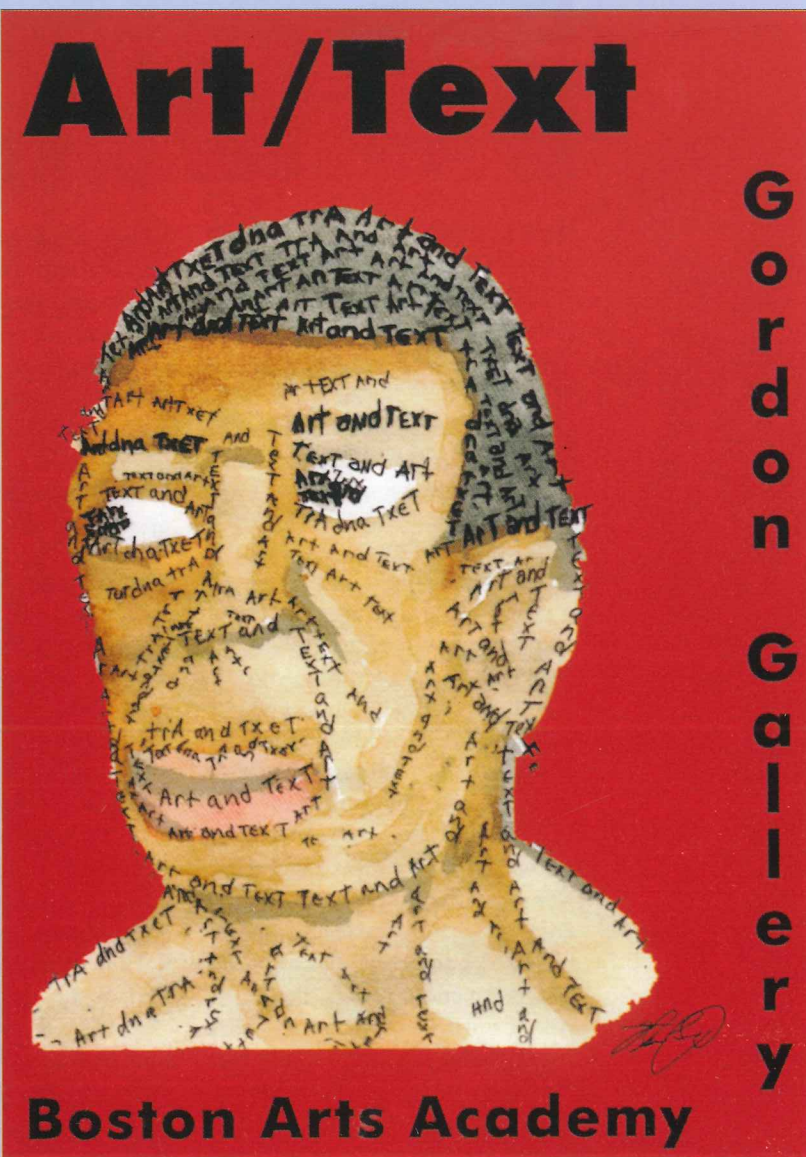
This nascent collaboration has spurred the philanthropic foundation of BankBoston of Argentina, as well as other foundations, to increase their work in education. We return to South America in February to speak at an education

conference that BankBoston, FleetBoston, and others are organizing to inaugurate the Boston Arts Academy project in Argentina. We hope to invigorate and inspire a group of educators from five urban and rural schools to radically rethink their ways of teaching and learning. Indeed, we are merely resurrecting Freire's philosophy, finding ways for students in both our countries to "own their own words."

When we deny young people the opportunity to experience the arts and humanities, we deny them a basic education. Without such an education, how can they be expected to participate fully in a democratic society? Many aspects of Argentine society are in need of reform. We found our Argentine friends willing to ask the hard questions necessary to begin changing educational systems and structures, and for that reason I am truly hopeful.

Linda Nathan is Headmaster of the Boston Arts Academy and holds a doctorate from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Boston Art Academy
exhibits student talent



The "Inter" Space

Connecting with the World through Interdisciplinary Arts Education

BY RUBÉN GAZTAMBIDE-FERNÁNDEZ

FROM COLUMBUS TO POSTMODERNISM CONTESTING TERRAIN

In America, that massive spread of land from Cabo de Hornos to Ellesmere Island and from the Near Islands to Recife, "interdisciplinary" was always the rule. That is, of course, until Columbus brought the Renaissance stored in the Pinta, the Catholic Church stored in the Santa María, and Queen Isabel II in the Niña. The natives of the American continent did not (and still don't) conceive of the world as a compartmentalized structure. Agriculture, religion and war, for example, were not three separate spheres of understanding, but were grounded in an epistemology of unity that saw these aspects of culture deeply connected and embedded. Cultural work was the stuff of everyday life; craftsmanship, spiritual devotion, collective sustenance and kinship were part of an aesthetic—to use one of those concepts stashed in the hold of the Pinta—of everyday life and a deep connection to the Mother Earth.

The Renaissance germ that arrived with the Europeans had the habit of decontextualizing culture, slowly brewing into the modern disciplines and the concepts of art and artists. Travelling on another ship (with the same captain), the European empire's economic ventures brought the virus of slavery and colonization, and with it, conceptions of "otherness" that made distinctions between those for whom the empire existed and those who existed for the empire. That is not to say that there weren't complex hierarchies and dynamics of power among American natives. But at the risk of exoticizing and romanticizing our ancestors, I would argue that these were, as the rest of their cultural life, embedded in a deep sense of human connection and spiritual

wholeness that the "big ship" of the conquest—the Catholic Church—had already lost by 1492. By dichotomizing good and evil, Christianity began a process of separation and linearity that contrasted with the circular connections of native religions. This was aggravated by the institutionalization of the Church,

As educators we have
the responsibility to
join students in their
"inter" space and allow
antiquated notions of
disciplinary separation
and domain
independence to be
redefined, renamed and
re(f)used.

which served as vaccine for European conquerors, and which they intended on injecting, albeit in limited doses, to American natives.

Of course, neither the germ of the Renaissance nor the virus of slavery, withstanding the Catholic vaccine, managed to break down the inherent connections in making and understanding that continue to shape and inform the cultural life of our America. Certainly, these historical, political and social processes have altered the face, the language and the context—as well as the content—of that cultural life making it more layered, contested and, indeed, more interesting. That is an irreversible process, and, for better or worse, we owe it a great

part of who we are today. Having drawn new disputed boundaries, realigned the turning circles of nature and spirituality, and given multiple new shapes to our knowledge and conceptions of the world, we find ourselves in a new millenium. A millenium filled with a dissonance and disorder that reveal and reestablish the interconnectedness between what we know and what we make; how we learn and how we create. Thanks to that dissonance and disorder, we can now move from the postmodern world to the "inter" world.

HYPHENATING IDENTITY: FROM POSTMODERNISM TO THE "INTER" WORLD

If you asked Guillermo Gómez-Peña, boundaries are there to be crossed. He has crossed so many that I have difficulty placing a label before his name. Writer, actor, or visual artist does not begin to describe the work of this Mexican-Chicano-American citizen of the borderlands. His living dioramas challenge every notion of personal identity and artistic concept inherited from the modernist aesthetic born in the Renaissance. Gomez-Peña gives life to the conception of culture as a malleable occurrence located in a specific context shaped by time, space and a slew of identity categories from race to shoe size. The nature of identity in our postmodern world is so transient and chaotic that we have the necessity to invent hyphenated titles for every person; Afro-Nuyorican, Black-Irish, Brazilo-Islandic, Mexican-American-with-a-little-bit-of-Palestinian.

These hyphenated identities reflect the inherent limits of the monolithic and essentialist categories constructed to identify and name that "other" that is to be conquered. We have inherited these identities, and as we become more and more conscious of



"Seven-Up: A mixed media collaboration" with students from the Stepping-Stones Foundation

their stasis, we begin to negotiate the space between them. It is in that interstasis that cultural theorist Homi Bhabha locates the negotiations that "convey a temporality that makes it possible to conceive of the articulation of antagonistic or contradictory elements." This "interstitial" negotiation is not limited to ethnicity, gender, class, or other categories of social analysis. In fact, it is a negotiation within the whole of culture. While social theorists are hyphenating categories and developing gradient notions of identity, all the academic disciplines are experiencing similar negotiations within and across traditional boundaries. We now think of social-historians, cultural-psychologists, linguistic-anthropologists, and we approach fields of study like medicine, education, and law with a battery of interdisciplinary tools and techniques that allow for better understanding and further development.

The arts have not escaped this "inter" revolution. Many contemporary artists, like Gomez-Peña and Amalia Mesa-Bainz do not fit into traditional categories like painter or

poet. Concepts like mixed media, performance art, installation, and movement-theater have become the new territory of exploration. The Internet (no pun intended) is now the largest stage-canvas for developing and installing art works. Before the Internet, public artists like the "Taller de Arte Fronterizo" and the Guerilla Girls set out to the streets to display their work. Most of these boundary-breaking cultural workers have a political agenda that is central to the work and fundamental to their approach. In this brief space, I cannot focus on the content of their work. But crossing boundaries—disciplinary, social, or cultural—is an inherently political act.

Postmodernism sought to burst open and melt away every notion of stability in which the world balanced itself. That balance had brought about a stagnation of the concepts and values in which it was sustained. Postmodernism, as the end of modernism, created a condition that is deeply unbalanced and chaotic, where order is exposed in its contradictions, and concepts are split open by their own

assumptions. As we move beyond this postmodern condition we are left with the "inter" spaces. It is in those "inter" spaces that we are now called upon to make culture. Artists of color, young people, and others marginalized by modern society are already occupying those spaces and creating some of the most exciting and innovative work since the cavemen began to paint graffiti on their walls. As educators we have the responsibility to join students in their "inter" space and allow antiquated notions of disciplinary separation and domain independence to be redefined, renamed and re(f)used. Otherwise, we are doomed to eternal stasis, or worst, to the postmodern condition of having no meaning at all.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ARTS EDUCATION: SOME IDEAS FOR ENGAGING IN THE "INTER" WORLD

In his article "Interdisciplinary Art Education Reconsidered," University of Texas professor J. Ulbricht raises the question: why should we change the way we teach the arts if

it is already yielding interdisciplinary work? Many of my colleagues will make the tired argument that it is important to have a strong foundation in the traditional approaches to a specific art form before students can explore new ideas. We need to pause for a "post" moment, and shake the perfect logic of this argument to reveal its suspicious stasis.

First, the old adage that one must learn the rules in order to break them keeps us in the chaos of the post-modern condition without any redeeming option. Only new rules, developed in an interdisciplinary fashion, can bring about innovative ways of making culture. Second, and perhaps most important, arts educators must realize that interdisciplinary cultural work is happening right under our noses. Popular culture does not simply emerge from traditional styles, but tradition becomes one of the materials of popular culture. Listen carefully to just one track of Puerto Rican rap artist Big Pun, and browse slowly through the "Art Crimes" graffiti website (<http://www.graffiti.org/index.html>), and you will see what

We approach fields of
study like medicine,
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further development.

I mean (also see related article on p. 43). Innovative, boundary-breaking, interdisciplinary cultural work does not happen because of the way we teach, but in spite of it.

In his essay *The New Cultural Politics of Difference*, Harvard professor Cornel West describes three challenges that cultural workers confront as they become engaged in the world. The intellectual challenge constitutes a

coming to terms with the anxieties, ambiguities and tensions of a pluralist world, and turning thought into action. This move into action then faces an existential or pragmatic challenge, which entails dealing with institutional, economic, and cultural realities. To face this task, West suggests that building coalitions across boundaries constitutes the political challenge for cultural workers. As I argued earlier, the "inter" world is an explicitly political world. It is through crossing boundaries, not to conquer, not to convert, nor to enslave, but to explore, connect and redefine that we can occupy the "inter" world.

The interdisciplinary approach fades the hierarchies within domains and techniques, turning them into materials and tools. Interdisciplinary artists approach their work with problem finding/solving strategies. Each idea poses a different set of challenges that might be approached through different methods and with different tools. Taking advantage of what each discipline uniquely offers, connections are made so that elements enhance each other. Ulbricht also offers some guidelines for how an interdisciplinary approach might change the way we teach the arts. He stresses the importance of collaborating with others and connecting with the world and argues that this should be made explicit in the way we teach.

All art is inherently collaborative, because no artist can work in isolation. Drawing themes from lived experiences, addressing social and political issues and utilizing a range of resources to contextualize the work we engage with our students to find relevance and meaning in the work. We must join our students in the exploration of the "inter" world, but they must be the ones on the tiller, trimming the sails, and filling the hold with new ideas.

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández is a father-husband-artist-student. His daughter is a Cantab-Rican-Irish-Afro-Caribbean-Spanish-French-Canadian who is often mistaken for a boy.

Art in Education Interdisciplinary Learning

Harvard Graduate School of Education's Arts in Education (AIE) Program is a school-wide interdisciplinary program that allows students to design their own arts-related course of study towards a Master's of Education or Certificate of Advanced Study. Founded in the fall of 1996, the program attracts students interested in a variety of artistic disciplines, as well as museums, arts administration and education, and social and cultural development organizations.

AIE Chair Jessica Davis offers a year-long core course addressing the role of the arts and arts learning within schools and beyond school walls into the community. This course addresses key arts-related issues in educational practice, theory, research, and policy. Students in the program may choose to focus on Administration, Planning, and Social Policy; Human Development and Psychology; and Learning and Teaching; or in Museum Education. Within and across areas, individual AIE students can

take a variety of arts as well as non-arts related courses, where they often research arts-related issues.

Some students also participate in field placements, where they gain practical experience, or independent studies, where they explore a selected topic with individual guidance. Pursuing these individual directions, students in the program represent the Harvard Graduate School of Education's broad base view of the importance of the arts in education. The program also supports doctoral students whose research addresses issues related to the arts in education. Doctoral students like Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (AIE-Ed.M. '00, Ed.D. Candidate, Learning & Teaching) also engage with the program as Teaching Fellows and Research Assistants in arts related research projects.

For more information, please contact the AIE office at 617-495-9068 or visit www.gse.harvard.edu/~aie web/.



Ducer, a street graffiti wall by Duce

“I Am”: The Voice of Graffiti

BY SALOMON ZAVALA AND RICHARD MORA

ON A SUMMER NIGHT, A DARK CLAD FIGURE RUNS across the lanes of a Los Angeles freeway, dodging fast-moving vehicles. He maneuvers his body around barbed wire and climbs a center pole up onto an overpass freeway sign. As he tries to gather his balance, he opens his backpack and pulls out a spray-paint can. While hanging for life with one hand, he diligently outlines with the other the letters of his ‘tag’ (a distinct name that each graffiti writer chooses to use). When semi-trucks and other large vehicles rumble below, the sign trembles causing him to slip and nearly fall onto the freeway—a situation that almost surely means death. This shadowy figure is a graffiti writer and his experience is shared by many youth in urban settings throughout the United States.

Since the beginning of aerosol graffiti in the late seventies in New York City, when graffiti writers would risk being electrocuted and killed just to put up their tag on city subways, many writers continue to risk their lives to write their names. What drives graffiti writers to endanger their lives simply to put up their tags or pieces, intricate letter patterns with complex color schemes and backgrounds? As Wel, a Los Angeles graffiti writer puts it, “It’s me showing and yelling to the world my name and my crews...I exist...I am.”

In Los Angeles, some youth—mainly Latinos—consider graffiti a form of art through which they can express themselves and demonstrate their artistic talents to the world. Swan, a writer from L.A.’s infamous UTI (Using The Imagination) crew (a group of artists who take on an acronym and work together), states, “In poor urban neighborhoods youngsters want an identity. They want to know they exist in society...so they pick up a marker or a spray can and write their name. I was here. That’s me.” In impoverished communities youth do not have much, if any, access to art programs. Nor can they afford to attend art

schools so they turn to graffiti as a way to develop and practice their artwork. Besides being a form of self-expression, graffiti can also be therapeutic for young people who must contend with the stress of urban poverty. “It’s like therapy....I may be angry one day and just go out and paint and get it all out. It’s very relaxing when I’m out there painting... I forget about all my problems. I forget that I am even part of this world,” says Duce, a graffiti artist and muralist from South Central Los Angeles.

On the streets of Los Angeles, the graffiti subculture also serves as an alternative to street gangs. “When you are in your early teens you are really impressionable. When you are at that age you are asking yourself, ‘Where do I belong?’ You have lots of gangs in L.A. and a lot of things to deal with...you look at how violent gangs are and then you look at how easy it is to do graffiti...you just come up with a name and write,” says Swan.

The manner in which graffiti writers settle disputes and problems among themselves is indicative of the difference between the world of graf (graffiti) and the gang world. Whereas gangs in L.A. seek to resolve their problems by fighting or shooting at one another, graf writers take their squabbles to the walls in what is known as a “battle.” A battle is an artistic competition, usually between two individuals or two crews. The winner is determined by a neutral judge, who critiques the quality of the two parties’ works based on creativity, style, and innovation. During one of L.A.’s classic battles, which took place in 1989 between Hex and Slick, a message that captures the essence of the graf world was incorporated into a piece: “Why can’t all wars be settled on a wall?”

In the graffiti world, writers put up their names in as many visible places as possible to be seen and recognized by others, especially graf writers. Gin, a veteran graf writer from TNT (The Dynamite Team) crew, states: “Doing

graffiti is something that no one can take from me. It's like my little world where I can be famous." Indeed this subculture functions as a world in which writers can become "known" based on both the quantity and quality of their artwork. "You have to stand out from the others, so I do my name on riskier spots like bridges and I also do my name bigger than other writers," says Duce.

This competition among writers is like a sport in which crews seek to "get up" more than other crews.

"The graffiti world is a microcosm of the real world. There is politics, beefs [personal animosity], treaties, truces, rumors and back-stabbings. But there is also many positive things like friendships and good times," says Skill, a member of the UTI crew and one of the world's most known and respected graffiti writers. Graffiti has enabled many urban youth to interact and build life-long friendships with other writers of different ethnic, racial and socio-economic backgrounds, from suburbia to other cities. For many Los Angeles graf writers, the first people of different ethnic and economic backgrounds that they come in contact with are writers from crews in other areas. As Skill explains, "Being part of the graffiti world exposes youth to situations and cultures that they would not have been exposed to otherwise." In fact one of the most appealing and unique characteristics of this art form is that anyone from anywhere can become a respected graf writer. Your reputation in the graffiti world is based solely on your artistic skills, and not on any privileges that may come with your class, race, or gender.

Although graffiti writers start-off by "tagging," through practice, experience, and advice from older members in their crew(s), most writers evolve into great artists. As such, they go on to paint elaborate "pieces," most painted illegally under the cover of night. They can be seen throughout the city on freeway walls, commercial buildings, and on the concrete banks of the Los Angeles River. Since these works are not commissioned, most are removed soon after. However, some pieces remain undisturbed for months, or even years, because their aesthetic quality is appreciated as much by commuters and graffiti removal squads as it is by other graf artists.

By utilizing their artistic skills to benefit their neighborhoods, graffiti artists are able to gain recognition not only from the graffiti world, but also from their own communities.

Describing his role as an artist in his community, Duce states: "My neighborhood is like an urban concrete jungle full of lifeless walls that are all so plain. I try to change that by adding color and using my artistic talents as a graffiti artist to beautify my neighborhood."

Like Duce, many other graffiti artists have successfully utilized their skills to find acceptance and appreciation,

while improving their barrios. They help their communities by transforming blank or defaced walls into elaborate murals with positive messages. Families and community members often pay small sums to have graffiti writers paint "Rest In Peace" murals. With the usage of Catholic imagery, such as *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, writers memorialize victims of drug overdoses and gang violence. This has become a tradition in many Latino, inner-city neighborhoods and, as Skill states, "It serves as a way to ensure that even though dead homies in the neighborhood are gone, they are not forgotten."

Even though some graffiti writers become accepted as "legitimate" artists, having their artwork exhibited at museums and art shows, most are not. As a result, some feel that their work is being disregarded. "We just opened the largest art facility in the country [The Paul Getty Museum] and graffiti is not represented anywhere. If you asked anyone about graffiti art, they don't even consider it a form of art. They just keep on passing us by," says Elfe, who has been doing graf art in Los Angeles for over five years.

Many graffiti writers are trying to combat the negative stigma attached to their work, which they consider to be the main reason why their work is neglected in the mainstream art world. One way graf artists are doing this is by exhibiting their artwork to the world via the World Wide Web. The Internet allows them to display not only pictures of current pieces, but also pictures of pieces that may have already been removed or painted over.

Barbed wire has not prevented graf writers from painting and neither will the harsher laws and stricter penalties against "graffiti vandals" that are being implemented in cities throughout the country. Graffiti is very meaningful to its practitioners. As a graf artists once wrote on his piece, "It's a cold world out there, and graffiti is my blanket." We need to look at graf artist in relation to their social context. "Without any local outlets like museums, community centers or mentors, I created my own artistic activity and that was doing graffiti," states Duce. Unable to find more suitable ways to develop their skills as well as alternative venues where they can showcase their artwork, graf artists will continue to risk their lives in order to paint their names on the large overhead freeway signs known appropriately to graf artists as "the heavens."

Salomon Zavala, a member of the UTI crew and a senior at Amherst College, is completing a documentary on graf art entitled, I Am: The Complete History of Los Angeles Graffiti.

Richard Mora, who is from Northeast Los Angeles, is currently a first-year graduate student in the Sociology and Social Policy program at Harvard University.

A message that captures the essence of the graf world was incorporated into a piece: "Why can't all wars be settled on a wall?"

Discovering Latin American Art

Old treasures and new initiatives at Harvard

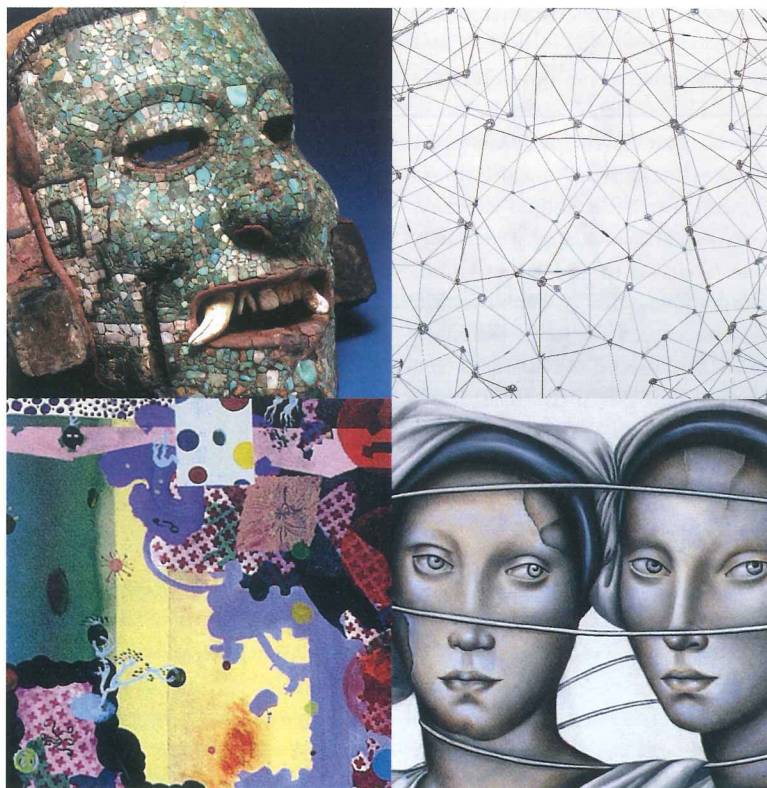
BY STEVE REIFENBERG

HARVARD UNIVERSITY HAS LONG been known for its collection of Mayan, Mesoamerican, and Andean artifacts at the Peabody Museum in Cambridge and for the incredible Pre-Columbian treasures at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. Harvard scholars have been doing research, offering courses, and organizing exhibitions around these rich resources for decades.

Despite the University's demonstrated commitment to Latin American antiquities, until recently there was remarkably little activity at Harvard on "post-contact" Latin American art, with almost no research, courses or exhibitions related to the past 500 years of Latin American visual arts at the University.

"As a Harvard art history undergraduate and then graduate student focusing on contemporary Latin American art, there was interest in but no commitment to the field," said Mary Schneider Enríquez, who later became a Latin American art critic and curator. "It was frustrating because by the 1990's Latin American art had achieved a level of attention worldwide, through exhibitions, biennials and the auctions, that one would have hoped that a university like Harvard might finally make a serious academic commitment to the field. But little changed at Harvard until this last year, when suddenly, perspectives shifted and decisive steps were taken to make Latin American art and the study of its history a part of the department and the art museums."

This year, the Harvard University Art Museums, the Department of the History of Art and Architecture, and the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies came together for the first time to organize a year-long lecture series on New Perspectives on Latin American Art from the 16th Century to the Present (see p. 9).



In addition, in the fall 2000 semester, Latin American art historian Tom Cummins from the University of Chicago offered two courses on themes in colonial Latin America art, the first regular courses on post-contact Latin American art ever offered in Harvard's History of Art and Architecture Department. Furthermore, in March 2001, Harvard's Fogg Museum of Art is hosting a major exhibition of contemporary Latin American painting, *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*.

"We hope this is just the beginning," said John Coatsworth, Director of the David Rockefeller Center. "Next on our long wish list comes recruiting new faculty and curators, then dedicated exhibition space, visiting artists, graduate fellowships, the museum collections, and much more."

Many factors came together to

ignite this increase in activity. The first step was to get an accurate assessment of Harvard's human and material resources in Latin American art. The David Rockefeller Center commissioned Mercedes Trelles, a doctoral student in the History of Art and Architecture, to interview faculty and curators across the University to understand the history and potential for teaching, research, and exhibits on Latin American art at Harvard and to write up those findings.

Trelles' report contained some surprises. There was, in fact, more post-contact Latin American art content in Harvard courses than some thought, but not necessarily in the History of Art and Architecture Department. Instead, Latin American arts were more typically being taught as part of advanced language courses in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures or at the Graduate

MAYA ORIGINS AT HARVARD

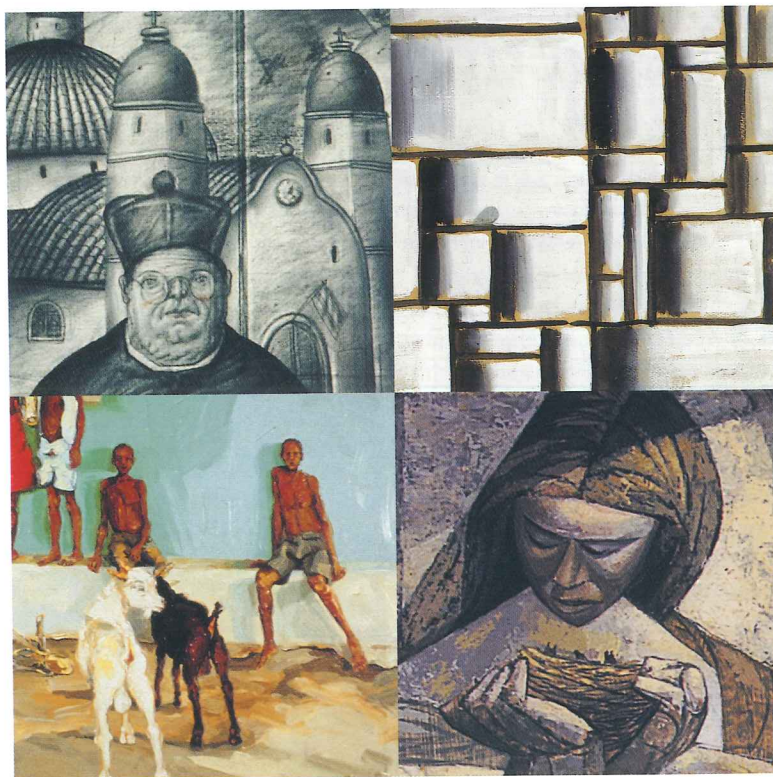
Harvard's interest in Latin American art can be traced to the Department of Ethnology and Anthropology's late 19th century interest in pre-Columbian culture, specifically Mayan. Harvard experts brought back diverse objects from their explorations, which were put on display in the Harvard's Peabody Museum. (See related article 'Exploring Things Mayan to Modern' p. 47). The acquisition and display of these objects was not to demonstrate the aesthetic capacity of the ancient Mayas, but rather to study their daily life and re-construct the history of a culture.

School of Design.

Connecting Harvard faculty with Latin American collectors and experts, some of whom are members of the international Advisory Committee of the David Rockefeller Center, was another critical step forward. A Latin American Arts subcommittee was created in 1999 to advise the Center. Its members now include David Rockefeller, Angeles Espinosa Yglesias, Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Mary Schneider Enríquez, Barbara Duncan, Estrellita Bograd Brodsky, as well as Harvard faculty members John Coatsworth and James Cuno. Neil and Angelica Rudenstine, Ioli Kalavrezou and Yve-Alain Bois have also been valued advisors to the process. This group enthusiastically set about exploring ways to promote Latin American art at Harvard.

"Reading the document by Mercedes Trelles before the first subcommittee meeting signaled something very important for me," said subcommittee member Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. "It was a kind of 'mea culpa' from Harvard, saying, essentially, this is an important area and we've done very little, and we need to change that. This demonstrated to me that Harvard was serious about remedying this situation and serious about doing something significant on Latin American art."

An important step forward for the University is the March 2001 exhibition of Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection at



the Fogg Museum of Art, the first-ever exhibition of contemporary Latin American art at a Harvard Museum. "Not only is the work of these important artists too little known in North America, but collaborations between North and Latin American critics, scholars, and institutions are far too rare," said James Cuno, the Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. "With increasing awareness of our cultures' common histories and interests, it is only appropriate that individuals and institutions from all of the Americas join

together to present the work of the most important artists of our common hemisphere," he said.

"I am really thrilled to witness this heightened awareness of Latin American art at Harvard," commented Mary Schneider Enríquez, the former Harvard student who is now serving as a guest curator for the Cisneros show at the Fogg. "Things are changing in dramatic ways and the future holds incredible promise."

Steve Reifenberg is the executive director of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies.

Latin American Art and Culture On and Off the Walls

DRCLAS is working to strengthen the presence of Latin American art at Harvard. In the fall of 1997, the Center initiated its Latin American and Latino Art Forum, featuring the work of Latin American and Latino artists, or artists working on Latin themes. Thanks largely to the establishment of the Gustavo Brillenbourg Memorial Fund, the Center has been able to feature the work of well-known and up and coming artists and transform its space at its offices at 61 Kirkland every few months.

Furthermore, the Center has received paintings,

prints, and sculptures from Robert and Emily Marcus, and from Angeles Espinosa Yglesias, the director of the Amparo Museum in Puebla, that are on permanent exhibition at the David Rockefeller Center.

The Center also recently created an endowment with the generous support of the Estrellita Bograd Brodsky Fund for Latin American Art and Culture. This endowment will promote the study of Latin American cultural heritage including art, architecture, cinema, music, poetry, dance, literature, and other forms of creative expression.

Exploring Things Mayan and Modern

A history of Latin American arts at Harvard

BY SUSIE SEEFELT LESIEUTRE

THE AGNES MONGAN CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF Prints, Drawings, and Photographs at Harvard's Fogg art museum houses most of the university's Latin American art collection. I am here from the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) to find pieces that graduate student Mercedes Trelles reported on for DRCLAS in 1998 as the Center sought to identify the scope of Latin American art at Harvard. I anticipated strolling past artwork hung from the walls, noting the title, the caption, and what type of process the artist used. Instead, I have specified the prints I want to look at — from a card catalog — and am waiting for the clerk to bring them out. Several people are sitting at the long tables studying their selections on handy tabletop easels.

My prints arrive. The clerk takes the top piece and tells me not to touch the bevelled edge of the paper matte frame. Lifting the frame, she shows me how to remove the protective tissue paper — you lift it up, she says, don't drag it across the piece. Underneath are women, black plaited hair reaching down their backs, and men with sombreros. Their heads are bowed as they sleep with their children. This is unmistakable Diego Rivera — broad foreheads and arms, sturdy, larger-than-life hands folded over loved ones.

"Sleep," dated 1932, was acquired by the Fogg's assistant director at the time, Paul Sachs. According to the current curator of the Mongan Center, Marjorie Cohn, in the 1930s and 1940s, Sachs collected works of other Mexican muralists and artists as well, including prints by Rufino Tamayo, José Clemente Orozco, and Leopoldo Mendez. Agnes Mongan continued this trend by acquiring more Mexican works through the early 1970s by artists such as Jean Charlot, Francisco Dosamontes, Raul Anguiano, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Rafael Coronel, José Luis Cuevas, Carlos Mérida, and Alfredo Zalce. Most of these pieces are lithographs, some in color.

Drawings by Chilean artist Robert Matta Echaurren and a sculpture and drawing by Francisco Zúñiga were purchased by the museum in the 1970s and 1990s. Recently the Fogg has added works by Enrique Chagoya and Luis Jiménez, both printmakers of Latin American background. Soon the museum will acquire 85 woodcuts by Cuban artist Antonio Canet, originally a gift to DRCLAS. Most recent acquisitions in the Mongan Center are the work of curator Marjorie Cohn.

The Fogg's photography department has also collected Latin American works. Many of these are gelatin silver prints, black and white photos. Artists in this collection include Manuel Alvarez Bravo and Lola Alvarez Bravo, both Mexican; Antonio Mendoza, Cuban-born; Luis Gon-

zales Palma, Guatemalan; Anna Bella Geiger, Brazilian; Rogerio Reis, Brazilian; Abelardo Morell, Cuban-born; and Oscar Palacio, Colombian. These photographs range from the pop art, political statements of Anna Bella Geiger to the 'camera-obscura' technique employed by Abelardo Morell, where he turns an entire room into a camera and imposes the picture it takes onto the wall of the room. Many of these were gifts to the museum, collected between the 1940s and 1990s.

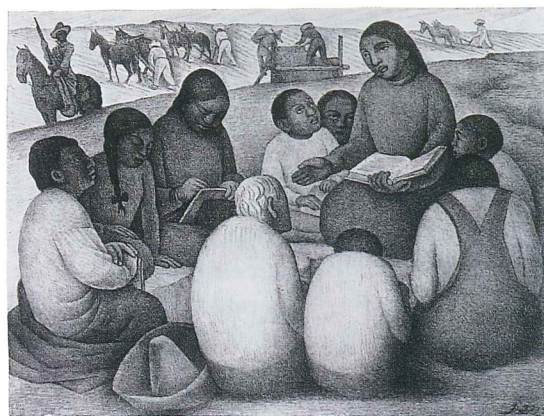
Harvard University began its exploration of Latin American art in the late 1800s when Harvard faculty brought back Mayan objects from Copan, Honduras, and Chichen Itza. These objects became part of the collection at the Peabody, the Harvard's ethnography museum, and were first on view at the Fogg, which in the 1930s was the only museum in America to exhibit these artifacts as art. Now they are on display on the third floor of the Peabody, the Latin American floor.

For many years, Harvard's commitment to Latin American arts remained fixed in its museum collections. Recently, however, many on campus have explored new definitions of Latin American art, which include modern works in many genres, and have boldly advanced the space where Latin American art is now displayed and studied.

When DRCLAS moved into its present building at 61 Kirland St., Cambridge, in 1997, Harvard graduate student Chris Tirres noted the ample bare walls and conceived the idea of a juried art competition. Since then, DRCLAS has established more than a dozen exhibitions as part of its Latin American and Latino Art Forum.

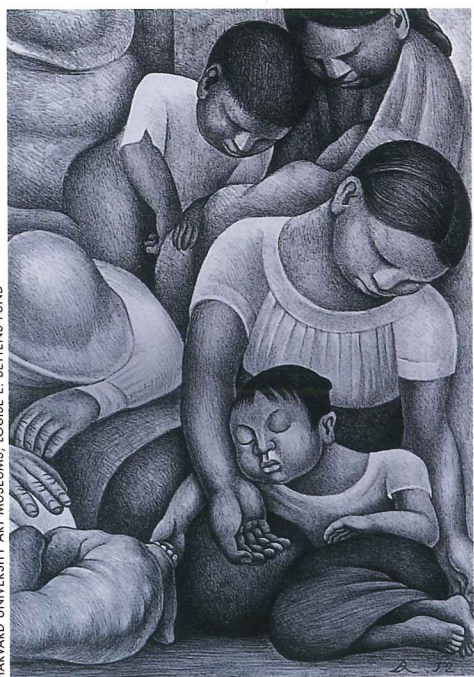
In the fall of 1999, Winifred Godfrey's "Mayan Procession" was on display; her life-size oil paintings spanned entire walls. "They were stunning," said then-Acting Director Otto Solbrig. "They were not abstract, yet quite symbolic." He said he enjoyed her work because she captured the stoicism of Guatemalan women even while displaying the vivid colors of the textiles they wear daily.

A large black and white photograph remains at the Center from Jack Lueders-Booth's photoessay of people who live on or near the dumps in Tijuana, Mexico. In this photo a young woman leans against a truck filled with garbage,



Diego Rivera
Open Air School
1930

COURTESY OF THE FOGG ART MUSEUM, HARVARD UNIVERSITY
ART MUSEUMS, GRAY COLLECTION OF ENGRAVINGS FUND

COURTESY OF THE FOGG ART MUSEUM,
HARVARD UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUMS, LOUISE E. BETTENS FUND

Diego Rivera
Sleep
1932

which rises past the edge of the picture. DRCLAS supported both his work and that of Laura Blacklow, a lecturer in Harvard's Department of Visual and Environmental Studies who recently traveled to Guatemala to teach photography (see photoessay this issue).

Contributing to the mix at Harvard is Latino Cultures, an interdisciplinary course on the Latin American diaspora taught by Doris Sommer from the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL) and Marcelo Suárez-Orozco from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, with DRCLAS funding. In 1998 and 1999, guest speaker Tomas Ybarra Frausto, an art scholar

and Rockefeller Foundation program officer, spoke to the class about Latin American art trends.

José Mazzotti is one of several RLL professors who regularly incorporates Latin American art themes in their courses. "I use a great deal of material such as slides of paintings by Cuban Wilfredo Lam, Mexican Tamayo, Peruvian Carlos Runcie Tanaka and Tilsa Tsuchya and other artists to illustrate the periods and cultural trends of which literary texts also talk." He also brings in film, "to explain historical processes like the Cuban revolution," and music, "from Mexican corridos to Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Peruvian songs."

Over the years the Harvard Film Archive (HFA) has made Latin films accessible to US audiences, broadening the definition of Latin American art further. In addition to the films by celebrated Spanish filmmaker Luis Bunuel, the HFA has sponsored several series dedicated to Latin American cinema, including the Glauber Rocha films comprising his "Trilogy of the Earth." These are political, often exposing the raw face of conflict between landowners and the poor in Brazil. Most recently the HFA hosted an experimental series, 20 films from Mexico's government film industry, Cinematic D.F. Both fiction and non-fiction, some offered a humorous look at politics, including one that parodied ex-President Salinas' flight out of the country. Steffen Pierce, Assistant Curator at the Archive, said that it's "very hard to get films out of Central and South America. They have been swamped with American product, which has made such inroads into those markets that it's very hard to keep a vital film industry going." Pierce added that while the Archive does have some Mexican, Brazilian, and Chilean films, and the Bunuel films, in their permanent collection, most of the Latin American films they show are on campus only temporarily. He said they would definitely like to expand their

Latin American holdings.

Some Harvard departments have collaborated with off campus sites to promote Latin American art. Jessica Morgan, curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in Boston, recounts a 1997 installation art exhibit they put together with Harvard's Visual and Environmental Studies department. The exhibit featured the work of Brazilian conceptual artist Cildo Meireles, "a sculptor who constructs a piece, or many pieces, and the space in which it will be displayed," Morgan explained. Meireles works in 3-D, sometimes incorporating found objects.

Ellen Phelan of the Carpenter Center at Harvard described one of Meireles' pieces that was displayed there during the joint show with the ICA. Entitled 'How to Build a Cathedral,' it consisted of a square of cinder blocks measuring 20' X 20', filled with pennies. Thousands of cow bones hung above; the perimeter was swathed in black. "One of the things that interests me about Latin American artwork at this time," Phelan commented, is the artists' "appropriation of minimalist forms from the 1960s and 1970s, which they load with political content. You don't often see that in the US." It may seem like a contradiction, she said, to load a minimalist piece. But she thinks Meireles' work "is extremely graceful."

Mercedes Trelles' report, which prompted this pilgrimage across campus, finally takes me to the third floor of the Peabody museum. I walk across the uneven hardwood floor, itself a hundred years old, and note the Mayan cookware. Large, heavy, ceramic dishes were made ornate by effigies of animals atop lids—I see a jaguar and a parrot. Another glass case displays ornaments, earrings, pendants, headbands, belts, and something called lip plugs made out of greenstone, shell, and ceramic. Sharp edged stone daggers remind me that this society believed in the ritual of blood sacrifice. And there are stone likenesses of the gear—mostly heavy belts—that men wore while playing ball.

Next I walk among the imposing stelae, towering stone columns, dating back to AD 600. Many of these are casts of the originals, all from the Mayan court at Yaxchilan. They tell stories of the Mayans, a class bound and ritualistic society, through pictograms carved onto the giant columns. The exhibit instructs visitors on how to decipher the drawings: read double columns of glyphs from top to bottom; the glyphs trace the cycles of life, work, and death.

The stories of these early artists are still being told, and many more are to come, with the expansive, campus-wide outreach at Harvard today, which is exploring Latin American art in its many forms and its many creators.

Susie Seefelt Lesieutre was a publications intern at DRCLAS for the fall semester and is currently working with the Center's publications director. She is enrolled in the Certificate for Publishing and Communications program at Harvard Extension. In 1990 she received a Master's degree in TESL; she has taught ESL in the US and abroad. This article draws on a 1998 report on Latin American arts at Harvard by Mercedes Trelles.

So, what are you doing this Friday?

An invitation to explore the periphery, edges, and beyond

BY JENNIFER BURTNER

“YOU HAVE TO LOOK AT THE EDGES,” MARCUS ZILLIOX said, pointing to the large 17th Century French painting, *The Crucifixion with the Virgin, Saint John, and Saint Mary Magdalene* (Mathieu Le Nain, oil on canvas, 1607-1677). “During this period, the artist meant for your eye to travel in a circle, starting at the outmost edge, and gradually, in a circular motion, move inward to the center.” In the air, his finger traced the outline of the canvas in a spiraling motion, resting on the upturned face of Mary Magdalene, gazing at the condemned Christ. “Whoever or whatever is at the center is what the artist wanted you to focus on.”

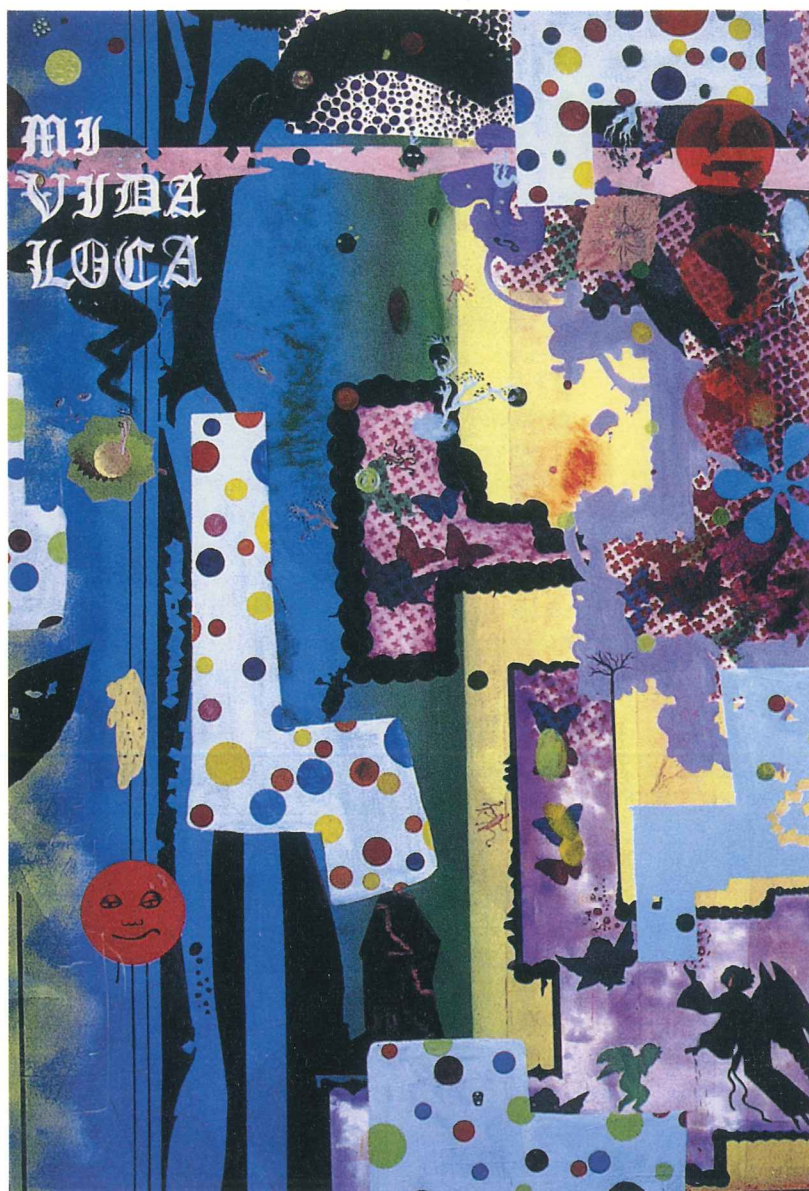
We had just left the DRCLAS Latin American and Latino Art Forum opening of Zilliox’s mixed media show “Collapsing Ivory Towers,” the title piece of which was *Mi Vida Loca* (acrylic and collage on wood, 48” x 36”, 1997), a layering of sharp primary colors forming geometric and organic shapes, within which flew butterflies and angels. Across the surface of this piece red dots were scattered, representing the #2 red dye in the processed food that has made up much of the diet of his home community in Arizona. We now stood in the middle of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts’ William I. Koch Gallery staring up at the faces of Christian martyrs, whose bodies and souls writhed in a different sort of pain. Slowly turning, we examined each piece in the 16th and 17th Century European Collection, scanning Italian, French, and Spanish pieces, and moving on through the Dutch, Flemish, and German masters, to see if Zilliox’s center-periphery theory held.

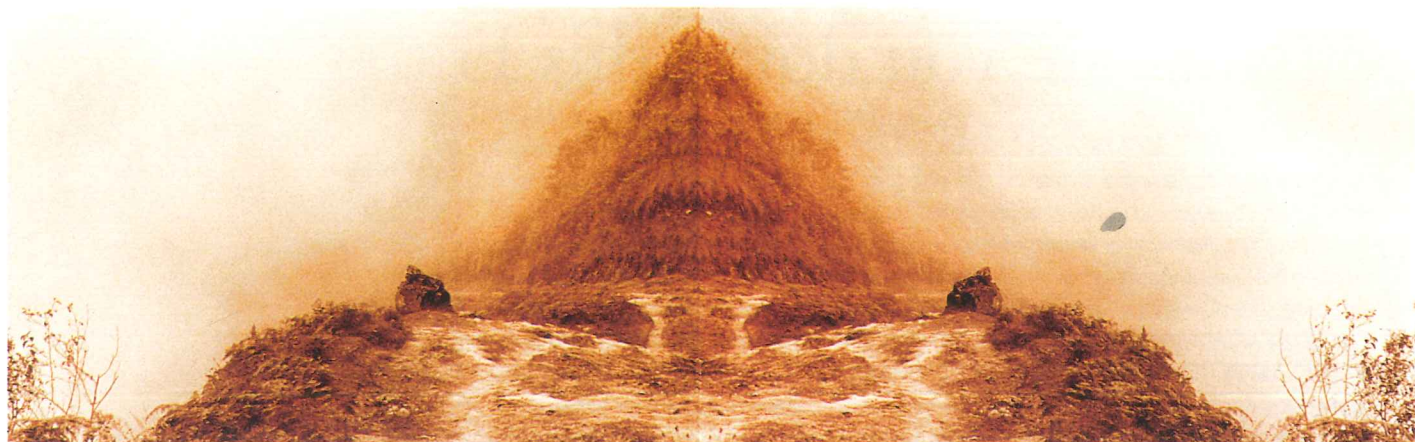
Animated men and women in their 30’s and 40’s, here for the MFA’s Friday night singles cocktail, drinks in hand, mingled around us, talking loudly, straining to hear one another above the background music while trying to make eye contact with strangers and, with luck, obtain their telephone numbers. One man moving in this human current stopped next to us and asked what we were doing. “Looking at the paintings,” I responded and pointed to Ruben’s *Head of Cyrus Brought to Queen Tomyris* (oil on canvas, 1622-23). The man looked at the piece, then at me, laughed, and continued his pilgrimage.

“Things are different now,” Zilliox explained, still examining the paintings. “The center is not so clear. Neither are the edges. Today, life is more frenetic. Society is more fragmented. What is important, may not necessarily be at the center, but scattered throughout. Messages everywhere.” For decades, post-modern theorists have argued that within “late capitalist culture” images are no longer connected with what they signify, that through seemingly endless replication and reinterpretation meanings have

multiplied and established chains of signification broken. As audiences, artistic genres, and methods of production changed, common systems of external referents that most people could identify ceased to exist. Today there is little control over how final pieces will be interpreted, much less consumed. I looked around me at the paintings, the polished stone walls, the bar, the band, and the hundreds of singles circling the room under the religious paintings. Perhaps Zilliox and post-modernists such as Baudrillard are correct: the seemingly endless reproduction of objects and images dominates our symbolic production and consumption, and we, entering a new millenium, with drinks

Marcus Zilliox
Mi Vida Loca
1997





Dominique Pepin
*Chemin vers le Cerro
de la Adoración*
1998

Right:
Touth Andrade
Botânica Brasileira
from the series
Bandeiras Brasileiras
1998

in hand, have internalized and are reveling in it.

Despite post-modern critiques and the increasing sense of disconnectedness between art, its production, and consumption, no painting stands in isolation. Every work is connected to the individuals who create and consume it; the people themselves complicated creations, worthy of study. Through the DRCLAS Art Forum, artists and their audiences explore ways of communicating subtle aspects of culture, identity and the surroundings we live in or have left behind. Students from area high schools, many born outside the U.S., visit the Center to learn from artists who discuss the experiences that formed them and helped them create the pieces now on display. Many of the artists in the DRCLAS Art Forum 2000 series are self-described intercultural hybrids, who have spent their lives crossing boundaries (geographic, cultural, racial and ethnic, etc.).

Through their art, they try to understand their journey and communicate the way they see their current surroundings and their 'inner landscapes.' As with Zilliox's work, most of the pieces displayed in the DRCLAS Latin American and Latino Art Forum 2000 series do not seek to represent, as much as re-present and evoke. These reified, manipulated, hyper-real and often abstracted images of objects, landscapes and people use the familiar as windows into other perceptive realities.

In Dominique Pepin's "Of Reflections and Ceremonies: Meeting with a Mazatec Shaman" (September 2000), photographs of the landscapes in the Sierra Mazateca of Oaxaca, Mexico, provide viewers with the impossible view of a world reflected back onto itself. The textures and positive and negative spaces of this parallel universe, at first glance, provoke an almost Rorschach interpretive impulse, before drawing the eye and mind into the world of shamanic trance and transcendence. In these representations, the monochromatic simplicity of the sepia tones allows the textures and patterns of naturally occurring objects (mountains, trees, and valleys) to dominate. The singular crease which divides the print down the center, as in *Camins vers le Cerro de la Adoración* (20" x 38", 1998), creates the illusion of a visual pathway, beckoning the viewer to come closer, follow, and ultimately, wager which side is the original and which the reflection.



In Touth Andrade's "Brasil: Nature and the Inner Self," (March 2000), a single red *Hybiscus* (oil on canvas, .6 x .7 meters) saturates the canvas. The scale and intensity of color momentarily disorients the eye and drawing its viewer closer into the center, like an insect, tempts it to touch, partake and fulfill an edible, if not sexual desire. In her *Botânica Brasileira* (oil on canvas, .8 x .9 meters, 1998), a Brazilian flag pulses with the movement of worker ants, molting butterflies, dew-covered bromeliads, and bees. Porpoises, turtles, and fish swim through another painting in the series *Bandeiras Brasileiras*, displaying in an aquarium-like frame the life that inhabits the famed jungles and coasts of Touth Andrade's homeland and animates her notion of "Brasilidad."

In each exposition, the artist uses a different trope to orient the viewer and, through some element of the medium (color, composition, etc.), to communicate the strength of a connection not previously recognized. In *Procession Near Tecpan* (oil on canvas, 60" x 80"), the folds of red and yellow ceremonial blouses known as *huipiles* overlap, covering the shoulders and arms of the female *cofrades* members. The *huipil*, the cultural marker of indigenous Guatemalan ethnicity, gender, status and place-identity, defines the individual figures while visually interconnecting them as a singular social group, spatially unifying them in the march that temporally links them to centuries of tra-

dition. Outside the visual tapestry of the canvases that make up "Mayan Procession" (September 1999), painter Winifred Godfrey hangs an assortment of woven *huipiles* and other garments. This rupture in the traditional framing of the pieces reinforces the trope of "the weaving of social fabric through communal pilgrimage," and takes steps towards dissolving the traditional boundaries of artist and artisan, object and subject.

Through the dark earth tones (black, browns, and greens) of many of the pieces in "Interior Gardens" (December 2000), Cuban-born Connie Lloveras takes the viewer downward into almost subterranean levels of self-reflection and back into rooms filled with longing. Canvases, often visually partitioned by clear lines between dark and light, are accented with deep blues, vivid reds, and shades of yellow and white. Her pieces are sad, but strangely, comforting. After the rest of the visitors leave the reception for Lloveras's show, the final exposition of the year, I stay to show the pieces to one last group. We walk through the empty building looking at the pieces. Lloveras asks the viewers what the pieces mean to them: In *Blue, Cocoon and Butterfly* (mixed media on paper, 30" x 22", 2000), does the colorful rectangle from which new life emerges represent sadness or hope? There are a number of pieces featuring vacant chairs: *Pointless Conversation* (mixed media on canvas, 60" x 48", 1995), *Catching Stones* (mixed media on canvas, 60" x 90", 1998), and *Alma* (mixed media on paper, 30" x 22", 2000). Could these be referring to the frustration and isolation of exile or perhaps, a more permanent departure, death. It's late, and bitterly cold outside. There are no taxis, so the group begins their walk toward Harvard Square. I lock the outside door, clear the wine bottles and glasses left over from the mingling crowds, long gone, put the empty chairs in place and turn off the lights. Before closing the door, I look around one last time. The glow from the streetlights outside illuminates a piece I had not noticed before, *Telephone* (mixed media on canvas, 60" x 96", 1999). In the air, I trace the outline of the canvas in a circular motion, following repetitive images of receivers spiraling inward, resting finally on the telephone in the center. I stare at the canvas, remembering Zilliox's explanation and the lonely men and women at the singles gathering months before,

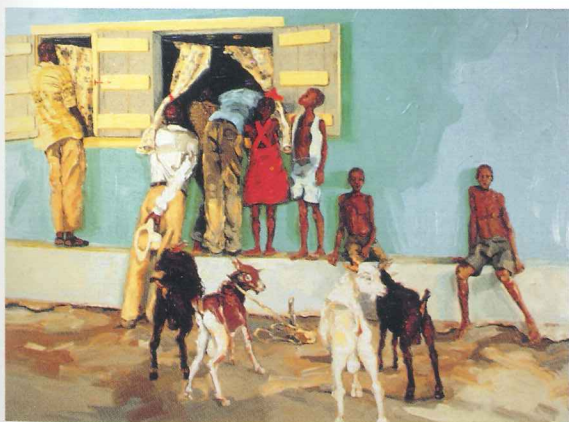
circling, trying to make contact with one another and obtain phone numbers.

Unlike the creators of classical works who sought to represent and provided interpretations, the artists whose work fill our Forum today claim they prefer to create and leave the interpretation to the viewer. They encourage us not to focus on the center, but explore the periphery, the edges, and beyond – and to link it to the world *we* live in. Resisting their role as the ultimate authors, these artists seek to collaborate with their subjects and audiences, and in a rebelliously democratizing, if not anarchic move, multiply the voices in dialogue, and help people, in desperate need, to connect with one another and their surroundings.

Jennifer Burtner is the DRCLAS Brazil Program Coordinator. She has worked with artists and marketers in Latin America since the late 1980s, researching and writing about the relationships between identity, commodification and petty commodity production in regional tourism markets. She can be found looking at paintings every Friday somewhere in the Boston area.

Left:
Marilene Phipps
Looking In

Below:
Connie Lloveras
Trials of Endurance



Interior Gardens

Art and the Human Condition

BY CONNIE LLOVERAS

AS THE MOST RECENT ARTIST featured in the DRCLAS Latin American and Latino Art Forum, I found that my canvases "Interior Gardens" provoked much dialogue among viewers, whether they were Harvard professors or bilingual schoolchildren. That did not surprise me.

My works are a result of a dialogue that exists between myself and a work of art. At the same time, this dialogue parallels the relationship between the viewer and the art object. My work is the outgrowth of my personal experience as a Cuban-born artist who came to this country in 1960 as a two-year-old and lost my mother not long thereafter. This double loss of father-

land and mothering parent gave me a heightened awareness of the temporality of human existence. It instilled in me a sensitivity to life and created a need to express this sensitivity through an art form.

A spiritual longing to find purpose and meaning led me to create my own personal vocabulary in a visual form, but this deeply personal vision also speaks to the universality of the human condition. Although my art has a statement to make, the viewer ultimately is forced to draw personal connotations from the symbols and establish an individual conversation with the art object.

Since 1981, I have worked on developing a language of ideas and

expressing them in an art form that is unique and personal. I work in a variety of mediums and feel that my work is bound by ideas rather than materials. I work in clay as well as canvas and paper, and have most recently moved into the public art arena. I find that each medium feeds the other. There is an immediacy and freshness when working with paint that I try to recreate in my clay works. And there is a richness and surface texture in clay that I try to incorporate into my paintings. The thick and rough materials provide me with more elements with which to express my ideas as shape, edges, and texture become as malleable as color, line, and form. The work interacts between structure, color, and texture, with variations built through layering and scraping.

My ideas, as expressed through these varied art forms, focus on the complexity of human emotions, particularly as experienced by women. My most recent works also derive from my own profound prayer life. Cocoons, nests, seeds, and butterflies draw metaphorically on the human ability to draw inner strength through life's journey. It speaks of interior gardens waiting to be watered and nurtured in order to come into full bloom. It alludes to the light that comes from within, and reveals an urgency to share a message of peace and unity.

Connie Lloveras is a Miami-based, Cuban-born artist whose exhibit Interior Gardens was on display in the DRCLAS Latin American and Latino Art Forum until March 2, 2001. The next Art Forum, beginning March 16, features a series of photographs on the African diaspora in Brazil "Axe' II / The Un Broken Circle: Ethnographs" by Reginald Jackson.

Connie Lloveras
Inquietudes
1997



From Favela to Bairro

Rio's Neighborhoods in Transition

BY SUSIE SEEFELT LESIEUTRE

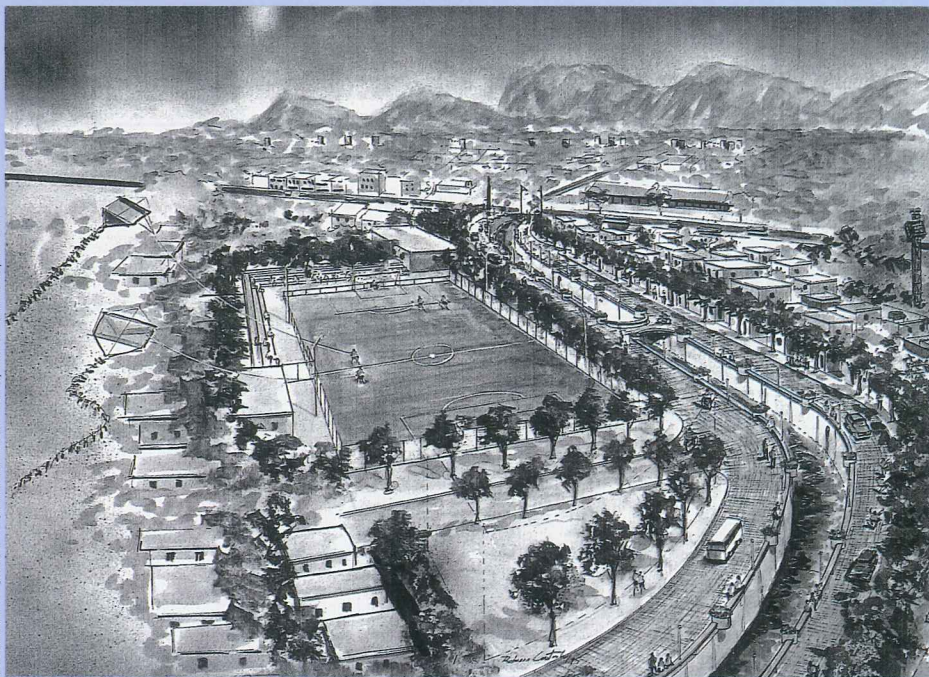
THE BRAZILIAN FIRM OF JORGE MARIO Jauregui Architects is the first Latin American recipient of the Harvard Graduate School of Design's Veronica Rudge Green Award in Urban Design. The award, given for outstanding accomplishments that make positive, humane contributions to urban life, recognized the architecture firm for its efforts to improve the poor neighborhoods of Rio de Janeiro.

"There is a general perception of the betterment of living conditions for the shantytown and its relation to the city," said Jauregui, a long-time Brazilian resident originally from Argentina, in an interview.

Public spaces are at the heart of Jauregui's designs — including the construction of community centers to provide recreational activities, job training, and assistance in setting up businesses in these shantytowns, known as favelas. Private spaces are left undisturbed unless a structure is substandard or sitting on unstable land. Relocation units are erected elsewhere in the favela for residents whose housing must be torn down.

At the award ceremony, Jauregui noted that the favelas of Rio have long been considered a problem. Unlike similar marginalized neighborhoods in other cities, many of these shantytowns share prime space with the city. People who live near the favelas would like to see them torn down and their residents relocated out of sight. The residents themselves often live in substandard housing; there is no clean water and no trash pickup. In many cases people have jerryrigged electrical wires to bring electricity into their homes. The people are poor, uneducated, and since the 1980s, the areas have been a haven for drug traffickers and corrupt policing.

Ben Penglase, a Ph.D. candidate in Social Anthropology at Harvard, indicated that about a fifth of Rio's population live in favelas; one out of every three homes is located in these poor neighborhoods. Faced with these statistics, the City of Rio decided to take action. In the 1990s, it designed Favela Bairro, a program that turns an impoverished neighborhood into a functioning one, integrated with the city at its edge. The city cre-



COURTESY OF JORGE M. JAUREGUI ARCHITECTS, RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

Overview of the urbanization of the Fernão Cardim favela

ated a Housing Secretariat to oversee the project, and the City of Rio, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the European Union provide funding.

The large-scale ongoing project involves teams of architects, engineers, construction workers, social workers, psychologists, and the people of the favelas themselves. According to the Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD), these extraordinary undertakings, called interventions, differ from other architectural interventions in the 1960s and 1970s, which razed favelas and moved people out to government housing elsewhere. Favela Bairro works instead with existing physical and social structures to create improved conditions that will complement the physical and social fabric that grew from people living in such proximity to each other. Many times these favelas are home to generations of the same family. Relocating them disrupts their already adverse lives, removing them from longstanding social ties and jobs.

Rodolfo Machado, Harvard GSD professor in the Practice of Architecture and Urban Design and chair of the award committee, wrote about Jauregui's work, commenting on

the distinction in Rio between the 'formal city' — where the middle class lives, and the 'informal city' — the favela. Jauregui, he says, works to "erase that opposition by creating true neighborhoods where there are streets with names, numbers on the houses, driveable streets with underground infrastructure, and well established pedestrian paths leading to social centers or public plazas and recreational spaces." He cites the characteristics of this project that set it apart from previous architectural interventions: the project starts with each favela's particular characteristics, the team shows respect and kindness for the inhabitants of the favelas, and the architecture serves a "social purpose resulting from local circumstances." "A simple design", Machado wrote, but "a sophisticated impact."

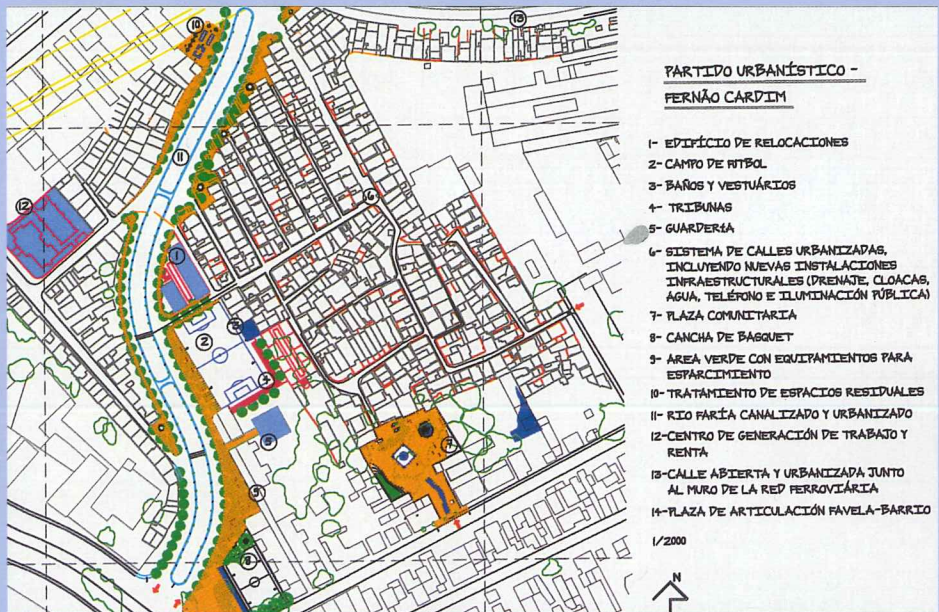
While the project in each favela takes on a slightly different look, several components remain constant across neighborhoods. Paths are paved to provide thoroughfares through the favela which link up with streets of the 'formal' city, giving residents better access into and out of the city and their neighborhood. The teams construct a sewage system and establish trash pick up, they build a day care center, and they

improve the all important soccer field.

Before beginning the physical work, Jauregui and his team spend time with residents to find out what they would like to see changed and to offer ideas that remedy the issues raised. He said that residents are always amazed to see his drawings of what could be. "In almost all cases, the first ideas I take into the meetings, the renderings and perspectives of what it would look like, are much more than they have ever expected to have in their favelas."

During the award ceremony, Jauregui highlighted the work he has done in five favelas, which range in size from 850 to 12,000 inhabitants: Fuba-Campinho, Salgueiro, Vidigal, Ferão Cardim, and Rio das Pedras. He remarked on the unique landscape of Rio, where the hills form the cityscape rather than the buildings. The shantytowns have been built on these hills, he said, "wherever space is available, so there are no streets. It's a very compact tissue. The most difficult thing is to trace and define those areas where roads and pedestrian pathways are going to be built."

The work can take up to 18 months to complete. Afterwards, the teams get a sense of how the residents feel about the improvements. "There seems to be a strong relationship between these interventions and the reduction of crime, drug dealing, etc.," Jauregui noted. The city also hires a firm to formally poll the residents on the various aspects of the inter-



vention, although there are not yet any studies to show the work's long-term impact.

Penglase, who lived in a favela in Rio's Zona Norte for almost a year, has a different perspective on favelas — he sees them as a solution rather than a problem. "They are the answer that the urban poor of Rio de Janeiro found to the dilemma of being caught between the high cost of housing and transportation on the one hand, and low wages and a lack of sufficient full time employment on the other," Penglase stated. "It would be hard to imagine a more grass-

roots initiative to the problem of a lack of adequate urban housing."

He commended Favela Bairro for the positive change it signals. "There is a change in the attitude of officials. There is now acceptance of these neighborhoods. Favelas are there to stay; they cannot be eradicated or ignored." But he is careful in gauging the long-term success of the project. "Of course improving water and sewage makes a huge difference in the community," he said. "But these communities aren't just a result of a lack of city services. They are the result of social and economic inequalities in Brazil. Favela-Bairro is just one of a series of steps that has to happen." He cited the social programs — income generation, childcare, sports programs, and health care — that must be maintained. "These are the really important part of Favela Bairro."

Ironically, he feels the improvements could also harm the residents. When you fix things like the roads and paint the houses, he said, "when you remove these obvious markings of a poor neighborhood, the underlying social distance becomes more obvious." In addition, now that electricity, water, and decent housing are available to the residents, they must pay an electric bill and a real estate tax. As more costs accrue to the residents from these improvements, the "market mechanism could push poorer people out," who will no doubt move somewhere, Penglase noted, and start another favela.

Caio Ferraz, a former visiting scholar at MIT, grew up on a favela in Rio. He, his parents, and twelve siblings lived in one room. There was no running water, no electricity,

Harvard Business Review

McKinsey Award

"TRANSFORMING LIFE, TRANSFORMING BUSINESS: THE LIFE-SCIENCE REVOLUTION" BY JUAN ENRÍQUEZ and Ray A. Goldberg, published in the March-April 2000 issue of *Harvard Business Review*, tied for the second-place award in the annual McKinsey Awards.

Juan Enríquez is a DRCLAS research associate, former Visiting Scholar, and a member of the DRCLAS Advisory Board.

Ray Goldberg is the George M. Moffet Professor of Agriculture and Business, Emeritus, at the Harvard Business School.

Since 1959, the McKinsey Foundation for Management Research has offered cash awards for the best articles published each year in the *Harvard Business Review* (HBR). These awards, judged by an independent panel of leaders in the business community, recognize outstanding works that are likely to have a major influence on the actions of business managers worldwide. The 2000 McKinsey Award winners will be announced in the March 2001 issue of HBR.

The first place award for 2000 is going to "Why Should Anyone Be Led By You?" by Robert Goffee and Gareth Jones.



Opposite page: Scaled plan of favela Fernão Cardim, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; left: general aerial view of the Fernão Cardim urbanization

and the bathroom was outside. His father was a construction worker, who later succumbed to alcoholism. His mother, a devout Catholic, worked in the national airport as a domes-

tic. "I know what it means when you have hunger and you don't have anything to eat," Ferraz said. "When you have the police go inside of your house and break everything

because they don't respect the law." Many of his friends have died in the drug wars that plague favelas. "The government doesn't understand. The only way to change this social situation is to make a big, big investment in education, in health care."

While tremendous efforts must continue in these neighborhoods, Harvard is pleased to honor Jauregui and his team for the impressive structural changes they have implemented to bring about social change. "This diligent and ethical professional team models a progressive, more holistic approach to urban design, one that recognizes the value of social research and re-investment in neighborhoods, rather than the outmoded practice of demolition and displacement," Machado said. "They have used urban design as a tool for social reform and they have succeeded."

—Susie Seefelt Lesieutre

El Salvador

Book Rescue Effort

THE JANUARY 13 EARTHQUAKE in El Salvador claimed many lives and homes, but it also played havoc with the country's cultural patrimony. Biblioteca Gallardo, one of the three or four most important libraries in Central America, now needs to move more than 90,000 of books into safekeeping. The library building, located in the earthquake epicenter of Santa Tecla, was totally destroyed by the earthquake, although the books survived and now run the risk of damage because of aftershocks.

"The collection is immensely valuable and contains materials dating back to the 1600s," writes Tani Adams, director of CIRMA, a social sciences library and research institute in neighboring Guatemala. "Currently there is

some destruction of books that have fallen under some debris, but the bulk of the collection is still sitting on very rickety shelves in rooms with their roofs about to fall or walls about to collapse."

Volunteers and librarians dashed into still trembling rooms to save the bulk of the card catalog and some invaluable paintings.

"Obviously, this kind of effort will not work for 90,000 books," Adams commented. Structural engineer and restoration architects are evaluating how to stabilize the building.

The DRCLAS Program for Latin American Libraries and Archives (PLALA) has awarded an emergency \$10,000 grant to the library to help it preserve and move its collection. In 1997, PLALA awarded the Biblioteca Gallardo \$17,500 grant toward

"a project to repair, preserve, and microfilm scarce Salvadoran imprints from the library's collections." PLALA is a DRCLAS program to aid Latin American libraries with specific preservation needs. More than 72 Latin American archives and libraries from Mexico to Rio de Janeiro have received PLALA grants since DRCLAS created PLALA with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in 1996. PLALA's executive director is Widener Library Bibliographer Dan Hazen. PLALA grants, generally up to \$20,000, are determined by a committee of distinguished scholars from universities throughout the United States.

Writing about the effect of the earthquake on the Salvadoran library, Adams indicates that "a good long term storage solution" has been found, in collaboration with the Salvadoran Ministry of Education. "The only crisis is getting the books out of

the building," she added.

CIRMA is coordinating the efforts to raise funds to save the books, while librarian colleagues in El Salvador are taking the lead in doing on-the-ground work.

Adams writes that funds will be handled by CIRMA Foundation, a Guatemalan non-profit organization, in order to alleviate the El Salvador staff from having to occupy themselves with these details during this emergency.

For more information on how to help the Gallardo library, contact: Tani Adams, Director, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamerica (CIRMA), 5 Calle Oriente #5, Antigua, Guatemala; tel: 502-832-0126, 832-1004/6/7; fax 832-2083; <tadams@guate.net>.

For more information on applying for a PLALA grant, see the DRCLAS web page <<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~drclas>>.

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