

## BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

# Innovators and Iconoclasts: Six Books on Latin American Modern and Contemporary Art

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This essay reviews the following works:

**Abstraction in Reverse: The Reconfigured Spectator in Mid-Twentieth-Century Latin American Art.** By Alexander Alberro. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. Pp. 368. \$50.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780226393957.

**Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America.** Revised and expanded edition. By Jacqueline Barnitz and Patrick Frank. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. Pp. 435. \$55.00 paperback. ISBN: 9781477308042.

**Manifestos and Polemics in Latin American Modern Art.** Edited and translated by Patrick Frank. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017. Pp. 320. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780826357885.

**Painting in a State of Exception: New Figuration in Argentina, 1960–1965.** By Patrick Frank. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2018. Pp. 256. \$40.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780813062495.

**Constructing an Avant-Garde: Art in Brazil, 1949–1979.** By Sérgio B. Martins. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013. Pp. 248. \$43.95 hardcover. ISBN: 9780262019262.

**The New Iconoclasts: From Art of a New Reality to Conceptual Art in Colombia, 1961–1975.** By Gina McDaniel Tarver. Bogotá: Facultad de Artes y Humanidades, Universidad de los Andes, 2016. Pp. 342. \$130.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9789587742909.

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In the past six years, more than ten new titles on modern and contemporary Latin American art have been published by academic presses in the United States,<sup>1</sup> each of which owes a great debt to Jacqueline Barnitz (1923–2017), whose 2001 survey *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* was issued in a revised and expanded edition in 2015. Barnitz, who held the first tenure-track position in the United States dedicated to Latin American art history, at the University of Texas from 1981 until her retirement in 2007, forged a narrative of twentieth-century Latin American art that departed from the Mexico-centric historiography typically taught in classrooms in the United States long before the revisionist desire to look farther afield and to more recent art had, by the late 1990s, begun to reshape Latin Americanist scholarship in English.

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<sup>1</sup> Others include Mónica Amor, *Theories of the Nonobject: Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, 1944–1969* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); Irene V. Small, *Hélio Oiticica: Folding the Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Elena Shtromberg, *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Catha Paquette, *At the Crossroads: Diego Rivera and his Patrons at MoMA, Rockefeller Center, and the Palace of Fine Arts* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017); Tatiana Flores, *Mexico's Revolutionary Avant-Gardes: From Estridentismo to 130-30!* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Lynda Klich, *The Noisemakers: Estridentismo, Vanguardism, and Social Action in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); Abigail McEwen, *Revolutionary Horizons: Art and Polemics in 1950s Cuba* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016); Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); and Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism: Art and Criticism in 1920s Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017).

Barnitz possessed a capacious and wide-ranging vantage that was formed by her experiences traveling to Buenos Aires in 1962 and working as an art critic among Latin American exiles in New York City during the late 1960s and early 1970s, when many artists, having traveled to New York on fellowships, stayed on to avoid the dictatorships in their home countries. This point of view shaped an interpretation of Latin American art that emphasizes its post-1945 manifestations and favors artists working in the region of the Southern Cone. As her book demonstrates, she also sought to bring to light the wide-ranging approaches to making objects and images that artists in Latin America naturally took—including abstract and figurative modes of representation and conceptualism—and to counter the misconception on the part of US or European readers that Latin American artists were not working within the flow of the most up-to-date trends of international contemporary art. Her book has been used to teach the surveys of Latin American art that have, during the past decade, increasingly become mainstays of art history departments in the United States. As the author of a crucial tool for structuring pedagogy around a region possessing diverse forms of modern art and disparate histories, Barnitz stitched together the numerous concerns of artists working in distinct social and cultural contexts and brought to the attention of English-speaking art history students and scholars the work of many frankly extraordinary artists.

It is thus unsurprising that Sérgio Martins, Alexander Alberro, Gina McDaniel Tarver, and Patrick Frank, in writing on, respectively, Brazilian avant-gardism, Latin American abstraction, Colombian conceptualism, and Argentinean neo-figuration, all tackle artists and topics first introduced to US readers by Barnitz. That said, they all in different ways also depart from her framework, revealing the limitations of the survey format by challenging many of the narratives and conventions of art history and by narrowing their focus to specific artistic concerns or national scenes. The historical scope of these new studies covers 1945 to 1975; the earliest episodes examined are the *Madí* and *Concreto-Invención* movements in the Rio de la Plata region, while the bulk of the texts focus on artists from Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia active at home and in Europe and the United States during the 1960s and early 1970s. Stylistically, the authors' foci range from conceptual art, neoexpressionist and figurative painting, to hard-edged abstract painting and sculpture, Pop, and installation art and street-level interventions in myriad forms. Their contributions are substantial and far reaching: they chart entirely new narratives (Tarver) and narratives little known beyond regional scholars (Frank), reassess movements (Martins), and offer a compelling, original reading of phenomena within the region we call Latin America (Alberro). Nor is it surprising that Frank, in his new anthology of primary sources, chooses texts that support the threads of avant-gardism laid out by Barnitz, although he updates both his anthology and the new edition of Barnitz's textbook he coauthored with her by supplementing them with material that discusses artists active in the current moment, an elaboration that shifts the focus from the international to the global and, in the process, raises productive questions about the position of Latin American art and culture within these past and present fields.

Exhibitions and their catalogs have also established the groundwork for these studies. In taking a closer look at artists whose work poses challenges to conventional art historical thinking, Martins, Alberro, Tarver, and Frank tackle artists whose work has been featured in revisionist exhibitions in the United States since the late 1990s. Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea's landmark exhibition *Inverted Utopias*, which appeared at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, in 2004, presented many of the artists who play leading roles in this group of recent studies.<sup>2</sup> It was first in this exhibition that figures who feature prominently in these books, including Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica, and Beatriz González, were held up as key protagonists in Latin America who were not only responding with great vigor to their local conditions but were also challenging artistic norms more broadly. These artists, who feature prominently in Alberro's and Martins's books, plus Colombians Antonio Caro and Bernardo Salcedo, who are central to Tarver's study, and others were also presented as challengers to US and European tropes of conceptual art in the groundbreaking exhibition organized by Luis Camnitzer and Jane Farver in 1999, *Global Conceptualism*. Since the late 1990s, the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros has mounted numerous shows that brought to visibility the mid-twentieth-century art of Brazil, Venezuela, and Argentina.<sup>3</sup> More recently, the Getty Research Institute supported some fifty research and exhibition projects in Southern California that came to fruition during the fall of 2017, which included exhibitions on modern and contemporary artists, national phenomena, and new cultural networks, such as the Chinese Caribbean diaspora, and political groups, such as feminist artists in Latin American countries and the Latino United States.

<sup>2</sup> Another important, earlier exhibition catalog is Dawn Ades's *Art in Latin America: The Modern Era, 1820–1980* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> In spring 2017, some hundred works from this collection were given to the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where they now form the core of the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Research Institute for the Study of Art from Latin America.

With great tenacity and enormous insight, Alberro, Martins, Frank, and Tarver all—in one way or another—enhance our understanding of how artists mediate the divide between art and life, how they respond to political events, and how they attempt to enact a politics of their own. While they take approaches that draw in different measures from social history of art, psychoanalytic theory, art criticism, and formal and semiotic analysis, by drilling down on specific episodes and works, they all bring beautiful nuance to chapters of Latin American art history that have long merited such sustained, scholarly attention.

Alexander Alberro, whose account begins in Buenos Aires in the year 1945 and ends in Rio de Janeiro in the late 1960s, emphasizes reversals in his study of the invention of a participatory mode of abstract art, *Abstraction in Reverse: The Reconfigured Spectator in Mid-Twentieth-Century Latin American Art*. Although he rounds out the chronological scope of his study in 1967, when Hélio Oiticica was making the samba capes in Rio he called Parangolés, he concentrates on questions that were raised by artists and critics during the 1950s, when the geometric abstract painting and sculpture to which artists had fully committed themselves in Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela became subject to a process of critical examination that eventually led artists to make works that required an unprecedented degree of participation. Alberro's argument revolves around the redistribution of power: that the spectator-turned-participant required by art brought extreme doses of "subjective agency and creativity" to viewers' experiences. When viewers became both "integral subject[s]" and "object[s]" perceived by other viewers, "new liberating spaces of sociability" were created (5).

In four chapters, Alberro examines artists focused on shared theoretical concerns. Beginning with an account of the Argentine avant-garde groups who polemically declared themselves devoted to abstract art and Marxist socialism, he describes how artists in Buenos Aires and Montevideo engaged in the issues of Communism and theories of abstraction to make works that gestured beyond themselves. Chapter 2 is devoted to kinetic works that the Venezuelan Jesús Soto began making in 1955 from transparent Plexiglas; chapter 3 examines Julio Le Parc's work with Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) and his mobiles in 1960. In chapter 4 Alberro contextualizes the social, participatory viewer that was envisioned by Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica during the late 1960s within a narrative of their experimentation with geometric abstraction. Throughout, Alberro wisely rejects the art historian's habit of depending too much on breaks to describe the advances of artistic discovery, instead structuring his story around a series of more complex relationships that speak to the push-pull involved in critical inquiry. Because he provides such rich accounts of artists' work leading up to their "discoveries," Soto's serial paintings, Oiticica's monochromes, Clark's Cocoons and Counter-Reliefs are analyzed in this book with heretofore unseen subtlety.

Alberro strikes new ground by rigorously examining a phenomenon that has been much applauded by art historians and curators during the past decade but has received sustained analysis only as either monographic or country-specific studies or catalogue essays, with the notable exception of Mónica Amor's *Theories of the Nonobject: Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, 1944–1969* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016). Among the many revelations Alberro brings to this material is a theoretical analysis that eschews the false perception that artists such as Clark and Soto were engaging in another form of what Michael Fried, referring to the work of US-based minimalists during the 1960s, called "theatricality." Instead, Alberro expands our understanding of how artists can encompass social and physical spaces by turning to Laura Mulvey to support his claim that artists and critics from Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s were indeed formulating an entirely "new paradigm of spectatorship" (5). He employs such sharp theoretical argument to structure his book, which, demonstrating the incisive value of art historical method, makes use of recent secondary literature; primary texts by artists, critics, and theoreticians; and his own, enormously insightful formal analysis to bring works into a discursive field that stays true to its local orientation while engaging in global issues that are relevant both historically and now.

Sérgio Martins describes the contours of a Brazilian avant-garde that was active during the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, when poets and critics were seeking new purposes for visual art during the heyday of the government's devotion to developmentalist policies and the dark days of the country's military dictatorship.<sup>4</sup> *Constructing an Avant-Garde: Art in Brazil, 1949–1979* explicitly addresses two groups of readers: those deeply invested in the question of what constitutes avant-garde practices in a conversation that has occurred among critics in the United States and Europe, and those who have already digested sweeping, celebratory narratives of such figures as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark and are looking for unorthodox readings of their works and to meet new characters. Toward the first end, Martins sets out to show how the Brazilian avant-gardes reveal the inadequacies of the theory of the avant-garde as posited by the German theorist Peter Bürger (and the revised versions by Hal Foster and Benjamin Buchloh). Toward the second, Martins subjects to

<sup>4</sup> Calirman, *Brazilian Art under Dictatorship*, and Shtromberg, *Art Systems*, bring to light different aspects of the politics of making art under the Brazilian dictatorship.

counterreadings well-known works that have too easily been enshrined as exemplars of a heroic, politically forthright avant-gardism in the region, such as the favela-like installation *Trópicalia* by Oiticica or the hinged metal *bichos* by Clark. And he grants leading roles to figures little known outside of Brazil, such as Carlos Zilio, an artist and critic who made violent and whip-smart work at the height of the dictatorship.

Martins examines different avant-garde strategies in five chapters, each of which focus narrowly on a group of texts or artworks. In chapter 1 he assesses the poet Ferreira Gullar's influential "Theory of the Non-Object" by reading it against and alongside the texts of Haroldo de Campos and Mário Pedrosa as well as the sculpture Amílcar de Castro made during the 1950s and early 1960s, arguing for the importance of questions of absence and imminence during this formative period. In chapter 2 he reexamines Oiticica's relationship with the concrete art movement that the artist claimed to have abandoned, instead arguing that Oiticica sought to intensify the contradictions of a "constructive avant-garde." Chapter 3 examines a circle of artists during the 1960s who were experimenting with portraiture in modes that engaged with pop and conceptualism, including Antonio Dias, Carlos Vergara, and Rubens Gerchman. Chapter 4 focuses on Cildo Meireles and Antonio Dias, arguing that in their work of the late 1960s and 1970s they questioned the image and strove to produce "alternative representational procedures" that resisted easy readings (122). The final chapter returns to Oiticica, considering the importance of Malevich's *Suprematist Composition: White on White* (1918) and John Cage for the artist in conceiving his *Cosmococa* series of the early 1970s.

While writing against the grain of a Brazilian art history that easily coheres around already accepted theories of avant-gardism in the United States and Europe, Martins also counters coherent conceptions of Brazilianness or even military dictatorship. Chronological disjunctions, failures and partial successes of avant-garde experimentation, and the unreliable and yet forceful psychological invitation of the artwork are all scenarios that shape the contours of the nonlinear avant-garde he is constructing in his book. His account possesses, in equal parts, the sense of judgement and of urgency that is the sign of the critic. Although history—and the historian's sense of archival and critical texts—is threaded through his account, Martins also make it clear that his priority is to convince us that the Brazilian artists he chronicles should change how we see avant-garde art. The glorious, indefatigable figure of Oiticica is the engine that drives this line of argument as well as the glue that holds together the visually disparate artists of this study. When, at one point in his book, Martins argues that "Gullar's 'conversion' from constructive to 'engaged' was not as extreme as it may seem" (97), he is stating a claim about one of the high priests of Brazilian avant-gardism that could be made about many of the artists whose work forms the focus of his study including Oiticica. Oiticica never turned his back on geometric abstraction; at the same time, a well-known conceptual artist like Dias, as engaged as he was in making performances and ephemeral installations, remained faithful to the logic of the grid and the monochrome.

That international and political modes of art, whether geometric abstraction and street-level performance or Pop and installation art, coexist in perpetual tension within one artists' practice or even a single artwork is a given in Gina McDaniel Tarver's groundbreaking study. In *The New Iconoclasts: From Art of a New Reality to Conceptual Art in Colombia, 1961–1975*, she tells the story of how a lively group of artists rose to national prominence championed by critics and institutions seeking to usher in a new cultural era. Less known to US and European readers than the Brazilians and Argentineans examined by Alberro and Martins, her protagonists are also less inclined toward European strains of abstraction. They instead trained a biting eye toward the popular cultures of the United States and Colombia. While the works of Beatriz González have been shown in US museums over the past five years, others who were central to the development of the experimental art scene Tarver describes, such as Bernardo Salcedo and Antonio Caro, are little known to US and European readers. Nor have these outstanding artists' activities been properly embedded in critical and institutional histories, as Tarver does. She charts a compelling narrative that ably copes with the complexity of a community of critics, artists, and museum directors who valued internationalism and strove to build institutions for contemporary art in the midst of political conflict and social instability. Her title conveys both the dynamism of her topic and the ambition of her approach: by labeling her subjects "iconoclasts" she is refuting art historical categories of US-European origin that stake colonialist claims to her protagonists by calling them Pop, Conceptualist, or even avant-garde. At the same time, it expresses the precision with which she attends to her subject. "Art of a New Reality" and "Conceptual Art" were descriptors wielded by Colombian critics in local newspapers and magazines to make sense of the boundaries they witnessed young artists questioning.

In four chapters that proceed chronologically, Tarver scripts a narrative of entangled interdependence in which a lively art scene is constructed by museums, critics, and, most of all, a group of cunning and transgressive young artists. She lays the groundwork by describing the emergence of experimental art by Feliza Bursztyn, Beatriz González, and Bernardo Salcedo during the early 1960s. Chapter 2 narrates the

mounting of an exhibition of immersive installations, *Environmental Spaces*, at the Museum of Modern Art of Bogotá in 1968 and Salcedo's ventures in printed media; chapter 3 examines key projects Salcedo and González made for a prominent biennial in Medellín during the early 1970s; and chapter 4 considers how conceptual artists came to use institutions to present work that emphasizes the visual impact of text.

Throughout, Tarver attests to the importance of institutions and critics. Her incisive and nuanced examination of the legendary Argentinean-born critic and museum director Marta Traba would alone be enough to merit high praise of this book's contribution to the field. Although Tarver is describing how conceptual art came to be in Colombia, she assiduously avoids depending on this term and instead describes the phenomenon from the vantage point of a rich and complex cast of artists and critics, consistently directing a keen eye toward deconstructing an easy—and false—US or Europe-derived version of it. This project is especially important as the “conceptualist” activities of artists in and from Latin America have become of increasing interest to scholars worldwide. Basing her study in primary sources, including interviews with artists, criticism, and press coverage, which she pairs with her own thoughtful descriptions of artworks, Tarver presents fresh, new interpretations rigorously contextualized within relevant cultural and historical scenarios. Clearing up confusions sowed by a complex local scene, she brings to light the astounding intelligence of a group of artists coping with precarious institutional support and ongoing political instability.

Patrick Frank's book *Painting in a State of Exception: New Figuration in Argentina, 1960–1965* differs from Alberro's, Martins's, and Tarver's because he focuses on a group of artists whose mode of figurative painting has garnered almost no attention from museums or curators in the United States and Europe. Although the revised edition of Barnitz's book, which Frank coauthored, dedicates seven pages to the Nueva or Otra Figuración group,<sup>5</sup> the only recent exhibition in the United States to have featured their work was *Inverted Utopias*.<sup>6</sup> The four artists who formed the group—Jorge de la Vega, Luis Felipe Noé, Rómulo Macció, and Ernesto Deira—will garner the attention that they deserve thanks both to Frank's study and to the fact that scholars in the United States, Europe, and Latin America are reassessing figurative painting. As Frank rightly emphasizes with the phrase “state of exception,” which he borrows from the historian Carl Schmitt, who used it to describe the suspension of constitutional rights that occurred in Nazi Germany, de la Vega, Noé, Macció, and Deira were working within an Argentina in which civil rights were curtailed and military power expanded. Frank's study attests to the historical importance of this work; by focusing on this brief period when they were working and showing together he displays the rich and varied vocabulary of forms they deployed to respond to the political and social strife they were witnessing.

Proceeding chronologically, the book recounts how four artists came together for six intense years, working and exhibiting in Buenos Aires, Paris, and New York. Frank lays the groundwork with accounts of how his protagonists came together around a 1959 exhibition of Noé's work, after which they began to share studio space in a former hat factory in Buenos Aires. In chapter 2 he brings to light the lively context in which the group inserted themselves in Buenos Aires and their disappointment in Paris; chapter 3 assesses a period when, in response to the rise of military power within the government, the Nueva Figuración artists exhibited a remarkable series of drawings in Buenos Aires that attracted great attention; chapter 4 chronicles Noé's move to New York City and Deira's inclusion in exhibitions organized by the Guggenheim Museum and the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. In chapter 5, Frank continues to trace both the international and local reception of the four artists' work, including that of Noé's book *Antiéstética* (anti-aesthetic), in which he rails against the myth of the expressionist painter.

Throughout his book, Frank presents a narrative that vividly contextualizes de la Vega, Noé, Macció, and Deira within the political and social specificity of Argentina during the mid-1960s, when, on the heels of Peron's fall, the country was struggling with incipient military strongmen. He draws from sources that include the unpublished papers of Noé, clippings and archives from the inimitable collection of the Fundación Espigas in Buenos Aires, and secondary literature that includes Argentine scholarship on the Nueva Figuración group and historical accounts of the period. That the artists were wisely utilizing the powerful charge of rebelling within the parameters of figurative painting is made clear, and scholars would be wise to consider figuration and the more easily digestible conceptual practices of the 1960s as enmeshed in common social struggles. The 2014 exhibition at Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo in Mexico City, *Desafío a la estabilidad: Procesos artísticos en México, 1952–1967*, contextualized the similarly

<sup>5</sup> The artists first called themselves the Otra Figuración (Other Figuration) group, but critics rechristened them Nueva Figuración (New Figuration), which is the moniker Frank uses.

<sup>6</sup> The exhibition *Cantos paralelos: Visual Parody in Contemporary Art* was organized by Mari Carmen Ramírez and mounted at the Blanton Museum at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1999 and included de la Vega.

figurative-expressionist Mexican artist José Luis Cuevas within a web of performance and installation art, and pop culture, the latter an issue that Frank also addresses. The exhibition of feminist artists from Latin America that opened in April 2018 at the Brooklyn Museum of Art likewise suggested that the political urgency of figurative drawings, prints, and paintings is not necessarily so distant from more conceptual approaches to coping with imminent social conflict.<sup>7</sup> The works by Noé, Deira, de la Vega, and Macció that Frank presents burst with an urgency aimed at the similarly ominous and immediate concerns of mutilated and furious bodies, frightening and titillating monsters, wrecked and disassembled canvases (i.e., culture turned to junk), and ominous military strong men or fallen national heroes.

Tarver, Frank, Martins, and Alberro all make claims for substantive shifts and reorientations in their books. Martins deploys the language of avant-gardism—or avant-gardist refusals—to construct these arguments; Tarver and Alberro invent their own terminology to describe phenomena that established theories of avant-gardism cannot attend to; and Frank employs the language of modernist rebellion. But all, in one way or another, seek to add specificity, depth, and complexity to our understanding of the historical circumstances that produced artists and their artworks, and the institutional apparatuses and intellectual circles that supported their display and interpretation.

The revised edition of Bartz's book, which was coauthored by Frank, and Frank's collection of translated primary texts *Manifestos and Polemics in Latin American Modern Art* deepen and broaden the potential territory that future scholars will tackle. Frank's anthology of translations functions as a supplement to his widely used anthology from 2004.<sup>8</sup> As Frank states in the introduction of his new anthology, "My intent is not to rearrange the canon of modern Latin American art, but rather to assist those who will do so in the future" (xii). And, indeed he delivers on this promise by bringing together sixty-five documents that supplement the already established touchstones of the twentieth century, such as the Brazilian poet Oswald de Andrade's "Anthropophagite Manifesto" (1928), with little-known texts like the Argentine artist Xul Solar's "The Great Serpent" (1933). Historical trends that are of great interest to current graduate students, such as conceptualist or performative practices of the 1970s and 1980s, are also represented with enlightening texts by Cecilia Vicuña (Chile), Lotty Rosenfeld (Chile), Leandro Katz (Argentina), and many others. Likewise, artists from the Latino United States active during the 1970s–1990s—such as Rupert García (Chicano) and José Bedia (Cuban American)—are given voice in interviews; and contemporary artists who, like Doris Salcedo (Colombia) and Abraham Cruzvillegas (Mexico), defy easy cultural labels because they work and circulate in today's global field, are represented by interviews and manifestos.

Frank also takes a light, deliberate hand in revising and elaborating on Bartz's *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America*. His changes to the 2001 edition of Bartz's book include updating the bibliography and incorporating the interpretive insights and factual revisions of the new scholarship on twentieth-century Latin American art that has been produced since 2001. Areas of the book that have been substantively enhanced by this expanded scholarship include sections on geometric abstraction from the Rio de la Plata region and avant-garde activities of Cuban artists during the 1920s through the 1940s. Throughout the text, reproductions of more artworks have been added and many images that appeared in the 2001 edition have been improved with better photography. Finally, a new chapter on contemporary art ends the revised edition. Written by Frank, it includes artists that allow him to build on themes established in the book's prior chapters, such as architecture, postmodernism, and alternative media and formats. It would be too easy to issue complaints that certain contemporary artists should not have been included and laments that others were not discussed, but Frank's treatment of contemporary art duly describes and contextualizes artists whose work is relevant for its intervention in both local and global discourses. Although the book's thirteen chapters covering the nineteenth century through 2010 also tempt a reader to tally scores and weigh personal preferences versus historical importance, as the first edition has for over a decade, the revised and expanded *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* provides an engaging and balanced introduction to the major moments of modern and contemporary art in Latin America for the students and nonspecialists for whom it was written.

These recent publications all place artists within a circuit of international relations that gestures both to points of contact within the region—Argentineans and Brazilians, Argentineans and Venezuelans, and Argentineans and Colombians meet and collaborate in regional centers and in European capitals—and to relationships negotiated with art scenes in New York and Paris. The sensitivity with which these authors assess the relational tensions of such encounters is especially welcome now, when we still see an art history

<sup>7</sup> *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, April 13–July 22, 2018, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

<sup>8</sup> Patrick Frank, ed., *Readings in Latin American Modern Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

shaped by US-Eurocentric canons upheld as a global model that is not only primed for export to countries subject to colonialism but is also thoughtlessly accepted as an undifferentiated unifying force in the age of global biennials and art fairs.<sup>9</sup> As the Argentine-born, Mexico-based theoretician Néstor García Canclini has observed, in the current age, globalization is most frequently a force of inequality that continues economic and political relations established under colonialism.<sup>10</sup> It is no small accomplishment, then, that Alberro's, Martins's, Frank's, and Tarver's scholarly monographs all bring to light the historical complexity with which artists in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia navigated scenes that were shaped, as art worlds have long been, by the interplay of local and global forces. In the process, they show the continued importance of tethering the study of the art of Argentina, Mexico, and Colombia, among other nations, to the idea of Latin America, suggesting that, despite the problems that come with this fraught term, it does the vital work of bringing to bear the opposition and mobility that are vital to understanding cultural production in the region.

### Author Information

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<sup>9</sup> For evidence of these issues see the conversations in *Art and Globalization*, edited by James Elkins, Zhivka Valiavicharska, and Alice Kim (State College: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> See Néstor García Canclini's *Imagined Globalization*, translated by George Yúdice (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

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