Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States

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PAN AMERICAN MODERNISM
AVANT-GARDE ART IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE UNITED STATES
EL ARTE DE VANGUARDIA EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS

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Untitled, 1968
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD ................................................................. 1
  Brian A. Dursum

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .................................................. 3
  Nathan J. Timpano

INTRODUCTION ......................................................... 5
  Nathan J. Timpano

PAN AMERICAN MODERNISM: DIALOGUES, COMMONALITIES, DISCONNECTS .................. 8
  Nathan J. Timpano

GEOMETRY AND GESTURE: NOTES ON ABSTRACTIONS IN THE AMERICAS .................. 24
  Edward J. Sullivan

BODY OF EVIDENCE: THE MODERNISMS OF MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO ...................... 52
  Heather Diack

CATALOGUE ............................................................. 74
  Part 1: Dialogues .................................................... 76
  Part 2: Commonalities & Disconnects .......................... 146

CONTRIBUTORS ........................................................ 165

MUSEUM STAFF ........................................................ 167

REFERENCES ............................................................ 168
FOREWORD
Drawn from the Lowe Art Museum’s permanent collection, the exhibition, *Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States*, features seventy-five paintings, sculptures, photographs, and works on paper produced between 1919 and 1979. Commemorating the Lowe’s longstanding commitment to collecting and exhibiting art from Latin America, the original concept for the exhibition was to include works exclusively from this region.

Rather than focusing our attention entirely on one area of the hemispheric region, the decision was made to “cast the net” more broadly and organize an exhibition that would demonstrate artistic developments in the hemisphere as a whole. Dr. Nathan Timpano, the exhibition’s curator, enthusiastically embraced the overarching concept of the exhibition selecting works that clearly demonstrate the rich diversity of artistic expression that emerged throughout the continents, and the sometimes surprising crosscurrents that informed the featured artists.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Timpano, for agreeing, two years ago, to undertake this exhibition project. While primarily designed as a major exhibition of modern art of the Americas, he developed the early organizational process as a pedagogical tool for students at the University of Miami. As a teaching museum, I was especially pleased with the integrated academic components to the project. I would also like to thank Dr. Heather Diack, Assistant Professor of Art History, for her wonderful contribution to the catalogue and Dr. Edward J. Sullivan, Helen Gould Sheppard Professor of the History of Art, Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and a long-time friend of the Lowe Art Museum, for his contribution to the exhibition catalogue.

**Brian A. Dursum**  
*Director and Chief Curator*
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
A number of individuals contributed to the fruition of *Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States*. I wish to principally thank Brian A. Dursum and Kara Schneiderman at the Lowe Art Museum for providing me with the opportunity to curate this important exhibition, and for their countless support and assistance in organizing the show and its accompanying catalogue.

Special thanks are due to Edward J. Sullivan (New York University) and Heather Diack (University of Miami) for their thought-provoking and timely essays on various aspects of Pan American modernism. Our incomparable editor, Patricia Hanna (former Director, CILO) further strengthened the overall quality of the *Pan American Modernism* catalogue and its contents.

I want to express my gratitude to a number of undergraduate students at the University of Miami who contributed to the catalogue entries included in this book. They include: Gabriella Abdelnour, Harriet Ashton, Diego Da Silva, Cory Dunn, Sarah Fischer, Kari Hecker, Sophie Isacowitz, Amanda Lemos, Katie Mato, Adys Mendizábal, Yoruba Mitchell, Albert Monreal, Natascha Rincón, Gainya St. Clair, Anaïs Sánchez, Ryan Simone, Jessica Tellería, Nikita van Dijk, Fabiola Vélez, and Fiona Yakubu.

Thanks are due to Julie Berlin, Natasha Cuervo, Alessia Lewitt, Raymond Mathews and Darren Price (Lowe Art Museum), Daniel Portnoy (Daniel Portnoy Photography), and Chris Rogers (Yazi design), who contributed significantly to various aspects of the exhibition and catalogue, including the promotion, design, preparation and implementation of this project. Irene Bergmann and Jodi Sypher (Lowe Art Museum) were additionally instrumental in organizing educational programming and special events related to *Pan American Modernism*.

Major funding for this exhibition and catalogue is made possible through the generosity of Beaux Arts, Friends of Art, and the membership of the Lowe Art Museum, with additional support from the Linnie E. Dalbeck Memorial Foundation Trust. Additional funding is provided through the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, the Cultural Affairs Council, the Mayor and the Miami-Dade County Board of County Commissioners.

Without the substantial support – be that financial, intellectual, or collegial – of these individuals and organizations, *Pan American Modernism* would be an unrealized endeavor. Thankfully, this is not the case.

**Nathan J. Timpano**  
*Guest Curator and Assistant Professor of Art History*  
*University of Miami*
INTRODUCTION
During the summer of 2011, Brian A. Dursum, Director and Chief Curator at the Lowe Art Museum, approached me about organizing a major exhibition for the Lowe centered on the theme of Pan American modernism. The proposed show, which would draw upon objects in the Lowe's permanent collection, would likewise provide the opportunity to explore dialogues, commonalities and disconnects that exist between various artists working throughout North, Central and South America during the early to mid-twentieth century. Since opening its doors in 1952, the Lowe has importantly showcased works by artists from Latin America during every decade of its existence, though it has been an entire decade since the museum has organized a survey of Latin American modern art. The present exhibition not only examines avant-garde art in Latin America, but additionally investigates such artistic articulations in relation to U.S. modernism and postmodernism for the first time in the history of the Lowe Art Museum.

*Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States* is therefore the culmination of this initial impetus to explore a discourse centered on art produced across two continents during a sixty year period (1919–1979). This exhibition and the accompanying catalogue importantly asks viewers to question the traditional manner in which curators have dealt with objects in U.S. collections that typically fall under the rather generalized rubric “Latin American Art,” in spite of the fact that works placed in this singular category originate in various countries and through disparate, multivalent artistic traditions. Moreover, rather than perpetuating a U.S.-centric hegemony – which tends to diminish and polarize works of art produced by artists from Latin America in relation to U.S.-based artists – *Pan American Modernism* analyzes how pan-American artistic exchange processes, rather than stylistic transmission, construct a fuller understanding of modernism as an intercontinental phenomenon across the Americas.

This exhibition opens at an appropriate time at the Lowe Art Museum. 2013 marks the 500th anniversary of an important moment in the history of European expansionism, colonialism, Caribbean travel, and the state: Juan Ponce de León's arrival on the east coast of Florida in 1513. Even though his numerous journeys to *La Florida* ("the flowery," or "flowery land" in Spanish) were initially driven by exploratory motives, and later on by colonialist agendas, Ponce de León's voyages throughout the Caribbean region (one of which took him and his crew from Puerto Rico to present-day Key Biscayne) highlight a common aspect of Spanish colonialism: the realization that travel facilitated the spread of ideas, language and culture, regardless of the impetus to do so. Apart from the erroneous claim that Ponce de León actually "discovered" Florida – as the land had already been inhabited by American Indian populations for thousands of years –
this moment in history does, nevertheless, present an early example of Pan American cultural exchange. The quincentenary of European exploration in the Sunshine State has likewise prompted a litany of cultural heritage events for the statewide initiative known as “Viva Florida 500,” and Pan American Modernism is very much a part of this festival year.

Miami’s art scene has enjoyed considerable growth in recent years, due in part to the international visibility of Art Basel Miami Beach and the slow but steady revitalization of Miami’s Wynwood District. Major private collections, such as the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse, the Ella Fontanals-Cisneros Collection at the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO), the de la Cruz Collection Contemporary Art Space, and the Rubell Family Collection / Contemporary Arts Foundation (RFC/CAF), have generously offered works by postmodern and contemporary artists from Latin America and the United States for public consumption, contemplation and scrutiny, and in the process, have helped to solidify art from Latin America as a major facet of Miami’s art scene.

Since joining the art history faculty within the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Miami in the fall of 2010, I have developed undergraduate and graduate courses on avant-garde and neo-avant-garde art in Latin America. The current exhibition and catalogue are very much a part of my current teaching interests and have developed, in part, as a pedagogical tool for students at the University of Miami. Undergraduates in my spring 2012 Latin American Modernism and Modern Art courses were involved in researching and writing catalogue entries. Additionally, former and future students in these courses will have the opportunity to study works included in the exhibition from a firsthand perspective – a keystone to the study of art history. As a university art museum, the Lowe has served as an optimal environment for this project, and given that the University of Miami was envisioned from its start in 1925 as a Pan American university that would service students across North, Central and South America, it is equally fitting that Pan American Modernism originates at the Lowe.

This exhibition showcases a range of objects not currently on view at the Lowe, as well as works that have rarely been seen by faculty, students, or the general public over the sixty years of the Lowe’s existence. Pan American Modernism highlights seventy-five objects from the museum’s permanent collection, including paintings, sculpture, works on paper, photography, and mixed media pieces.

Artists from 13 countries are featured in the exhibition. Countries include Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto Rico, the United States, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The remaining country – Brazil – is represented solely in
the exhibition by Ivan Cardoso’s documentary/art film H.O. (1979), which highlights works by Hélio Oiticica and his contemporaries. That having been stated, it is necessary to equally call attention to the fact that numerous American countries are not included in this study of modernism. These omissions were not, however, governed by cultural or stylistic hegemonies; but rather, by choices based on either curatorial aptness, or more likely, by the absence of works by artists from these American countries in the permanent collection of the museum. Within the context of the exhibition, each of the countries that are included in Pan American Modernism understandably represents an artist's nationality, and yet it is important to note that such distinctions enjoyed considerable fluidity as a result of travel and expatriation throughout the sixty years that encompass works in this exhibition. Travel prompted the exchange of ideas and created dialogues between artists and styles, and in turn, helps to negate the notion that European or U.S. artists were the only individuals “transmitting” artistic styles throughout the Americas during this period.

This catalogue and, to a lesser extent, the exhibition are organized into two sections. Part I: Dialogues consists of multiple sub-sections, or modules, including “Mexican Muralism and its Legacy,” “The Female Muse: Class, Gender, Race,” “Modernist Photography: Pan American Exchanges,” and “Abstract Expressionism and its Legacy: A Pan American Language?.” Counterpoints – or opportunities to explore moments when established artists broke with more dominant style(s) associated with the “status quo” – are offered in the modules on Mexican Muralism and Abstract Expressionism. Part II: Commonalities & Disconnects presents a single module: “The Legacy of Geometric Abstraction: Constructivist Art, Minimalism, Op Art,” which explores these various “isms” in South America and the United States between the late 1930s and late 1970s.

My hope is that Pan American Modernism ultimately provides an opportunity for faculty, students, and staff at the University of Miami, as well as visitors to the Lowe Art Museum, to contemplate the varied relationships that exist between artists, artworks, styles, and discourses that developed throughout the Americas in the early to mid-twentieth century.

Nathan J. Timpano
Guest Curator and Assistant Professor of Art History
University of Miami
PAN AMERICAN MODERNISM: DIALOGUES, COMMONALITIES, DISCONNECTS

MODERNISMO PANAMERICANO: DIÁLOGOS, PUNTOS DE CONTACTO, INCONEXIONES

Nathan J. Timpano
“So, while there is indeed a sense in which we have entered a postmodern, postcolonial, and post-western-centred period of history, there is another sense in which we still have yet to catch up with modernism.” — David Craven

“In the case of Latin American artistic movements, … omission… is largely due to the biased decharacterization coming from the market and exhibition boom of the 1980s and 1990s in the United States.” — Mari Carmen Ramírez

In many ways, Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States developed as an informal reaction to David Craven’s theorization of modern and postmodern art in Latin America, as well as Mari Carmen Ramírez’s observations on the disproportionate attention given to U.S. artistic movements of the twentieth century in relation to avant-garde movements in Latin America. As analyzed by Craven, the term “modernism,”

“Por tanto, a pesar de que en cierto sentido hemos ingresado a un período de historia posmoderno, poscolonial y poseurocéntrico, también es cierto que debemos aún llegar al modernismo.” — David Craven

“En lo relativo a los movimientos artísticos latinoamericanos, … las omisiones… se deben en gran medida a la descaracterización tendenciosa que llega del mercado y al boom de las muestras de arte de los años 1980 y 1990 en los Estados Unidos.” — Mari Carmen Ramírez

En cierta manera, Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States (Modernismo panamericano: la vanguardia en Latinoamérica y Estados Unidos) se desarrolló como una reacción informal a las teorías de David Craven sobre el arte moderno y posmoderno en Latinoamérica, y como respuesta a las observaciones de Mari Carmen Ramírez.
or modernismo, was first utilized in relation to the arts by the Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío in the 1880s, rather than the French poet Charles Baudelaire, who Craven aptly suggests employed the term modernité solely in response to the economic modernization of Europe in the 1860s. It would seem, then, that a discussion of the history of artistic modernism is a particularly American (read here as “relating to the Americas,” rather than to the United States) concept. George Yúdice has similarly examined the claim that the “precedent of postmodernity” could be situated in Latin America, as opposed to the United States – a debate which suggests that the neo-essentialism of postmodernity might mirror the heterogeneity of Latin American nations and cultures. In linking modernity with postmodernity, Gerardo Mosquera has further theorized that Latin America – when viewed from a Western (that is, Euro-North American) perspective – may even have reached postmodernity without ever having arrived at modernity.

This examination of modernity/postmodernity in the postcolonial era in Latin America has subsequently been the topic of numerous intellectual discourses, books, articles and exhibitions since the 1990s, particularly in the United States, and yet a number of pertinent questions still remain today. First and foremost, are scholars able to move beyond the “old” dichotomies that have long classified Latin America’s push towards hegemonic equality, particularly in the twenty-first century? Moreover, has the present discourse moved beyond a “center” versus “periphery” binary, or are we still tied to such constructs? And finally, have we, as Craven offers, truly entered a postmodern, postcolonial, and post-western-centered period of (art) history? Attempting to answer these very queries is where language ultimately fails us, as words – often utilized as instruments of power – perhaps can never truly capture the subtle nuances involved in the multicultural conceptualizations that are postmodernism, postcolonialism, and a post-western-centered examination of Pan American artistic sobres la atención desproporcionada dispensada a los movimientos artísticos estadounidenses del siglo XX en relación a los movimientos vanguardistas de Latinoamérica. Del modo en que lo analiza Craven, fue el poeta nicaragüense Rubén Darío quien utilizó por primera vez el término modernismo, en vez del poeta francés Charles Baudelaire, quien Craven indica con acierto que empleó el término modernité solo en respuesta a la modernización económica europea de los años 1860. Parecería, entonces, que cualquier discusión sobre la historia del modernismo en las artes es un concepto específicamente americano (entiéndase América como “las cuatro Américas” en lugar de solo a los Estados Unidos). De forma similar, George Yúdice ha examinado la afirmación de que “el precedente del posmodernismo” se podría situar en Latinoamérica en lugar de en los Estados Unidos, lo que implica un debate que sugiere que el neoesencialismo de la posmodernidad podría ser un reflejo de la heterogeneidad de las naciones y culturas latinoamericanas. Al vincular la modernidad con la posmodernidad, Gerardo Mosquera ha ido más allá para teorizar que Latinoamérica, vista desde una perspectiva occidental (es decir eurocentrista y norteamericana), puede incluso haber alcanzado la posmodernidad sin haber llegado a la modernidad.

Este estudio de la modernidad/postmodernidad en la era poscolonial de Latinoamérica ha sido posteriormente el tema de numerosos discursos intelectuales, libros, artículos y muestras de arte desde los años 1990, en particular en los Estados Unidos; no obstante, aún quedan una cantidad de interrogantes pertinentes a la fecha. En primer lugar, ¿son capaces los académicos de dejar atrás las “viejas” dicotomías que durante tanto tiempo han clasificado la presión de Latinoamérica hacia la igualdad hegemónica, en particular en el siglo XXI? Asimismo, ¿el discurso actual se ha alejado del binario “centro” versus “periferia”, o aún nos encontramos atados a estos constructos? Por último, ¿hemos de veras ingresado (como indica Craven) a un periodo de historia
processes. In accordance with this latter notion, even the term “Latin America” becomes somewhat problematic, as we resort to utilizing a generalized term that can never entirely encompass the localized differences that exist among the various nations of North, Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean. For example, the name of this country—the United States—implies shared and common interests that seemingly bind our states together, and yet there exists (among these very same states) countless un-united ideals and conceptions of what it means to be a U.S. citizen residing in this nation.

The need to address these questions, however, was a nascent line of inquiry when Joseph Randall Shapiro organized the 1959 exhibition *The United States Collects Pan American Art*, which opened at the Art Institute of Chicago. Unlike *Pan American Modernism*, Shapiro’s 1959 exhibition did not include works by U.S. artists, opting instead to represent works from Canada and countries in Latin America that were held in U.S. collections. In his introductory essay for the show’s catalogue, Shapiro writes:

> What then is “Latin American” about these new paintings other than the nationality of the artists? Most Americans think of Latin American art as having a single identity. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that this art is or at any time was homogeneous.⁶

Evident in Shapiro’s statement is the understanding that Latin America, at least in 1959, was generally considered a single, unified concept within the collective U.S. consciousness, if not in scholarly discourses focused on the “other” Americas and their relationship to the United States. Shapiro seems to propose that geographic proximity may be the only link between these artists and artistic traditions, yet he invariably utilizes the term “American” to denote...
individuals from the U.S. alone, thus situating Latin America in a binary with the United States and Canada, as demonstrated in *The United States Collects Pan American Art*.

Mari Carmen Ramírez’s examination of the bias shown to non-U.S. American art in this country highlights a paradox in the current literature given that the intellectual formulation of artistic modernism was initially realized in Central America (Nicaragua), not the United States or Europe. In her seminal 2004 exhibition *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, which showcased a substantial survey of pan-Latin American art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Ramírez offered that such an examination was overdue since avant-garde movements in Latin America had yet to be given “a pertinent reading at the museological or academic level” in U.S. institutions. And while *Inverted Utopias* certainly helped, in Ramírez’s words, to “halt this vicious cycle,” my point here is not to criticize *Inverted Utopias*, as it was, and remains today, one of the most significant explorations of modern and postmodern art from Latin America. Rather, my aim with the present exhibition is to steer my audience away from a discourse centered on oppositional binaries, and instead explore the positivistic and tangible artistic exchange processes that transpired across the Americas – including the United States – from the early to mid-twentieth century. This notwithstanding, accepting (as this exhibition does) the notion that Pan Americanism might be a fruitful tool to explore the dialogues, commonalities, and disconnects that exist between avant-garde art produced in the Americas, may yet be, as George Yúdice, Jean Franco, and Juan Shapiro destaca en su declaración que, al menos en 1959, se veía a Latinoamérica como un concepto singular y unificado en el imaginario colectivo estadounidense cuando no en los discursos académicos centrados en las “otras” Américas y su relación con Estados Unidos. Shapiro parece proponer que la proximidad geográfica puede ser el único vínculo entre estos artistas y estas tradiciones artísticas; sin embargo, utiliza el término “americano” para referirse a los individuos de los EE. UU. y de este modo sitúa a Latinoamérica en un binario con los Estados Unidos y Canadá, como se demuestra en el título de la muestra *The United States Collects Pan American Art*.

Los estudios de Mari Carmen Ramírez sobre el sesgo demostrado hacia el arte no estadounidense en este país subrayan una paradoja en la literatura actual dado que la formulación intelectual del modernismo artístico se llevó a cabo en un comienzo en Centroamérica (en Nicaragua), y no en los Estados Unidos o Europa. En su trascendente muestra de 2004, *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (Utopías invertidas: la vanguardia en Latinoamérica), que realizó un recorrido sustancial del arte panamericano en el Museum of Fine Arts de Houston, Ramírez indicó que hacía tiempo que era necesario un estudio de este tipo debido a que las vanguardias latinoamericanas debían aún recibir una “lectura pertinente a nivel museológico o académico” en instituciones estadounidenses. A pesar de que *Inverted Utopias* sin dudas contribuyó, según explica Ramírez, a “detener este círculo vicioso”, la muestra lo hizo centrándose en las obras producidas en Latinoamérica solo como medio para estudiar estos “otros” modernismos localizados más allá de sus contrapartes estadounidenses o europeos.

Mi deseo no es criticar *Inverted Utopias* ya que fue, y continúa siendo, una de las exploraciones más significativas del arte moderno y posmoderno de Latinoamérica. Mi propósito con esta muestra es...
Flores have previously argued, nothing more than “a jazzed-up remake of an old standard” – that is, U.S. “dominion” over less powerful American nations. Interestingly enough, this distrust of the cultural and artistic impact of a U.S.-centric globalization and the effects that such cultural imperialism would have on the visual arts in Latin America was already being discussed in the 1970s by the influential Argentine-Colombian art critic Marta Traba, who suggested that terms like “Latin American” and “American” were nothing more than vague labels assigned to objects and individuals within an emerging global art market. As previously mentioned, one of the goals of the current exhibition is to examine the use of such vague terminology, particularly since a number of artists, including Joaquín Torres-García and Alfredo Jaar, were also challenging these notions throughout the twentieth century.

In line with Traba’s assertions, the Uruguayan constructivist artist Joaquín Torres-García, and the Chilean-born U.S. conceptual artist Alfredo Jaar, have each explored the semantics of “Americanism” in their modernist works, respectively. Torres-García’s seminal piece América invertida (Inverted America, 1943; illustration 1) has been the subject of recent scholarship, including the exhibition catalogue for Inverted Utopias. In this image, Torres-García – who was the originator of Constructive Universalism, as well as the founder of the Sociedad de las Artes del Uruguay (Society of Arts of Uruguay) and the Taller del Sur (Studio of the South) – toys with presuppositions of geographic and cartographic “truths,” namely the historical (and current) placement of South America in relation to North America on maps. Very much in dialogue with the history of European exploration in South America (and the resultant colonial period), Inverted America y los efectos que tal imperialismo cultural podría tener sobre las artes visuales latinoamericanas; Traba sugería que términos como “latinoamericano” y “americano” no eran más que rótulos amplios que se asignaban a objetos e individuos en un mercado artístico global emergente. Como ya se ha mencionado, uno de los objetivos de esta muestra es examinar la utilización de tal terminología amplia, en particular ya que un número de artistas, incluyendo a Joaquín Torres-García y Alfredo Jaar, también desafiaron estas nociones durante el siglo XX.

¿BINARIOS DE IDENTIDAD?

En consonancia con las afirmaciones de Traba, el artista constructivista uruguayo Joaquín Torres-García y el artista conceptual estadounidense nacido en Chile Alfredo Jaar han cada uno explorado la semántica del “americanismo” en sus obras modernistas. La trascendente obra
calls attention to the idea that maps have long been constructed and utilized as hegemonic tools to essentially “place” Latin America “below” the North. Given that South America is situated “below” North America in terms of latitudinal demarcations, Torres-García’s work is moreover a play on the cultural metaphors inherent in the semantics and semiology of maps.

In his 1935 manifesto La escuela del Sur (The School of the South), Torres-García initially argued that he chose this particular title “because, in fact, our North looks South. For us, there must not be a North, except in opposition to our South.”¹¹ By inverting the South to the North, Torres-García’s Inverted America conceptually proposes that by looking “North” – that is, toward South America’s nearest pole, the South Pole – Uruguayan artists might embrace their “North,” while simultaneously distancing themselves from the other North (that is, Europe, North America, etc.). From a
theoretical perspective, this was an important maneuver for the artist, as it allowed Torres-García to argue that the School of the South was not tied to European or U.S. artistic movements out of necessity or cultural hegemony; from a humorous perspective, Torres-García’s inverted map might be seen to rescue South Americans from having to look “upside down” to see their North. Ultimately, Torres-García’s words remind us that terms such as “North” and “South” are nothing more than linguistic attempts to understand the world around us, sometimes in hierarchical ways, and often in terms of (arbitrary) geographic boundaries, divisions, and constructs.

Alfredo Jaar’s *A Logo for America* (1987, illustration 2) similarly confronts the semantics involved in defining Pan Americanism. In Jaar’s work, a series of animated images and texts were broadcast on a Spectacolor light board affixed to the side of a building in Times Square, New York. I would like to pause to describe the sequence of words and images that construct *A Logo for America* since the illustrations presented here cannot convey the complexity, nor the entirety, of Jaar’s installation. The work begins with a “map” of the United States that fuses a silhouette of the United States; next, the words *ESTO NO ES AMÉRICA* appear over the United States silhouette; then the silhouette and the text disappear, and the American flag appears; the colors of the American flag fade into their complementary colors (green, black, orange); the words *ESTA NO ES LA BANDERA DE AMÉRICA* appear over the green American flag; then the flag disappears and the word *AMÉRICA* appears on the screen. The “R” of *AMÉRICA* changes into several geometric forms until it finally transforms into a contour of North, South, and Central America. This “map” of the Americas begins to rotate in the middle of the light board while the word *AMÉRICA*, which is repeated along the screen, begins to move vertically on both sides of the rotating image of the Americas; the screen fades to black and the “map” of North, South, and Central America reappears. Finally, the light board fades to black and the artist’s name is revealed in white lights.
New York City's Time Square. I want to spend some time describing the sequence of words and images that construct *A Logo for America*, as the accompanying images cannot convey the intricacies, or entirety, of Jaar's installation. The work opens with a “map” of the United States, which then fades to an outline of the United States; next, the words THIS IS NOT AMERICA appear superimposed over the outline of the United States; the outline and text disappear, and the U.S. flag appears; next, the traditional colors of the U.S. flag dissolve into their color compliments (green, black, orange); the words THIS IS NOT AMERICA’S FLAG appear over the green U.S. flag; the flag disappears and the word AMERICA appears on the screen. The “R” in AMERICA then morphs into various geometric shapes, before it finally transforms into an outline of North, Central and South America. This “map” of the Americas starts to pinwheel in the middle of the light board, while the word AMERICA, which is repeated across the screen, starts to move vertically on either side of the spinning image of the Americas; the screen fades to black and the word AMERICA with the “map” of North, Central and South America reappears. Finally, the board fades to black and the artist’s name is revealed in white lights.

It is important to consider how the specificity of Jaar’s piece in New York City suggests that the work’s message was intended to reach residents of the United States in the 1980s who unquestioningly assumed that the term “America” exclusively referred to the United States. In her analysis of Jaar’s piece, Jacqueline Barnitz suggests that the map of North, Central and South America can therefore be read as a “corrected map of ‘America’,” insofar as all of the Americas are represented in this image. Barnitz also proposes that a conceptual link exists between Jaar’s work and René Magritte’s painting *La trahison des images (Ceci n’est pas une pipe)* (The Treachery of Images [This is Not a Pipe]) of 1928-1929. In Magritte’s surrealistic
painting, the title *This is Not a Pipe*, which is painted onto the canvas in French below an image of a pipe, reminds the viewer that she/he is not looking at an actual pipe, but rather, a painted representation of a pipe. If we apply a similar semiotic reading to Jaar’s *A Logo for America*, then we conclude that we are not viewing a corrected map of “America,” but rather, a representation of a representation of the Americas. This conceptual reading aside, Jaar certainly intended his piece to spark a conversation on the semantics of the term “America” when considered from a U.S.-centric perspective. When viewed together, Torres-García’s *Inverted America* and Jaar’s *A Logo for America* collectively complicate the viewer’s understanding of what it means to be an American, while expanding the possibilities for what this term can – and does – represent.

The problem of terminology, as it applies to North and South America, or Latin America and the United States in Torres-García’s and Jaar’s respective works, is equally observable in the discourse surrounding modernism and the ever-questionable, ever-changing definition of postmodernism. Two decades ago, when Latin American cultural studies, literary studies, and art history enjoyed a considerable revival across the globe, numerous individuals were understandably invested in bringing these “marginal” modernisms to the fore. It is interesting then, that when Latin American modernism and postmodernism are discussed in academic circles, these terms often refer to avant-garde literary movements, rather than those that transpired in the visual arts.¹³ My choice of terms in the present exhibition might therefore appear quizzical, as *Pan American Modernism* may imply (to some) an examination of the literary avant-gardes – which it does not offer – given my interest in the history and usage of the term modernismo in a Latin American context. The repeated use of “Pan American” throughout the exhibition equally risks highlighting the contestable notion that Pan Americanism is nothing more than an imposition from the United States (visto como el “centro” de esta Panamérica) of its art and culture onto the countries of Latin America that reside in the “periferia” of this center. However, I justify this curatorial agenda by the project’s thematic aims.

Al proponer (con una cierta despreocupación) que traslademos el presente discurso a una arena post posmoderna, o incluso a una antipostmoderna, espero que las obras de esta muestra les permitan a los espectadores esquivar los binarios que colman la literatura actual: binarios tales como “centro” versus “periferia”; “colonizador cultural” versus “otro”; “privilegiado” versus “excluido”; “Occidente” versus “No occidente”, y en cambio investigar los vanguardismos americanos más allá de estos constructos dicotómicos. Creo que también es importante desafiar (por más que resulte paradójico) la idea de que los movimientos artísticos de los EE. UU. mantuvieron un dominio inequívoco y uniforme sobre los movimientos que...
attempt on the part of the United States (seen as the “center” of this Pan America) to impose its art and culture on American countries residing on the “periphery” of this center. And yet, I feel justified in the curatorial agenda that informs this project.

By proposing—somewhat glibly—that we move the present discourse into a post-postmodern arena, or even an anti-postmodern arena, my hope is that works in the exhibition will allow viewers to circumvent the binaries that pervade the current literature – binaries like “center” versus “periphery”; “cultural colonizer” versus “other”; “insider” versus “outsider”; “West” versus “Not West” – and instead investigate American avant-gardism apart from these dichotomous constructs. I think it is also important to challenge, however paradoxically, the idea that U.S. artistic movements unequivocally and uniformly held dominion over those that transpired in Latin America throughout the twentieth century.

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Perhaps such an objective is impossible, or naïve, yet when one considers that a number of the artists that fill the walls and pages of this exhibition and catalogue were not grappling with these binaries, but were instead interested in creating and promoting their art and the art of others, then this task certainly seems plausible. The narratives explored in *Pan American Modernism* hopefully attest to this endeavor.

**PAN AMERICAN EXCHANGES**

In his essay “Geometry and Gesture: Notes on Abstractions in the Americas,” which follows in this volume, Edward J. Sullivan offers astute observations on the connections that exist between artists and objects in the “Abstract Expressionism and its Legacy: A Pan American Language?” module, as well as the final module of the exhibition, “The Legacy of Geometric Abstraction: Constructivist Art, Minimalism, Op Art.”

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En su ensayo “Geometry and Gesture: Notes on Abstractions in the Americas” (Gesto y geometría: apuntes sobre la abstracción en América) que se encuentra más adelante en este volumen, Edward J. Sullivan ofrece algunas observaciones astutas acerca de las conexiones que existen entre los artistas y los objetos en el módulo “Abstract Expressionism and its Legacy: A Pan American Language?” (El expresionismo abstracto y su legado: ¿un lenguaje panamericano?), al igual que en el módulo final de la muestra “The Legacy of Geometric Abstraction: Constructivist Art, Minimalism, Op Art” (El legado de la abstracción geométrica: arte constructivo, minimalismo, op art’). Con respecto a este último módulo, es importante señalar que muchos de los artistas, quienes compartían un interés común por principios de la abstracción geométrica (aun cuando desde lo visual confrontaban estilos tan dispares como el minimalismo, el op-art o arte “retinal” y el arte cinético), ya habían expuesto juntos en 1965 cuando William C. Seitz organizó la muestra *The Responsive Eye* (El ojo receptivo) en el Museum of Modern Art de Nueva York. La exposición del MoMA fue principalmente una exploración sobre la importancia del color, el medio y la forma en pinturas no figurativas creadas en toda Europa, Estados Unidos y Latinoamérica, pero la muestra de Seitz examinaba de igual modo...
Art, Minimalism, Op Art.” With regard to this latter module, it is important to note that many of the artists, who shared a common interest in the tenets of geometric abstraction (even when visually confronting such disparate styles as minimalism, optical or “retinal” art, and kinetic art), had previously been shown together in 1965 when William C. Seitz organized The Responsive Eye exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art. The MoMA show was principally an exploration of the importance of color, media, and form in nonobjective paintings created throughout Europe, the United States and Latin America, but Seitz’s exhibition equally examined the manner in which contemporary, post-painterly abstraction had developed in response to the New York School’s particular brand of Abstract Expressionism.

Individuals represented in both The Responsive Eye and Pan American Modernism include U.S. artists Richard J. Anuszkiewicz, Gene Davis, Kenneth Noland, Julian Stanczak, and Frank Stella, as well as the Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez. Interestingly enough, works by the Venezuelan painter Jesús Rafael Soto (see cat. nos. 70 & 74), which compare favorably to works by Cruz-Diez, were not included in The Responsive Eye. Pan American Modernism not only reunites works by various artists in the MoMA show in order to analyze their commonalities and disconnects, but additionally presents works by Soto and the Colombian artist Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, both of whom were part of the optical and kinetic art movements, and furthermore interested in the modernist language of geometric abstraction. Torres-García and Pierre Daura, who had collectively formed the Parisian anti-surrealist group Cercle et Carré (Circle and Square), equally favored geometric abstraction and constructivism, as evidenced by the iconography of their respective works (cat. nos. 63-65). A final image titled Circus (cat. no. 75) by the U.S. artist Gordon Matta-Clark (son of the Chilean surrealist artist Roberto...

la manera en la que la abstracción contemporánea pospictórica se había desarrollado en respuesta al tipo de expresionismo particular de la New York School.

Los individuos representados tanto en The Responsive Eye como en Pan American Modernism incluyen artistas estadounidenses como Richard J. Anuszkiewicz, Gene Davis, Kenneth Noland, Julian Stanczak y Frank Stella, además de al artista venezolano Carlos Cruz-Diez. Resulta interesante observar que las obras del pintor venezolano Jesús Rafael Soto (ver no. cat. 70 y 74), que se comparan de manera favorable con los trabajos de Cruz-Diez, no se vieron incluidos en The Responsive Eye. Pan American Modernism no solo reúne las obras de varios artistas de la muestra del MoMA para analizar sus puntos de contacto e inconexiones, sino que además presenta obras de Soto y del artista colombiano Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, quienes formaron parte de los movimientos de arte cinético y op-art además de estar interesados en el lenguaje modernista de la abstracción geométrica. Joaquín Torres-García y Pierre Daura, que habían formado colectivamente el grupo parisino antisurrealista Cercle et Carré (Círculo y Cuadrado), favorecían del mismo modo la abstracción y el constructivismo, como se evidencia en las iconografías de sus trabajos respectivos (no. cat. 63-65). Una imagen final titulada Circus (Circo) (no. cat. 75), del artista estadounidense Gordon Matta-Clark (hijo del artista chileno Roberto Matta), completa el módulo “The Legacy of Geometric Abstraction” (El legado de la abstracción geométrica). A diferencia de las obras de Cruz-Diez, Noland, Soto y Stella, el collage fotográfico de Matta-Clark transmite un sentido de figuración de manera contrastante ya que en la pieza se distinguen “fragmentos” de edificios; sin embargo, la naturaleza deconstructivista del trabajo vincula desde lo teórico la obra de Matta-Clark con articulaciones anteriores de constructivismo y abstracción geométrica más que la fotografía...
Matta) completes “The Legacy of Geometric Abstraction” module. Unlike works by Cruz-Diez, Noland, Soto and Stella, Matta-Clark’s photographic collage contrastingly conveys a sense of figuration, in so far as “fragments” of buildings are discernible in the piece; and yet, the deconstructivist nature of the work theoretically links Matta-Clark’s work to earlier articulations of Constructivism and geometric abstraction, rather than the “pure” photography explored by many of the artists in the “Modernist Photography” module. Like Matta-Clark’s Circus, Carl Andre’s Yucatan (cat. no. 62), which completes the photography module, presents theoretical challenges to the medium, while confronting the need for a distinction between “low” and “high” art forms. Andre, who was close friends with Stella, was likewise a proponent of minimalism, and Yucatan interestingly highlights the interplay between minimalism, conceptual art, concrete poetry, geometric abstraction, and new media (such as the Xerox machine as artistic device).

In her essay “Body of Evidence: The Modernisms of Manuel Álvarez Bravo,” Heather Diack explores a number of important images created by this Mexican photographer in the 1920s through the 1950s. In addition to offering thorough and critical analyses of works by Álvarez Bravo included in the “Mexican Muralism” and “Modernist Photography” modules, Diack equally discusses his oeuvre in relation to images by U.S. photographers Edward Weston, Man Ray, and Walker Evans, whose works can also be found in this exhibition and catalogue. Álvarez Bravo met Weston through the Italian actress and photographer Tina Modotti, who, along with Weston, was living and working in Mexico in the 1920s. Álvarez Bravo’s first wife, Lola Álvarez Bravo, was also a photographer that worked alongside her husband until their separation in 1934. Like Manuel, Lola was affiliated with artists associated with the Mexican muralism movement, such as Diego Rivera (see cat. no. 21), who were working during the post-

“pura” explorada por muchos de los artistas en el módulo “Modernist Photography” (Fotografía modernista). Al igual que Circus (Circo) de Matta-Clark, Yucatan (Yucatán) (no. cat. 62), de Carl Andre, que completa el módulo de fotografía, presenta desafíos técnicos para el medio a la vez que confronta la necesidad de distinción entre formas artísticas “bajas” y “altas”. Andre, quien era amigo íntimo de Stella, era de igual modo un defensor del minimalismo, y resulta interesante destacar que Yucatan (Yucatán) subraya el juego entre minimalismo, arte conceptual, poesía concreta, abstracción geométrica y los nuevos medios (tales como la máquina Xerox como artefacto artístico).

En su ensayo “Body of Evidence: The Modernisms of Manuel Álvarez Bravo” (Cuerpo del delito: los modernismos de Manuel Álvarez Bravo), Heather Diack explora un número de imágenes de importancia creadas por este fotógrafo mexicano en los años 1920 y hasta los años 50. Además de ofrecer análisis completos y críticos de las obras de Álvarez Bravo incluidas en los módulos “Mexican Muralism” (Muralismo mexicano) y “Modernist Photography” (Fotografía modernista), Diack también discute su obra en relación con imágenes de los fotógrafos estadounidenses Edward Weston, Man Ray y Walker Evans, cuyos trabajos también se pueden encontrar en esta muestra y catálogo. Álvarez Bravo conoció a Weston a través de la actriz y fotógrafa italiana Tina Modotti, quien vivía y trabajaba junto a Weston en México en los años 1920. La primera esposa de Álvarez Bravo, Lola Álvarez Bravo, también era fotógrafa y trabajó junto a su esposo hasta que se separaron en 1934. Al igual que Manuel, Lola se relacionaba con artistas asociados al movimiento muralista mexicano tales como Diego Rivera (ver no. cat. 21) que trabajaban durante el periodo posterior a la Revolución Mexicana, además de con artistas que no eran murales de Frida Kahlo, a quien Lola fotografió con frecuencia en los años 1940.
Mexican Revolution era, as well as non-muralists like Frida Kahlo, who Lola frequently photographed in the 1940s.\(^{15}\)

One of these images of Kahlo (cat. no. 7) forms part of the “Female Muse” module, which examines the widespread modernist interest in female subjects – a trope long explored throughout the history of art. Unlike a number of the other modules, this particular section proposes that commonalities among disparate works could be explored through subject matter, rather than stylistic, conceptual, or cultural constructs. Various works by Cuban avant-gardists, such as Eduardo Abela, Carlos Enríquez (de Gomez), Antonio Gattorno, Wifredo Lam, and Amelia Peláez, take the female body as subject, be that through the visual language of naturalistic, surrealist, or cubistic forms. Wifredo Lam’s *Untitled* ink drawing (cat. no. 6) reveals a woman gazing at her reflection in a handheld mirror, a theme equally evident in Lola Álvarez Bravo’s photograph of Kahlo.

Notions of modernist “primitivism,” or “otherness,” furthermore develops as a common theme amongst a number of these works, including the Afro-cubanismo of the subject in Enríquez’s *Mulata* (cat. no. 3), the African sculpture depicted in Man Ray’s *Noire et blanche* (cat. no. 8), and the visage of Lam’s *femme cheval*, or horse-headed woman, which is reflected on the surface of the mirror in the artist’s 1943 drawing.

In terms of Pan American artistic exchanges, a number of relationships between these artists speak to the importance of travel, the interest in sharing ideas about art and culture, and the personal connections that brought artists from the Americas into contact with one another during the twentieth century. For example, Enríquez was briefly married to the U.S. artist Alice Neel, who he met in Philadelphia during his studies there in the 1920s; in turn, Neel spent time in Havana following their marriage in 1925, which,
according to Pamela Allara, had a profound effect on Neel’s “socially concerned art.”

This marital and artistic union between a Cuban and U.S. artist was present in a number of other relationships throughout the modern/postmodern era, including Ana Mendieta’s tumultuous marriage to Carl Andre. A further anecdote concerning Pan American artistic interactions reveals that in 1932 the Rockefeller family commissioned Diego Rivera to create a mural (*Man at the Crossroads*) at Rockefeller Center in New York City—a painting that was famously destroyed in 1934 when Rivera refused to remove an image of the Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin from the mural. While the fresco was still in progress, however, the U.S. social realist artist Ben Shahn assisted Rivera with portions of the large-scale painting. Accordingly, images by Rivera and Shahn (cat. nos. 21 & 22) hang side by side in *Pan American Modernism* as an opportunity to reflect upon this relationship, but to also consider the differences that exist between Rivera’s “brand” of social realism, which was often driven by communist or revolutionary ideals, and Shahn’s, which was driven by his Leftist political leanings as a social democrat.

Other surprising connections exist between artists included in *Pan American Modernism*, some superficial, and others particularly substantial. Wifredo Lam, who is typically associated with European artists like Pablo Picasso and the Parisian Surrealists, briefly spent time discussing art with the U.S. abstract expressionists Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner (see cat. no. 38) during a trip to their Long Island home in 1947. The U.S. artist Robert Motherwell, who was equally associated with Pollock and Krasner during the 1940s and 1950s, was also close friends with the Chilean artist Roberto Matta, who traveled with Motherwell to Mexico in the 1940s. Motherwell later served as an editor and contributor to the short-lived, but influential Mexican avant-garde art journal *Dyn*, which promoted works by numerous artists between 1942 and 1944, including

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**MODERNISMO PANAMERICANO: DIÁLOGOS, PUNTOS DE CONTACTO, INCONEXIONES**

y artística entre cubano y estadounidense también se dio en una cantidad de otras parejas durante toda la era moderna/posmoderna, incluyendo el tumultuoso matrimonio de Ana Mendieta y Carl Andre. Otra anécdota relativa a las interacciones artísticas panamericanas revela que en 1932 la familia Rockefeller le comisionó a Diego Rivera que creara un mural, *Man at the Crossroads* (Hombre en la encrucijada) en el Rockefeller Center de la ciudad de Nueva York, pintura que fue celebrememte destruida en 1934 cuando Rivera se rehusó a retirar una imagen del líder soviético Vladimir Lenin del mural. Sin embargo, mientras el fresco estaba aún en proceso, el artista realista social Ben Shahn ayudó a Rivera en algunas porciones de la inmensa pintura. Por lo tanto, imágenes de Rivera y Shahn (no. cat. 21 y 22) se ubican lado a lado en *Pan American Modernism* para tener la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre esta relación, pero también para considerar las diferencias que existen entre el “tipo” de realismo social de Rivera, que a menudo fue impulsado por ideales comunistas o revolucionarios, y el de Shahn, que se veía animado por sus inclinaciones políticas izquierdistas de social demócrata.

Existen otras conexiones sorprendentes entre los artistas que se incluyen en *Pan American Modernism*: algunas resultan superficiales, pero otras son particularmente sustanciales. Wifredo Lam, a quien en general se asocia con artistas europeos como Pablo Picasso y los surrealistas parisienses, pasó un período corto analizando arte con los expresionistas abstractos Jackson Pollock y Lee Krasner (ver no. cat. 38) durante un viaje a la casa que estos tenían en Long Island en 1947. El artista estadounidense Robert Motherwell, quien también estaba vinculado con Pollock y Krasner en los años 1940 y 1950, era también amigo del artista chileno Roberto Matta, quien viajó con Motherwell a México en los años 1940. Motherwell luego se desempeñó como editor y colaborador del periódico de arte vanguardista *Dyn*, que solo se publicó durante un período breve pero
works by Matta, Motherwell, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, and Carlos Mérida (see cat. nos. 44, 45, 52 & 24). The Dyn Circle, which was recently the focus of a 2012-2013 exhibition at the Getty Research Institute, provides a further thread connecting artists in the current show, given that the journal’s founder – the Austrian-Mexican artist and writer Wolfgang Paalen – studied art under Hans Hofmann (see cat. no. 34) before each of these men immigrated to the Americas (Hofmann to the United States, and Paalen to Mexico). These and other anecdotes concerning Pan American artistic exchanges are more fully explored in the illustrated catalogue that follows the first part of this book, and, as a final reminder, have served as the very impetus for the present exhibition.

Pan American Modernism is not, however, an attempt to offer definitive answers, to put forth a single narrative on the development of modern art in the Americas, or to conclusively state that we (whether in the local or global sense of this collective pronoun) have either transcended into a utopic understanding of Pan Americanism, or slipped back into retrograde ways of thinking about Latin American avant-gardism in relation to U.S. modernism. Instead, this exhibition and catalogue strive to discuss the many dialogues – both linguistic and stylistic – that transpired between artists residing in the Americas between 1919 and 1979, in order to explore tangible relationships that were forged through the vibrant exchange of ideas concerning the commonalities and disconnects that exist between art and culture.
GEOMETRY AND GESTURE:
NOTES ON ABSTRACTIONS IN THE AMERICAS

GESTO Y GEOMETRÍA:
APUNTES SOBRE LA ABSTRACCIÓN EN LAS AMÉRICAS

Edward J. Sullivan
INTRODUCTION

Abstract art, in all its varied forms, is having a major come-back in American and European museums and is attracting renewed attention from the general public. Judging from the recent efforts of New York's Museum of Modern Art, we observe a serious commitment to the subject. In 2010-2011 MoMA mounted a major show entitled Abstract Expressionist New York (drawn from its own immense holdings in this area) and in 2011-2012, De Kooning: A Retrospective allowed us a 'close up and personal' look at the work of this great pioneer of American abstraction. As this essay was being written (in winter, 2012-2013) a major exhibition entitled Inventing Abstraction: 1910-1925 was seen at MoMA. Investigating the roots of non-objective art in Europe and the United States (with particular attention being paid to the contributions of Russian, German, Dutch, Italian and Central European artists as well as to some of the North Americans associated with the Synchromist movement), this exhibition and its valuable catalogue allowed us invaluable

INTRODUCCIÓN

En toda su variedad de formas, el arte abstracto experimenta, en la actualidad, un resurgimiento en los museos europeos y estadounidenses y atrae una atención renovada del público. A juzgar por los esfuerzos recientes del Museum of Modern Art de Nueva York (MoMA), se observa un serio compromiso con el tema. En 2010-2011, el MoMA organizó una muestra importante titulada Abstract Expressionist New York (Expresionismo abstracto en Nueva York) de su inmensa colección en el área y en 2011-2012 hizo lo propio con De Kooning: A Retrospective (De Kooning: Una retrospectiva), que nos permitió observar “de cerca” la obra de este gran pionero de la abstracción estadounidense. Mientras se escribía este ensayo (invierno de 2012-2013), se presentaba una muestra de trascendencia con el título Inventing Abstraction: 1910-1925 (Inventando la abstracción: 1910-1925) en el mismo Museo de Arte Moderno. Al investigar las raíces de este arte no figurativo en Europa y los Estados Unidos (con atención especial a las contribuciones de los artistas rusos, alemanes, holandeses, italianos
insights into the genesis of not only a form of art but a mode of visual and cultural expression that had (and still has) profound consequences in all parts of the world.22

The Lowe Art Museum’s Pan American Modernism: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America and the United States exhibition is another demonstration of a cultural institution’s search for meanings within the parameters of its own collection. While abstract art forms only a portion of its contents, this exhibition is notable for bringing to the fore a number of works (many of them seldom seen in the galleries) by artists from virtually all parts of the Americas who have experimented with a variety of ways of creating images which do not have observed reality (including the human form) as their point of departure. Pan American Modernism also serves another important purpose. It allows the public a glimpse at the patterns of collecting of one of the region’s most significant art spaces – in this case, a university museum which has the mission not only to collect and display art for the edification and interest of the general public but for the education of students in all fields in which the visual arts can illuminate their processes of learning.

It is noteworthy that Pan American Modernism poses to its viewers the question “is abstraction a Pan American language,” this is precisely the query that has been implicit within a number of recent international exhibitions of abstract art from the Americas. The decade of the 1990s and into the present has witnessed a much broader interest in abstraction produced in the nations south of the U.S. border and in the Caribbean than ever before. To cite only a few major projects organized around the theme of abstract art we might remember the seminal exhibition El Taller Torres-Garcia.23 Organized by curator Mari Carmen Ramírez for the The Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery (and an international tour), this project was...
a landmark in rehabilitating the career of the virtual founder in Latin America of forms of art based on the principles of geometry. Some years later, in 2004, Ramírez and many of her colleagues discussed the multitude of forms of abstract visual languages in the essays that accompanied the monumental exhibition *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* shown at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. Many of the catalogue essays dealt either directly or obliquely with the existence (or lack thereof) of a [Latin] American sensibility to abstraction. This is, of course, a fundamental issue and one that has provoked my own ruminations on this subject.

The essay that follows (which outlines certain thematic and methodological approaches that I hope to take in a larger study of this subject) does not attempt to solve this complex problem but to suggest some ways in which we could consider various forms of abstraction done by artists throughout the Americas to have certain “signs of identity.” At times their “American DNA,” as it were, is present in the way that artists suggest sources from specific design motifs or patterns of architectural form (I deal with this here in my remarks on what I call “Mythological Abstractions”). At other times such distinct-ness is more difficult to determine. After all, abstraction has become so common and a natural way for us to accept visual information, since its earliest beginnings around 1910, that it’s difficult to isolate the genesis of individual ways of abstracting observed reality or suggesting evanescent things. Artists from the Americas, as well as from everywhere else, inevitably absorb, share and re-invent many of the sources to which they have been exposed – often without even being conscious of their origins.

In the past decade further exhibitions of Latin American abstract art have helped to push forward the conversation about its significance into realms unexplored until now. Among many such projects, the various los ensayos del catálogo trataron de manera directa o tangencial la existencia (o ausencia) de una sensibilidad [latino] americana a la abstracción. Se trata, por supuesto, de un tema fundamental que me ha preocupado en los últimos años.

El presente ensayo, que representa un bosquejo de ciertos enfoques temáticos y metodológicos sobre los que espero ahondar en un estudio mayor sobre el tema, no intenta resolver este complejo problema. Mi deseo es de sugerir algunas maneras en las que podríamos considerar las varias formas de abstracción realizadas por artistas en toda América para que podamos comprender ciertas “marcas de identidad”. En ocasiones, su “ADN americano” (por llamarlo así) se encuentra presente en el modo en que los artistas sugieren fuentes de motivos de diseño o sugerencias arquitectónicas específicas (discuto en este trabajo este punto en lo que denomino “abstracciones mitológicas”). En otras ocasiones, tal distinción es

Desde la década de 1990 se ha observado un interés inédito mucho más amplio en el arte abstracto producido en las naciones al sur de los Estados Unidos y en el Caribe. Para citar algunos de los proyectos más importantes que giraron en torno al tema de la abstracción vale recordar la trascendente muestra *El Taller Torres-García*. Mari Carmen Ramírez fue la curadora de esta exposición de 1992 en el museo de arte de la Universidad de Texas (y para su posterior itinerancia internacional): un proyecto que marcó un hito que volvió a poner en escena la carrera del virtual fundador en Latinoamérica de las formas artísticas basadas en los principios de la geometría. Unos años después, en 2004, Ramírez y muchos de sus colegas retomaron los temas de la multiplicidad de formas que adquieren los lenguajes visuales abstractos en los ensayos que acompañaron la muestra monumental *Inverted Utopias. Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (Utopías invertidas: arte de vanguardia en Latinoamérica), organizada para el Museum of Fine Arts de Houston. Muchos de
exhibitions of the collection of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros are inevitable points of departure. This exemplary assembly, developed over several decades by one of the most perspicacious collectors of modernist art, is principally devoted to geometric abstraction beginning in the 1930s. Its great masterpieces of Venezuelan, Brazilian, Argentinean and Uruguyan art have been shown in such university museums as Harvard’s Fogg Museum, the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas at Austin and the Grey Art Gallery of New York University. The Newark Museum’s 2009 exhibition entitled The Constructivist Spirit: Abstract Art in South and North America, 1920s-50s went further than the exhibitions from the Cisneros collection in extending the comparatist method of analysis to art produced in the 1920s to the 1950s in both North and South America.

There have also been important monographic exhibitions in U.S. museums of abstract artists from Latin America. Most of them have concentrated on those who privileged a geometric or constructivist approach. Houston’s Museum of Fine Art’s retrospective of Carlos Cruz-Diez and that of Jesús Rafael Soto at the Grey Art Gallery of New York University are outstanding recent examples.

Beyond the confines of the U.S., many exhibitions and curatorial projects in Latin America have asked similar questions regarding the role of abstract art within their cultures. The 1998 São Paulo Biennial, for instance, famously juxtaposed many works by artists as diverse as Piet Mondrian, Kasimir Malevich, Yves Klein, Robert Ryman and others with South Americans, Armando Reverón, Antonio Dias, Hélio Oiticica and many others in a way the proved to be eye-opening to all who had the privilege of seeing it or reading its catalogue.

European museums have paid somewhat less attention to the phenomena of Pan American abstraction. However, a recent...
show of Latin American constructivist-derived art was mounted to great acclaim in Madrid in 2011. *America Fria* (Cold America) was a landmark in the analysis of the role of hard-edged abstract art throughout the continent.\(^\text{29}\)

The Lowe’s exhibition should be seen in the context of these and many other projects in which the questions provoked and the ensuing scholarly dialogues initiated are as significant as the actual works on the walls.

In this essay I would like to make some observations on only a few of the most salient aspects of abstraction throughout the Americas, in accordance with the exhibition’s module entitled “Abstract Expressionism and its Legacy: A Pan American Language?” In addition, I will suggest some other pathways and perhaps suggest some heretofore un-named categories for abstract art as it developed in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the dialogues it sustained with parallel phenomena in the U.S. and Europe. Following the spirit of the present exhibition that looks at the museum’s permanent collection along trans-national lines, it is imperative to consider these phenomena within a hemispheric context. Such a view is a much more fruitful way to understand how abstract art develops and circulates throughout most of the twentieth century and well into our own times. In an era (beginning in the 1920s) of increasing ability to travel as well as the possibilities of seeing what artists in other parts of the world were doing via magazine and other forms of publications, it seems less than logical to adhere to an outmoded model that examines only the art of one country, region or even continent. We might begin the discussion with a brief look at the work of a seminal abstractionist from Latin America, even though his art represents a period well before the starting point of the present exhibition.

Los museos europeos le han prestado relativa menor atención al fenómeno de la abstracción panamericana. Sin embargo, en 2011 se montó en Madrid una exposición de arte latinoamericano basada en el constructivismo. Gozó de una excelente acogida por parte del público. *América fria* marcó un hito en el análisis del papel del arte abstracto geométrico en todo el continente.\(^\text{30}\)

Se debería considerar la muestra del Lowe en el contexto de estos y muchos otros proyectos en los que los interrogantes que se provocan y los consiguientes diálogos académicos que surgen resultan tan significativos como el arte expuesto.

En este ensayo, quisiera presentar ciertas propuestas y observaciones sobre algunos de los aspectos más sobresalientes de la abstracción en toda América de acuerdo con el módulo de la muestra titulado “Abstract Expressionism and its Legacy. A Pan-American..."
The only works from Latin America in MoMA’s *Inventing Abstraction* exhibition were two drawings by the Argentine artist Emilio Pettoruti (1892-1971) dated 1914 and 1915. As his surname suggests Pettoruti was of Italian origin and it was in Italy that he benefited from lengthy contact with members of the Italian Futurists (Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrá and others) whom he encountered during his stay as a young artist in Florence and Milan. Pettoruti’s exposure to cubism during his European years which lasted from 1913 to 1924 also figured into the creation of his unique early drawings in charcoal and pencil, which may be considered the earliest totally-abstract works by an artist from Latin America. These drawings are characterized by dynamic forms defined by vibrant outward-reaching lines of force or in some examples suggest a vortex of whirling circles indicating an inwardly-directed spiraling force (illustration 1). These drawings may be placed into a pan-American perspective if we consider them in the light of the work of other pioneers of non-objective form associated with dynamic force and movement. The most cogent comparison with North American art is with the work of Arthur Dove. Beginning in around 1910, just after his first European journey (where he had been impressed with the futurists’ experiments with space) Dove began making paintings and drawings of similar proportions to those of Pettoruti, and with parallel suggestions of outward-moving dynamism (illustration 2). Although rarely discussed together in considerations of early American modernism and abstraction, these two pioneers of non-objective form share a distinct sensibility and method of expressing their analyses of shapes, space, and energy. While Dove (whose work in the abstract manner was championed and exhibited by Alfred Stieglitz) and Pettoruti never met, and were perhaps unaware of each other’s work, a closer comparison of the achievements of the early parts of their careers would certainly comenzar la discusión echando una breve mirada al trabajo de un artista abstraccionista trascendente de Latinoamérica, si bien su arte representa un período anterior al comienzo de esta muestra.

**EMILIO PETTORUTI Y LA ABSTRACCIÓN DINÁMICA**

Los únicos dos trabajos de Latinoamérica en la muestra *Inventing Abstraction* (Inventando la abstracción) del MoMA fueron dos dibujos del artista argentino Emilio Pettoruti (1892-1971) que datan de 1914 y 1915. Como lo sugiere su apellido, Pettoruti tenía origen italiano y fue en Italia que aprovechó su amplio contacto con miembros del movimiento Futurista italiano (como Umberto Boccioni y Carlo Carrá entre otros), a quienes conoció durante su estancia en Florencia y Milán cuando era un joven artista. La exposición de Pettoruti al cubismo durante sus años en Europa, que se prolongaron de 1913 a 1924, también tuvo su influencia en la creación de sus
yield compelling insights into the way American artists began to formulate their own strategies of expressing pure form.

At the Museum of Modern Art’s *Inventing Abstraction* show the Pettoruti drawings were presented within the context of Italian Futurism. They formed an integral link between the theoretical writings of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and the visual representations of dynamism by Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini or Luigi Russolo and others. These drawings precede, by at least two decades, the more fully developed emergence of abstract art in Latin America. On one hand I am tempted, as shown above, to link them to a hemispheric *zeitgeist* by comparing them with the work of a handful of North American artists (Dove, and slightly later, Georgia O’Keeffe) who were doing analogous experiments in their art. However, we are also reminded of the conundrum of geography, aesthetic affinities as well as chronology in our

primeros dibujos singulares a carbón y en lápiz, que pueden considerarse las primeras obras totalmente abstractas realizadas por un artista de Latinoamérica. Estos dibujos se caracterizan por formas dinámicas definidas por enérgicas líneas centrífugas o, en algunos ejemplos, por un torbellino de círculos arremolinados que indican una fuerza espiral centrípeta (ilustración 1). Estos dibujos se pueden ubicar en una perspectiva panamericana si los consideramos a la luz de la obra de otros pioneros de las formas no figurativas asociadas con la fuerza dinámica y el movimiento. La comparación más convincente con el arte norteamericano se puede realizar con la obra de Arthur Dove. Desde alrededor de 1910, luego de sus viajes por Europa, donde había quedado impactado por los experimentos de los futuristas con el espacio, Dove comenzó a pintar y dibujar utilizando proporciones similares a las de Pettoruti y con una idea paralela de dinamismo centrífugo (ilustración 2). Aunque rara vez se los ha pensado juntos cuando
attempts to link Pettoruti’s work with a sensibility that is specifically “Latin American.” This is complicated even further by the fact that when Pettoruti returned to Buenos Aires his art became both figurative and in many cases reflected subject matter directly related to his Argentine surroundings.\(^{32}\)

**CONSTRUCTED FORMS**

Although the majority of abstract works on exhibition in *Pan American Modernism* are not, strictly speaking, based on the rigid proportions of geometry, many of them possess an underlying sub-structure that derives from their artist’s interest in the segmentation of space and the analysis of form through the simplification of their component units. This is especially true in the 1947 work by U.S. artist Adolph Gottlieb. *New York Night Scene* presents us with an abstract pattern of quasi-totemic shapes and forms derived from a universal visual vocabulary of signs. Such elements as the sun in the upper left, the minimally-described face or the several phallic/spear-shaped forms pertain to a set of visual archetypes that appealed to and were utilized by civilizations throughout time and geographical location to define their history, myths, and beliefs. Like many artists of the mid-twentieth century in the U.S. and Latin America (including the little known but extremely important group of U.S. artists called the *Indian Space Painters*, headed by Steve Wheeler), Gottlieb was highly impressed by native American imagery and incorporated it into his “Pictographs.” These pictures segment forms to create patterns reminiscent of the organization of space in indigenous textiles or ceramics of a wide variety of indigenous cultures in both North and South America. A parallel attraction to indigenous arts (painting, sculpture, and architecture) was an important factor for Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García (1874-1949) whose impact throughout South America in the middle years of the twentieth century and after was definitive.

se discute los comienzos del modernismo y la abstracción, estos dos pioneros de formas no figurativas comparten una sensibilidad distinta y una manera de expresar sus análisis de formas, espacios y energía. Mientras Dove, cuyo trabajo abstracto fue defendido y expuesto por Alfred Stieglitz, y Pettoruti nunca se conocieron, y quizás no conocían la obra del otro, comparar sus logros en la primera parte de sus carreras sin dudas brindaría una perspectiva contundente sobre el modo en el que los artistas americanos comenzaron a formular sus propias estrategias para expresar las formas puras.

En la muestra *Inventing Abstraction* los dibujos de Pettoruti se presentaron en el contexto del Futurismo italiano. Formaban un vínculo integral con los escritos de Filippo Tommaso Marinetti y las representaciones visuales de dinamismo de Giacomo Balla, Gino Severini y Luigi Russolo entre otros. Estos dibujos antecedían, en al menos dos décadas, la aparición más acabada del arte abstracto en Latinoamérica. Por un lado me siento tentado, como se ha indicado, a vincularlos con un *zeitgeist* en el hemisferio al compararlos con la obra de un puñado de artistas norteamericanos (como Dove, y un tanto después, Georgia O’Keeffe), quienes llevaban a cabo experimentos análogos en su arte. Sin embargo, también somos recordados del enigma de la geografía, de las afinidades estéticas y de la cronología en nuestros intentos por vincular la obra de Pettoruti con una sensibilidad que resulta específicamente “latinoamericana”. Este hecho se complica aun más por el hecho de que cuando Pettoruti regresó a Buenos Aires, su arte se hizo figurativo y en muchos casos reflejó los temas relacionados directamente con su entorno argentino.\(^{32}\)
In fact, it is not an exaggeration to state that much of the art throughout Latin America based on geometric principals had its roots in one way or another in the stimulus of Torres-García. Torres-García had spent his formative years in Europe where his contact with the work of Piet Mondrian and other founding fathers of geometric abstraction were critical for the development of his own aesthetic. This was enhanced in many ways by his deep engagement with the art of pre-Hispanic America (patterned textiles, ceramics etc.) which he first viewed in Paris collections, principally at the Musée de l’Homme, the anthropological museum that pre-dated today’s ethnographic collections in the Musée du Quai Branly. Torres-García developed his famous philosophy of Constructive Universalism that utilized his knowledge of universal visual paradigms as well as world philosophical tenets from wide-reaching sources. Although

FORMAS CONSTRUÍDAS

Aunque la mayoría de las obras abstractas expuestas en Pan American Modernism no están basadas, en un sentido estricto, en las proporciones rígidas de la geometría, muchas cuentan con una estructura subyacente que deriva del interés del artista por la segmentación del espacio y el análisis de la forma a través de la simplificación de las unidades que lo componen. Esto resulta en especial evidente en la obra de 1947 del artista estadounidense Adolph Gottlieb. New York Night Scene (Escena nocturna de Nueva York) nos presenta un patrón abstracto de formas cuasi totémicas derivadas de un vocabulario universal de signos. Elementos como el sol en la esquina superior izquierda, el rostro mínimamente descripto o las varias formas de lanza / fálicas corresponden a arquetipos visuales que resultaron atractivos y fueron utilizados...
some of his literally thousands of paintings, drawings, prints, wood sculptures and other forms of construction were indeed abstract, the majority of them could be classified as semi-abstract. In such images as portraits or city-scapes he continued to employ the ideals of proportion and geometric analysis that were derived from his studies of cubism, the example of Mondrian and the De Stijl followers of pure geometric non-objectivity, combined with his attraction to non-Western pictorial elements (illustration 3).

Torres-García initiated several schools and artists groups in Montevideo (the Taller Torres-García and the Escuela del Sur), where he returned after his long European sojourn in 1934 and remained until his death in 1949. His students (those who had worked directly with him as well as the hundreds more who had been inspired by him) took his example into many far-reaching directions. Some of the artists who studied with Torres-García directly, such as the Lithuanian-born painter and sculptor José Gurvich (1927-1974), created fascinatingly hybridized forms that referenced his teacher’s art but added elements from his Eastern European visual heritage. Gurvich was fascinated by Jewish mysticism, even though he was not himself an overly, deeply religious man, and some of his art reflects a unique hybridization of geometric shapes informed by an interest in pre-Hispanic pattern with subject matter related to kabalistic traditions (illustration 4).

It is important to stress the enduring legacy of the constructivist art of Torres-García well into the later years of the twentieth century (and with artists who might not always have directly acknowledged their debt to the Uruguayan master). The members of such innovative and experimental artists groups as the Argentine and Uruguayan participants in Madí or Arte Concreto Invención rejected, in their work of the mid-1940s and beyond, any hint of figuration in their canvases and

Torres-García había pasado sus años formativos en Europa, donde su contacto con la obra de Piet Mondrian y otros fundadores de la abstracción geométrica resultaron críticos para el desarrollo de su propia estética. Esta se vio acentuada de muchas maneras por su profundo compromiso con el arte prehispánico (textiles con diseños, cerámicas, etc.) que tuvo oportunidad de ver por primera vez en colecciones en París, en especial en el Musée de l’Homme, el museo antropológico que precedió a las colecciones etnográficas del actual Musée du Quai Branly. Torres-García desarrolló su famosa filosofía del Universalismo constructivo que utilizaba sus conocimientos acerca de paradigmas visuales universales y de principios filosóficos mundiales de variadas fuentes. Aunque algunos de sus literalmente miles de pinturas, dibujos, grabados, esculturas en madera y otras formas de construcción eran de hecho abstractos, la mayoría de ellos se podría clasificar como semiabstractos. En imágenes tales como retratos o paisajes urbanos, continuó utilizando los ideales de proporción y
constructions. However, their concerns with geometry that forms the substructure of their aesthetic would have been unthinkable without their having interiorized the lessons of Torres-García.33

Experimenting with pure abstract construction in his many large-scale pieces in wood and other found objects, Argentine artist Marcelo Bonevardi (1929-1994) went well beyond the parameters set by Torres-García, even though his art, like that of so many of his colleagues, was deeply steeped in the essential visual languages developed by him (Illustration 5). Bonevardi added new dimensions to the totemic forms in Torres-García’s art. Bonevardi’s paintings and constructed objects often resemble emblems of an unknown civilization or symbols with obscure yet potent meanings.

A number of artists from Latin America who have attracted widespread attention throughout the Americas and Europe in

análisis geométrico que derivaban de sus estudios del cubismo, del ejemplo de Mondrian y de los seguidores De Stijl de la pura geométrica no objetiva, que se combinaban con su atracción por elementos pictóricos no occidentales (Ilustración 3).

Torres-García fundó varias escuelas e inició grupos de artistas en Montevideo (la Asociación de Arte Constructivo y el Taller Torres-García), donde regresó luego de su extendida estancia europea y donde permaneció hasta su muerte en 1949. Sus alumnos (aquellos que habían trabajado de manera directa con él como así también los cientos que se vieron inspirados por su obra) tomaron su ejemplo en diversas direcciones de amplio alcance. Algunos de los artistas que estudiaron directamente con Torres-García, como el pintor y escultor lituano José Gurvich (1927-1974), crearon formas híbridas que hacían referencia al arte de su maestro a la vez que le agregaban elementos desde lo visual.
the last decade may also trace their beginnings of their interest in geometric form and manipulation of constructed space to the art of Torres-García. Brazilians Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica (subjects of major upcoming exhibitions in U.S. institutions\textsuperscript{34}) or the Venezuelan constructivist and kinetic artists like Cruz-Diez and Soto (whose experiments in kineticism both captured the spirit of modernity of the 1950s oil-rich society and were coveted by the political and social elites of the 60s and 70s) would probably not associate themselves with constructivist art of the 1930s and 40s in Uruguay and Argentina (illustration 6). Nonetheless, the artistic transformations of the visual landscape of the Spanish and Portuguese-speaking Americas that took place prior to the second half of the century undoubtedly set the stage for a wide variety of options for abstraction later on.

Geometric art has retained its hold on artists throughout the Americas well into the twenty-first century. Thanks to the efforts of a number of younger scholars from both South and North America, the achievements of a wide variety of post 1960s adherents to the principals of geometry have been examined and are slowly making inroads into the often hard-to-penetrate canon of “important” contemporary art. The Colombian art historian Ana Franco has written eloquently on the work of Édgar Negret (1920-2012) and Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar (1922-2004).\textsuperscript{35} Ramírez’s dynamic sculptures and enigmatic paintings (illustration 7) as well as the monumental constructivist-based pieces by Negret speak both the language of international geometric abstraction (related to that of their contemporaries and friends such as Ellsworth Kelly, Jack Youngerman and Louise Nevelson) but inflected by reminiscences of the places where they were born. This is especially true in the case of Negret who first encountered three-dimensional form in the colonial churches he frequented as a boy in the Andean city of Popayán.

de su herencia cultural de Europa del Este. Gurvich estaba fascinado por el misticismo judío, si bien no era un hombre que demostrara una profunda religiosidad, y algunas de sus obras reflejan una hibridación única de formas geométricas basada en un interés por los patrones prehispánicos con temas relacionados a las tradiciones cabalísticas (ilustración 4).

Es importante subrayar el legado perdurable del arte constructivista de Torres-García que se extendió hasta finales del siglo XX (y con artistas que quizás no siempre reconocieron su deuda con el maestro uruguayo de manera directa). Los miembros de estos grupos artísticos innovadores y experimentales como los participantes argentinos y uruguayos de Madi o Arte Concreto Invención rechazaban en su obra de mediados de los años 1940 en adelante cualquier atisbo de figuración en sus lienzos y construcciones. Sin embargo, su preocupación por la geometría que forma la subestructura de su estética habría sido impensable sin antes haber incorporado las lecciones de Torres-García.\textsuperscript{33}

Al experimentar con la construcción abstracta pura en muchas de sus piezas a gran escala en madera y en otros objetos encontrados, el artista argentino Marcelo Bonevardi (1929-1994) llegó más allá de los parámetros de Torres-García, aunque su arte, como la de tantos de sus colegas, se encontraba profundamente sumido en los lenguajes visuales esenciales que él desarrolló (ilustración 5). Bonevardi agregó nuevas dimensiones a las formas totémicas de la producción visual de Torres-García. Las pinturas y los objetos construidos por Bonevardi a menudo se asemejan a emblemas de una civilización desconocida o símbolos con significados oscuros y a la vez potentes.

En un número de artistas latinoamericanos que han concitado gran atención en toda América y Europa en la última década se
The contemporary language of hard-edged abstraction in Colombia has been developed to its most refined point by Fanny Sanín (b. 1938). Trained in New York (where she has resided for several decades) and Mexico, her early work was squarely within the abstract expressionist mode. Some of Sanín's first works were done in the spirit of those of her compatriot Lola Fernández (b. 1926) whose 1964 abstraction *Petróleo 4am* (cat. no. 41) is in the current exhibition. However, Sanín’s most characteristic production represents a vision to which she has remained faithful for decades (illustration 8). Her paintings and hundreds of drawings in watercolor and acrylic reflect a constant, obsessive striving for technical perfection, the widest possible forms of experimentation in color combined with veiled recollections of monumental shapes, often suggested by pyramidal archetypes.

FANNY SANÍN
b. 1938, Bogotá, Colombia
Lives and works in New York, New York
Composition No. 2, 2009
acrylic and pencil on paper
35 x 27 in. (88.9 x 68.58 cm)
Frederico Sève Gallery
© 2009 Fanny Sanín

pueden también hallar marcas de la obra de Torres-García en su interés por la forma geométrica y la manipulación del espacio construido. Los brasileños Lygia Clark y Hélio Oiticica (quienes pronto tendrán muestras de importancia en instituciones de EE. UU.) o artistas constructivistas y cinéticos venezolanos como Carlos Cruz-Díez y Jesús Rafael Soto (cuyos experimentos con la quinética captaron el espíritu de la modernidad de la sociedad petrolera de los años 1950 y resultaron codiciados por las élites políticas y sociales de los años 1960 y 1970) tal vez no desearían asociarse con el arte constructivista de los años 1930 y 1940 de Uruguay y Argentina (ilustración 6). Sin embargo, las transformaciones artísticas en el panorama visual de los países latinoamericanos que tuvieron lugar antes de la segunda mitad del siglo sin dudas abrieron luego el camino para una amplia variedad de opciones en lo relativo a la abstracción.

EDUARDO RAMÍREZ VILLAMIZAR
b. 1923, Pamplona, Colombia
d. 2004, Bogotá, Colombia
*Composición mecánica* (Mechanical Composition), 1957
oil on canvas
39 ½ x 79 in. (100 x 200 cm)
OAS AMA | Art Museum of the Americas Collection
An exquisite sense of color as well as controlled, stable forms often characterizes the work of Japanese-born Brazilian artist Tomie Ohtake (b. 1913). Although her art is far from the controlled geometry of many of the artists cited above, she nonetheless infuses her compositions with a sense of permanence and contemplation doubtlessly derived from forms of art that permeated the Brazilian art scene after mid-century when many painters and artists of other media came to Brazil from Japan (illustration 9). While these Japanese Brazilian artists (who included, among others, the gestural abstractionist Flavio Shiró) did not represent a homogeneous group they helped create vibrant links with the new post-World War II art scene in both Tokyo and Kyoto, thus internationalizing even more a Brazilian art world that has traditionally been one of the most open sites in the hemisphere to new trends and experimental forms of visual expression.

MYTHOLOGICAL ABSTRACTIONS

Within the context of the present exhibition, the Guatemalan artist Rodolfo Abularach (b. 1933) is one of many artists who has practiced a form of abstraction rooted, at least in part, within the panorama of myth and the pervasive presence (in his native country) of structures and signs from the ancient past. One of the forgers of a new artistic ground in Central America in the mid-twentieth century Abularach has, nonetheless, received relatively little attention outside his native country. He emerged from a traditional training in Guatemala City to extend his frame of reference to New York in 1960 (where he has spent his mature career). Studies at the Art Students League and his contacts with his New York contemporaries opened his eyes to new possibilities and his art changed in the direction of the experimental. Although best known for his many surrealist-related studies of the human eye in both paint and charcoal drawing, there are many...
instances, such as in the untitled ink on paper composition in this exhibition from 1964 (see cat. no. 40) in which he seems to ruminate on the solidity and monumentality of timeless ancient structures from the country of his birth. Although by no means should we assign specific “mythological” or archaizing content to this and related pieces by Abularach, I am convinced that his art lies within the territory occupied by certain major figures of American abstraction who in the 1950s and 60s created non-objective works with an overlay of both evanescent spiritual content and a strong suggestion of rootedness in the past. In his travels around Guatemala, Abularach could hardly have been unimpressed by that nation’s outstanding architectural heritage of the Maya and other indigenous groups. Such structures as the great pyramids as well as the more modest yet equally substantial monuments that comprise the grand complex known as Tikal come to our minds as we view this work.

y reminiscencias veladas de formas monumentales, a menudo sugeridas por arquetipos piramidales.

Un sentido exquisito de color además de formas estables y controladas a menudo caracterizan la obra de la artista brasileña de origen japonés Tomie Ohtake (nacida en 1913). Aunque su arte se aleja bastante de la geometría controlada de muchos de los artistas antes citados, la artista le infunde a sus composiciones un sentido de permanencia y contemplación que sin duda deriva de formas de arte que atraviesan la escena artística brasileña durante la segunda mitad del siglo cuando muchos pintores y artistas de otros medios llegaron desde Japón a Brasil (ilustración 9). A pesar de que estos artistas japonés-brasileños (que incluían entre otros al abstraccionsita de la pintura gestual Flavio Shiró) no representaban un grupo homogéneo, contribuyeron a crear vínculos dinámicos con la escena artística posterior a la Segunda Guerra Mundial de Tokio y Kioto, para de este modo internacionalizar aún más el mundo artístico brasileño (tradicionalmente uno de los más abiertos del hemisferio) y abrirlo a nuevas tendencias y formas experimentales de expresión visual.

ABSTRACCIONES MITOLÓGICAS

En el contexto de la esta exhibición, el artista guatemalteco Rodolfo Abularach (nacido en 1933) es uno de los muchos artistas que ha practicado una de las formas de abstracción enraizada (al menos en parte) en el panorama del mito y la presencia constante en su país natal de estructuras y signos del pasado antiguo. No obstante el hecho de ser uno de los forjadores de nuevos horizontes artísticos en Centroamérica a mediados del siglo, Abularach ha recibido relativamente poca atención crítica fuera de su tierra. Más allá de su formación tradicional en la ciudad de Guatemala, luego extendió su
One of Abularach older contemporaries, the Peruvian artist Fernando de Szyszlo (b. 1925) has made an even more overt career and political statement in his references to ancient structures and places in a visual language that incorporates gestural abstraction and coloristic experimentation. The art historian Natalia Majluf has commented that “de Szyszlo can truly be called the true founder [of abstraction] in Peru and the catalyst for the emergence of an entire social group searching for a renovation of modern art.” Szyszlo’s first exhibition in which works of total abstraction appeared occurred in 1951. Since that time he has made references to the ancient history and civilizations of the Inca in virtually all of his compositions, many of which are done in series. Szyszlo’s sense of color is one of the salient facets of his oeuvre; utilizing a highly personal form of deep, brooding tones juxtaposed with shocking jewel-like colors to intimate the atmosphere of lost things emerging, dream-like, from our subconscious (Illustration 10). Szyszlo’s art has remained stylistically and thematically consistent throughout his long years as Peru’s most well-known modern classic painter. While he has undoubtedly created a visual vocabulary that could be described as upholding a (perhaps by now faded) national identification with ancient civilizations, he nonetheless is among the most distinguished representatives of a group of abstract artists from Latin America who seek to evoke lost glories and diminished memories of a celebrated edenic existence prior to the contact with western civilizations from across the ocean.

Another of these grand figures of mythological abstraction is the Mexican painter Gunther Gerszo (1915-2000). The son of Hungarian and German immigrants to Mexico, Gerszo’s career was enormously varied and included a lengthy stint as a designer of theatre and film sets both in Mexico and the U.S. Widely traveled, Gerszo made the acquaintance of a large group of artists and intellectuals who came to film and set design. While he has undoubtedly created a visual vocabulary that could be described as upholding a (perhaps by now faded) national identification with ancient civilizations, he nonetheless is among the most distinguished representatives of a group of abstract artists from Latin America who seek to evoke lost glories and diminished memories of a celebrated edenic existence prior to the contact with western civilizations from across the ocean.

El peruano Fernando de Szyszlo (nacido en 1925), uno de los contemporáneos de más edad que Abularach, ha realizado una declaración profesional y política aún más abierta con sus referencias a estructuras y lugares antiguos a través de un lenguaje visual que incorpora la pintura gestual y la experimentación con el color. La historiadora de arte Natalia Majluf ha comentado que “de Szyszlo puede considerarse el verdadero fundador [de la abstracción] en Perú y catalizador del surgimiento de todo un grupo social que busca una espiritual evanescente como de fuertes referencias a las raíces del pasado. A lo largo de sus viajes por Guatemala, resulta difícil pensar que Abularach no se viera afectado por el riquísimo patrimonio arquitectónico maya y de otros grupos indígenas. Cuando vemos su obra, nos vienen a la mente estructuras como las grandes pirámides o los monumentos más modestos y aun así sustanciales que comprenden el gran complejo conocido como Tikal.

Aunque se conoce más por sus numerosos estudios surrealistas del ojo humano tanto en pintura como en dibujos a carbón, existen muchos ejemplos, como la obra sin título en tinta sobre papel de 1964 (cat. no. 40) expuesta en esta muestra en la que parece reflexionar sobre la solidez y monumentalidad de antiguas estructuras atemporales de su tierra natal. Aunque de ningún modo se le debería asignar ningún contenido “mitológico” o arcaizante específico a esta u otras piezas de Abularach, creo que su obra se ubica dentro del territorio ocupado por algunas de las figuras más importantes de la abstracción americana quienes en los años 1950 y 1960 crearon obras no figurativas revestidas tanto de un contenido espiritual evanescente como de fuertes referencias a las raíces del pasado. A lo largo de sus viajes por Guatemala, resulta difícil pensar que Abularach no se viera afectado por el riquísimo patrimonio arquitectónico maya y de otros grupos indígenas. Cuando vemos su obra, nos vienen a la mente estructuras como las grandes pirámides o los monumentos más modestos y aun así sustanciales que comprenden el gran complejo conocido como Tikal.
in Paris and elsewhere, many of whom were participants in the surrealist movement. He re-established relations with some of them, including the Austrian Wolfgang Paalen and Alice Rahon when they fled Europe during World War II for Mexico. Both Paalen and Rahon were principally abstract artists and their visual experiments had a certain impact on Gerszo, who only began painting full time after the 1960s.

Gerszo became known for his canvases in which a strong suggestion of ancient structures was present (illustration 11). It was most often the built environments of the pre-Hispanic peoples of the Americas that left their mark on him, but travels to Greece allowed reminiscences of classical antiquity to make their appearance as well. Gerszo’s compositions generally have a strong architectonic, even geometric sub-structure, but in no case are they representative of a specific moment or place. They

renovación artística” 38 La primera muestra de de Szyszlo en la que se expusieron obras de abstracción total se llevó a cabo en 1951. Desde entonces, ha hecho referencias a la historia y civilización antigua inca en virtualmente todas sus composiciones, mucha de las que realizó en series. El sentido de color de de Szyszlo es una de las facetas sobresalientes de su obra debido a la utilización de tonos taciturnos y profundos de una naturaleza muy personal yuxtapuestos con colores impactantes y vivaces para crear la atmósfera de cosas perdidas que surgen, como entre sueños, de nuestro subconsciente (ilustración 10). El arte de de Szyszlo se ha mantenido constante desde lo estilístico y temático a lo largo de todos sus años como el pintor clásico moderno más conocido de Perú.39 A pesar de que sin dudas creó un vocabulario visual que podría describirse como defensor de una identificación nacional (quizás ahora descolorida) con las civilizaciones, se encuentra entre los representantes más distinguidos de un grupo de artistas abstractos de Latinoamérica

Illustration 11
GUNTER GERZSO
b. 1915, Mexico City, Mexico
d. 2000, Mexico City, Mexico
Dos personajes (Two Characters), 1956
oil on canvas
36 ¼ x 26 ¾ in. (93 x 67.9 cm)
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Gift of Charles A. Storke
© John Michael Gerzso

Illustration 10
FERNANDO DE SZYSZLO
b. 1925, Lima, Peru
Cajamarca, 1959
oil on canvas
50 x 36 in. (127 x 91.4 cm)
OAS AMA | Art Museum of the Americas Collection
© 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / APSAV, Lima
are, rather, abstractions in which the artist (not unlike Fanny Sanín, discussed above) evinces his dreams of long-forgotten essences of places that never really existed but lived more in the collective imagination than any other concrete venue.

RUPTURAS

Gunter Gerszo is nominally connected with a specific movement in Mexican art that developed after c. 1950 that has been called La Ruptura (the Rupture). This is a very loosely defined faction of artists who, in general, felt alienated from the dogmatism of the late manifestations of muralism and what they perceived as its strangle hold on creativity in their country. It should be remembered that David Alfaro Siqueiros, the youngest of the so-called tres grandes or three most powerful mural artists (the other two were Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco) famously stated that “there is no other route than ours,” indicating the hegemony of not only muralism but the so-called “Mexican School” of artists whose subjects were principally the landscape and everyday life of urban and rural dwellers of the country. The Ruptura had, in fact, no unifying style. Nonetheless, the majority of artists associated with it practiced some form of abstract painting, sculpture and graphic art. This ranged from the free-form gestural work of Manuel Felguérez to the more geometrically-oriented series by Spanish-born artist Vicente Rojo.

Many artists of La Ruptura had studied abroad after the end of World War II. Their art offered a dramatic and contemporary antidote to the surrealist-related imagery of such famous figures as Frida Kahlo, Leonora Carrington, María Izquierdo or Remedios Varo, all of whom were still painting in 1950. As was true of the surrealist painters of the 1930s and 1940s, some of the most outstanding figures of the Ruptura were women. Cordelia Urueta (1908-1995) became famous for her

que busca evocar las glorias pasadas y los recuerdos empequeñecidos de una celebrada existencia edénica anterior al contacto con las civilizaciones occidentales del otro lado del océano.

Otra de las grandes figuras de la abstracción mitológica es el pintor mexicano Gunther Gerszo (1915-2000). Hijo de inmigrantes húngaros y alemanes que llegaron a México, la carrera de Gerszo resultó tremendamente variada e incluyó un largo periodo como diseñador de escenografías de teatro y cine en México y los Estados Unidos. Gerszo, quien era un viajero ávido, conoció a un gran grupo de artistas e intelectuales, muchos de los cuales participaban en el movimiento surrealista en París y otros sitios. Volvió a establecer relaciones con algunos de ellos, incluyendo a los austriacos Wolfgang Paalen y Alice Rahon, cuando huyeron de Europa a México durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Tanto Paalen como Rahon eran principalmente artistas abstractos y sus experimentos visuales afectaron en cierta forma a Gerszo, quien se dedicó únicamente a pintar después de los años 1960.

Gerszo se hizo conocido por sus lienzos en los que se hacían fuertes referencias a estructuras antiguas (ilustración 11). Muy a menudo eran los entornos construidos por los pueblos prehispánicos de América los que dejaban una marca en él, pero sus viajes a Grecia le permitieron también otorgarle referencias de la antigüedad clásica a sus obras. Las composiciones de Gerszo en general poseen una fuerte subestructura arquitectónica y hasta geométrica, pero en ningún caso son representativas de un momento o lugar específico. Se trata más bien de abstracciones en las que el artista (de manera similar a Fanny Sanín como se consideró anteriormente) presenta sus sueños de aquello que considera esencial de lugares olvidados de hace tiempo que nunca existieron en la realidad pero que habitan el imaginario colectivo en lugar de un sitio concreto.
lush studies of color in abstract washes across the canvas. Lilia Carrillo (1930-1974) was perhaps the most exceptional gestural abstract painter of her time. Although her career was sadly short (she died at age 44) she produced a prodigious body of work that often suggests oniric spaces created with diaphanous application of contrasting colors that played one against the other (illustration 12). There are similarities to the abstract painting of the émigré artist Wolfgang Paalen, mentioned as pertaining to the group of foreigners who had established surrealism in Mexico. In fact, Carrillo was indeed inspired by the “smoky” quality of Paalen’s paintings (many of which were literally done incorporating smoke from a candle). Nonetheless, it was Carrillo’s deeply personal synthesis and abstraction of the art she most admired during her years in Paris in the early 1950s (including that of Matisse and Picasso) that accounted for her rejection of the figuration which she had been trained to do as a student and the development

**RUPTURAS**

Nominalmente, Gunther Gerszo estaba conectado con un movimiento artístico mexicano específico que se desarrolló después de 1950 denominado La Ruptura. Esta era una facción de artistas definida de manera vaga, artistas que en general se sentían alejados del dogmatismo de las manifestaciones últimas del muralismo y que percibían que este asfixiaba la creatividad de su país. Se debe recordar que David Alfaro Siqueiros, el más joven de los tres grandes muralistas (los otros dos eran Diego Rivera y José Clemente Orozco), pronunció la frase célebre “no hay otro camino que el nuestro” al indicar la hegemonía no solo del muralismo sino además de la “Escuela mexicana” de artistas cuyos temas eran principalmente los paisajes y la vida cotidiana de los habitantes urbanos y rurales del país. De hecho La Ruptura no tenía ningún estilo unificador. Sin embargo, la mayoría de los artistas asociados con ella practicaban algún tipo de pintura, escultura o arte gráfico abstracto. Estos iban desde la abstracción gestual libre de Manuel Felguérez a las series más orientadas hacia lo geométrico del artista español Vicente Rojo.

Muchos de los artistas de La Ruptura habían estudiado en el extranjero luego de terminada la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Su arte ofrecía un antídoto dramático y contemporáneo a las imágenes surrealistas de figuras reconocidas como Frida Kahlo, Leonora Carrington, María Izquierdo o Remedios Varo, quienes todavía estaban pintando en 1950. Del mismo modo que sucedió con los pintores surrealistas de los años 1930 y 1940, algunas de las figuras más destacadas de La Ruptura eran mujeres. Cordelia Urueta (1908-1995) se hizo famosa por sus suntuosos estudios de color en maretas abstractas desplegadas sobre el lienzo. Lilia Carrillo (1930-1974) fue quizás la pintora abstracta gestual más excepcional de su época. Aunque

**Illustration 12**

*LILIA CARRILLO*

b. 1930, Mexico City, Mexico
d. 1974, Mexico City, Mexico

*Seradis*, 1963
oil on canvas
39 ¼ × 47 ¾ in. (99.7 x 119.7 cm)
Gift of Esso Inter-America, Inc., 70.024.027
© 1963 Lilia Carrillo
of one of the most distinguished and distinctive bodies of gestural abstract work in mid-century Latin America.\textsuperscript{42}

THE SPECIAL CASE OF THE CARIBBEAN

The last series of comments, in this admittedly idiosyncratic choice of “American abstractions,” concerns the Caribbean. In the section devoted to abstraction in the Pan American Modernism exhibition, Caribbean artists hold pride of place; Cuba and Puerto Rico are present with at least nine works. Why do I refer to the ‘special case’ of the region? Taking the title from an important essay written in 1988 by Puerto Rican scholar Marimar Benítez who underscored the anomalies of Puerto Rican art within a larger Latin American context,\textsuperscript{43} I wish to suggest the uniqueness of all approaches to abstract form in Caribbean art, given the long-standing dominance in the region of representational art, especially landscape and genre compositions.

Although a detailed examination of approaches to abstraction in the anglophone, francophone, and Dutch-speaking islands would obviously enhance our vision of the multiple meanings of abstract art in the Caribbean, I will confine myself to some representative examples from the Spanish-speaking islands: Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

The Pan American Modernism exhibition contains an important work in oil and collage by Luis Hernández Cruz (b. 1936), one of the major exponents of abstract art in Puerto Rico. There are, in fact, a number of points of contact between the art of Hernández Cruz and some of the painters discussed above, especially Fernando de Szyszlo, whose penetrating color the Puerto Rican artist very much admires. Hernández Cruz was one of the most active abstractionists on the island, serving as a co-founder in the late 1970s of the artists group known as \textit{Frente} (the same name, incidentally, as a...
Intimately related to Hernández Cruz’s work is that by Olga Albizu (1924-2005), another leading (but much less well known) abstractionist from Puerto Rico. *Crecimiento* (Growth) (cat. no. 35), an oil-on-canvas from around 1960 also suggests movement and germination. A clear hint of burgeoning life about to surge through the confines of the canvas is present here as in many other works by Albizu. Nonetheless this painting (which displays the artist’s significant Brazilian abstract artists group from the 1950s). The work in the Lowe Art Museum’s collection is entitled *Subsuelo* (Subsoil) (cat. no 36) and it indeed defines a variety of levels, suggesting, particularly in its lower portion, a telluric sense of rocky substances (see cat. no. 36). Other images by Hernández Cruz from the 1960s, including his extensive series called *Paisajes* (Landscapes) also attest to his intense interest in structured form and rich texture.

Aunque un estudio detallado de los acercamientos de las islas anglofonas, francófonas y neerlandesas hacia la abstracción significaría ampliar nuestra visión de los significados múltiples del arte abstracto en el Caribe, me restringiré a algunos ejemplos representativos de las islas hispanoparlantes: Cuba, la República Dominicana y Puerto Rico.

Pan American Modernism cuenta con obras en óleo y collage de Luis Hernández Cruz (nacido en 1936), uno de los mayores exponentes del arte abstracto en Puerto Rico. Existen, sin embargo, un gran número de puntos de contacto entre el arte de Hernández Cruz y el de algunos de los pintores ya discutidos, en especial de Fernando de Szyszlo, cuyo trabajo con colores penetrantes era bien admirado por el puertorriqueño. Hernández Cruz fue uno de los abstraccionistas más activos de la isla y fue cofundador a fines de los años 1970 del grupo de artistas conocido como *Frente* (el mismo nombre que utilizó, de hecho, un significativo grupo de artistas brasileños de los años 1950). La obra en la colección del Lowe Art Museum se titula *Subsoil* (Subsuelo) (cat. no. 36), que de veras define una variedad de niveles al sugerir, en particular en su parte inferior, una sensación telúrica de sustancias rocosas (cat. no. 36). Otras imágenes de Hernández Cruz de los años 1960, incluyendo su extensa serie denominada *Paisajes* también da cuenta de su fuerte interés por la forma estructurada y las texturas ricas.

Íntimamente relacionada con la obra de Hernández Cruz, Olga Albizu (1924-2005) es otra de las abstraccionistas principales de Puerto Rico (si bien mucho menos conocida). *Crecimiento* (cat. no. 35), un óleo sobre lienzo se alrededor de 1960 también sugiere movimiento y germinación. Un claro indicio de vida floreciente a punto de estallar en los márgenes del lienzo se observa aquí, como en muchos otros trabajos de Albizu. Sin embargo, esta pintura, en la que la artista
characteristic intensity of color with its vibrant contrasts of searing yellow, deep oranges and rich blacks) also contains a specific structure as well as what Hans Hofmann (whose painting Nightfall of 1958 is also in the present exhibition) would call the effect of “push and pull” (cat. no. 34). The eye is lead into the depths of the canvas and is then propelled outward as it observes the totality of the image (illustration 13).

There is, in fact, a direct correlation between Albizu and Hofmann in the person of Albizu’s Spanish-born teacher at the University of Puerto Rico, Esteban Vicente. Vicente (1903-2001) figures prominently in the story of the first generation of New York abstract expressionists (he was its only Spanish-born member). In the 1950s he was in close contact with Hofmann and worked for a time in his studio. He had also spent two formative years in Puerto Rico in 1945 and 1946 (the year Albizu, his pupil, received her Bachelor of Arts degree) where he taught at the university (and started to

Albizu is principally remembered for the many record album covers she designed in the 1960s and 70s, but her painting is currently receiving a re-evaluation and should become much better known in the future when her seminal role in Caribbean abstraction will become clearer.45

There are many more recent (and significant) advances in the expressionist forms of abstract art in Puerto Rico and it is important to signal the ongoing role of another individual whose activities as a teacher (at the Universidad Interamericana in San Germán) have also served as a beacon of inspiration for many younger artists. Noemí despliega su característica intensidad de colores con contrastes vivos de amarillo abrasador, anaranjados intensos y negros exquisitos, también contiene una estructura específica además de lo que Hans Hofmann (cuya pintura Nightfall [Atardecer] de 1958, también se encuentra presente en la muestra) llamaría el efecto de “ir y venir” (cat. no. 34). El ojo se dirige a las profundidades del lienzo y luego se ve expulsado hacia afuera al observar la totalidad de la imagen (ilustración 13).

Existe, de hecho, una correlación directa entre Albizu y Hofmann a través del maestro español de Albizu de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Esteban Vicente. Vicente (1903-2001) figura de manera prominente en la historia de la primera generación de expresionistas abstractos de Nueva York (y el único miembro nacido en España). En los años 1950, mantenía contacto fluido con Hofmann y trabajó durante cierto tiempo en su atelier. Asimismo había pasado dos años formativos en Puerto Rico, en 1945 y 1946 (el año en que Albizu, su estudiante, recibió su diploma universitario), donde enseñó en la universidad (y comenzó a desarrollar su estilo abstracto). Albizu y Vicente permanecieron en contacto y ambos se mantuvieron activos en Manhattan en los años 1960, donde la labor de Albizu demostró su admiración contínua tanto por la obra de su maestro como por la de Hofmann, quien era reconocido como un gran pedagogo del movimiento Expresionista Abstracto44 (ilustración 14). Albizu se recuerda principalmente por las numerosas portadas de álbumes de discos del maestro de jazz Stan Getz que diseñó en los años 1960 y 1970, pero en la actualidad, sus pinturas están siendo reevaluadas y en el futuro deberían recibir mucho mayor reconocimiento, cuando su papel trascendental en la abstracción caribeña quede más claro.45

Existen muchos más avances recientes (y significativos) en las formas expresionistas del arte abstracto en Puerto Rico y es importante
Ruiz (b. 1931) studied in Puerto Rico and received her MFA from New York University in 1956. While in New York, she had ample opportunity to observe the latest trends in abstract art and she incorporated many of these lessons into her painting. Since the 1960s her art has dealt with dynamic forms, rhythms and strong color alternations, evidencing the intense contrasts of tone and the defining nature of light in a tropical climate (illustration 15). Ruiz was celebrated with a major retrospective exhibition at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico (MAC) in San Juan in 2007 which attested to her place of importance in the history of contemporary Puerto Rican art.46

Dominican artist Ada Balcácer (b. 1930) demonstrates a shared sensibility with that of Ruiz in that her abstract paintings deal principally with light and the extremes of Caribbean color and the effects of the tropical sun’s glare (which, in effect, often subrayar el papel continuo de otra persona cuya labor docente (en la Universidad Interamericana de San Germán) también ha servido como fuente de inspiración para muchos artistas jóvenes. Noemí Ruiz (nacida en 1931) estudió en Puerto Rico y recibió su maestría en bellas artes de New York University en 1956. Mientras se encontraba en Nueva York, tuvo numerosas oportunidades de observar las últimas tendencias en el arte abstracto e incorporó muchas de estas lecciones en su obra. Desde los años 1960, su arte ha tratado con formas dinámicas, ritmos y alteraciones de colores fuertes, marcando contrastes intensos de color y la naturaleza clave de la luz en un clima tropical (ilustración 15). Ruiz fue celebrada en una muestra retrospectiva de importancia en el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico (MAC) en San Juan en 2007, la cual dio fe de su lugar de relevancia en la historia del arte contemporáneo puertorriqueño.46

Illustration 14

ESTEBAN VICENTE
b. 1903, Turégano, Spain
d. 2001, Bridgehampton, New York

Number 3, 1958
oil on canvas
48 ⅝ x 60 ⅝ in. (122.2 x 152.7 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, and gift of Dr. and Mrs. John Alfred Cook, by exchange
© The Harriet and Esteban Vicente Foundation
Digital Image © Whitney Museum of American Art

Illustration 15

NOEMÍ RUÍZ
b. 1931, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico

Impromptu, 1976
acrylic on masonite
48 x 60 in (122 x 152.5 cm)
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, San Juan, Puerto Rico
Collection of R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.
© 1976 Noemí Ruiz
tends to erase color completely) (illustration 16). Balcácer has had an immensely varied career, beginning in Santo Domingo in the 1950s (a time of artistic efflorescence yet political instability), continuing in New York (where she worked in the fashion industry) and, more recently, in Miami where she has done some of her largest and most experimental abstract canvases and murals. Balcácer, whose 2011 retrospective show at the Centro Cultural Eduardo León Jiménez in Santiago (Dominican Republic) demonstrated the breadth of her work (which includes a large series devoted to paintings that reference ancient myths of the ancient Caribbean Tsaino peoples) and underscored her significance for the development of younger Dominican artists such as Scherezade García and many others who are carrying the experiments of their teacher into new directions.

Pan American Modernism contains three important works by Cuban artists active in the developing forms of abstraction just prior to and after the Cuban Revolution that started in 1959. Raúl Millián, Antonio Vidal and Hugo Consuegra were members of a loosely knit group called Los Once (The Eleven) who exhibited their work together on several occasions from the mid-1950s to the early 60s, when many of them left the country. While figurative compositions such as those by Wifredo Lam (well known as a member of international avant-garde surrealist and cubist circles) or the striking still lifes of Amelia Peláez may characterize Cuban art of the mid-twentieth century in the mind of many, there was a remarkably healthy and highly original series of abstract options practiced by artists working in Havana, one of the most productive and generative art centers of the Americas. Recent research by American, Cuban and European scholars has begun to underline the importance of (principally gestural) abstraction in Cuba from the 1950s onward. Guido Llinás (1923-2005) was one of the most outstanding members

La artista dominicana Ada Balcácer (nacida en 1930) demuestra una sensibilidad compartida con la de Ruiz en el sentido de que sus pinturas abstractas tratan principalmente con la luz, los extremos del color caribeño y los efectos del reflejo del sol tropical (que, en efecto, a menudo tiende a borrar el color por completo) (ilustración 16). Balcácer ha tenido una carrera variada: comenzó en Santo Domingo en los años 1950 (en una época de florecimiento artístico en medio de la inestabilidad política); continuó en Nueva York (donde trabajó en la industria de la moda), y, más recientemente, en Miami donde ha realizado algunos de sus lienzos y murales más grandes y experimentales. Balcácer tuvo una muestra retrospectiva en el 2011 en el Centro Cultural Eduardo León Jiménez de Santiago (República Dominicana) donde se demostró la amplitud de su obra, que incluye una serie dedicada a pinturas que hacen referencia a mitos primitivos de los pueblos caribeños tsainos antiguos, y se subrayó la importancia dada por la artista al desarrollo de los artistas dominicanos más jóvenes como Scherezade García, entre muchos otros, que llevan la experimentación de su maestra en nuevas direcciones.

Pan American Modernism contiene tres obras importantes de artistas cubanos activos en el desarrollo de las formas de la abstracción apenas antes y después de la Revolución Cubana que comenzó en 1959. Raúl Millián, Antonio Vidal y Hugo Consuegra eran miembros de un grupo un tanto disímil llamado Los Once, y exhibieron su obra juntos en varias oportunidades a mediados de los años 1950 y principios de los años 1960, cuando muchos de ellos abandonaron el país. A pesar de que para muchos, las composiciones figurativas de artistas como Wifredo Lam (conocido como miembro perteneciente a círculos de la vanguardia surrealista y cubista en el mundo) o las sorprendentes naturalezas muertas de Amelia Peláez pueden caracterizar el arte cubano de mediados del siglo XX, existían una serie de opciones dentro de la abstracción muy saludables y
of the group of Los Once. He moved to Paris in 1953 and remained there until his death. Throughout his career, his work was characterized by vigorous gesture. Deriving inspiration from both New York Abstract Expressionism and its Parisian counterpart tachisme, Llinás consistently made reference to Afro-Cuban iconography (taking at least a partial clue from Lam), especially in his extensive series collectively called the \textit{Pinturas negras} (Black Paintings) (illustration 17). Totemic shapes, semi-defined figural specters that appear to emerge from a Lam-like jungle setting (minus the jewel like color of the older painter) define a body of work that is unique within the panorama of Caribbean abstraction that draws its roots back to a time prior to the mid-twentieth century.\footnote{49}

The themes that interested Llinás (references to Afro-Cuban spirituality executed with a vigorous brush work and a rich
palette of colors) also attracted the attention of Carlos Alfonzo (1950-1991). Alfonzo is the youngest of the artists in the ‘abstract expressionism’ section of this show and most of his mature work was done in Miami. A graduate of the San Alejandro Academy in Havana, he departed from his conservative training to devote himself to investigations of Afro-Caribbean spirituality (with sometimes clear references to the syncretistic religious practices of Santería), which he painted in his highly personal visual vocabulary and vivid colors. These compositions may be linked directly with a new form of expressive abstraction that dominated much of American and European art at the time Alfonzo’s career was at its high point. The late 1970s and 80s witnessed the development of a new form of abstract expressionism (often mixed with extorted figuration) that came to be known by the catch-all phrase “neoexpressionism.” Alfonzo probably did not wish to be associated with any particular group and his work represents an originality that makes it more memorable than a great many others who were highly successful in the over-heated art market of the time. His art, especially the large-scale canvases of the later 1980s, stand as monuments to a unique approach to the use of aggressive line and forceful color\(^{50}\) (Illustration 18).

**CONCLUSION**

The *Pan American Modernism* exhibition plays an important role in questioning and analyzing trans-national dialogues within a wide variety of modernist forms of art. In terms of abstraction it allows us a glimpse into the complexities of the hemispheric response to the non-objective image and to the discourses of expressive form. It also serves as a platform for questioning notions of influence, originality and dissemination of modes of artistic expression. The preceding essay is, as stated at the beginning, a partial summation of some

**CONCLUSIÓN**

La muestra *Pan American Modernism* tiene un papel importante en la disquisición y análisis de los dialogos transnacionales de una variedad...
of these themes. There are many more areas of research to be accomplished in the area of abstraction in the work of artists throughout the Americas. The present exhibition will certainly stimulate both scholars and lovers of art to think more carefully about the complexities of these issues.

Illustration 18
CARLOS ALFONZO
b. 1950, Havana, Cuba
d. 1991, Miami, Florida
Curso de la vida (Lifetime), 1988
oil on linen
84 x 96 in. (213.4 x 243.8 cm)
Gift of Friends of Art in honor of Ira Licht’s 10th Anniversary at the Lowe Art Museum, 88.0004

de formas artísticas modernistas. En términos de abstracción, nos permite una mirada hacia las complejidades de la respuesta en el hemisferio a las imágenes no figurativas y a los discursos de la forma expresiva. Asimismo, sirve como plataforma para cuestionar nociones de influencia, originalidad y diseminación de modos de expresión artística. Este ensayo representa, como se indicó al principio, un resumen parcial de algunos de estos temas. Existen muchas otras áreas de investigación por abordar en el área de la abstracción en la obra de artistas de toda América. La presente muestra sin dudas estimulará tanto a académicos como a los amantes del arte para pensar las complejidades de estos temas con mayor atención.
BODY OF EVIDENCE:
THE MODERNISMS OF MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO

EL CUERPO DEL DELITO:
LOS MODERNISMIOS DE MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO

Heather Diack
“Photography has its limits. What is important for a photographer is to know them, understand them precisely, and give them a personal interpretation. Reality itself is one limit that presents photography with specific problems.” — Manuel Álvarez Bravo

“Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. Now, search as one may one will never find any other motivating force in the activities of the Surrealists than the hope of finding and fixing this point.” — André Breton

“La fotografía tiene sus límites. Lo que es importante para un fotógrafo es conocerlos, comprenderlos con precisión y darles una interpretación personal. La realidad en sí misma es un límite que se le presenta a la fotografía con problemas específicos” — Manuel Álvarez Bravo

“Todo tiende a hacernos creer que existe un cierto lugar en la mente en que la vida y la muerte, lo real y lo imaginario, el pasado y el futuro, lo comunicable y lo incommumicable, lo elevado y lo bajo, se dejan de percibir como contradicciones. Ahora bien, por más que uno busque, nunca encontrará ninguna otra fuerza motivadora en las actividades de los surrealistas más que la esperanza de hallar y fijar este punto” — André Breton
The ties that bind photography to the real in the analog world secure for the viewer a temporal and credible sense of what Roland Barthes called “that-has-been.” An assuredness exists, despite whether uncertainty lurks regarding what transpired before and after the actual shot under consideration. Somehow what is pictured in the photograph indeed not simply depends upon reality but in fact represents reality in that it is a part of reality. As a complicated nexus of “the real,” it seems obvious why, as Andrea Noble has expressed it, “Photography was the privileged medium of modern representation and was, moreover, used to alter the very image of modernity.”

Certainly, thinking through the layers of the real in relation to representation has always been key to the modernist project. The advent of photography in the nineteenth century itself attests to a zeitgeist centered on capturing images as a means of further understanding human experience. Arguably photography’s crucial relationship to the real is in part what makes it the central medium of modernism and modern art. Additionally, due to photography’s “direct relation to what was present at the time the lens opened, and because it could reproduce reality with more fidelity to appearance, its essence was really about representation per se.”

The overwhelming sense of fragmented consciousness observed as a phenomenon of modernity, in the face of vast technological changes and political upheaval, made the camera the decisive device for probing a new sense of being in the world. To call on André Breton’s words from the epigraph, regarding the desire to “fix” “perceived contradictions,” it seems apt that the camera would be called into service.

I would like to address some of the complexities that were purportedly both resolved and instigated by photography as a vehicle of modernity and modernism. Moreover, my analysis will be grounded in a case study that puts pressure on many of the categorical distinctions that

Los lazos que vinculan la fotografía con lo real en el mundo análogo le aseguran al espectador una sensación temporal y creíble de lo que Roland Barthes ha denominado “esto ha sido”. Existe una cierta seguridad, más allá de si la inseguridad merodea lo que aconteció antes y después de la toma que se observa. De algún modo, lo que se representa en la fotografía de hecho no depende solo de la realidad sino que de hecho representa la realidad misma puesto que ES parte de la realidad. Como un nexo complicado de “lo real”, parece obvio por qué (como ha indicado Andrea Noble) “La fotografía fue el medio privilegiado de la representación moderna e incluso se la utilizó para modificar la imagen misma de la modernidad”. Por cierto, pensar a través de las capas de lo real en relación con la representación siempre ha sido clave en los proyectos modernistas. La aparición de la fotografía en el siglo XIX da cuenta de un espíritu de la época que giraba en torno a la captura de imágenes como medio para comprender mejor la experiencia humana. Es posible que la relación crucial de la fotografía con lo real sea en parte lo que la convierte en el medio central del modernismo y del arte moderno. Asimismo, por la “relación directa [de la fotografía] con lo que se encontraba frente al lente al momento en que este se abría, y debido a que podía reproducir la realidad con mayor fidelidad en lo relativo a la apariencia, su esencia era de hecho la representación en sí misma”. El sentido sobrecogedor de la conciencia fragmentada observado como fenómeno de la modernidad, frente a los vastos cambios tecnológicos y la agitación política, convirtió a la cámara en un artefacto decisivo para investigar un nuevo devenir en el mundo. Pensando las palabras de André Breton del epígrafe en cuanto al deseo de “fijar” “las contradicciones percibidas”, parece natural que la cámara entrara en juego.

Me gustaría discutir algunas de las complejidades que se supone que resolvió y despertó la fotografía como vehículo de la modernidad y
have frequently been directed at photography and modernism more broadly, including the tendency to separate documentary practices from artistic ones, and thus in many ways, to view politics apart from aesthetics. The case in point is the work of the Mexican photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902-2002), which evidences a stark contrast to the dominant discourses of European and American modernist formalism, and demonstrates the fixedly unstable synthesis of aesthetics and politics.

Overwhelmingly considered the defining practitioner of Mexican photography, his highly circulated photographs have in some ways become occluded by the “celebratory weight” of his status as “the greatest Mexican photographer.”\(^{56}\) As a participant in the cultural renaissance in Mexico that followed the country’s revolution of the 1910s, Álvarez Bravo’s experiments with form and subject amount to a body of work that cannot be subsumed del modernismo. Asimismo, mi análisis se basará en un estudio de caso que afecta muchas de las distinciones categóricas que con frecuencia han permeado a la fotografía, y al modernismo de manera más amplia, incluyendo la tendencia de separar las prácticas documentales de las artísticas y de muchas maneras ver así a la política separada de la estética. El caso a revisar es la obra del fotógrafo mexicano Manuel Álvarez Bravo (1902-2002), quien evidencia un marcado contraste con los discursos dominantes del formalismo modernista europeo y estadounidense y demuestra la síntesis siempre inestable de la estética y la política.

Considerado en general como el artista más paradigmático exponente más acabado de la fotografía mexicana, a pesar de la alta difusión que han recibido sus fotografías, de algún modo estas se han visto opacadas por el “peso laudatorio” de su estatus como “el fotógrafo más grande de México”.\(^{56}\) Como
by a singular category, particularly if that category depends on a stylistic concept for self-definition. Literally and figuratively bridging a gap between various versions of Latin American modernism and Euro-North American modernism, a palpable confrontation between aesthetics and politics, regionalism and universalism, and, in terms of historiographic accounts, between mainstream modernist studies and the critical edge of art from Latin America, occurs in Álvarez Bravo’s photographs. Xavier Villaurrutia praised Álvarez Bravo’s ability to create unforeseen potentials in art, photography, and judgment, explaining he made “it possible that, standing before his best photographs, we find ourselves facing true representations of the unrepresentable, facing true evidence of the invisible.”

This feat of straddling evidence and invisibility is a provocative description; one that I will argue deserves to be taken seriously as a mode of modernist “truth” which is always somehow out of reach or untenable, even in the moment it is presented or professed.

Two key bodies famously stand out in Álvarez Bravo’s oeuvre, in part because of their formal coincidence: focally, they are both lying down. One titled Obrero en huelga, asesinado (Striking Worker, Assassinated, 1934) (illustration 1) and the other La Buena fama, durmiendo (Good Reputation, Sleeping, 1938-1939, illustration 2). It is meaningful to bring them into dialogue with one another as much for their similarities as for their apparent contrasts. Each provides a sensation of an out-of-body experience to the viewer. They suggest a place beyond the frame, thus calling attention to exactly what they can and cannot represent. As a pair, indeed they can function as a parable regarding the limits of representation as well as a litmus test of the fine and often porous lines separating documentary photography from art. Together they propose a crucial example of the various modes of visuality Álvarez Bravo invested in and investigated.

miembro del renacimiento cultural de México que se produjo en el país tras la revolución de la década de 1910, Álvarez Bravo llevó a cabo diversos experimentos con formas y temas que hacen que su obra no pueda resumirse en una única categoría, en especial si esa categoría depende de un concepto estilístico para definirse. Literal y figurativamente zanjando las diferencias entre diversas versiones del modernismo latinoamericano y el modernismo euro-norteamericano, en las fotografías de Álvarez Bravo se produce una confrontación palable entre estética y política, entre regionalismo y universalismo y (en cuanto a las narraciones historiográficas) entre los estudios modernistas convencionales y el lado crítico del arte de Latinoamérica. Xavier Villaurrutia ha alabado la capacidad de Álvarez Bravo de crear potenciales inesperados en el arte, la fotografía y la razón al indicar que el artista hizo “posible que, cuando nos paramos frente a sus mejores fotografías, nos enfrentemos a representaciones verdaderas de lo irrepresentable, a evidencias verdaderas de lo invisible”. Esta hazaña de alternar invisibilidad y evidencia resulta una descripción provocativa que merece tomarse en serio como una forma de “verdad” modernista que resulta siempre de algún modo inalcanzable o inasequible, incluso en el momento en el que se la presenta o profesa.

En la obra de Álvarez Bravo hay dos cuerpos en particular que se destacan en parte por su coincidencia formal: ambos se encuentran recostados. Uno titulado Obrero en huelga, asesinado (1934) (ilustración 1) y el otro La buena fama, durmiendo (1938-1939) (ilustración 2). Resulta significativo ponerlos en diálogo tanto pos sus similitudes como por sus aparentes contrastes. Ambos le transmiten al espectador una sensación extracorpórea. Sugieren un lugar más allá del cuadro y, de este modo, llaman la atención a lo que pueden y no pueden representar. Juntos de hecho, funcionan como una parábola sobre los límites de la representación además de como una
Separated by four years, the *Striking Worker, Assassinated* precedes *Good Reputation, Sleeping*, and shows a bloody corpse, eyes open, laying face up on the ground. The subject matter, a close-up of a victim of violence, connects the image to a long lineage of crime photography. Reminiscent of memorable and contemporaneous images by Weegee, the legendary free-lance tabloid photographer of New York City’s “dark side” throughout the 1930s and 1940s, the viewer is directed to the scene of the crime. In stark black and white, the death clearly pictured is as real as it gets, at least in representational terms. Leonard Folgarait has insightfully referred to this photograph as a flat lifeless image exemplifying “a representation of death as further deadened.”

The rhetorical first impression is indeed as pointed evidence rather than artifice. The fact of death before one’s eyes is arresting in its concrete impact, an impact made only more substantial and stony by the ground upon which the body lies.

Leonard Folgarait has referred to this photograph as a flat lifeless image exemplifying “a representation of death as further deadened.”

The tone of the photograph here is one of statement rather than symbolic contemplation. And yet, this photograph has nevertheless been accounted for by a number of art historians and art critics as less about specificity or social ideology and more about a kind of “symbolic visual vernacular,” which is often associated with the idea of the victim/martyr that is transcendent, harkening back to the rites of human sacrifice in ancient Mexico.

In Nissan Perez’s words, the Director of Photography at the Israel Museum, “What matters is the act [of assassination] and its significance for the image rather than its obvious social connotations.” Read in this way, as an aesthetic representation of timeless themes, arguably the “obvious social connotations” are no longer so obvious. Rather, they are elided by the high modernist impulse for considering the work of art on its own terms, as centripetally contained by its frame and demarcated apart from its social context.
A key question here would be whether the image asks the viewer to read inwards or outwards, to see this photograph as a whole or as a fragment? In her discussion of grids as the emblematic structure of modernist ambition within the visual arts, Rosalind Krauss makes important observations regarding the ambiguity of these two kinds of readings. On the one hand, the centripetal reading affirms the idea of the image as autonomous, thereby encouraging modernist introspection, or more powerfully and ideologically “an intromotion of the boundaries of the world into the interior of the work.” By contrast, a centrifugal reading would see the image as a fragment “cropped from an infinitely larger fabric [...] compelling our acknowledgement of a world beyond the frame.” Both approaches are credible and considering the traditional rectangle encasement of the photograph – they are provocative ways of thinking within or through the boundaries of the framing device. The first method emphasizes an aesthetic that is at a remove from the real, while the second brings the real to bear on the image as a work of not simply art, but, moreover, documentary. However, particularly in this case, the centrifugal reading is compelling by virtue of the fact that it takes all of the parts of the image into consideration as evidence, including interdependent relations between the caption, the composition, and the context. Álvarez Bravo himself admitted to the complimentary possibilities of combining the poetic with the documentary, thereby creating “documentary fictions that invent and tell the truth, mimetically capture and abstract the subjects they contain.” In other words, faced with the photographic box containing the body here, the subject nevertheless exceeds that which is presented and visible.

This is true in formal as well as conceptual terms. Notice the arm of the fallen man, as it stretches out languidly towards the viewer on the lower left, and the blood which courses over his face without...
an identifiable source, seeps around his head, and runs straight out the lower frame to the right. Such details within the image – the arm and the blood – reach beyond the photograph, thereby alluding to our living space outside the frame even as the “that-has-been” of the image alienates our connection to the moment captured. These two elements have been observed as crucial counterpoints by Folgarait, in his reflective attempt “to articulate a meaningful relationship between the social dynamic of the historical moment and the expressive content” of images. In his close reading of this particular photograph, Folgarait astutely observes that though the arm reaches, the worker’s fingers retract. As though to “assert his power of agency even in death,” his fingers curl back towards his own body. The framing of the body gives the viewer proximity and privilege as a voyeur, while maintaining a distance in which the viewer is always at an inevitable and interminable remove.

The title Álvarez Bravo attributes to this photograph is itself deliberate – namely, *Striking Worker, Assassinated*, is concise in its delivery and punctuated in its explanation. What can we make of the comma, the temporal interruption that separates the “Striking Worker” from the fate of his being “Assassinated”? Why not simply title the image “Assassinated Striking Worker,” or drop the comma, as a number of published reproductions of this particular photograph have? Something is indeed lost in translation. Poetic titles and attention to literary detail are among Álvarez Bravo’s signature maneuvers.

The importance of political context to Álvarez Bravo, additionally evidenced by the inclusion of a fragment of the Mexican flag in the background, in this instance seems to exceed the desire to conscript the dead youth as an icon of elusive martyrdom. It is worth noting that Álvarez Bravo was already an established photographic artist by the time of this image’s creation, and as such it is truly su intento reflexivo de “articular una relación significativa entre la dinámica social del momento histórico y el contenido expresivo” de las imágenes. En su lectura crítica de esta fotografía en particular, Folgarait observa con astucia que, aunque el brazo se extiende, los dedos del trabajador se retraen. De algún modo, se “afirma su empoderamiento incluso en la muerte” ya que los dedos se contraen hacia el propio cuerpo. La composición del cuerpo le da al espectador la proximidad y la prerrogativa de ser voyeur, mientras que mantiene una distancia en la que el espectador se encuentra siempre alejado de forma inevitable e interminable.

El título que Álvarez Bravo le da a su fotografía, *Obrero en huelga, asesinado*, es en sí mismo deliberado, conciso y explicativo. ¿Cómo podemos interpretar la coma, esa interrupción temporal que separa al “Obrero en huelga” de su destino al ser “asesinado”? ¿Por qué no titular la imagen “Asesinan obrero en huelga”, o dejar de lado
ahistorical to consider this photograph entirely outside the political and social realities of its time or of Álvarez Bravo’s larger oeuvre. Álvarez Bravo has described his trip to Tehuantepec, which resulted in this photograph, stating his intention to “make a counterpoint between labor and the picturesque.” Though he could not have precisely anticipated the sugar mill workers strike he encountered, and this particular body, strikes were increasingly prevalent at the time. The intensity of worker protests in 1934 escalated to 202 with approximately 14,685 workers participating. The Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios (the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists), of which Álvarez Bravo was a member, included the image in their publication *Frente a Frente* in 1936. First as part of a two-page photo spread, prepared by Álvarez Bravo in collaboration with Heinrich Gutmann, and again as the cover piece, montaged with portraits of Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Plutarco Elias Calles, two issues later. In both cases *Striking Worker, Assassinated* is used in the service of demonstrating a dialectic class conflict and arguably “a timely protest against the tyranny of specific dictators and rulers” as opposed to a “an apolitical, modernist metaphor of a timeless “ritual sacrifice to the gods of society.”

In his provocative study of the archives of the celebrated Mexican photographic agency *Agencia Fotográfica Nacional* (also known as the Casasola Archive), Jesse Lerner analytically takes up the complicated relationship between crime and photography in Mexico City in the 1920s and 1930s, the years following the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920). Lerner refers to this iconic image by Álvarez Bravo in terms of its relationship to contemporary *judiciales* images. For Lerner, this work is exemplary of the overlap between the “two seeming distinct photographic practices, the tabloid and the high modernist.” *Striking Worker, Assassinated* demonstrates a sophisticated literacy of modernist visual language, including the

Aunque no pudo haber anticipado la huelga específica de los trabajadores azucareros que halló y este cuerpo en particular, las huelgas eran cada vez más comunes por entonces. La cantidad de protestas obreras aumentó en 1934 a 202 con la participación de unos 14.685 trabajadores. La Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios, de la que Álvarez Bravo era miembro, incluyó la imagen en su publicación *Frente a Frente* en 1936. Primero como parte de un ensayo fotográfico de dos hojas que preparó Álvarez Bravo en colaboración con Heinrich Gutmann, y luego como portada, montada con retratos de Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini y Plutarco Elias Calles dos números después. An ambos casos, *Obrero en huelga, asesinado* se utilizó para demostrar un conflicto dialéctico de clase y, se podría decir, como “una protesta oportuna contra la tiranía de dictadores y gobernantes específicos” en lugar de como “la metáfora modernista apolítica de un sacrificio ritual atemporal a los dioses de la sociedad.”
tight cropping, the sharp focus, and the abstracted context, however it is also visibly aware of not simply the rhetoric of photojournalism but moreover the particularities of the narrative pictured. Álvarez Bravo’s consciously avant-garde use of “a modernist sensibility emphasizing sharp definition, everyday subject matter and a purist formal rigor,” does not preclude his ability to involve himself in a highly politicized reportage regarding real life in Mexico. The pressure Álvarez Bravo has placed on the dead man’s chest here by virtue of cutting the image close to the body creates a claustrophobic space; a desire for a way out of the demarcated arena is palpable and stressed. As an advocate of straight photography in the vein of Paul Strand and Tina Modotti, Álvarez Bravo famously disavowed any act of manipulation in the printing process. Visible, for example, in works such as Strand’s Mexican Portfolio from the 1930s, a direct shot with a clearly centered subject is a shared modernist strategy (see cat. no. 54). Such images could even be described as confrontational; meanings might be obscure, however the framing is always decisive in appearance. Similarly, what is literally laid bare before the viewers is crucial for Álvarez Bravo.

The photograph Striking Worker, Assassinated is often referred to as “one of Álvarez Bravo’s few “documentary” images.” However, I contend that particularly after spending time thinking about his early work, the social documentary strain that indeed characterized Mexican art during the Cádiz regime becomes visible in other works by the artist. Olivier Debroise refers to such occurrences as evidence of a particularly Mexican “complex perception of the world that is translated in the photographs through an emphasis on the invisible, on what is left out of the picture and yet is indispensable to its existence.” This description sounds strikingly similar to words used by Esther Gabara when she discusses what she calls “visible photographs of invisible bodies.” Álvarez Bravo’s work operates

En su estimulante estudio sobre la celebrada Agencia Fotográfica Nacional de México (conocida también como el Archivo Casasola), Jesse Lerner realiza un análisis de la complicada relación entre el crimen y la fotografía en la ciudad de México en los años 1920 y 1930, los años posteriores a la Revolución Mexicana (1910-1920). Lerner hace referencia a esta imagen icónica de Álvarez Bravo en relación con las imágenes judiciales de la época. Para Lerner, este trabajo es un ejemplo de la superposición de “dos prácticas fotográficas en apariencia diferentes, la amarillista y la modernista”. Obrero en huelga, asesinado demuestra un conocimiento sofisticado del lenguaje visual modernista, incluyendo el encuadre recortado, la nitidez del enfoque y el contexto abstracto; sin embargo, también está conciente no solo de la retórica del periodismo fotográfico sino además de las particularidades de la narrativa presentada. La conciente utilización vanguardista que hace Álvarez Bravo de “una sensibilidad modernista que enfatiza la definición nítida, los temas cotidianos y la búsqueda del rigor formal” no descarta su habilidad de comprometerse en un ensayo fotográfico con fuertes tintes políticos sobre la vida real en México. La presión que Álvarez Bravo ha depositado aquí sobre el pecho del hombre muerto al cortar la imagen cerca del cuerpo crea un espacio claustrofóbico: el deseo de hallar una salida del área demarcada resulta palpable y pronunciado. Como defensor de la fotografía directa al estilo de Paul Strand y Tina Modotti, Álvarez Bravo rechazaba con vigor cualquier acto de manipulación en el proceso de impresión. Por ejemplo, en obras como Mexican Portfolio (Portafolio mexicano), de Strand, de los años 1930, se presenta una toma directa con un sujeto centrado con claridad, una estrategia compartida por los modernistas (ver n.° cat. 54). Se podría describir estas imágenes incluso como combativas; aunque los significados pueden resultar poco claros, el encuadre siempre tiene un aspecto decisivo. De forma similar, lo que se desnuda frente a los espectadores es crucial para Álvarez Bravo.
somewhere between the news journal and the art gallery, as a model for the ways in which there is no convincing way to talk about a singular ‘Mexican photography.’ As curator Jessica S. McDonald of the Museum of Modern Art in San Francisco has explained, citing Álvarez Bravo as the touchstone, “There is no one ‘Mexican photography,’ but one strand that runs throughout is a synthesis of aesthetics and politics.”

The photographs themselves are replete with contentious and competing multivalences. The year 1933 was a significant year for Álvarez Bravo. He exhibited at the Julien Levy Gallery in New York alongside Henri Cartier-Bresson and Walker Evans, as well as in Mexico City’s Palacio de Bellas Artes. Cartier-Bresson and Evans’ emphasis on finding the compelling mysteries present in everyday scenes had affinities with Álvarez Bravo’s approach to photography. Certainly his membership in the avant-garde circle of photographic art was confirmed by his public alignment with such figures. His association with modern European and American artists who professed their dedication to being aesthetically revolutionary yet apolitical has frequently provided justification for viewing his work through a particularly symbolic and formal lens. This strain is absolutely essential to Álvarez Bravo’s work. However, his fascination with “unlocking the riddles of iconography” does not sufficiently account for the unsettling character of many of his works. Álvarez Bravo’s connection to the surrealist strategy of making strange (or ostranenie) is never completely dissociated from the political charge of confounding habitual seeing in everyday life and accessing news ways, truly sur-real ways, of thinking through social relationships. Arguably, even when a solitary person is pictured in Álvarez Bravo’s photographs, a social dimension is nevertheless implicated. Additionally, inanimate objects in his work take on multiple identities, as characters of sorts, who prod viewers into considering a world that is defamiliarized, yet interdependent rather than isolated.

A menudo se refieren a la fotografía Obrero en huelga, asesinado como “una de las pocas imágenes ‘documentales’ de Álvarez Bravo”. Sin embargo, creo que, especialmente luego de pensar en su obra temprana, la veta documental social que de hecho caracterizó el arte mexicano durante el régimen de Cárdenas, se hace más evidente en otros trabajos del artista. Olivier Debroise se refiere a tales eventos como evidencia de una “percepción compleja (particularmente mexicana) del mundo que se traduce a las fotografías a través de un énfasis en lo invisible, en lo que queda fuera de la imagen y que sin embargo resulta indispensable para su existencia”. Esta descripción suena extremadamente similar a las palabras que utilizó Esther Gabara al hablar de lo que ella denomina “fotografías visibles de cuerpos invisibles”. La obra de Álvarez Bravo opera en algún lugar entre el periódico noticioso y la galería de arte como modelo de las formas en las que no existe manera convincente de hablar acerca de un tipo único de ‘fotografía mexicana’. La curadora Jessica S. McDonald del Museum of Modern Art (Museo de Arte Moderno) de San Francisco ha indicado, poniendo a Álvarez Bravo como ejemplo, que “no existe una ‘fotografía mexicana’ única sino que una veta que la recorre es una síntesis de estética y política”. Las fotografías en sí mismas están repletas de una multiplicidad de significados que compiten y se enfrentan entre ellos.
The kind of latency and liminality I am describing here is paramount to *Good Reputation, Sleeping*. Here again a body lies along the picture plane, but it is “striking” in a different way. What is laid bare in this instance seems at first glance to be less about evidence and more about reverie. The woman depicted rests on the ground, atop a striped blanket, lounging. A group of star cacti at her side threaten to impale her if she were to inadvertently roll over, and their prickly thorns literally and figuratively impede onlookers from getting too close.

Mostly nude, parts of her body are conspicuously bandaged in white, her wrists, her feet, her hips and thighs, with her pubic area exposed. The image is overt and subtle, lending itself immediately to an eroticized reading, but also to a sense that this is about more than the body as a subject of desire. This staged scene speaks of estrangement. In part because of the depth of field, the viewer’s distance from the body is further than in *Striking Worker, Assassinated*. This bizarre proximity positions the viewer as a voyeur, and by extension, an outsider. On the one hand this angle enhances the idea that this image evidences the pre-Cortesian erotic and exotic dream of Mexican Eden, affirming Sergei Eisenstein’s attraction to what he referred to as Mexico’s “bodies outside of history,” or what Lerner describes in his *Maya of Modernism* as an “undifferentiated, languid sexuality [which] inhabits a place outside history – a timeless paradise in southeastern Oaxaca whose portrayal resonates with depictions of that region created by Miguel Covarrubias, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, and more recently, Graciela Iturbide.”

The dream is not all it seems to be. A darkness lurks in the image that harkens back to *Striking Worker, Assassinated*, and which detours escapist fantasies. Notice the gritty realism of the wall that forms the backdrop of this theater. The concrete wall is dirty, worn,

La especie de latencia y liminalidad que describo aquí reviste vital importancia en *La buena fama, durmiendo*. Una vez más, aquí se encuentra un cuerpo tendido en el plano de la imagen, pero resulta “llamativo” de un modo diferente. Lo que en este caso se expone parece a primera vista tener menos que ver con lo evidencial y más con la ensoñación. La mujer retratada descansa en el suelo sobre una manta a rayas. Un grupo de cactus a su lado amenazan hincarla si, por ejemplo, fuera a girar sobre sí sin darse cuenta, y las espinas impiden que los espectadores se acerquen demasiado, literal y figurativamente.

En su mayoría desnudo, algunas partes de su cuerpo se ven cubiertas con vendas blancas: sus muñecas, sus pies, su cadera y sus muslos, pero la región pública está expuesta. La imagen es manifiesta y sutil, y se presta a una lectura erótica inmediata, pero también a la idea de que se trata más que de un cuerpo como objeto del deseo. Esta escena
scratched, filled with suspicious holes and other wounds. A heavy black seeping line runs unevenly and oppressively down the wall, intersecting the woman’s chest perpendicularly. In a noir twist this may be an allusion to the idea that she may not be asleep at all, but rather a beautiful corpse. The dark stains on the vertical wall answer the blood in Striking Worker, Assassinated, and similarly push the inquest outside the picture’s frame. Uncannily, by contrast to the worker’s open eyes, the subject here has her eyes closed, though the former image is the only photograph in Álvarez Bravo’s oeuvre that is explicitly of a dead body. The in-between and exchangeable existential states summoned to mind may reflect Xavier Villaurrutia’s writing in 1932, claiming that, “what we can call an obsession, a preoccupation with death, is present in the work of Manuel Álvarez Bravo.”

The bizarre bandages reinforce this reading, alluding as much to mummification as adornment. Good Reputation, Sleeping was originally created for inclusion in a surrealist exhibition curated by André Breton. Álvarez Bravo claimed that the bandages were inspired by “the way dancers in Anna Sokolow’s company bound their feet during rehearsals.” The paradox of drawing on the habits of dancers to picture such a still, inanimate figure is provocative. The subject’s motionlessness is crucial to the image. There is something of her stillness that again plays to the idea of this as a vision of a “timeless” Mexico, passive and ritualistic. A counter position however would be to consider that the photograph is staged as a “vision,” a fantastical one, that is entirely aware of the codes with which it is both playing with and tempting the viewer’s gaze. As yet another understated interruption, the young woman’s far right leg crosses over her body to the left. A curious irony is suggested and confounded by the words Good Reputation, Sleeping. The comma gives pause once more. The image is puzzling and purposefully disorienting.

El sueño no es todo lo que parece. Una cierta oscuridad amenaza la imagen y recuerda Obrero en huelga, asesinado. El sujeto aquí tiene los ojos cerrados, aunque la imagen anterior es la única fotografía en toda la obra de Álvarez Bravo de un cadaver retratado de forma explícita. Los estados existenciales intermedios e intercambiables que evocan pueden reflejar las ideas de 1932 de Xavier Villaurrutia, quien escribió que “lo que podemos llamar obsesión, una preocupación por la muerte, se encuentra...
The distance between *Striking Worker, Assassinated* and *Good Reputation, Sleeping* could perhaps be bridged by a third body by Álvarez Bravo: *Gorrión, claro* (Sparrow, Skylight, 1938-1939) (illustration 3). In this photograph, a partially nude young woman’s body is again pictured. She emerges from the lower edge of the frame vertically, though she is shown lying horizontally on a roof-like structure. Her lower body is missing. Cut in half by this perspectival reversal, the oddity of her “sleeping” is augmented. Her outline against the cracked surface of the skylight veritably combines the language of documentary and crime scene photography from *Striking Worker, Assassinated*, with the surreal poetry of *Good Reputation, Sleeping*. The possibility of imagining her as either dead or alive, as either reportage or art, exists simultaneously. The allusion to the sparrow in the title alludes to the idea of a fallen bird. The photograph here is at once documentary forensics and surrealist fantasy. As with presente en el trabajo de Manuel Álvarez Bravo”.

Los vendajes extraños refuerzan esta lectura y aluden tanto a la momificación como al adorno del cuerpo.

*La buena fama, durmiendo* fue creada en principio para incluirse en una muestra surrealista curada por André Breton. Álvarez Bravo sostenía que los vendajes fueron inspirados por “la forma en que las bailarinas de la compañía de Anna Sokolow se envolvían los pies en los ensayos”. La paradoja de inspirarse en los hábitos de bailarinas para presentar una figura tan inmóvil e inanimada resulta provocativa. La falta de movimiento del sujeto es crucial para la imagen. Hay algo en su quietud que una vez más juega con la idea de que se trata de una visión de un México “atemporal”, pasivo y ritualista. Sin embargo, sería una contraposición considerar que la fotografía está montada como una “visión” fantástica que está del todo conciente de los
other photographs by Álvarez Bravo, such as *Umbral* (Threshold, 1947) (illustration 4) in which we see truncated feet, apprehensively positioned on a cold floor, surrounded by liquid that is either as innocent as water or as incriminating as blood, there is more than one way to understand the image and any reading will always be only one aspect of what is before us. In *Threshold* the upper body is absent and the title itself suggests the tentative sensation of being in-between. This kind of uncanny duplicity recurs throughout Álvarez Bravo’s career, and functions as a means of suspending and combining various modernist avant-garde strategies.

Esther Gabara’s contribution to this mode of analysis is crucial. In her 2008 study of photography in Mexico and Brazil, entitled *Errant Modernism*, she evokes the concept of “ethos” to perform “a mediating function between ethics and aesthetics,” and further to demonstrate how modernism in Latin America is “a philosophy of art situated in a real space between representation and action.”

The ethics Gabara refers to involve a social imperative that is never entirely superseded by the drive for art or abstraction. Evidence for this approach is found throughout Álvarez Bravo’s photographs.

Numerous scenes in Álvarez Bravo’s work picture walls and storefronts, thereby drawing connections between the context of socialist murals (in the tradition of Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros, for example) and the documentary potential of the camera. Such choices reinforce an ethos that functions through the conjunction of social content with abstract form. Álvarez Bravo calls attention to the urban billboard and by extension the prominence of new relationships with products in the metropolis in works such as *Dos pares de piernas* (Two Pairs of Legs, 1928-1929) (illustration 5) and *Parabola óptica* (Optical Parable, 1931) (illustration 6). In *Two Pairs of Legs* fragmented body parts above the word “inimitable” draw códigos con los que juega y a la vez tienta la mirada del espectador. Incluso como otra interrupción discreta, la pierna derecha de la joven cruza sobre su cuerpo hacia la izquierda. Las palabras *La buena fama, durmiendo* sugieren y trastocan una curiosa ironía. Una vez más la coma otorga una pausa. La imagen resulta enigmática y adrede desconcertante.

La distancia entre *Obrero en huelga, asesinado* y *La buena fama, durmiendo* se podría quizá sortear con un tercer trabajo de Álvarez Bravo: *Gorrión, claro* (1938-1939) (ilustración 3). En esta fotografía una vez más se presenta el cuerpo semidesnudo de una joven. Emerge del ángulo inferior del cuadro de manera vertical, aunque se la presenta tendida horizontalmente sobre una estructura que parece ser un techo. La parte inferior de su cuerpo no aparece. Cortada en dos en esta inversión de la perspectiva, lo extraño de su “sueño” se potencia. Su silueta recortada contra la superficie resquebrajada del tragaluz verdaderamente combina el lenguaje documental y la fotografía criminal de *Obrero en huelga, asesinado* con la poesía surrealista de *La buena fama, durmiendo*. Coexiste en la foto la posibilidad de imaginarla tanto viva como muerta, como ensayo fotográfico o arte. La alusión al gorrión que se hace en el título remite a la idea de un pájaro caído. La fotografía es tanto documental forense como fantasía surrealista. Como en otras fotografías de Álvarez Bravo como *Umbral* (1947) [ilustración 4], en la que vemos pies truncados, colocados aprensivamente sobre un piso frío, rodeados de un líquido que resulta inocente como el agua o incriminator como la sangre, hay más de una manera de comprender la imagen y cualquier lectura será solo un aspecto parcial de lo que encontramos frente a nosotros. En *Umbral*, el torso se encuentra ausente y el título sugiere la sensación tentativa de encontrarse entre dos espacios. Este sorprendente tipo de duplicidad es recurrente en toda la carrera de Álvarez Bravo y funciona como medio para suspender y combinar varias estrategias vanguardistas del modernismo.
our attention to cropped signage and partial reference points. As Roberto Tejada describes it, “Álvarez Bravo explores the contrast between two patterns: the imperfect grid of the advertisement and the rickety slats and windows of the Mexico City building behind it. With characteristic irony, he makes use of the divided plane to create a modern theme: the difference between the concrete world and its copies, as represented in a painted imitation or in the quasi-mirror likeness of a photograph.” Optical Parable further challenges the epistemology that associates seeing with knowing, in other words, the promise of Western modernity, as it plays with temporal and spatial discontinuity in the public arena and in perceptual experience. Other photographers of the time similarly sought to test the viewer’s optical sensitivity. Consider Edward Weston’s Nude Floating (1939, cat. no. 53) for example. Included in the exhibition Pan American Modernism alongside works by Álvarez Bravo, Weston’s photograph cunningly taunts

La contribución de Esther Gabara a este modo de análisis es crucial. En su estudio del año 2008 titulado Errant Modernism (Modernismo errante) sobre la fotografía en México y Brasil, evoca el concepto de “ethos” que cumple “una función mediadora entre la ética y la estética” y demuestra cómo el modernismo latinoamericano es “una filosofía de arte situada en un espacio real entre la representación y la acción”. La ética a la que se refiere Gabara implica un imperativo social que nunca se sustituye por completo con el impulso del arte o la abstracción. Se puede hallar evidencia de este enfoque en las fotografías de Álvarez Bravo.

En numerosas escenas de las imágenes de Álvarez Bravo se observan paredes y frentes de tiendas, por lo que se establecen conexiones entre el contexto de los murales socialistas (por ejemplo al estilo de Diego Rivera y David Alfaro Siqueiros) y el

Illustration 5

MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO
b. 1902, Mexico City, Mexico
d. 2002, Mexico City, Mexico
Dos pares de piernas
(Two Pairs of Legs),
1928-1929
gelatin silver print
9 ¼ in. x 7 ¾ in.
(23.5 cm x 18.26 cm)
© Colette Urbajtel/Archivo Manuel Álvarez Bravo, SC

Illustration 6

MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO
b. 1902, Mexico City, Mexico
d. 2002, Mexico City, Mexico
Parabola óptica (Optic Parable),
1931 (printed 1974)
gelatin silver print
9 ¼ x 7 ¼ in.
(23.8 x 18.1 cm)
Gift of The American Foundation for the Arts, 84.0190.01
© Colette Urbajtel/Archivo Manuel Álvarez Bravo, SC
the viewer to make visual sense of varying surfaces and weights as they are formally suspended.

I would argue that Álvarez Bravo’s *Optical Parable* however, exceeds the formal considerations of visuality and more importantly, even politically, “obliges us to become conscious of the act of looking, here and now.”\textsuperscript{92} Strategies of modernist abstraction and defamiliarization for Álvarez Bravo seem to be about more than a game of looking for the sake of looking. The name of the business “La Óptica Moderna” imaged in the photograph is literally translated into “the modern optician” but can also be interpreted as “the modern viewpoint.”\textsuperscript{93} Such a viewpoint here is explained as far from coherent or singular but rather endlessly disjointed and complicated. Such a viewpoint possesses the self-referentiality so often demanded of modernism. However, it also has the capacity to flip one’s sense and be infinitely contrary.

Further hauntings of social relationships, in “an adulterated sphere in which ethics and aesthetics are edgily interdependent and mutually disruptive”\textsuperscript{94} recur in these photographs when one begins to search beneath appearances. While *Las lavanderas sobreentendidas* (The Washerwoman Implied, 1932) (illustration 7) seems to share a formal coincidence with Man Ray’s *Enigma of Isadore Ducasse* (1920) (illustration 8) for example, it is significant to note that the washerwoman who is insinuated beneath the sheet is a worker. Employed against reification, even if only in the form of such ghostly allusions, labor and the realities of labor continuously make their appearance in Álvarez Bravo’s photographs. In *The Washerwoman Implied*, the message is all the more resounding despite its disguise, by virtue of the subject being depicted as a kind of apparition. Such figures ask the viewer to look beneath the opacity of surface and summon a specifically post-revolutionary Mexican psychology that though fascinating to outsiders at this time, could never be fully appreciated or emulated.
abstracción y desfamiliarización modernistas para Álvarez Bravo parecen tener que ver con algo más que el juego de mirar por el simple hecho de mirar. El nombre de la tienda “La Óptica Moderna” presente en la fotografía se puede interpretar como “el punto de vista moderno”. Este punto de vista aquí no se presenta como coherente o único sino desdoblado y complicado al infinito. Tal punto de vista posee la autorreferencialidad que tan a menudo se requiere del modernismo. Sin embargo, también posee la capacidad de invertir nuestro sentido y ser por completo contrario.

Otras evocaciones de las relaciones sociales en una “esfera adulterada en la que la ética y la estética se vuelven interdependientes hasta la crispatión y mutuamente perturbadoras” se hacen recurrentes en estas fotografías cuando uno comienza a indagar debajo de las apariencias. A pesar de que Las lavanderas sobreentendidas (1932) (Ilustración 7) parece compartir una coincidencia formal por
This sort of tension is also present in works that are seemingly less figurative. *Juego de papel* (Paper Games, 1926-1927) (illustration 9) is a group of photographs often highlighted in Álvarez Bravo’s practice for their formal innovation and exemplification of the tendency towards modernist abstraction. Though there is a resemblance to Edward Weston’s sensualized studies, in which close-ups of vegetables for example become suggestive bodies, it is important to note that the paper pictured is in fact cash register tape (illustration 10). These aestheticized receipts incite a direct connection to economic realities and, again, to labor. They are not simply to be looked at. They exemplify the mediated “ethos” Gabara discusses. Even a photograph such as Álvarez Bravo’s *Magueyes heridos* (Wounded Agaves, 1950) (illustration 11) offers a radical interpretation of modernist visual play. Showing agave plants cut bluntly at their edges, these images connote violence on the body, rather than pure optic pleasure. Such photographs are perhaps closer to Albert Renger Patzsch’s New Objectivity than Weston’s formalism (illustration 12). Their ambiguity similarly brings to mind Walter Benjamin’s quoting of Bertold Brecht in his “Short History of Photography” (1931), as a means of critique the limits of how much critical information an image can convey. Benjamin writes:

“The situation is complicated by the fact that less than ever does the mere reflection of reality reveal anything about reality. A photograph of the Krupp works or the AEG tells us next to nothing about these institutions. Actual reality has slipped into the functional. The reification of human relations—the factory, say—means that they are no longer explicit. So something must in fact be built up, something artificial, posed.”

Photographs may suggest readings that bring social realities such as labor to bear on aesthetics, however the risk of aestheticizing and ejemlo con *Enigma de Isadore Ducasse* (Enigma de Isadore Ducasse, 1920), de Man Ray (ilustración 8), resulta significativo notar que la lavandera que se insinúa debajo de la sábana es una trabajadora. Utilizados contra la cosificación, aunque más no sea como alusiones fantasmagóricas, el trabajo y las realidades laborales aparecen continuamente en las fotografías de Álvarez Bravo. En *Las lavanderas sobreentendidas* el mensaje resulta aun más resonante a pesar de su disfraz gracias a que el sujeto es presentado como una especie de aparición. Tales figuras le piden al espectador que mire debajo de la opacidad de la superficie y evoque una psicología posrevelacionaria mexicana específica que aunque resultara fascinante a los extranjeros en la época jamás podría ser apreciada o emulada.

Este tipo de tensión se encuentra también presente en trabajos que en apariencia son menos figurativos. *Juego de papel* (1926-1927) (ilustración 9) es un grupo de fotografías que a menudo se destacan en la práctica de Álvarez Bravo por su innovación formal y como ejemplo de la tendencia hacia la abstracción modernista. Aunque se parecen en cierta medida a los estudios sensualizados de Edward Weston en los que los primeros planos de vegetales por ejemplo sugieren cuerpos humanos, es importante notar que el papel que se muestra es en realidad papel de caja registradora (ilustración 10). Estos recibos estilizados incitan una conexión directa con las realidades económicas y, una vez más, con el trabajo. No están solo para verse. Ejemplifican el “ethos” mediado del que habla Gabara. Incluso una fotografía como *Magueyes heridos* (1950) de Álvarez Bravo (ilustración 11) ofrece una interpretación radical del juego visual modernista. Al mostrar plantas de agave cortadas sin delicadeza en los bordes, estas imágenes connotan violencia sobre el cuerpo en lugar de puro placer óptico. Tales fotografías se asemejan quizás más a la Nueva Objetividad de Albert Renger Patzsch que al formalismo de Weston (ilustración 12). Su ambigüedad recuerda...
las ideas que Walter Benjamin cita de Bertoldt Brecht en su “Short History of Photography” (Breve historia de la fotografía) (1931) como medio para criticar los límites de cuánta información clave puede transmitir una imagen. Benjamin escribe:

“La situación se complica debido al hecho de que ahora menos que nunca el solo reflejo de la realidad revela nada de la realidad. Una fotografía de la fundición Krupp o de la AEG nos dice casi nada de estas instituciones. La realidad en sí ha pasado a ser funcional. La cosificación de las relaciones humanas (digamos por ejemplo la fábrica) significa que estas ya no son explícitas. Por lo que de hecho algo debe construirse, algo artificial propuesto”.96

Las fotografías pueden sugerir lecturas que hacen que realidades sociales como el trabajo pesen sobre la estética; sin embargo, el
thus removing the real from its actual conditions of production is also a contentious possibility.

Once asked by John Mraz if he had ever taken “political” photographs other than *Striking Worker, Assassinated*, Álvarez Bravo responded by referring to *Los agachados* (Crouched Ones, 1934) (illustration 13). The photograph depicts five seated workers from behind, each on a stool, all chained together at the base, within the storefront of a typical Mexican *comedor*. At this modest lunch counter which caters to the working and middle-classes, the sun bears down obliquely casting dramatic, even ominous, shadows upon an ordinary scene. The title suggests the crouching their bodies perform in the act of work, but also seemingly inescapably, even during the down time of a meal. Freedom of movement is not a luxury available to these subjects. And yet there is also evidence in the photograph, in their actual bodies, that this is not entirely the case either. For they in fact are not crouched, but actually seated upright. The dynamic of stark light and shadow creates the impression of oppression, but again there seems to be more to the eye. The workers are decapitated figuratively by noonday shadows and yet the image may be more of a challenge to the partial vision of the viewer, both optically and ideologically, who is demarcated outside of the space of the iron roll-up door, curtaining the top of the frame.

Real bodies are at a stake in Manuel Álvarez Bravo’s practice. These bodies evidence the necessity of grappling with the real as it exists between an ethical and an aesthetic position, as they summon thoughts of social documentary and modern art combined. The fact, moreover that a photograph, however real, is always an abstraction is reinforced. The very possibility of an abstraction only exists in relation to a real referent, a referent to be “abstracted.” This tense interdependence between abstraction and objective reality finds a
productive and problematic arena in the photograph, one which was mined extensively in Álvarez Bravo’s oeuvre. Staging the difficulties of the real subject with and against an abstracted sense of presence is particular to photography in a manner that painting, though struggling with shared issues, does not possess as intimate or innate a connection. Álvarez Bravo’s modernisms challenge the ways in which post-revolutionary aesthetics in Mexico have too often been blindly read as autonomous and instead reasserts their deeply self-aware contingency.

“abstraerá”. Esta tensa interdependencia entre la abstracción y la realidad objetiva encuentra una esfera productiva y problemática en la fotografía, una realidad explotada de manera extensa en la obra de Álvarez Bravo. Poner en escena las dificultades del sujeto real con y contra un sentido abstracto de presencia es una característica peculiar de la fotografía, ya que la pintura, a través de su debate con problemáticas compartidas, no posee una conexión tan íntima o innata. Los modernismos de Álvarez Bravo desafían las formas en que las estéticas posrevolucionarias de México tan a menudo se han observado como autónomas sin cuestionamientos y, en cambio, reafirman su contingencia conscientes de sí mismos.
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PART 1: DIALOGUES
THE FEMALE MUSE: CLASS, GENDER, RACE

The female subject has long persisted as a popular genre within the history of art. Nearly every period since the prehistoric era has produced images of women and for various means, be those allegorical, historical, mythological/religious, symbolic, sensual, or as an exploration of abstraction. The twentieth century was no exception, as the female subject continued to serve as a “muse” for artists working in the modern and postmodern eras. By examining the international and intercultural interest in the female form during the early to mid-twentieth century, objects in this module propose commonalities among disparate works via subject matter, rather than stylistic, nationalistic, or cultural constructs.

Notions of race, artistic “primitivism,” and class distinction equally develop as motifs alongside the overarching theme of gender. Photographs by Lola Álvarez Bravo and Man Ray exemplify these themes alongside paintings and drawings by the Cuban vanguardia, who explored the female body through the visual language of naturalism, surrealism, cubism, or a combination of divergent styles. The Colombian modernists Enrique Grau and Guillermo Wiedemann similarly reveal their interest in (but divergence from) European representations of the female muse, offering images that convey a strong sense of aesthetic hybridity.
ANTONIO GATTORNO

b. 1904, Havana, Cuba
d. 1980, Acushnet, Massachusetts

Untitled, 1919
pencil on paper
11 7/8 x 8 5/8 in. (30.2 x 21.9 cm)
Donation from the Cuban Museum of the Americas,
Gift of Eduardo Avilés Ramírez, 99.0009.041
© 1919 Antonio Gattorno

Antonio Gattorno was a prominent member of the first generation of Cuban modernists who, along with fellow artists Wifredo Lam and Amelia Peláez, studied at Havana’s Academy of San Alejandro in the early twentieth century. In this untitled drawing, Gattorno depicts an Afro-Cuban woman who appears to be dancing. One “discerns” that Gattorno’s subject is a black woman through the artist’s use of exaggerated, stereotypical facial features: the woman has a large nose and lips, and a short-cropped hairstyle.

If not an Afro-Cuban dancer, the subject of the drawing could represent a *mulata*, or half black, half white Cuban woman. The drawing includes a sensual element, communicated through the semblance of the woman’s breasts, as well as a sense of movement, conveyed by her raised arms and flowing scarf. It is likely that the woman is dancing the rumba, a popular Afro-Cuban dance, or some other form of musical genre representative of Cuban culture during this period.

A. M. & N. T.
In *Mujer*, the Cuban modern artist Eduardo Abela presents the viewer with an allegorical image of his country, represented by a woman surrounded by different elements that represent Cuban culture and its landscape. Abela places his female subject in the center of the composition encircled by lush fruits and seashells, indicative of Cuba as a Caribbean island. In the background, the viewer can observe the sea and clear blue skies. These island elements can be compared to his renowned painting, *El triunfo de la rumba* (ca. 1928), which includes representations of the sea, exotic shells, fish, and Royal Palm trees, as well as other elements that were meant to symbolize Cuban folklore and culture.

It is important to note Abela’s use of vibrant colors in this painting, many of which are utilized to highlight aspects of the native landscape: the bright blue sky that merges with the glassy sea, and the rich reddish brown hues of the Cuban soil. The *mujer* rests on a wheeled cart, perhaps representative of the wagons used on Cuban sugar cane plantations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Abela paints the woman with a caramel colored skin tone, perhaps an indication that she is a *mulata* and thus a symbol of Cuba’s diversified racial makeup.

A. M. & N. T.
In Carlos Enríquez’s painting *Mulata*, one can see the representation of a nude Afro-Cuban woman. She is surrounded by vivid strokes of green and yellow, which represent Cuba’s tropical landscape. By placing this female subject at the center of the canvas, Enríquez seems to suggest that she is symbolically at the heart of the island. This notion that the female body is symbolically and symbiotically tied to the land is also evident in the subject’s left breast, which is depicted with veins and arteries of a human heart, or alternatively, the veins of a plant or leaf. As such, she nurtures the land by holding her breast and providing for the land, just as a mother nourishes her newborn child.

The use of bold, lush colors in the painting is of particular interest, since Enríquez does not confine color to specific lines, but rather, incorporates colors of various gradients and tones throughout the canvas. The predominance of green overtakes the viewer’s visual field, reinforcing the tropical essence of the piece.

A. M. & N. T.
One of the most celebrated Cuban avant-gardists of the twentieth century, Wifredo Lam was born in Cuba in 1902 to an Afro-Cuban mother and a Chinese father. He left for Europe in 1923, where he met his mentor, Pablo Picasso, as well as the Surrealist leader André Breton, and eventually his second wife, Helena Holzer. In Portrait of Helena, Lam depicts his wife holding an oil lamp – an iconographic element which was perhaps meant to bring visual form to a poem written by Breton in 1941 for Helena's birthday. Breton wrote: "I have never lit a candle whose flame was as many-colored as are your lips when they leap from one language to another."  

Conversely, or in addition to, the aestheticizing of Breton's prose, the lit flame might also serve as a symbol of the inspirational light that Helena provided Lam as his artistic muse, particularly if one considers that the years of their marriage (1939-1950) correspond with the development of his most significant artistic period. One can also see references to Afro-Cuban primitivism in the piece, specifically through Lam's subtle reference to a non-European mask in Helena's cubistic face and headdress.

K. M. & N. T.
Enrique Grau is often affiliated with other well-known Colombian modernists, including Alejandro Obregón, Édgar Negret, Fernando Botero, Guillermo Wiedemann, and Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar. Along with Grau, the latter three artists represent the Colombian avant-garde in this exhibition. Despite being an autodidactic painter, and therefore did not train at the School of Fine Arts in Bogotá, Grau notably won an Honorable Mention award at the First Annual Salon of Colombian Artists in 1940. This early acclaim garnered him a government scholarship that allowed him to study at the Art Students League in New York between 1941 and 1943. Four years after his return to Bogotá, Grau became a professor of art at the National University of Colombia, a position he held until 1954.

Grau painted Portrait of a Woman one year later, when he left Colombia for Italy. In terms of iconography, it is apparent that Grau’s work shares certain stylistic affinities with portraits produced by Pablo Picasso in the mid-1950s, as both artists were independently exploring a post-cubist visual language at this time. Portrait of a Woman is a recent gift to the Lowe Art Museum and importantly makes its public debut as part of the Pan American Modernism exhibition.

N. T.
Throughout his career, Wifredo Lam often infused various artistic genres and styles, such as surrealism, cubism, and automatism, along with traditional African and Oceanic motifs, in an effort to revive the Afro-Cuban culture in his native country. Lam began his studies in Havana at the Escuela de Bellas Artes and later at the studio of Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor in Madrid, Spain, before moving to Paris to work alongside Pablo Picasso and French Surrealists in the 1930s. He returned to Havana in 1941 where his Afro-Cuban heritage served as his main inspiration, seeking to synthesize Cuba’s indigenous culture with a sense of European modernism.

In this drawing, Lam presents the viewer with an image of a nude woman, perhaps Venus (the ancient Greek goddess of love, beauty, and procreation) at her toilette. When Lam’s female muse gazes into her mirror, her reflection surprisingly reveals an image of Lam’s ‘femme cheval,’ or “horse-headed woman,” or alternatively, Yemalla, the Santería goddess of the ocean, moon, and magic. Symbolically, Yemalla is characterized by her long flowing hair (representing the ocean), a mirror (representing her vanity), and the belief that mortals could not look upon her directly. Lam’s drawing recalls divination images drawn by Santería priests and priestesses during their Afro-Cuban rituals, as well as the Western artistic interest in African masks, as seen in Man Ray’s photograph Noire et blanche (Black and White, cat. no. 8).

C. D. & N. T.
LOLA ÁLVAREZ BRAVO
b. 1907, Lagos de Moreno, Jalisco, Mexico
d. 1993, Mexico City, Mexico

_Frida Kahlo Looking in Mirror with Two Hairless Dogs_, ca. 1944
gelatin silver print
8 7⁄8 x 4 ¼ in. (22.5 x 10.8 cm)
Museum purchase, 2007.22.1
© 2013 Center for Creative Photography, The University of Arizona Foundation / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

This image of the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo was taken by her friend and photographer Lola Álvarez Bravo, who, at this time, was the ex-wife of Manuel Álvarez Bravo. In this image, Kahlo’s back is turned toward the viewer, so that her face (and identity) is shown only in the mirror’s reflection. Given that Álvarez Bravo took this photograph five years after Kahlo’s divorce from Diego Rivera, her reflection may be intended to present the (male) viewer with an indirect vision of the “feminized,” yet autonomous, female artist, who is nevertheless dressed in a black and white traditional dress.

The stone sculpture that is partially visible, yet present in the lower left side of the composition, is seemingly included to visually and symbolically connect Kahlo (and perhaps even Álvarez Bravo) to a bygone, yet culturally-relevant, pre-Columbian heritage. Álvarez Bravo and Kahlo maintained a close personal and professional relationship throughout the 1940s and 1950s, as Álvarez Bravo, who served as the director of photography at the National Institute of Fine Arts and Literature while at the same time owned her own gallery, was the first art dealer to exhibit Kahlo’s work in Mexico City.

K. H. & N. T.
In this canonical surrealist photograph by the U.S. artist Man Ray, Kiki of Montparnasse, who was a well-known Parisian model, as well as Man Ray’s lover, holds an African mask. The image was first published in the May 1926 issue of Vogue magazine. By juxtaposing Kiki’s face with that of the African mask, Man Ray alludes to the concept of primitivism as a modernist theme. The woman’s face shows a certain level of sophistication, which is visible through her makeup, her very thin eyebrows, as well as her neatly coiffed hair. Here, the African mask is elevated to the same level of sophistication as the woman, given that it is positioned on the same visual plane as her head, and yet the mask (in its vertical position) ostensibly serves as a surrogate human subject, while Kiki’s face is relegated to the role of artistic object.

In terms of hierarchy, this trope may suggest that the African mask is privileged above the European figure, and yet Kiki is holding the mask, perhaps an allusion to the European/colonialist control of the primitive. The viewer is left to question whether or not she (Kiki) is attempting to hide behind the mask – perhaps as a social commentary on race – or whether this dichotomy is meant to highlight the belief that “primitive” non-European bodies were seen as the new form of beauty in early twentieth-century art.

A. M. & N. T.
Although he was initially trained as an academic oil painter at the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana in the late 1930s, the Cuban modern artist José Mijares later worked in various styles and media throughout his artistic career. This brilliantly colored composition is a prime example of Mijares’ more figurative paintings of the 1940s and 1950s, which often took female portraits as their subject. This untitled work is further indicative of his preference for using strong lines to create form, and – as was the case with many of his Cuban contemporaries working in the 1940s – presents the viewer with a mixture of stylistic elements, ranging from constructivism, surrealism, and cubism.

Considered an important figure in the Cuban avant-garde movement, Mijares blended traditional colonial iconographies with modernist elements. Most striking about the present painting is Mijares’ use of intense blues and greens, which are reminiscent of the various stained glass windows that dominate Cuba’s colonial architecture. As in many of his pieces, Mijares incorporates the Cuban landscape – in this instance, a Havana street scene – as the setting for his female muse.

N. V. D. & N. T.
RAFAEL SORIANO
b. 1920, Cidra, Matanzas, Cuba
Lives and works in Miami, Florida

_Mujer_ (Woman), 1941
oil on canvas
9 3⁄4 x 7 3⁄4 in. (24.8 x 19.7 cm)
Donation from the Cuban Museum of the Americas, Bequest of the Rafael Casalins Estate, 99.0009.025
© 1941 Rafael Soriano

This early painting by the Cuban-born U.S. artist Rafael Soriano was finished while he was still a student at the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana, Cuba. Soriano is part of the third generation of Cuban modernists, and later became affiliated with geometric abstraction and the concrete art movement. _Mujer_ represents Soriano’s exploration of figuration alongside geometric abstraction, as seen through his use of basic geometric shapes, such as the circle, to represent the woman’s face.

Soriano’s work is also known for its use of Oneiric Luminism, a term coined by Ricardo Pau-Llosa to describe the use of “light as a symbol” and a “vehicle for tropological expression” in Soriano’s paintings. In this work, the viewer can observe the visual tension that exists between light and dark on the subject’s visage. Although Soriano’s style is generally believed to break with regional or folkloric Cuban themes, the iconography and style of _Mujer_ is seemingly in dialogue with Victor Manuel’s portraits of tropical “gypsies,” as represented in this exhibition by Manuel’s 1955 ink drawing of a young woman (cat. no. 11). Soriano had met Manuel during his studies in Havana, and was purportedly drawn to the older artist’s style and ideas.

A. M., N. R. & N. T.
This drawing, created by the Cuban modernist Victor Manuel, blends European and Latin American avant-gardist elements into a single work. Manuel’s subject is depicted in lush tropical vegetation, drawing an allusion to the verdant Cuban landscape. The central figure closely resembles Manuel’s most popular work *La gitana tropical* (The Tropical Gypsy, 1929) in its style, composition, and subject matter. The composition – a portrait of an anonymous female sitter – is equally reminiscent of European portraiture; yet Manuel’s “gypsy” girl offers a more modernized take on historical portraits like Leonardo da Vinci’s *Mona Lisa* (ca. 1503-1506). In Manuel’s drawing, as in the *Mona Lisa*, the subject’s penetrative stare reinforces her presence within the composition, while simultaneously acknowledging her viewer’s gaze. Interestingly, this particular figure type is often referred to as “la Giaconda americana,” or the “American Mona Lisa.”

G. S. C. & N. T.
Unlike most of his contemporaries, the Cuban artist René Portocarrero remained in his native country following the Cuban Revolution of 1959. Although Portocarrero initially trained at the Academy of San Alejandro in the late 1920s, he soon abandoned his formal education in order to pursue a career outside the traditions of the institution. Accordingly, Portocarrero, along with Wifredo Lam and Amelia Peláez, is considered a key figure in the development of the Cuban vanguardia. Most of Portocarrero’s work primarily deals with Cuba, focusing on the native landscape, culture, and people.

The whimsical nature of this untitled drawing – which depicts a female sitter with an elongated neck, wearing a headdress of leafy foliage – is characteristic of the artist’s method of portraying his subjects in a theatrical, stylized manner. In terms of symbolism, the present drawing thus subsists a fantastical representation of a Cuban woman, as well as a metaphorical representation of Cuba’s tropical landscape and vibrant culture.

*N. V. D. & N. T.*
Having entered the Academy of San Alejandro in Havana in 1916 as a rather non-traditional student (she was 20 at the time), Amelia Peláez eventually emerged as one of Cuba’s most significant artists of the early twentieth century. In 1927, Peláez left Cuba to study painting in Paris, where she became acquainted with cubism and the works of Pablo Picasso, whose heavily outlined, flat organic shapes she greatly admired. When Peláez returned to Cuba in 1934, her style had matured and her signature trait of placing thick black outlines around her cubistic figures distinguished her paintings from those being produced by other Cuban avant-garde artists working in the 1930s (see, for example, Eduardo Abela’s Mujer; cat. no. 2).

The use of her signature black outlines can be seen in this late untitled painting, executed just five years before her death in 1968. In terms of iconography, she dedicated most of her oeuvre to modernist representations of iron balconies, gates, and stained glass windows that she observed in colonial and bourgeois Cuban architecture. This particular piece presumably features a woman in a long dress seated on a highly ornate armchair that has been placed on a skewed red carpet (note the contrasting use of aerial perspective), or which alternatively stands before a vertical red door or stained-glass window.
WIFREDO LAM
b. 1902, Sagua la Grande, Cuba
d. 1982, Paris, France

Untitled, 1950
watercolor on paper
9 ⅜ x 11 ⅞ in. (24.4 x 28.9 cm)
Gift of Martha Frayde Barraqué Collection of Hispanic Art and Culture, 2007.9.3
© 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris

Wifredo Lam’s oeuvre is often understood as a combination of disparate, artistic elements drawn from European, African, Afro-Cuban, and American cultures. Some of his work can be categorized as surrealist; and at times, can be seen to intertwine cubist elements with surrealist subject matter. Lam spent the majority of his artistic career in Europe, studying in the 1930s alongside Pablo Picasso, and befriending Parisian Surrealists, such as André Breton. Between 1940 and 1941, Lam provided illustrations for Breton’s surrealist poem *Fata Morgana*, which presented readers with Lam’s popular motif of the *femme cheval* (or “horse-headed woman”) for the first time.

Following his return to Cuba in 1941, Lam produced his best-known work, a painting titled *La jungla* (The Jungle, 1943), which presents the viewer with a densely-populated tropical scene, replete with hybrid figures that recall iconographies found in Afro-Cuban or Oceanic sculptural works. Elements from *La jungla* can be seen in a number of Lam’s paintings from the 1940s and 1950s, including this small watercolor, which quizzically depicts a “deflated” female body draped in the mouth of a monstrous creature. Alternatively, features associated with the *femme cheval* can be seen in Lam’s 1943 untitled drawing included in this exhibition (cat. no. 6).

F. Y. & N. T.
ROBERTO DIAGO  
b. 1920, Havana, Cuba  
d. 1955, Madrid, Spain  

Untitled, 1947  
ink, watercolor and colored pencil on paper  
13 1/2 x 10 1/8 in. (34.3 x 25.7 cm)  
Donation from the Cuban Museum of the Americas,  
Bequest of the Rafael Casalins Estate, 99.0009.010  
© 1947 Roberto Diago  

Roberto Juan Diago was an Afro-Cuban artist who, like many  
Cuban painters of the early twentieth century, received his  
formal training at Havana's Academy of San Alejandro. By the  
late 1930s, Diago had become a prominent member of the  
Free Studio of Painting and Sculpture, and is often credited with  
revitalizing engraving into the Cuban art scene. According to art  
historian Sara Cooper, Diago’s oeuvre can be seen to illustrate  
“obvious pride in his Blackness,” yet as an artist, he tended to  
emphasize “race-based controversy” in his native Cuba.  

This idea resonates in Diago’s untitled watercolor of 1947. The  
stark contrast between white and black/positive and negative  
space in the image recalls the iconography of a silhouette,  
which in turn, ostensibly symbolizes the tension Diago may  
have observed between white and black races in Cuba. What  
is more, the central figure appears to have transformed into  
an anthropomorphized Santería figurine that is strained, yet  
sonorously elegant in its arabesque pose. Jarring spikes – scissor-  
like in appearance – surround the figure's distorted body, yet  
there is nevertheless a morphed sense of unity in Diago’s work.  

A. J. M. & N. T.
In viewing Guillermo Wiedemann’s *Untitled (Figure at Carnival)*, one notices that the artist constructs an expressionistic portrait of an Afro-Colombian woman dressed in a brightly colored Carnival costume. The figure’s long, thin body appears slightly disproportionate, particularly the hands and forearms. Her small, downcast eyes, large nose, red lips, and unrealistic bluish-grey skin tone give the sitter an almost caricature-like quality.

In terms of style and iconography, the piece is seemingly a modern interpretation of Old Master portrait types, such as...
Rogier van der Weyden’s Portrait of a Lady (ca. 1460). Unlike van der Weyden’s Renaissance panel painting – which idealized the female form, while calling attention to her piety, via her downcast gaze – Wiedemann’s watercolor piece highlights the anti-classical, non-European black body. Given his training at the Akademie der Kunst in Munich, Germany in the 1920s, one is left to wonder whether or not Wiedemann is deliberately drawing a visual allusion to Weyden’s fifteenth-century exploration of ideal female beauty. Having immigrated to Colombia in 1939, it is likely that this “studio” portrait was drawn from first-hand observation of a black Colombian woman attending the festivities of the 1948 carnival season.

Y. M. & N. T.
The German-born Colombian artist Guillermo Wiedemann executed this ink drawing of a female torso in a manner that recalls the visual language of cubism and German expressionism. The artist was reportedly mesmerized by the surroundings of his newly adopted country, and was particularly intrigued by the customs of the indigenous Colombian population. The woman is depicted carrying a basket on her head, while her nude left breast is exposed. The use of ink allows the artist to explore delicate lines and traces, though there is no definitive outline to the figure, which presents a hurried, yet expressive style to the piece.

S. F. & N. T.
GUILLERMO WIEDEMANN
b. 1905, Munich, Germany
Lived and worked in Bogotá, Colombia
d. 1969, Key Biscayne, Florida

Untitled (Surreal Woman), 1960s
watercolor on paper
25 ¼ x 22 ⅛ in. (64.8 x 56.2 cm)
Bequest of Cristina Wiedemann, 91.0476.26

During his early studies at the Akademie der Kunst in Munich, Guillermo Wiedemann trained under the well-known Bavarian portraitist Hugo von Habermann, whose genre of painting left a lasting impression on Wiedemann. Following his formal training, he moved to Berlin in 1936, and, like other modern artists working in Germany during this period, fell victim to National Socialism’s persecution of so-called “degenerate art.” In 1939 he immigrated to South America, arriving first in Buenaventura, Colombia, and later Bogotá. He immediately began painting, drawing inspiration from the tropical environment and exhibiting a strong preference for Afro-Colombian themes. He was particularly intrigued by the native Colombian inhabitants and subsequently painted this work in a cubist/surrealist style, filling the heavily outlined figure with bold colors.

D. D. & N. T.
MEXICAN MURALISM AND ITS LEGACY

Twentieth-century modern art in Mexico was largely, though not uniformly, a response to the Mexican Revolution, which gripped the country between 1910 and 1920. In 1921, the government began to fund public art projects – namely murals – as a means of building a strong sense of nationalism among the people by reinforcing the importance of Mexican and Mesoamerican identity and cultural history through art. Populist artists working in post-revolution era Mexico, such as José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, soon became known as “the big three” painters within the Mexican mural movement, a widespread, though loosely-defined art movement that was strongest from the 1920s through the 1950s.

Other Mexican artists such as José Luis Cuevas and Rufino Tamayo principally rejected the nationalistic overtones and the social realist style of Mexican muralism. Together, Cuevas' and Tamayo's respective works offer a “counterpoint” to the dominance of muralism within the history of Mexican modernism. Unlike Cuevas and Tamayo, however, U.S. artists Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, and Ben Shahn (who assisted Rivera in New York during the 1930s) each separately expressed their interest in Mexican muralism, and admired the possibility for social reform through this form of art.
Manuel Álvarez Bravo, who was born in Mexico City in 1902, came from a family of painters and photographers, as both his father and grandfather were artists. This notwithstanding, he initially studied accounting and worked in the Mexican Treasury Department until 1918, when he formally entered the Academy of San Carlos to study art. He did not, however, take photography classes at the Academy, which means he was largely self-taught in this particular medium. He was well acquainted with several artists, collectors, and connoisseurs throughout his lifetime, including André Breton, Diego Rivera, Frida Kahlo, Tina Modotti, Lola Álvarez Bravo, Henri Cartier-Bresson, and Edward Weston, who encouraged Álvarez Bravo in the 1920s to continue to explore photography as an artistic career.

The present work, easily one of Álvarez Bravo’s most canonical photographs, was shot during a trip to Tehuantepec, Mexico, where a worker was killed during a protest. In many ways, this image brings material form to the social interests explored by artists working in post-revolution Mexico, including the Mexican muralists. Within the pages of this catalogue, Heather Diack provides further analysis of this image in her essay “Body of Evidence: The Modernisms of Manuel Álvarez Bravo.”

F. V. & N. T.
This highly expressive etching by the social realist Mexican artist José Clemente Orozco, is based on his earlier mural Prometheus (1930) at Pomona College. According to ancient Greek mythology, Prometheus was a Titan who was eternally punished for stealing fire from the gods to give to mankind. In the early twentieth century, he became a heroic symbol of the communist and socialist movements. This work reflects Orozco’s classical training at the Academy of San Carlos in Mexico City, both in its academic subject matter and its European artistic conventions. The aggressive lines and strong tonal contrasts, both signature traits of Orozco’s style, translate well into the medium of etching.

H. A. & N. T.
DIEGO RIVERA  
b. 1886, Guanajuato, Mexico  
d. 1957, Mexico City, Mexico  

Untitled, 1940s  
ink on paper  
5 x 7 7/8 in. (12.7 x 19.4 cm)  
Gift of Kenneth and Helyne Treister, 94.0037.02  
© 2013 Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

This untitled drawing, presumably a preparatory sketch for a larger painting, depicts an industrial or agricultural building, perhaps a factory, mill or barn, set within a bucolic landscape. In this work, the Mexican artist Diego Rivera contrasts the trunks of the trees with the tall structure of the factory’s chimney, a reminder of Mexico’s industrial advancements in the early twentieth century. The impact of mankind is therefore juxtaposed with a natural, peaceful environment.

Rivera’s European artistic education is evident in the geometric, almost cubist structure of the drawing, and seemingly recalls images of pollard trees painted by Vincent van Gogh in the late nineteenth century. One wonders, however, if these trees are instead meant to represent native Mexican cacti. According to Dawn Ades, it is nevertheless clear that Rivera celebrated rural Mexico as “vital and picturesque rather than backward and poverty-stricken.”

H. A. & N. T.
Ben Shahn was a Lithuanian-born U.S. artist who was best known for his social realist artworks. Embracing the style of U.S. social realism, Shahn often depicted important social themes and figures of the period. In New York in the 1930s, Shahn was affiliated with such artists as Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Diego Rivera, who Shahn assisted in 1933 with his infamous Rockefeller Center mural *Man at the Crossroads* (1932-1934).

In this image, Shahn represents the art publisher Monroe Wheeler who, starting in 1935, was an integral (and influential) figure at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In this portrait of Wheeler, the sitter appears to be pensive and deep in thought. His expressive facial features, with his crinkled forehead, ostensibly reinforce his persona as a prominent intellectual figure in the art world.

*S. F. & N. T.*
DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS  
b. 1896, Chihuahua, Mexico  
d. 1974, Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico  

Jesus from The Mexican Suite, 1968  
lithograph  
21 1/4 x 15 1/4 in. (54 x 40 cm)  
Gift of Mrs. Benjamin Kresberg, 78.024.016  
© 2013 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SOMAAP, Mexico City  

This piece comes from a series of lithographs created in the 1960s by the well-known Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros. Here, the artist depicts an emotional portrayal of the suffering Christ, perhaps reflecting the spiritual ideals conveyed in his Catholic upbringing. The dripping ink in the lithograph recalls blood and tears pouring down Christ's face, a human expression of his pain and sorrow, while the dark contours of the body serve to further emphasize the intensity of his anguish. The angular, geometric features of Christ's face and closed eyes appear to be inspired by “primitive” masks, perhaps illustrating a link between Spanish Catholicism and indigenous (pre-Columbian) Mexican motifs.

H. A. & N. T.
Carlos Mérida, a Guatemalan artist of Mayan-Quiché descent, is best remembered as a muralist and printmaker. In 1912, he traveled to Europe to study painting and was acquainted with individuals like Pablo Picasso and Amedeo Modigliani. He returned to Guatemala in 1914, but settled in Mexico in 1919, where he became active in the Mexican mural movement. Throughout the 1920s, Mérida worked alongside Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros on a number of government-sponsored projects. Like most of the Mexican muralists, Mérida’s early work was politically oriented and executed in a figurative, social realist style. After 1927, when Mérida took a second trip to Europe, his art became less representational and eventually developed into his characteristic abstract style of geometric forms, which are present in *Abstract with Three Figures*.

In this work, Mérida blended sand into his oil paint, perhaps as a nod to European primitivism – as this practice is similar to Pablo Picasso’s use of sand in paintings from the 1930s, as well as Jean Dubuffet’s combination of materials in his *art brut* works – or as reference to organic materials utilized by Mérida’s pre-Columbian/Mayan ancestors. Mérida equally draws upon the principles of the cubist grid, which are emphasized by the deconstructed geometric forms that visually synthesize into three humanoid figures within the composition.

*Abstract with Three Figures*, 1961
oil, sand and pencil on wood
28 ¾ x 35 in. (72.1 x 88.9 cm)
Gift of ExxonMobil Corporation, 2006.28.1

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*F. V. & N. T.*
The African-American artist Romare Bearden is perhaps best known for his collage works of the 1960s. Having studied at the Art Students League in New York in the late 1930s under the German expatriate artist George Grosz, Bearden also became interested in the Mexican muralists, particularly Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, whose social realist style he admired for its exploration of race and class. Following a period of abstraction in the 1950s, Bearden turned to the medium of collage in the 1960s during the height of the civil rights movement in the United States, and thus created a body of work that almost uniformly promotes a positivistic view of African American progress.

In The Family, Bearden offers a bold, brightly colored portrait of a black American family preparing a meal. Their style of dress indicates that they are probably Southern sharecroppers. The image thus tells a story of racial and artistic gazes: in 1776 they were gazed upon as inferior individuals, but in 1976, they dare to gaze back at their (white) viewers, presumably as an act of empowerment.

Y. M. & N. T.
Jacob Lawrence was an African-American artist whose work often dealt with the history of black emigrants in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century. He is perhaps best known for his Migration series, a collection of sixty paintings created between 1940 and 1942 that depict the African-American “Great Migration” from the southern United States to the North. Having described his personal style as Dynamic Cubism, Lawrence sought to convey emotion through his use of rich colors, moving iconographies, and bold compositions. His early interest in the social realism of the Mexican muralists, including works by Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, which he saw in New York in the 1930s, is equally evident in this image celebrating social activism. Confrontation at the Bridge – an image that visually resembles work from the Migration series – depicts a group of civil rights activists who marched from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery in 1965. Here, Lawrence’s use of color is able to evoke feelings of unsettlement and danger, or even fear of what lies ahead.

F. Y. & N. T.
The Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo is often associated with the Mexican mural movement of the 1920s and 1930s, though unlike fellow artists Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros – who were interested in forging a new Mexican identity through art and political activism – Tamayo contrastingly explored the balance between pre-Columbian and European-inspired iconographies. Strongly stirred by prehistoric artifacts, his paintings are generally devoid of the pro-revolutionary stance adopted by the other Mexican muralists. As a result of his “outsider” status, Tamayo left Mexico for New York City in 1926. In Tamayo’s Dos cabezas, the artist emulates prehistoric painting and sculpture with the use of simplified, geometric figuration. This work comes from a series titled Las mujeres, in which Tamayo explores the female Mexican identity, blending notions of the Nahua people with cubistic, or even surrealist, formulations of the female body.
U.S. photographer Arnold Newman was considered the father of environmental portraiture, wherein the subject is photographed in a setting that reveals something about the sitter’s persona or profession. In this portrait, Newman depicts the Mexican artist Rufino Tamayo seated on a wooden bench, with his arms crossed and a noticeable scowl on his face as he stares into the camera lens, and thus directly at the viewer. During the 1940s, Tamayo was an instructor at The Dalton School in New York and taught art to various young rising artists, including Helen Frankenthaler. Given Tamayo’s pose in Newman’s photograph, one wonders if we are viewing the authoritative teacher, the political activist, the Mexican modernist, or a combination of these personas. Tamayo, who left Mexico for New York in 1926 due to his anti-revolutionary views, remained in New York until 1949. As such, Newman captured this image during the artist’s final year in New York, before Tamayo and his wife Olga left for Paris.

Y. M. & N. T.
Largely active in Mexico City in the 1950s and 1960s, José Luis Cuevas was a leading member of the Generación de la Ruptura (Rupture Generation) of Mexican painters who sought to distance their work from the politically charged social realism of the previous generation of Mexican muralists. In Cuevas’ Mujer, the artist depicts what appears to be a frightened woman. The subject’s face shows signs of fear, confusion, and anguish: themes and feelings that Cuevas is known for depicting, and alluding to, in his work. The fact that her arms are lifted in the air above her head likewise seems to suggest that she is caught in a moment of surrender. Perhaps she is conceding to chaos, mental turmoil, or to the viewer. Cuevas’ use of bold outlining adds to the emotionally charged state of the woman.
ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM AND ITS LEGACY: A PAN AMERICAN LANGUAGE?

It is commonly taught that a shift in power occurred at the close of World War II that displaced Paris as the center of the modern art world, transferring this control instead to New York City. This paradigm shift was consequently seen to solidify the nascent style of abstract expressionism as the first significant “American” art movement to gain international acclaim. Accordingly, the historiography of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism would have us believe that this style was chiefly born in the United States, and then transferred, disseminated, and imitated elsewhere.

Rather than perpetuating a U.S.-centric narrative of abstract expressionism, this module proposes that this style and its legacy (including color field painting) might instead be viewed as a Pan American language that developed through artistic dialogues between Pan American artists, or within independent schools that formed in the 1940s through the 1970s in the Americas. It is known, for example, that European expressionism and surrealism played a significant role in the New York School’s initial exploration of abstraction, though it is less well known that works by the Chilean artist Roberto Matta had a profound effect on the early development of these New York-based artists.

Artists associated with the New York School (such as Adolph Gottlieb, Lee Krasner, Knox Martin, and Robert Motherwell), are therefore juxtaposed alongside their contemporaries from Latin America, such as Matta, the Cuban Los Once artists, and the Puerto Rican abstractionists Olga Albizu and Luis Hernández Cruz. Paintings by lesser-known modernists, like Rodolfo Abularach and Silvio Miranda, are joined by other abstract works created by artists throughout the Americas.

Individuals who openly (though sometimes inconspicuously) rejected abstract expressionism and color field painting in favor of neo-figuration are equally included in this module as stylistic “counterpoints” to abstraction. Pieces by Fernando Botero, Ernesto Deira, Sacha Tebó, and Enrique Castro-Cid are subsequently offered here as “counter” abstract paintings.
ADOLPH GOTTLIEB
b. 1903, New York, New York
d. 1974, New York, New York

New York Night Scene, 1947
oil and sand on fiberboard
17 3⁄8 x 13 3⁄8 in. (44.1 x 34 cm)
Museum purchase through funds from Friends of Contemporary Art, 50.007.000
Art © The Adolph and Esther Gottlieb Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Although Adolph Gottlieb is largely remembered as a U.S. Abstract Expressionist affiliated with the New York School, he was initially part of an earlier modern art group called “The Ten” (also known as The Whitney Dissenters), who, in the mid to late 1930s, exhibited their “non-literal” paintings in New York and Paris. During his early training in the 1920s, Gottlieb studied at such places as the Art Students League, Parsons School of Design, and Cooper Union — all in New York — as well as at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris.

While his works from the 1930s were largely surrealist in terms of iconography and content, paintings from the 1940s, such as New York Night Scene, are characterized by Gottlieb’s interest in pictographs and their symbolic meanings. Gottlieb’s use of pictoforms is akin to Joaquín Torres-García’s exploration of Constructive Universalism in the 1930s and 1940s, which sought to convey a universal visual language through the use of traditional, indigenous symbols that pervaded the Americas prior to European expansionism. In this piece, Gottlieb seemingly captures the hectic nature of the urban setting, but through archetypal, totem-like signs set within a compartmentalized grid composition. In this regard, a dichotomy exists between the title, which implies a modern cityscape, and the work’s iconography, which may reflect Gottlieb’s interest in non-Euro-American art.

R. S. & N. T.
Raúl Milián was a self-taught Cuban abstract expressionist artist who did not begin painting until the age of 40. Although he was a prominent member of the Cuban modern art group Los Once (The Eleven) – which tended to favor oil on canvas painting – Milián preferred to work with mixed media, such as watercolor, gouache, and ink on paper or cardboard. His abstract paintings evoke a sense of turmoil, suggesting that the viewer is encountering a fractured or fragmented world within his compositions. The use of earth tones and black heavy outlines in this untitled drawing is seemingly in dialogue with works by various New York School artists, such as Adolph Gottlieb, Knox Martin, or Robert Motherwell (see cat. nos. 30, 37 & 45), yet nonetheless diverges from these U.S. articulations of abstract expressionism.

A. S. & N. T.
The Cuban-born artist Hugo Consuegra was a multi-faceted individual who worked as an architect, graphic designer, painter, and engraver. He was a prominent member of the modern Cuban art group Los Once (The Eleven), which was a group of painters known for their abstract expressionist compositions and subversive, political ideals. Consuegra, in particular, was known for his rustic, muddy, and dark tonal ranges. Entrada en la tierra is a prime example of this signature color palette. Consuegra later became a founding member of Los Once’s successive group, Los Cinco (The Five), before immigrating to New York City in 1970.

S. I. & N. T.
Antonio Vidal was a prominent member of the Cuban abstract expressionist groups Los Once (The Eleven) and Los Cinco (The Five), as well as a founder of TEG, or Taller Experimental de Gráfica (Experimental Graphic Studio), in Havana. Organized in the 1960s, the TEG served as the official union for Cuban writers and artists. Most likely executed prior to the formation of the TEG, Sagua de Tánamo, named after a city in Cuba’s Holguín province, exemplifies common elements of Vidal’s “adventurous” abstractions such as lively colors and painterly brushwork. Totem-like figures, such as the one located on the right side of the composition, appear quite frequently in Vidal’s work from the 1950s, and can equally be found in paintings by other Los Cinco artists, such as Hugo Consuegra (see cat. no. 32), as well as earlier Cuban modernists, such as Wifredo Lam, or New York Abstract Expressionists, like Adolph Gottlieb (see cat. nos. 14 & 30).
HANS HOFMANN
b. 1880, Weissenburg, Bavaria, Germany
d. 1966, New York, New York

Nightfall, 1958
oil on composition board
14 3/4 x 17 1/8 in. (36.5 x 44.1 cm)
Museum purchase through funds from
Mary Patterson Nats and Evelyn Waggener Jones, 90.0027
© 2013 Renate, Hans & Maria Hofmann Trust /
Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The German-born U.S. painter Hans Hofmann was a prominent artist-teacher who played a significant role in establishing postwar abstract art (namely “pure painting” and abstract expressionism) in New York from the 1930s through the 1960s. After immigrating to the United States in 1932, Hofmann began teaching at the Art Students League in New York, but left soon thereafter in order to start his own art school. A number of well-known Abstract Expressionists and post-painterly abstract painters, including Helen Frankenthaler, Red Grooms, Lee Krasner (see cat. no. 38), Louise Nevelson, Larry Rivers, and Frank Stella (see cat. no. 67) all initially studied under Hofmann.

The artist’s signature “push and pull” technique is clearly visible in Nightfall, which reveals Hofmann’s interest in impasto, or the building up of thick, noticeable layers of paint on the surface of the composition board. In terms of abstract expressionist works included in Pan American Modernism, Hofmann’s piece compares favorably to canvases by Olga Albizu and Luis Hernández Cruz (see cat. nos. 35 & 36), as well as Knox Martin’s untitled work of 1962 (cat. no. 37).

N. T.
The Puerto Rican artist Olga Albizu is best known as a color field abstract expressionist painter, who formally studied at the University of Puerto Rico before traveling to New York City in 1948 to complete her post-baccalaureate work at the Art Students League. After traveling throughout France and Italy in the late 1940s and early 1950s, she returned to New York, where she spent the majority of her artistic career. Albizu’s paintings typically feature harsh brushstrokes using the spatula, which allowed her to layer multiple colors of paint over monochromatic backgrounds. *Crecimiento* features bright yellows and oranges, which contrast with deep blacks in order to evoke a sense of light emerging from darkness, or a modernized re-conceptualization of chiaroscuro effects utilized by Old Master painters to create volume and form in a painting.

A. S. & N. T.
Along with Olga Albizu, Luis Hernández Cruz is a prominent Puerto Rican abstract painter whose career spans five decades. His paintings from the 1960s are characterized by elements typical for the Puerto Rican school of abstraction: bright colors, painterly brushstrokes, and richly textured surfaces. In Subsuelo, Hernández Cruz divided the canvas into two registers: the top third of the canvas is largely occupied by rich black tones, while the lower two thirds of the composition consists of a myriad of brighter patches of color. In this regard, the artist may have intended his viewers to visually read the bottom portion of the painting as the titular subsoil, leaving the upper register to symbolize a cross-section of topsoil, or the darkened earth.

A.S. & N.T.
KNOX MARTIN  

b. 1923, Barranquilla, Colombia  
Lives and works in New York, New York  

Untitled, 1962  
acrylic, enamel, ink, pencil and collage on paper  
12 1/4 x 9 in. (30.8 x 22.9 cm)  
Gift of Rose Fried Gallery, 65.022.000  
Art © Knox Martin/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY  

Born in Barranquilla, Colombia to an American father and a Colombian mother, Knox Martin emerged as a prominent abstract expressionist artist affiliated with the New York School in the 1950s and 1960s. Having moved with his family to the United States in the 1920s, Martin later studied at New York’s Art Students League from 1946 until 1950, and eventually worked alongside other Abstract Expressionists, such as Franz Kline. Best known for his symbolic and semiotic representations of natural forms, Martin expresses this artistic interest in this untitled painting. This seemingly complex collage offers the viewer a variety of colors and media through organic shapes and lines.

S. I. & N. T.
Along with Helen Frankenthaler, Lee Krasner was one of the few female artists associated with the male-dominated New York School of Abstract Expressionism in the 1940s and 1950s. Like many of her male colleagues, she initially trained at the Art Students League, Cooper Union (through its Women’s Art School) and later at the National Academy of Design. Krasner specifically studied abstract expressionist painting with Hans Hofmann (see cat. no. 34), who also exposed her to cubist works by Pablo Picasso, and fauvist paintings by Henri Matisse. Under Hofmann’s guidance, Krasner began to work in an “all-over” style, covering the surfaces of her paintings with abstract, repetitive designs informed by floral motifs. It was this “all-over” technique that later inspired her husband, Jackson Pollock, to abandon cubism and develop his famous “drip” paintings.

Unlike Pollock, who had studied with David Alfaro Siqueiros at the artist’s Experimental Workshop in New York in 1936, and was inspired by the Mexican muralists, Krasner remained tied to the “Paris School of Painting,” which, according to Krasner, was exemplified in the works of Picasso and Matisse. Like Matisse’s gouaches découpés (painted paper cut outs, or collages) from the 1950s, Krasner used a color palette representative of nature: green, blue, and white in Free Space, which collectively evoke the land, ocean, and sky. The expressive arabesques repeated throughout the composition give the work a feeling of rhythm, movement, and dynamism – elements that characterize Krasner’s unique style.

*F. V. & N. T.*
CARLOS ALFONZO  
b. 1950, Havana, Cuba  
d. 1991, Miami, Florida  

*Te pinto mi amor sincero* (I Paint You My Most Sincere Love), 1978  
gouache on paper  
21 3⁄4 x 17 1⁄4 in. (55.2 x 43.8 cm)  
Museum purchase, 2000.014  

Executed in 1978 by the Cuban-born U.S. artist Carlos Alfonzo, this work was completed just two years prior to the artist emigrating from Havana to Miami during the Mariel boatlift of 1980. *Te pinto mi amor sincero* thus represents an emotional – and perhaps even violent – inner monologue between his sexual orientation and issues surrounding his political exile, given that Alfonzo was a gay man whose sexuality had been repressed under Fidel Castro’s communist regime. A sense of isolation and despair are therefore felt for his “amor sincero,” his sincere love.

Prior to moving to the United States, Alfonzo studied at Havana’s Academy of San Alejandro in the early 1970s. He concealed his homosexuality in Cuba, but lived as an openly gay man once he settled in Miami, where he resided until 1991 before dying of AIDS-related complications. His art, which collectively tended to adopt the language of abstract expressionism, is typically seen to express his sense of alienation and despair. A feeling of claustrophobia or confinement can equally be felt in the consolidated nature of forms in *Te pinto mi amor sincero*.

*F. V. & N. T.*
Rodolfo Abularach, a Guatemalan artist of Palestinian descent, is a painter and printmaker whose works exhibit an interest in both abstraction and figuration. Recognized as one of Central America’s most distinguished contemporary artists, he graduated from the National School of Plastic Arts in Guatemala City in 1954, and later received a government grant to travel to New York, which allowed for study at the Art Students League, among other U.S. institutions. Abularach is most commonly recognized for his depictions of the human eye, which he visually references in this particular work on paper by way of the large floating orb that hovers above the semblance of rectangular form in the lower register of the composition. These “pseudo-pictographs,” whether intentional or not, recall the visual language employed by such semi-abstract artists as Adolph Gottlieb (cat. no. 30) and Joaquín Torres-García (cat. nos. 63 & 64).

G. A. & N. T.
LOLA FERNÁNDEZ
b. 1926, Cartagena, Colombia
Lives and works in San José, Costa Rica

Petróleo 4 a.m. (Petroleum 4 a.m.), 1964
oil on board
57 x 48 ¼ in. (144.8 x 122.2 cm)
Gift of Esso Inter-America, Inc., 70.024.018
© 1964 Lola Fernández

At the age of twenty-three, the Colombian-born Costa Rican artist Lola Fernández became the youngest professor of fine arts at the National University in Bogotá. She was also a member of the Grupo Ocho (Group Eight), a group of artists who introduced post-war, international styles to the contemporary art scene in Colombia in the 1960s. In Petróleo 4 a.m., the abstracted forms recall the visual language of cubism, as well as geometric abstraction, or geometric non-objectivity, and yet the dark color palette – which simultaneously creates a somber, but rich picture plane – is a decidedly unique aspect of Fernández’s structured composition.

G. A. & N. T.
Born in 1912 in Lanús, Argentina, a suburb of Buenos Aires, Vicente Forte later attended the Buenos Aires School of Fine Arts, and upon graduating, became a professor of drawing in 1935. Along with fellow artists Luis Barragán and Leopoldo Presas, Forte founded the Grupo Orión (Orion Group), a leading artistic group that embraced the second avant-garde movement, which developed in Argentina in the 1930s. This group sought to free Argentine art from the dominant academic, post-impressionist, and decorative trends favored by the Buenos Aires elite until the third decade of the twentieth century. He is known for his strong-handed brushstrokes and use of heavy impasto, as seen in Pájaro libre, where the bird is being freed from the decomposing column to which it is attached. This motif was meant to symbolize the avant-garde Argentine artists achieving freedom from the decaying academic school of thought.

D. D. & N. T.
In this symbolic and abstract painting, the Nicaraguan artist Silvio Miranda depicts a modern rendition of a recurring theme in the history of Christian art – the Holy Family – or the Virgin Mary, Joseph, and the Christ Child. Unlike traditional depictions of this motif, Miranda abstracts the figures of the Holy Family. The red, white, and pink form in the center of the composition may therefore reference a crib, or manger, and thus metaphorically represent the Christ Child. By casting the manger in a tenebristic light, Miranda may symbolically suggest that Jesus is the light brought into the darkness of this world.

_D. D. & N. T._
Roberto Matta, arguably the most well-known Chilean surrealist and abstract expressionist artist, played a major role in the foundation of the New York School, and was instrumental in promoting an interest in surrealist automatic drawing throughout the Americas in the 1940s. Like European Surrealists, Matta was interested in Sigmund Freud’s theories of psychoanalysis, which in turn, greatly inspired his own artistic conceptualization of “psychological morphology,” or the belief that the inner workings of the unconscious mind could produce meaningful forms in a work of art.

According to Freud, the primary motivator for an individual’s actions is sex. In Matta’s *SM-4*, the harsh lines used to create the abstracted figure(s) seem to provide the viewer with a sense of tension; one could argue that the image appears to be emotionally charged, perhaps insinuating a physical anxiety manifested through a battle of the sexes. From a purely iconographic perspective, Matta’s forms share affinities with the numerous Santería-inspired figures that populate Wifredo Lam’s oeuvre (see cat. no. 14), as well as the grotesque bodies that occupy paintings by the English painter Francis Bacon.
Robert Motherwell, a prominent member of the New York School of Abstract Expressionism, is said to have decided to pursue a career in painting during a 1941 voyage to Mexico with his friend and fellow artist, Roberto Matta (see cat. no. 44). Matta – whose interest in the artistic power of the psychic unconscious and automatic drawing had a profound effect on Motherwell and other New York School artists, such as Lee Krasner and Jackson Pollock – remained an important figure throughout Motherwell’s artistic career, and particularly during their time in Mexico.

Within the history of U.S. abstract expressionism, Motherwell is best known for his series *Elegy to the Spanish Republic*, which he executed between 1948 and 1967. According to the artist, the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) represented the ultimate social injustice, and works in this series were thus meant to visually serve as a lamentation of the war, but also as a forewarning of (modern) society’s potentially destructive destiny.

In his *Basque* series of 1970, Motherwell similarly utilized form and color to illicit a feeling of foreboding and unease in his viewers. In *Untitled, No. 10*, the large black chevron that dominates the composition can be seen to either recede from the vibrant green surface in the center of the work, or alternatively, invade (or swallow up) the tranquility of this green space. In each of these interpretations of Motherwell’s abstract composition, expressive forms serve as powerful metaphors for the hardships endured by the Basque people during the war in Spain. The work seems to further suggest that no matter how much time separates the events of the war from the present moment, one can nevertheless witness the bloody scars that remain as a result of this conflict.

K. M. & N. T.
The Argentine artist Ernesto Deira was a founding member of the group *Otra Figuración* (Other Figuration), which consisted of fellow Argentine artists Jorge de la Vega, Rómulo Macció, and Luis Felipe Noé. Known also as the *Nueva Figuración* (New Figuration) painters, this group sought to distance itself from purely abstract painting by incorporating figurative, or representational, elements into their works. Deira, who was almost exclusively preoccupied with the human form, ironically approached near abstraction in a number of his compositions that incorporate distorted, expressionistic figures, as witnessed in *En torno al pensamiento*.

In terms of technique, Deira applied oil paint to the canvas in grand, violent gestures, allowing the medium to drip onto, and then spread throughout, the surface of the canvas. Deira’s mode of painting recalls processes employed by U.S. abstract expressionist and color field painters, such as Helen Frankenthaler’s “soak stain” technique, and Jackson Pollock’s “drip” paintings, yet ostensibly marries these techniques, along with semblances of the human body, in order to arrive at the style of Other Figuration. In this particular painting, Deira’s subjects are three human figures who are arguably deep in thought, as implied by the title. The ambiguity of these subjects seemingly mirrors Deira’s chaotic artistic process, and may also imply the confusion of modern thought.

*N. R. & N. T.*
SACHA TEBÓ

b. 1934, Port-au-Prince, Haiti
d. 2004, Santiago, Dominican Republic

Lovers, 1963
pigments and wax on canvas
26 ¾ x 30 ¾ in. (67.9 x 77.2 cm)
Gift of Richard Levine, 84.0203
© 1963 Sacha Tebó

Sacha Thébaud, more commonly known as Sacha Tebó, was born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1934. After moving to Canada with his family in 1945, he enrolled at College Stanislas in Montreal, where he received his bachelor’s degree in French. Tebó later pursued a degree in architecture in the mid 1950s at the University of Miami, and professionally exhibited his works for the first time during this period. A myriad of subjects can be found in his abstract and figurative paintings which include: men and women; flora and fauna from the sea; spiritual, mystical, mythological, and metaphysical creatures; natural forms; and metaphorical aspects of the Caribbean region, such as rhythm, movement, and color. In this encaustic painting, two lovers – a common theme in the history of art – are depicted in vibrant blues, reds, and greens in a style that visually recalls cubism. The use of encaustics, or pigment-infused wax, adds a tactile quality that mirrors the couple’s embrace and sense of touch.

N. T.
a. **FERNANDO BOTERO**

b. 1932, Medellín, Colombia  
Lives and works in New York, New York and Paris, France

*Las frutas* (The Fruits), 1964  
oil on canvas  
50 x 51 1/2 in. (127 x 130.8 cm)  
Gift of Esso Inter-America, Inc., 70.024.030  
© 1964 Fernando Botero

Painted in New York in 1964 by the well-known Colombian figurative artist Fernando Botero, *Las frutas* embodies Botero’s unique style, which is characterized by the use of rotund, voluminous or inflated figures, which often take the form of satirical caricatures. Here, Botero seemingly parodies the history of Western academic still life painting, particularly of depicting fruit, and expands this discourse by creating enormous, plump, and muddy-colored fruits, perhaps suggesting that the tropical flora of his native Colombia are more robust than those typically found in conventional still life paintings. What is more, the choice of colors and slightly skewed perspective of the tabletop appear to cleverly satirize other modernist re-interpretations of the traditional still life, such as Paul Cézanne’s *Pommes et biscuits*.

K. H. & N. T.

b. **PAUL CÉZANNE**

b. 1839, Aix-en-Provence, France  
d. 1906, Aix-en-Provence, France

*Pommes et biscuits* (Apples and Biscuits), ca. 1880  
oil on canvas  
Musée de l’Orangerie, Paris  
Photo Credit: Gianni Dagli Orti / The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

*Pommes et biscuits* was painted in New York in 1964 by the well-known Colombian figurative artist Fernando Botero, *Las frutas* embodies Botero’s unique style, which is characterized by the use of rotund, voluminous or inflated figures, which often take the form of satirical caricatures. Here, Botero seemingly parodies the history of Western academic still life painting, particularly of depicting fruit, and expands this discourse by creating enormous, plump, and muddy-colored fruits, perhaps suggesting that the tropical flora of his native Colombia are more robust than those typically found in conventional still life paintings. What is more, the choice of colors and slightly skewed perspective of the tabletop appear to cleverly satirize other modernist re-interpretations of the traditional still life, such as Paul Cézanne’s *Pommes et biscuits*.

K. H. & N. T.
ENRIQUE CASTRO-CID  
- b. 1937, Santiago, Chile  
- Lived and worked in Miami, Florida  
- d. 1992, Santiago, Chile  

*Desnudo de Ingres* (Ingres Nude), 1977  
- acrylic and pencil on canvas  
- 72 x 120 in. (182.9 x 304.8 cm)  
- Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Kolbert, 79.021.000A-B

JEAN-AUGUSTE-DOMINIQUE INGRES  
- b. 1780, Montauban, France  
- d. 1867, Paris, France  

*La Grande Odalisque*, 1814  
- oil on canvas  
- 35 7/8 x 63 3/4 in. (91 x 162 cm)  
- Louvre, Paris, France  
- Photo Credit: Scala / Art Resource, NY

*Ingres Nude*, a painting by the Chilean artist Enrique Castro-Cid, exhibits an expressive, nude body that spirals around a monumental canvas. Here, the artist plays with the geometric transformations of the nude body, manipulating it until it becomes distorted and stretched. In terms of iconography, the subject matter of this piece may be looked at as a fetus; however, the adult head and mature legs seem to suggest the contrary.

From an art historical perspective, *Ingres Nude* can be said to visually pastiche figural types from paintings such as *La Grande Odalisque* (1814), painted by the well-known nineteenth-century French artist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. In Ingres’ orientalist canvas, the artist intended to celebrate the non-European female body, yet equally exoticized it through elongated and fleshy features. Castro-Cid’s “interpretation” of Ingres’ nude contrastingly adopts a non-naturalistic configuration, and one in which European physiognomies have been replaced with Amerindian facial features, suggesting that the subject matter is a hybrid of both cultural and art historical discourses.

*S. F. & N. T.*
MODERNIST PHOTOGRAPHY: PAN AMERICAN EXCHANGES

Given that photography and the camera were inventions of the nineteenth century – the same epoch that gave rise to the modern era – it could be argued that photography is perhaps the most modern of mediums, at least amongst those explored in the current exhibition. And although photography was not always considered a “high” art form during the nineteenth century, its place within the art historical canon was certainly solidified by the twentieth.

This module examines the manner in which pan-American artists utilized the camera to explore modernity by way of the photographic lens, and via different genres, such as studio portraiture, documentary photography, social realism, or avant-garde compositions. Prints by Paul Strand and Edward Weston illustrate the value and importance of travel, as each of these U.S. artists spent time in Mexico, which had a profound effect on their individual oeuvres. Weston, in turn, encouraged Manuel Álvarez Bravo to continue to pursue the medium as a fine art form in the late 1920s.

Images by Lola Álvarez Bravo, Man Ray, and Arnold Newman are contrastingly included in other modules within the exhibition, as they reinforce photography’s desire (and ability) to confront themes explored by other mediums, such as painting, drawing, and printmaking. The final work in this section, Carl Andre’s Yucatan, is interestingly not a photograph, but a photocopy – and thus suggests that a commonplace Xerox machine (an instrument of reproducibility) can be utilized to create a modern photo-image.
RODRIGO MOYA
b. 1934, Medellín, Colombia
Lives and works in Cuernavaca, Morelos, Mexico

La vida no es bella, Región Ixtlera del Norte de México
(Life Isn’t Beautiful, Ixtlera Region, Northern Mexico), 1965
gelatin silver print
19 7/8 x 15 7/8 in. (50.5 x 40.3 cm)
Museum purchase through funds from Beaux Arts, 2013.7
© 1965 Rodrigo Moya

The Colombian-born Mexican photographer Rodrigo Moya began working as a documentary photographer nearly a generation after artists like Manuel Álvarez Bravo popularized this medium in the 1930s and 1940s in Mexico. Moya’s most productive period was between 1956 and 1968, during which time he documented social injustice and political unrest throughout Latin America, though largely in Mexico, Cuba, and Venezuela, where he focused on such diversified populations as peasants, children, revolutionaries, and guerrillas. Moya initially studied with the Colombian photographer Guillermo Angulo, but was equally interested in works executed by U.S. Depression-era artists who explored social realism through photography, including Walker Evans and Dorothea Lange.

Moya’s La vida no es bella portrays a Mexican field worker from the Ixtlera del Norte region of the country, whose hands have noticeably become swollen, cracked, and callused from years of manual labor. In this particular image, Moya chooses to focus not on the man’s face, as would typically be the case in a portrait photograph, but rather, on the man’s hands, which occupy the foreground of the image. In terms of iconography and subject matter, La vida no es bella creates an interesting dialogue with Álvarez Bravo’s La buena fama, durmiendo (Good Reputation, Sleeping, cat. no. 52), which presents the viewer with a very different articulation of the Mexican body in modernist photography.

N. T.
The U.S. artist Arnold Crane initially worked as a trial lawyer before turning to photography in the 1960s. During this transitional period, Crane was introduced to one of his longtime idols, the surrealist photographer Man Ray (see cat. no. 8). After executing a few portrait photographs of him, Crane was commissioned to create a book titled The Other Side of the Camera, which consists of candid images of influential photographers of the twentieth century.

In this particular image, Crane captures a likeness of the Mexican photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo casually seated in his studio. Álvarez Bravo, who was 69 at the time the photograph was taken, was arguably Mexico’s most celebrated modern photographer. Working largely in Mexico City in the 1930s and 1940s, Álvarez Bravo was affiliated with such fellow artists and photographers as Lola Álvarez Bravo (his first wife), Wilhelm Kahlo (Frida Kahlo’s father), Tina Modotti, Edward Weston, Paul Strand, and Henri Cartier-Bresson.

J. T. & N. T.
MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO  
**b. 1902, Mexico City, Mexico**  
**d. 2002, Mexico City, Mexico**  

*La buena fama, durmiendo* (Good Reputation, Sleeping), 1938 (printed 1974)  
gelatin silver print  
7 3/4 x 9 1/4 in. (18.7 x 24.4 cm)  
Gift of The American Foundation for the Arts, 84.0190.03  
© Colette Urbajtel/Archivo Manuel Álvarez Bravo, SC

There is a famous saying in Mexico: “Hazte fama y échate a la cama,” which roughly translates to mean: make a good reputation for yourself and sleep easy. In this image by the well-known Mexican photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo, the artist creates a dialogue between the photograph and this cultural idiom (as referenced by the title of the piece) by depicting a nude woman laying on her back, relaxing and sunbathing on a Mexican serape. Bandages cover her feet and hips, yet her breasts and pubic region are visible to the viewer, which collectively add an eroticized, voyeuristic tone to the photographic print. Here, Álvarez Bravo ostensibly satirizes the aforementioned Mexican idiom, offering that the sensual nature of the woman’s unclothed body (which in turn references the art historical importance given to classical nudes) should have us believe that this subject does not, perhaps, possess a good reputation.

_F. V. & N. T._
Edward Weston, a pioneer in early twentieth-century American photography, was affiliated throughout the 1920s and 1930s with such U.S. artists as Alfred Stieglitz, Paul Strand, and Ansel Adams, and Mexican artists like Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Between 1923 and 1927, Weston traveled between California and Mexico with the Italian photographer Tina Modotti, with whom he was romantically involved. During his stay in Mexico, Weston photographed individuals and artists, including Rivera, as well as the native landscape and folk art.

The subject of this photograph is Weston’s third wife, Charis Wilson. True to his style of depicting nude women throughout his artistic career, the photograph communicates Weston’s belief that the body can create sensual, organic forms within a work of art. Placing Wilson in a pool of water, the theme of purity is reinforced; the purity of her form and the purity of the water unite. The water also acts as a visual tool, given that the depth of the left side of the pool presents an illusion, making Wilson appear as if she is floating.

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The modernist U.S. photographer and filmmaker Paul Strand was a key figure in his field, having studied under the documentary photographer Lewis Hine in the early decades of the twentieth century. Through Hine, Strand met the renowned photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who owned and operated the eminent 291 Gallery in New York City. At 291, Stieglitz championed avant-garde photography as a medium on par with painting, and equally promoted Strand’s images on the walls of his gallery, as well as within the pages of his quarterly journal Camera Work. Having established himself as a serious artist by the 1920s, Strand eventually co-founded New York’s Photo League, and helped to promote social reform through photography in the 1930s through 1950s.

Strand was equally associated with Manuel Álvarez Bravo, who he had befriended during his years in Mexico between 1932 and 1935. Throughout this period, Strand worked as a cinematographer for the Mexican government, but also shot images that comprise his celebrated Mexican Portfolio. In this particular photograph from the series, Strand offers the viewer a portrait of a man clothed in the traditional style of dress worn by men in the early twentieth century in Central Mexico, particularly the south-western region. The subject’s clothing, stoic pose, and vertical posture provide a sharp contrast to the horizontal orientation and macabre subject matter of Álvarez Bravo’s Obrero en huelga, asesinado (Striking Worker, Assassinated, cat. no. 19), which was photographed at roughly the same time as Strand’s image.

N. T.
Best known for his regionalist images of American society, the U.S. photographer Walker Evans began taking photographs with little artistic training, but eventually worked for the federal government’s Farm Security Administration capturing the widespread effects of the Great Depression. His intent was to move away from “high art” images, and instead, plainly capture American life in the 1930s and 1940s. During the 1930s, Evans traveled to Cuba and the southern United States, photographing local scenes and people. *A Cypress Swamp* captures an iconic Florida landscape, while still subsisting as a strong image in terms of formalism.

G. S. C. & N. T.
FRANK PAULIN
b. 1926, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Lives and works in New York, New York

Revolutionary, Cuba, 1959
gelatin silver print
10 ¾ x 13 ½ in. (27.3 x 34.3 cm)
Gift of Bruce Silverstein, 2009.24.22
© 1959 Frank Paulin

The U.S. photographer Frank Paulin worked primarily as a street photographer, becoming well known for his ability to capture poignant, fleeting moments with his photographic lens. Having grown up in Pittsburgh, New York, and Chicago, it was the latter city that shaped Paulin as an artist. During the 1940s, he began studying art and photography at the Whitaker-Christiansen Studio, the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts, the Art Institute of Chicago, and later, the Chicago Institute of Design.

In late 1959/early 1960, Paulin traveled to Havana to document the social conditions in post-revolution Cuba. He had a brief, though unplanned, encounter with Fidel Castro during this initial trip to the island. The fortress of the Castillo de los Tres Reyes Magos del Morro, or Morro Castle, located at the entrance to Havana Harbor, can be seen in the background of Paulin’s image. The majority of the photographic plane, however, is dominated by the profile of a Cuban revolutionary wearing a cowboy hat.

N. T.
The Cuban-born U.S. photographer Albert Coya grew up in Havana, where he developed an early interest in photography and photojournalism. When the newspaper that Coya worked for closed following the Cuban Revolution, he and his family immigrated to Miami. Coya soon thereafter became a photojournalist for The Miami Herald, often assigned to capture fleeting moments of intense human emotion. In this particular image, *Child Receiving Inoculation*, the subject of the photograph is a young Cuban child who is receiving a vaccination in order to be allowed to enter the United States. The close cropping of the photograph, the almost theatrical presentation of the child’s emotions, and the expressive body language collectively evoke a sense of empathy in the viewer.

*J. T. & N. T.*
The Cuban-born U.S. artist Mario Algaze left his native country in 1960, and settled in Miami, where he has worked as a photographer and freelance photojournalist since 1971. Algaze’s *Carretas, Guatemala* is striking for its graceful composition. The elegant lines, circles, and diagonals guide the viewer’s eye through the grid-like photographic plane. Although the decaying buildings, antiquated equipment, and style of dress give an indication of setting, the sharpness of the image, the complex tonal range, and the strong contrast between light and shadows strip the image of its sense of time: it could have been taken fifty or five years ago. The mother and child glide subtly into the left side of the composition with regal bearing, raising the question of whether they support, or subvert, the tradition of depicting indigenous peoples as part of the native landscape. Of particular interest, the viewer will note that while the mother stares purposefully ahead as she walks down the sidewalk, it is the infant who glances back at the viewer, challenging our gaze.
The photographer and art historian Alfredo Boulton was a prominent Venezuelan artist and intellectual in the early to mid-twentieth century. While his formal education was completed in Europe, he seriously turned to photography upon his return to Venezuela in 1928, and was largely interested in documenting the rapidly changing nature of urbanization in Caracas. He is often associated with other Venezuelan artists working in the early twentieth century, including Manuel Cabré, Francisco Narváez, and Armando Reverón, and was the first art historian to publish a comprehensive survey of Venezuelan art from the colonial period to the twentieth century.

The subject of Boulton's image is a Venezuelan gondolero, who appears to be pushing a truck or jeep on a barge (constructed from four gondolas) over the Río Apure, near the village of Puerto de Nutrias in Barinas, Venezuela. The reflection of the sunlight off the surface of the river water and the strong diagonal lines created from the shape of the gondolas, as well as the boatman's long wooden pole, combine to create a dynamic composition in the photograph.
The Peruvian photographer Martín Chambi is best known for his ethnographic, documentary-style images of indigenous Andean people, though he also enjoyed considerable success as a society portraitist in Cuzco in the early twentieth century. Born in a rather poor region in Southern Peru, Chambi first learned the techniques of photography from a site photographer who worked at the Santo Domingo Mine near Coaza. He eventually moved to Cuzco in the 1920s, where he opened his second photographic studio.

In addition to shooting society portraits and local peoples, Chambi extensively documented Incan ruins in the Andes, often selling these and other landscape photographs as lucrative postcards. This particular image depicts Tambomachay, a site near Cuzco associated with the Incas. Also known as El Baño del Inca, or “The Bath of the Inca,” the site may have functioned as a thermal spa within the Inca Empire, as it contains a series of stone aqueducts, canals, and terraced rock waterfalls. In Chambi’s image, the ruins are romanticized, conveying a sense of nostalgia; and yet the photograph also conveys a heightened sense of formalism through the repetitive linear lines of Tambomachay’s stonework, as well as the contrast between light and shadows on the surface of the walls.

N. T.
Having moved to South Florida in 1914 at the age of 27, the U.S. photographer Richard Hoit was primarily a Miami-based artist who photographed a number of historic sites in the region, including James Deering’s Villa Vizcaya, the burgeoning city of Coral Gables in the 1920s, and the developing University of Miami campus in the 1950s. Hoit traveled extensively throughout the Americas during the early twentieth century, taking trips to Mexico, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. This photograph depicts a wall and “hoop” at the pre-Columbian Mayan ball court at Chichén Itzá in the Yucatan region of Mexico. Hoit’s decision to place the stone hoop in the upper left-hand corner of the photographic plane simultaneously creates a sharp diagonal line through the sloping wall of the immense ball court. The framing of the court within this image thus presents the viewer with a composition constructed through the use of extreme one-point perspective.

N. T.
CARL ANDRE
b. 1935, Quincy, Massachusetts
Lives and works in New York, New York

Yucatan from the Anthology Film Archives Portfolio, 1973
photocopy
11 x 8 1/2 in. (27.9 x 21.6 cm)
Gift of The American Art Foundation, 84.0009.02
Art © Carl Andre/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

The U.S. minimalist artist Carl Andre is best known for his sculptures based on the grid or grid-like forms, though he is equally recognized for his large-scale public artworks and concrete poetry. During his studies at the Phillips Academy in the early 1950s, Andre met fellow artist Frank Stella, who is said to have encouraged Andre to explore new conceptualizations of form in his “cut” sculptures of the late 1950s. Between 1960 and 1965, Andre briefly abandoned sculpture for concrete poetry, or “visual poetry,” in which the typographical placement of words on the page is directly tied to the meanings of these words within the context of the poem’s linguistic or rhythmic structure.

Andre’s Yucatan, which is one image in a series of works by the same title, is a prime example of the artist’s examination of concrete poetry in the 1970s. At around this same time, Andre became interested in Cortés’ conquest of Mexico, and accordingly, one wonders if the words in this visual poem are meant to invoke the placement and shape of stones that constructed the grand stepped pyramids of the Aztec or Mayan Empires. As meaning is not immediately discernible to the viewer, one must read the text, thus engaging with the work of art in an unconventional way. Given that Yucatan is a photocopy, Andre additionally plays with notions of originality and reproduction, a debate that has long occupied art historical discourses.

R. S. & N. T.
PART 2: COMMONALITIES & DISCONNECTS
THE LEGACY OF GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION: CONSTRUCTIVIST ART, MINIMALISM, OP ART

Within the Western tradition of twentieth-century abstract art, geometric abstraction emerged early on as a prevalent style of painting that explored non-representational (or non-illusionistic) compositions through the use of reductive geometric forms and “pure” color. Like expressionism and cubism, geometric abstraction’s roots can be grounded in the European avant-gardes of the early twentieth century, as early practitioners were the Russian Suprematists, as well as the Dutch De Stijl artists.

Variously called non-objective painting, neoplasticism, or constructivism, geometric abstraction took various forms (and names) throughout the twentieth century, and was explored by countless modern artists in the United States and Latin America, where it enjoyed considerable popularity following the Second World War. In South America, the well-known Uruguayan constructivist artist Joaquín Torres-García was an early proponent of geometric abstraction, and was likewise responsible for popularizing this form of abstraction in the 1930s and 1940s.

In terms of geometric abstraction’s legacy, concrete art, minimalism, hard-edge painting, post-painterly abstraction, and optical art (or Op art) can collectively be seen to have developed out of, or as a form of, this “brand” of abstraction at the mid-century. A number of artists represented in this module were first shown together in William C. Seitz’s exhibition *The Responsive Eye*, held at New York’s Museum of Modern Art in 1965. These individuals include: U.S. artists Richard J. Anuszkiewicz, Gene Davis, Kenneth Noland, Julian Stanczak, and Frank Stella, and the Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez. *Pan American Modernism* similarly examines objects by these artists, but additionally presents works by Pierre Daura, Gordon Matta-Clark, Jesús Rafael Soto, and Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar.

The 1979 film *H.O.* by Ivan Cardoso is likewise included in this module, given that Cardoso’s work documents various abstract and conceptual pieces by the Brazilian neo-concrete artist Hélio Oiticica, who explored elements of geometric abstraction in the 1950s, before turning to installation and performance art in the 1960s.
JOAQUÍN TORRES-GARCÍA
b. 1874, Montevideo, Uruguay
d. 1949, Montevideo, Uruguay

Composición (Composition), 1935
ink on paper
4 5/8 x 7 in. (11.7 x 17.8 cm)
Museum purchase through the 2013 Director's Circle, Christina Wiedemann Endowment Fund, Linnie E. Dalbeck Memorial Endowment Fund, Larue Storm Art Acquisition Endowment and the Lowe Art Museum Acquisitions Fund, 2013.9.2

As the founder of Constructive Universalism – a style formed around the cubist grid, but which also incorporated universal symbols common to disparate countries, cultures, and peoples – the celebrated Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García was instrumental in promoting geometric abstraction in his native Uruguay, as well as other South American countries, throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Torres-García’s Composición consequently demonstrates the artist’s interest in geometric abstraction, particularly the neoplasticism of the Dutch modernist Piet Mondrian and the De Stijl art movement.

Although he was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, Torres-García, along with his family, moved to Spain in the late nineteenth century, a decision that allowed Torres-García to eventually study painting at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Barcelona. Following his studies, he began exhibiting work in Europe, and eventually befriended such European modernists such as Manolo Hugué, Pablo Picasso, Antoni Gaudí, and Mondrian. Along with Mondrian, Pierre Daura, and Michel Seuphor, Torres-García co-founded the group Cercle et Carré (Circle and Square), which promoted geometric abstraction and constructivism in Paris in the late 1920s and early 1930s. After leaving Paris in 1932, he soon established the Grupo Constructivo (Constructive Group) in Spain in 1933, and permanently resettled a year later in Montevideo, where he founded the Sociedad de las Artes del Uruguay. Composición, created one year after his return to Uruguay, subsequently draws upon his early “European” constructivist works, yet situates this drawing as a particularly “American” object, given its association with the Society and its promotion of modern Uruguayan art.

N. T.

THE LEGACY OF GEOMETRIC ABSTRACTION: CONSTRUCTIVIST ART, MINIMALISM, OP ART
Like Composición of 1935 (cat. no. 63), Torres-García’s Constructivo con sol reveals the artist’s preoccupation with the (cubist) grid as a geometric motif celebrating abstract art in the 1930s. The modernist grid was historically seen to convey order and categorization in a work of art, and was furthermore regarded as a visual element that could symbolically represent the underlying structural systems at play in art, nature, and across cultures. Torres-García was the founder of Constructive Universalism, a personal style that embraced abstraction, while simultaneously incorporating
figurative pictographs into his compositions. According to the artist, these pictographs were symbols that could be found across cultures and peoples, but which also highlighted traditional and indigenous pictographs created by pre-Columbian cultures in South America.

Having co-founded Cercle et Carré (Circle and Square) in Paris in 1929, Torres-García eventually “re-established” this art group in Montevideo in 1936 under the Spanish name Círculo y Cuadrado. As in Europe, Circle and Square continued to promote constructivist art, though the Uruguayan articulation of this group equally embraced figurative elements that might represent South America’s pre-European past. Constructivo con sol is a prime example of the artist’s work from this period, as the figure of a ship (in the upper register of the drawing) could be read as a representation of a conquistador’s ship or of European expansionism/commercialism, while the pictograph of a head (located on the left side of the grid) is largely reminiscent of a pre-Columbian mask or ancient Olmec head (ca. 1500-400 BCE) from present-day Mexico. Other symbols ostensibly represent ancient Mesoamerican glyphs, including the image of the sun, while the symbols for “man” and “woman” (located below the sun glyph) seem to materialize as universal symbols for a collective mankind.

N. T.
In 1929, the Spanish-born U.S. artist Pierre Daura, along with the renowned Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García and the Belgian artist Michel Seuphorr, co-founded the art group known as Cercle et Carré (Circle and Square), which celebrated geometric abstraction through the purity of circular and square forms. The group, which formed in 1929, exhibited their works the following year for the first time in a joint exhibition, but was eventually absorbed in 1931 by the anti-surrealist group Abstraction-Création (Abstraction-Creation), which equally favored non-representational, abstract works of art.

Even though Daura painted Étude No. 1 Analise after he left France and moved to the United States, the work’s grid-like patterning and resultant color fields, or planes, are an exploration of the principles of abstraction explored by the Circle and Square group, which included artists like Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian (who later became a member of Abstraction-Création), Fernand Léger, and Joseph Stella. As with paintings by Mondrian, Léger, and Torres-García, Daura’s piece is a further examination of the cubist grid as the underlying framework of nature.

N. V. D. & N. T.
The Colombian artist Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar initially trained as an architect at the National University of Colombia in the early 1940s, but decided instead to pursue a career in the fine arts. Throughout the 1950s, he traveled (and lived) in France, made frequent trips to New York City, Madrid and Rome, and also taught courses at the School of Fine Arts in Bogotá. Ramírez Villamizar’s oeuvre underwent a transition in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as the artist turned almost exclusively to sculptural work, for which he is known for today.

Even though Ramírez Villamizar ultimately abandoned architecture for painting, and then sculpture, *Ritmo vertical* visually suggests that the artist was interested in combining each of these disparate categories into a single work of art, as the three-dimensionality of the piece ostensibly blurs the line between painting, sculpture, and small-scale architecture. Somewhat reminiscent of Brazilian neo-concretism, and particularly Lygia Clark’s flat, three-dimensional “sculpture-paintings” from the 1950s, *Ritmo vertical* presents the viewer with an equally dynamic, avant-garde confrontation of artistic categories. This work additionally shares commonalities with Joaquín Torres-García’s geometric abstraction and constructivist works of the 1930s and 1940s (see cat. nos. 63 & 64); and yet, Villamizar’s piece pushes Torres-García’s grid-like compositions one step further, exploring their forms in three-dimensional space.

*N. T.*
FRANK STELLA
b. 1936, Malden, Massachusetts
Lives and works in New York, New York

_Hyena Stomp_, 1973
lithograph
8 7/8 x 8 7/8 in. (21.9 x 21.9 cm)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Martin B. Grossman, 78.029.001
© 2013 Frank Stella / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

Known for his anti-illusory works, Frank Stella began to create minimalist art in the late 1950s that consisted of simple shapes and lines in an effort to steer away from purely figurative painting. Having moved to New York in 1958 after his studies at Princeton University, Stella began working on his _Black Paintings_ series soon after, having largely completed the series by 1959. As the title of the series implies, these paintings consist of wide black stripes and smaller white lines that often generate non-representational geometric shapes, such as diamonds, chevrons, crosses, or squares.

In Stella’s _Hyena Stomp_, the artist’s signature use of minimalist lines calls attention to the flattened picture plane. In this work, which is both a reference to, as well as a deviation from Stella’s earlier _Black Paintings_, the artist visually creates tension between the negative and positive spaces of the square form, in a manner that references optical art and its visual effects on the viewer.

_K. M. & N. T._
Richard Joseph Anuszkiewicz is a U.S. artist who emerged as a prominent figure in the optical art movement of the 1960s. Along with fellow optical artist Julian Stanczak, Anuszkiewicz studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art and Yale University, under the tutelage of Josef Albers. In his early works, Anuszkiewicz was fascinated by the power of mathematics, the role of color theory, and how basic geometric shapes could be utilized to construct a modern work of art. In *Spectral Nine*, he plays with the juxtaposition of warm, analogous colors bordered by cooler, pseudo-complementary colors. The use of concentric square patterns and bright colors compel each square to visually “vibrate,” allowing the viewer’s eye to experience the invisible energy that his colors and forms possess.

C. D. & N. T.
JULIAN STAN CZAK
b. 1928, Borow nica, Poland
Lives and works in Seven Hills, Ohio

_Fervent #1_, 1971
acrylic on canvas
27 7⁄8 x 23 3⁄4 in. (70.8 x 60.3 cm)
Gift of Mann Galleries, 73.009.000
© 1971 Julian Stanczak

Julian Stanczak is a Polish-American painter and printmaker best known for his exploration of optical art. Similar to the works of Anuszkiewicz, Soto, and Cruz-Diez, Stanczak’s work is concerned with how colors, shapes, and patterns affect one’s perceptual experiences, as filtered through a dialogue between the senses and the psyche. In _Fervent #1_, the artist uses hues of the same color (yellow) to insinuate depth and transparency, giving the work a three-dimensional effect. The background consists of a grid with lines that vary in spacing and pattern to produce a pulsating rhythm that, when combined with the painting’s warm, golden hues, generates an all-over, radiant affect within, and around, the central cube.

_C. D. & N. T._
The Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto was a leading figure in geometric abstraction, as well as the kinetic and optical art movements of the late 1950s and 1960s. Having studied at La Escuela de Arte in Caracas in the 1940s, Soto was initially interested in cubism, neoplasticism, and soviet constructivism, but after moving to Paris in 1950, his work began to adopt optical, and then kinetic elements. Rather than embracing the contemporary trends of lyrical abstraction or abstract expressionism, Soto and fellow Venezuelan expatriate artists Alejandro Otero and Narciso Debourg (all of whom were then living in Paris) formed the short-lived, counterculture art group Los Disidentes (The Dissidents), which rejected figurative art in favor of geometric abstraction and concrete/constructivist ideals. **Jai-Alai**, a screen print on Plexiglas, shares its title with another work in this series by Soto included in the exhibition (see cat. no. 74), and implies movement through the startling contrast between the bright yellow field and the more subdued gray field, which is further “animated” by yellow straw-like lines, which give the illusion of vibration in the piece.

*N. R. & N. T.*
Kenneth Noland

b. 1924, Asheville, North Carolina
d. 2010, Port Clyde, Maine

Untitled, 1968
screen print on linen
16 3/4 x 47 1/2 in. (42.5 x 120.7 cm)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Martin B. Grossman, 85.0131
Art © Estate of Kenneth Noland/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Variously known as an abstract expressionist, color field painter, and minimalist artist, Kenneth Noland is perhaps best known for his artistic preoccupation with geometric shapes, namely circles (including targets or concentric, repeated circles), stripes, and chevrons. During his studies in the 1940s at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, Noland was introduced to the aesthetics of neoplasticism, so central to De Stijl and the works of Piet Mondrian, as well as to the centricity of color in works by Paul Klee and Josef Albers, who was then teaching at Black Mountain as one of Noland’s instructors. Following his formal training, Noland became acquainted with the artists Morris Louis and Helen Frankenthaler, who were interested “soak-stain” paintings, as well as the influential New York art critic Clement Greenberg, who included Noland’s work in his Post-Painterly Abstraction exhibition of 1964.

During the latter half of the 1960s, Noland began to experiment with horizontal bands of color, filling the surface of his canvases with vibrant, yet thinly applied paint. Untitled, which is very much a part of this larger exploration of minimalist lines, consists of green, dark purple, white and yellow horizontal stripes set parallel to one another in the visual plane. The work’s competing color values, exemplified by the tension between light and dark shades, in turn may be seen to create interesting optical effects for the viewer.

A. L. & N. T.
Born in Washington D.C., Gene Davis was initially a writer and journalist who wrote for various newspapers around the United States. Inspired by modern works of art at the Phillips Collection, which he saw for the first time in 1949, he began to take up painting as a serious artistic pursuit. Known for his canvases and prints of vertical stripes of color, of which *Untitled* is a prime example, Davis, along with fellow U.S. artists Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis, form the first generation of the Washington Color School. This particular art movement began in the 1950s and was largely a response to the philosophical tenets behind abstract expressionism. Davis placed a heavy importance on color and was greatly inspired by modernist works by the Swiss expressionist artist Paul Klee. Like Noland, Davis’ works tend to explore a post-painterly aestheticism through geometric abstraction and minimalist compositions.

_A. L. & N. T._
The title *Physichromie No. 577* derives from a word invented by the Venezuelan artist Carlos Cruz-Diez to define concepts that inform his exploration of color within geometric abstraction, as well as optical and kinetic art. *Physichromie* thus reflects the interplay between nature (*physis*) and color (*chromos*). In this piece, vertical strips of plastic, which have been painted with differing colors on either side, are affixed perpendicularly to a flat painted background. As a result, when the viewer observes the piece from multiple angles and vantage points, various geometric shapes rendered in different color combinations begin to emerge and then change within the composition.

The overall effect of the work creates multiple optical illusions, or multiple ways of “seeing” the various geometric combinations that are “contained” in the visual plane. For Cruz-Diez, the notion of color is not something that can be expressed upon a flat surface, but is an experience that transpires in space. Although his work shares theoretical and iconographic similarities with other Venezuelan optical and kinetic artists, such as Jesús Rafael Soto and Alejandro Otero, Cruz-Diez was not a member of *Los Disidentes* (The Dissidents), as he did not travel to Paris until the 1960s.

*N. R. & N. T.*
In this sculptural, kinetic piece titled *Jai-Alai*, the Venezuelan artist Jesús Rafael Soto investigates the optical effects of geometric lines on his viewers’ visual perception by placing a movable red line in front of a raised white surface (in the upper portion of the composition), as well as a raised surface with black and white lines (in the lower register of the work). Jai-alai – a ball sport played across the globe, but particularly popular in Latin American countries – is perhaps referenced here through the interplay of the rectangular white shape, the movable red line (a kinetic element that is moved by changes in the air around the piece), and the vertical black lines, which create varying optical effects when the viewer observes the piece from varying angles. The implied “energy” of the piece is therefore in direct relation to the viewer’s physical presence in the space surrounding this object, as this non-motorized sculpture only moves when changes in the environment surrounding the piece occur.

*N. R. & N. T.*
GORDON MATTA-CLARK
b. 1943, New York, New York
d. 1978, New York, New York

Circus, 1978
photographic collage
20 x 30 in. (50.8 x 76.2 cm)
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Marvin Sackner, 86.0115
© 2013 Estate of Gordon Matta-Clark / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

The son of Chilean artist Roberto Matta, Gordon Matta-Clark initially studied architecture at Cornell University before turning to a career in the visual arts. In an effort to distance himself from his father’s surrealist works (see cat. no. 44), Matta-Clark instead experimented with a wide range of media, though is mostly known for his use of photography and film throughout his oeuvre.

Circus forms part of Matta-Clark’s most well-known series of “building cuts” (1972-1978), or works that function as “archives” of performance pieces, as well as photographic collages. To construct these images, Matta-Clark first “cut” into old or condemned buildings with a chain saw in order to literally fracture the original structure, thus creating new architectural compositions, which the artist called “Anarchitecture.” For Circus, Matta-Clark initially carved portions out of soon-to-be demolished buildings in Chicago, then photographed these architectural spaces, before cutting and tearing the final prints in order to present them in a new/original composition. This final image is not, however, meant to be entirely abstract; rather, the artist leaves recognizable elements, such as doors and knobs, so that the viewer might still discern the original building in the photographic fragments.

A. L. & N. T.
Throughout the 1950s and 1960s in Brazil, new and innovative avenues in contemporary art were explored by various artists, who often blurred the line between reality and artifice, while challenging distinctions between “high” and “low” art. In 1959, the Grupo Neoconcreto (Neo-Concrete Group) was formed by visual artists Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Amilcar de Castro, Lygia Pape, and Franz Weissmann, as well as the poet Ferreira Gullar, in order to push the boundaries of contemporary Brazilian art. Although the group did not officially embrace any singular/collective style, an exploration of color and the tenets of concrete art form the basis of their early works. Grupo Neoconcreto disbanded in 1961, though its members continued to explore novel approaches to art making, each becoming pioneers in various fields, including abstract art, concrete and neo-concrete art, kinetic and optical art, and perhaps most importantly, sensorial and performance art. In Ivan Cardoso’s art/documentary film H.O. (titled after Hélio Oiticica), a number of Grupo Neoconcreto artists, including Lygia Clark, can be seen to engage with Oiticica’s various artworks, including his environmental/performance pieces from the 1960s. Among these works is his well-known series Parangolés, or capes, which explore art and dance in the public sphere by inviting spectators to become participants in the art making process. Cardoso’s film is not only important for its examination of these ephemeral performance pieces, but even more so as a documentary archive, given that the majority of Oiticica’s works (including his Parangolés) were destroyed when a fire claimed the artist’s collection in 2009.
NATHAN J. TIMPANO is Assistant Professor of Art History at the University of Miami. Across his program of research, Timpano investigates modern artistic movements in Europe and Latin America, respectively, and adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the nature of collaborative activities in both the visual and performing arts. His major area of study examines the history and historiography of modern German and Austrian art, while his minor area focuses on the Cuban avant-garde and critical theory. Prior to curating the Pan American Modernism exhibition at the Lowe Art Museum, he organized an online exhibition and study database of Lyonel Feininger’s photographic works at the Harvard Art Museums (2009-2011). Timpano has been awarded national and international honors, including a 2007 DAAD research grant and a 2007-2008 Fulbright fellowship, and has likewise published articles and book chapters on the cross-cultural and artistic exchanges that exist between various artists in Europe, Latin America, and the United States. As a current Faculty Research Fellow within the Center for the Humanities at the University of Miami, Timpano is completing a book on modern art, theatre, and science in fin-de-siècle Vienna.

EDWARD J. SULLIVAN is the Helen Gould Sheppard Professor of the History of Art at the Institute of Fine Arts and the Department of Art History of New York University. Specializing in the modern and contemporary art of Latin America and the Caribbean he is the author of over thirty books and exhibitions catalogues. His most recent texts include The Language of Objects in the Art of the Americas (Yale University Press, 2007); Fragile Demon: Juan Soriano in Mexico 1935-1950 (Philadelphia Museum of Art and Yale University Press); Observed: Milagros De La Torre (co-authored exhibition catalogue) and the forthcoming From San Juan to Paris: Francisco Oller and Caribbean Art in the Era of Impressionism (Yale University Press).
**HEATHER DIACK** is Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary Art in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Miami. Diack holds a PhD from the University of Toronto and is active as a writer and independent curator. Specializing in the history of photography, Diack has held many fellowships including a research residency at The Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal and a Rubenstein Fellowship in Critical Studies at the Whitney Independent Study Program, New York. Diack has presented and published papers internationally on topics related to twentieth century art, photography and theory throughout Europe and North America. Currently, she is working on a number of research projects including the final manuscript for her book *The Benefit of the Doubt: Regarding the Photographic Conditions of Conceptual Art, 1966-1973* and co-editing a volume on the critical conjunction between conceptual art and humor.

**PATRICIA GARCÍA-VELEZ HANNA** is an independent art consultant based in Miami, Florida. Most recently, she served as the Director of the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation (CIFO), a non-profit contemporary art foundation in Miami. In this capacity, she managed the overall operations of the foundation in addition to its exhibitions and publications program. Recent editorial projects include: *Frames and Documents, Conceptualist Practices; Inside Out, Photography After Form;* and *Tacita Dean: Film Works.* Prior to directing the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation, she was the Exhibitions Manager of Miami Art Central. With over ten years in the non-profit sector, she has worked with internationally recognized artists and institutions to bring numerous contemporary art exhibitions to the South Florida community.
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<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>Yina Balarezo</td>
<td>Membership Coordinator</td>
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<td>Irene Bergmann</td>
<td>Special Events Coordinator</td>
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<td>Receptionist</td>
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<td>Natasha Cuervo</td>
<td>Museum Registrar for Exhibitions and Loans</td>
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<td>Brian Dursum</td>
<td>Director and Chief Curator</td>
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<td>Janie Graulich</td>
<td>Receptionist</td>
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<td>Alessia Lewitt</td>
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<td>Environmental Services Technician</td>
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<td>Darren Price</td>
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<td>Office Manager</td>
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<td>Jodi Sypher</td>
<td>Curator of Education</td>
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<td>Hope Torrents</td>
<td>School Programs Coordinator</td>
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REFERENCES

PAN AMERICAN MODERNISM:
DIALOGUES, COMMONALITIES, DISCONNECTS


4 George Yúdice, “Postmodernity and Transnational Capitalism in Latin America,” in On Edge: The Crisis of Contemporary Latin American Culture, eds. George Yúdice, Jean Franco, and Juan Flores (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1992), 1.


MODERNISMO PANAMERICANO:
DIÁLOGOS, PUNTOS DE CONTACTO, INCONEXIONES


12 Barnitz, Twentieth-Century Art in Latin America, 287.


In addition to meeting with Pollock and Krasner, Lam met with a number of artists throughout the 1940s and 1950s who were living and working in New York. See Lowery Stokes Sims, Wilfredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde: 1923-1982 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 139-40.

For a review of Motherwell's biography and personal writings and correspondences with other artists and critics, see Stephanie Terenzio, (ed.), The Collected Writings of Robert Motherwell (Berkeley Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

The Dyn art journal, which was published in both English and French, has recently been the subject of a small, but thorough exhibition at the Getty Center. See Annette Leddy and Donna Conwell, eds., Farewell to Surrealism: The Dyn Circle in Mexico (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2012).


This was only one of several significant shows devoted to Torres-Garcia in the 1980s and early 90s. See also Torres-Garcia: Grid-Pattern-Sign. Paris-Montevideo, 1924-1944 (London: Hayward Gallery, 1985).


The Constructivist Spirit: Abstract Art in South and North America, 1920s-50s (Newark...
The curator of this exhibition was Mary Kate O’Hare.


29 Fundação de São Paulo, *[XXIV Bienal de São Paulo: núcleo histórico: antropofagia e histórias de canibalismos]* (São Paulo, 1998). See especially the section of the catalogue that discusses the nucleus of the exhibition devoted to abstract art: which was curated by Paulo Herkenhoff “Monocromos,” 192-233.


32 Pettoruti’s art post-Europe was derived from a variety of sources, including the cubism of Picasso and Juan Gris. The subject matter of some of his most well-known works from the 1920s and 30s included such “local” themes as street musicians reminiscent of tango and other popular street bands. In old age he returned to pure abstraction, although this has often been considered decorative and non-experimental.

33 For a succinct discussion of these movements see Mario H. Gradowczyk and Nelly Perrazo, *Abstract Art from the Río de la Plata* (New York: The Americas Society, 2001).

34 As this essay is in preparation the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh is planning a large-scale exhibition of the work of Hélio Oiticica and the MoMA is organizing one of Lygia Clark.


37 As a child Fernández moved to Costa Rica. She is considered one of the principal participants in the abstract movements in that country.


40 See the exhibition catalogue Risking the Abstract. Mexican Modernism and the Art of Gunter Gerzso (Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 2003).


42 See the exhibition catalogue Lilia Carrillo (Monterrey: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey, 1992).


45 Abby McEwen of the University of Maryland is currently at work on a monograph about Albizu.

46 Noemí Ruiz y su espacio en el tiempo (San Juan: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, 2007).

47 Alas y raíces. Ada Balcácer (Santiago de los Caballeros: Centro Cultural Eduardo León Jiménez, 2011).

48 It is important to note that there was a somewhat smaller but equally significant group of geometric abstracts artists working in Havana at this time. Among the most outstanding were Mario Carreño and Lolo Soldévilla.

49 See the exhibition catalogue Guido Llinás and Los Once After Cuba (Miami: the Art Museum at Florida International University, 1997).

BODY OF EVIDENCE:  
THE MODERNISMS OF MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO


56 Folgarait, 153.

EL CUERPO DEL DELITO:  
LOS MODERNISMOS DE MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO


58 Born Arthur Fellig, Weegee earned his nickname in reaction to his astonishingly quick arrival times at crime scenes. Though he covertly tuned into the police radio frequency for tips, he was nevertheless perceived as possessing a kind of sixth sense and thus his name is a play on the fortune telling capacities of the “Ouija” board.

59 Folgarait, 168.

60 Nissan N. Perez, Revelaciones: The Art of Manuel Álvarez Bravo (San Diego: Museum of Photographic Arts, 1990), 24-25.


63 Ibid., 60.


68 Weegee, cuyo nombre verdadero era Arthur Fellig, recibió su sobrenombre por la increíble velocidad con la que llegaba a las escenas de los crímenes. Aunque en secreto escuchaba la frecuencia de radio policial en busca de datos y pistas, de todas formas parecía que tenía un sexto sentido; por ello es que su sobrenombre es un juego de palabras con el prodigioso tablero Ouija, de similar pronunciación en inglés.

59 Folgarait. p. 168.


64 Folgarait, 3.
65 Ibid., 171.
69 *Frente a Frente, segunda época*, no. 3 (May 1936):1. Calles was the President of Mexico between 1924-1928 and continued to exert power in Mexican politics throughout the 1930s. He notably championed populist politics at the outset before becoming increasingly repressive and violent as his administration turned towards anti-Catholic campaigns.
70 Ibid., 61-83.
72 Ibid., p. 60.
73 Ibid., p. 61.
76 Folgarait, p. 3.
77 Ibid., p. 171.

23 Ibid.
24 *Judiciales* photographs refer to images created and used in the related practices of tabloid photography, law enforcement, and the judicial and penal systems of Mexico.
25 Ibid., 68.
26 Ibid., 61.
27 Both Strand and Modotti were influential on Álvarez Bravo and each spoke resolutely regarding what was to be expected from a “good” photograph. “Bad photography should be understood as that which is produced, one could say, with a kind of inferiority complex, without valuing what photography has to offer as its very own.” Tina Modotti, first published with the title “On Photography” in *Mexican Folkways*, n. 4 (October – December 1929): 196-198. This manifesto is reprinted in Jesús Nieto Sotelo and Elisa Lozano Álvarez, eds., *Tina Modotti: Una nueva mirada*, 1929 (Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/ Centro de la Imagen, 2000), 32-33 and 126-127.
29 Ibid., 228.
30 Ibid., p. 60.
31 Ibid., p. 61.
32 Both Strand and Modotti were influential on Álvarez Bravo and each spoke resolutely regarding what was to be expected from a “good” photograph. “Bad photography should be understood as that which is produced, one could say, with a kind of inferiority complex, without valuing what photography has to offer as its very own.” Tina Modotti, first published with the title “On Photography” in *Mexican Folkways*, n. 4 (October – December 1929): 196-198. This manifesto is reprinted in Jesús Nieto Sotelo and Elisa Lozano Álvarez, eds., *Tina Modotti: Una nueva mirada*, 1929 (Mexico City, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes/ Centro de la Imagen, 2000), 32-33 and 126-127.
34 Ibid.
35 Las fotografías *Judiciales* son imágenes creadas y utilizadas en las prácticas relacionadas de la fotografía en la prensa amarilla, en la detección del delito, y en el sistema judicial y penal de México.
36 Ibid., p. 68.
37 Ibid., p. 61.
38 Tanto Strand como Modotti influenciaron a Álvarez Bravo y cada uno de ellos habló con seguridad sobre lo que se esperaba de una “buena” fotografía. “Se debe entender por mala fotografía la que se produce, diríamos, con una especie de complejo de inferioridad, sin valorar

Walker Evans’ *A Cypress Swamp, Florida* (1941), for example, included in the exhibition *Pan American Modernism*, demonstrates eloquently how a simple setting may be endowed with unexpected presence and poetic power through photography.


Ibid., 5.


The photograph was in fact not included in the exhibition. Due to its full frontal nudity, Eastman Kodak refused to send it through the mail. See John Mraz, *Looking for Mexico*, 86, referring to Elena Poniatowska, “Manuel Álvarez Bravo (Quinta y última parte),” *La Jornada*, 26 July 1990, 11.

Hopkinson, 62.

Gabara, 8.

Works by Rivera, Siqueiros and other significant Mexican muralists are included in the exhibition *Pan American Modernism* and provide a useful way of thinking about the entwined contexts of muralism and socialism, as well as their impact on artists, such as Álvarez Bravo.


Debroise, 227.

Roberto Tejada, 123.

Gabara, 198.


100 Sara E. Cooper, “Quien no tiene de Congo, tiene de carabali: Representation of blackness in works by Mirta Yáñez, Roberto Diago, y Armando Mariño,” *Chasqui* 39, no. 2 (2010), 54-69.


La muestra *Pan American Modernism* incluye trabajos de Rivera, Siqueiros y otros muralistas mexicanos significativos y ofrece una manera útil de pensar los contextos interrelacionados del muralismo y el socialismo, además del efecto que produjeron en artistas como Álvarez Bravo.


92 Debrose. p. 227.

93 Roberto Tejada. p. 123.

94 Gabara. p. 198.

