

1981 - 2000

GERMÁN RUBIANO CABALLERO

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This book complements *Art of Latin America, 1900-1980* by Marta Traba. In this volume, Colombian historian Germán Rubiano Caballero provides an overview of the arts of Latin America during the last two decades of the twentieth century. He discusses the main exhibitions, trends, influences, artists, and theorists of the period. Illustrated with 40 full-color reproductions, this companion volume has been written with the rigor and methodology of the historian, completing the vision of one of the most important art critics of Latin America.



A graduate in Philosophy and Letters from the National University of Colombia, **Germán Rubiano Caballero** studied art history in 1968-1969 at the Courtauld Institute of the University of London. From 1961 to 1994, he was a professor in the Department of Humanities and the Department of Art at the National University in Santafé de Bogotá. He was named Professor Emeritus upon his retirement, and currently holds the position of Special Professor in the same university. He has authored or co-authored 12 books, among them *Escultura colombiana del siglo XX* (1983) and *El dibujo en Colombia* (1997), and many articles. He has also served on the admissions and certification panel for national and international exhibitions, and as curator for shows and retrospectives. Germán Rubiano Caballero lives in Santafé de Bogotá.

ART OF LATIN AMERICA

1981-2000

GERMÁN RUBIANO CABALLERO

Inter-American Development Bank

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INTRODUCTION

THE WORLD IS CURRENTLY UNDERGOING PROCESSES THAT ARE AT ONCE STARTLING and fascinating. The planet has turned into a veritable global village of 6.5 billion inhabitants. But despite the astonishing technological and scientific feats that mankind has achieved, overpopulation and environmental degradation appear to be irreversible. National borders no longer stand still; the pace of emigration has quickened; and the cultural distinctions that once characterized the peoples of the world well into the second half of the 20th century are becoming blurred.

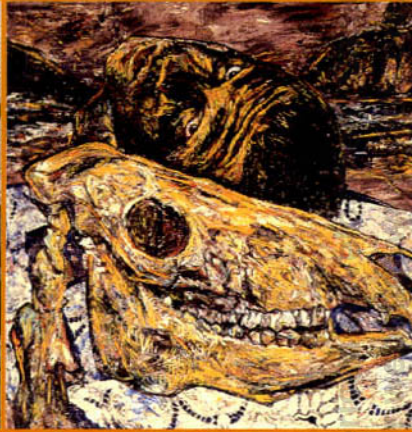
In the political arena, one of the most monumental events of recent times took place in 1991: the disintegration of the USSR. As of that point in time, the United States, which had been playing a hegemonic role on the world stage over the course of the century, became the lone superpower. Nevertheless, age-old repressed ethnic and religious conflicts have continued to break out throughout the world. Furthermore, with regard to the world economic order, the gap between developed countries and the so-called Third World—Latin America, Africa and part of Asia—continues to get wider.

Artistic and cultural manifestations, of course, do not remain unaffected by these processes and events. This is evident in the emergence of post-modernism, a conceptual movement that has set out precisely to express and define the goings-on of the cultural world over the past few decades. In the words of American Todd Gitlin, post-modernism “refers to a particular galaxy of styles and tones in cultural endeavors: pastiche, the void; a sense of exhaustion; a mix of levels, shapes, styles; a taste for copying and repetition; ingenuity that can dissolve commitment into irony; a deep self-consciousness about the formal, fabricated nature of the work; a pleasure in managing surfaces; a rejection of history.”¹ And to illustrate these ideas, Gitlin mentions several cultural expressions that encompass everything from Phillip Johnson’s AT&T building in New York, to Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault’s philosophical texts, by way of Rauschenberg’s serigraphs, architect Robert Venturi’s glass façades, Twyla Tharp’s choreography and William Burroughs’ novels, *inter alia*. In Gitlin’s view, post-modernism does not only constitute a style, but rather “a general orientation.” Employing the term “structure of feeling,” coined by the late English critic Raymond Williams, Gitlin states that post-modernism is about “a

way of seizing and experiencing the world and our location, or dislocation in it.”² As Jean François Lyotard states—quoted here by art historian Alfonso de Vicente—post-modernism would consist of “a condition,” more than a way of being, and it would be about a state of being characterized by the end or the unworkability of modern ideologies.³

But let us turn our attention at this point to Latin America. The countries of the subcontinent vary greatly in many respects, but also have much in common in other respects. Furthermore, we must not forget that Latin America has also been caught up in the above-mentioned historical context. Socioeconomic troubles have persisted and, in many respects, have been on the rise. In the cultural arena, the complex post-modern state of affairs of recent years is shared by all. This is evident in viewing the rich artistic creations of the 1980s and 1990s and in studying the most recent critical thinking. On this subject, Cuban art critic Gerardo Mosquera has stated that “post-modernism is, among other things, a relief. And any relief makes it possible for things to move on. The problem lies in how to gear post-modern changes toward a global economy, the breakdown of the one-size-fits-all solution to problems, decentralization, the ‘everything goes’ mentality, virtual reality, *jouissance*, interest in otherness, and multiculturalism, along with the serious economic, social and ecological problems that the world is facing. And there persist the high levels of poverty that remain unchanged in this ‘new world’ —at least up until now I have not heard anyone speak of ‘post-modern poverty’— and constitutes the greatest scandal of modern times. The problem is especially critical in Latin America and, in general, the periphery...” Mosquera later adds: “Latin America could build the paradigm of the global cybermess, precisely because it finds itself in an intermediate situation, a situation of confluence that makes the fragmentation visible, a world of multiplicity, hybridization and contrasts determined by specific historical developments. Latin America is the ‘Continent of Seminess’, as Néstor García Canclini put it: semi-modern, semi-western, where there is an interaction of a dominant semi-oligarchic order, a semi-industrialized capitalist economy and semi-transforming social movements; a world where modernity can occur after post-modernity. The fragmentary nature of Latin America and the weight that the non-modern still carries in our societies make it possible to symbolize this concept of a pre-modern post-modernism, which is the result of the diversity of interacting structures in the economy, society and culture.”⁴





ARTE DE AMÉRICA LATINA

1981-2000

“Two decades of paradoxes and coexistence, creativity and disdain for the new...a world where everything seems to have a place”

Overview

COMPARING ART PRODUCED THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AS WELL AS IN LATIN America during the first 80 years of the 20th century with the artistic creations of the past two decades reveals an impressive degree of variety in the latter period. These two decades featured schools of representational painting and sculpture that were dubbed with such titles as neo-expressionism, transavant-garde, “bad painting,” neo-geo, neo-conceptualism and appropriationism. If we survey the techniques employed in the art of this period, we find a great deal of installations, large quantities of photographs and many videos. In other words, the period was characterized by a high degree of pluralism and the coexistence of trends and attitudes that ran totally counter to each other. This astonishing variety is more palpable at group art exhibitions such as the Kassel Documenta, the Venice Biennial and the São Paulo Biennial. A few hours of viewing at those shows usually leaves you with the impression that you have just taken a kaleidoscopic look at monumental works of art mixed in with lesser creations and downright mediocre endeavors; highly innovative and original works standing side by side with mere knockoffs; as well as patently artistic creations commingled with true “objects of anxiety,” to use Harold Rosenberg’s apt expression. It would be accurate to say that we are currently experiencing “the decline of the new,” according to critic Irwing Howe; or a loss of enthusiasm for “the value of the new,” according to critic Simón Marchán Fiz. More dramatically, there is a lack of stable purpose and ideals, coupled with the most crude type of commercialization, as Suzi Gablik puts it in her book *Has Modern Art Died?* Alfonso de Vicente maintains that the maxim par excellence that governs in post-modern times is “anything goes.” Stated in another way, in our day and age, people have opted to simultaneously accept or reject the modern and pre-modern, the eclectic tradition and the avant-garde. Nevertheless, in the midst of all this turmoil that has left today’s art devoid of any convincing models—and, therefore, fraught with uncertainty—quite a formidable number of frankly stimulating and high quality pieces by creative artists still crop up. The group of artists behind these works includes many outstanding Latin Americans.

• **FRANZ KRAJCBERG (BRAZIL)**

SEM TÍTULO (SOMBRA PROJETADA)

(UNTITLED, PROJECTED SHADOW).

1997 ♦ WOOD AND NATURAL PIGMENT ♦ 222 X 90 X 45 CM ♦ COLLECTION OF THE ARTIST ♦ PHOTO FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE IDB CULTURAL CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C.



At present, the following artists from Europe and the United States create three-dimensional pieces that can be regarded as major works of art: Magdalena Abakanowicz, Anthony Caro, Eduardo Chillida, Richard Serra, Takis Vassilakis, Christo Javachef, Martin Puryear and Rachel Whiteread. We can find, however, outstanding works of the same caliber produced by Latin American artists such as Cuban Juan Francisco Elso, Polish-born Brazilian Franz Krajcberg, Venezuelan Milton Becerra, Argentinean Hernán Dompé and Colombian Ronny Vayda. In his piece *La transparencia de Dios* [The Transparency of God], executed with tree branches, amate bark paper, jute, iron, volcanic sand and other materials, Elso reflects deeply on the themes of death, the creation of the world, and the heart of America. Krajcberg reminds the world that “Brazil is in flames” and levels serious charges against the depredation of nature by showing fallen and burned trees (according to recent figures, half of the tropical forest has already been destroyed). In Becerra’s installations, containing stone that is often hanging, the artist has drawn inspiration from the cosmic realm and from certain indigenous rituals. Dompé features ancient archaeological objects steeped in modern-day feelings, which, according to Fèvre, constitute “feelings of dissemination, decentralization, breaking, precariousness, change, and ideological disenchantment and lack of faith in across-the-board responses to problems, i.e., responses that are applied indiscriminately to every individual and situation.”⁵ Lastly, Vayda makes beautiful statements



• **RONNY VAYDA (COLOMBIA)**
 TORNAMESA, 1997 ♦ WELDED
 STAINLESS STEEL AND BRICK ♦ 10 X
 10 X 5 M ♦ COLLECTION OF I.D.E.A.
 (INSTITUTO PARA EL DESARROLLO
 DE ANTIOQUIA), MEDELLIN, CO-
 LOMBIA ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF
 CARLOS TOBÓN

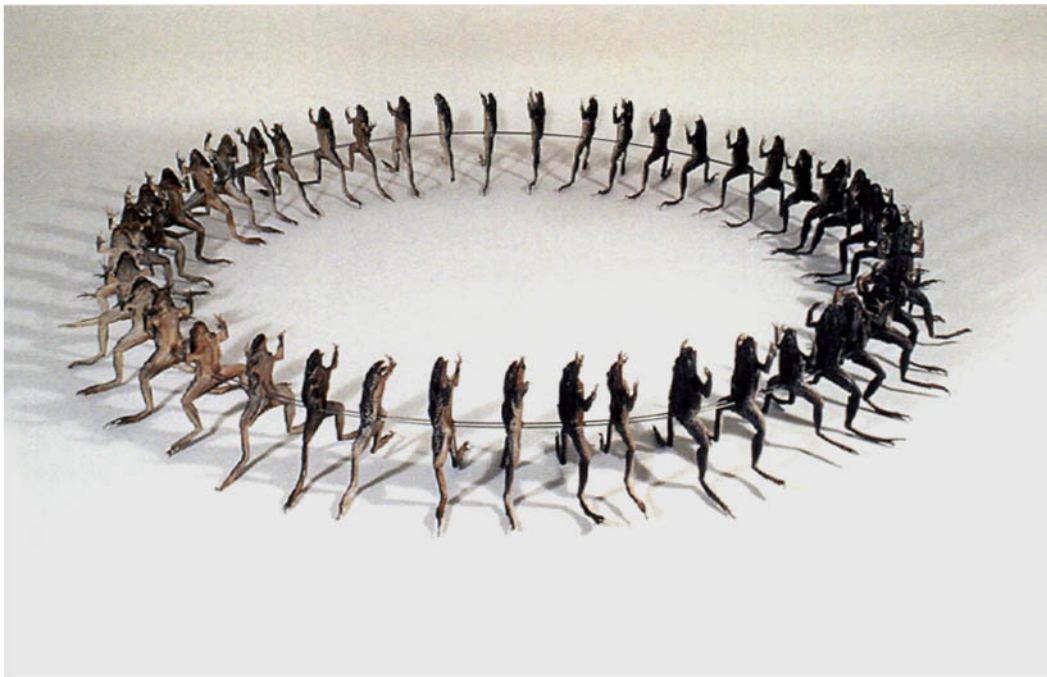
of order and measure through large-format, public art pieces—each one governed by geometry—that grace many sites throughout the city of Medellín, Colombia. The work of these and a few other artists is living proof of today’s eclecticism. It is not an easy task to pick out a common thread to the works of such a diverse group of artists; nevertheless, it is possible to find a common bond among them. They all show concern for new materials, new ways of defining art, new and distressing expressions of man in the late 20th century, or a vehement urge to rein in chaos. Other traits that can be attributed to contemporary artists are a disdain for polished finishes, a zeal for things lacking in beauty, secularization and a concern for the historic, the political, the primitive, the ecological and anything pertaining to extinction and death.

Latin American art, the same as its U.S. and European counterparts, manifests itself in a wide variety of forms. It is, however, an indisputable fact that many of the experimental endeavors coming forth from the artists of this region—outside of the realm of painting and sculpture—are of much greater importance than artwork falling under the category of traditional plastic and visual art. Even though examples of this type of work abound, we must single out two in particular. The first one is Brazilian Cildo Meireles’ *Massão/Missões* or *Cómo construir catedrales* [How to Build Cathedrals]. This is a spectacular piece made up of 600,000 coins arranged on the floor and 200 ox bones placed on the ceiling.

Rising up between the ox bone ceiling and the coin-covered floor stands a fragile and almost imperceptible column of 800 holy wafers. Since the time of its unveiling in Brazil at the exhibition “Misiones–300 años,” which was held to commemorate the Jesuit missions in the south of that country, this work has been presented at several different art shows. The missions took hold in the region by dominating the indigenous population and introducing the raising of livestock. In the end, however, the missions forced the native South American indigenous peoples out of the region or exterminated them. The other outstanding example of this type of work is *Nika uifkana*, a highly poetic work created by Brazilians Roberto Evangelista and Regina Vater. This display consists of 300 gourds set out in a circle with countless bird feathers rising up from the vessels to a window. This work was dedicated to Chico Mendes, the labor leader who worked in rubber taping in the Amazon region and was murdered by order of a landowner in 1988. “Nika uifkana” means “union of the people” in Tucano, one of the indigenous languages of the Amazon. Three other prime examples of experimental endeavors, also worthy of mention, are found in Colombia. Even though the artists of this country have particularly excelled at sculpture, especially in the abstract style, two of the most outstanding examples of experimental work in the last decade were both put forth by Doris Salcedo. These are *Imágenes de duelo* (1990) [Images of Mourning] and *Desafiante* (1992) [Defiant]. The latter was prepared for the international group exhibition titled “Ante América” held in Bogotá. In both works, the artist used ready-made, prepared or contrived objects to allude to violence and death. In *Imágenes de duelo*, Salcedo set out packages of white plastered shirts pierced through with metal rods, metal bed frames covered with animal fiber, and small bags filled with bones. In *Desafiante* (also known as *Atrabiliarios*), the artist piled up empty boxes made of animal fiber and placed women’s shoes in niches that were specially built into the wall. The shoes were barely visible because each niche was covered with the same animal fiber as the boxes. The amazing thing about this is that the shoes that the artist used had come from the homes of *desaparecidas*, women who were missing for different reasons, including political ones, thus constituting a painful reminder for their families. The third example of this type of art in Colombia is the installation *Comentario jardín vertical* (1992) [Vertical Garden Commentary] by María Fernanda Cardoso, which was featured in the exhibition “Places” at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1999. This piece depicts nature in plastic: a vertical garden, sowed with industrial products; a garden that never wilts, with bunches of flowers that come out of a wall on which there appear drawings of arches made with graphite (an allusion to many cemeteries in Latin America and southern Europe, where the gravestones often have niches for vases into which people put artificial flowers).

Sculpture

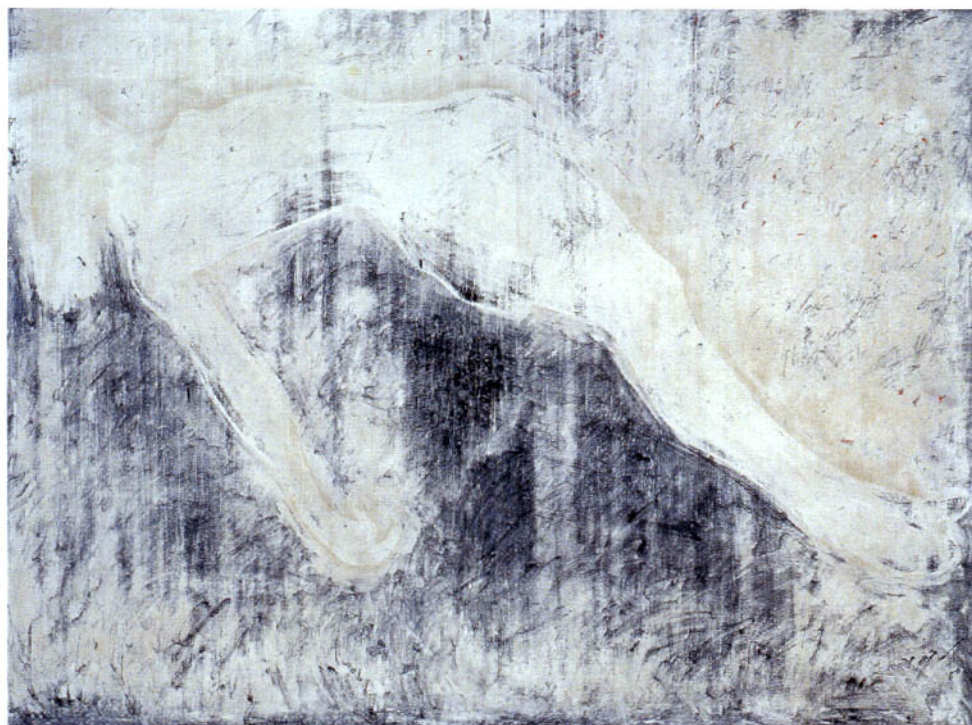
Throughout the 20th century, sculptors have continued to use traditional materials as well as the millenary techniques of sculpting and bronze casting. Never-



• **MARÍA FERNANDA CARDOSO**
 (COLOMBIA), UNTITLED, 1990 ♦
 DISSECTED FROGS AND METAL ♦
 152.4 X 152.4 X 10 CM ♦ PHOTO
 COURTESY OF LA GALERIA EL
 MUSEO, BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA.

theless, the two most typical types of three-dimensional work of this century find their roots in Picasso's first assemblages, beginning with the guitar made of metal sheets, *Guitarra* (1912), and the "ready-mades" which were unveiled with Duchamp's bicycle wheel on the kitchen chair (1913). The development of these two types of three-dimensional artwork, which were often combined with constructions consisting of ready-made materials and objects, has made its mark on sculpture in the 1980s and 1990s. More recently, however, there has been a predominance of installations—often originating in three and even two-dimensional works—whose roots can be traced back to the "environments" that appeared at the end of the 1950s—although some may even harken back to Schwitters' trailblazing piece *Merzbau* in the 1920s. Albeit many installations from all over the world are downright inane, one cannot deny the value of the ones listed above and of others such as *Proyecto pérgamo* [Project Pergamum] or *Una estética para la resistencia* (1992) [Aesthetics for the Resistance] by New York-based Chilean Alfredo Jaar. The work was set up on the staircase and the neighboring wall of the altar of Zeus of Pergamum in Berlin. Displayed are the names of the German cities where assaults on refugees and foreigners took place at that point in time, as well as photographs of some of the defeated figures of the famous frieze of the Hellenistic period, together with skinheads and the sinister letters SS. It is also fitting at this point to mention the participation of Cuban Ricardo Rodríguez Brey at the Kassel Documenta of 1992. In a staged setting, Rodríguez Brey presented feathered strokes and pieces of broken glass, as if birds of prey had done away with all living species, including man. Finally, Venezuelan Francisco Bugallo's work *Imagen y semejanza* (1999) [Image and Likeness] is also worthy of mention. In this piece, the artist recreates Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*

• **FRANCISCO BUGALLO** (VENEZUELA) *PIEDAD DE VILLENEUVE-LES-AVIGNON*, 1991 ♦ OIL ON CANVAS ♦ 162 X 218 CM ♦ COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, CARACAS, VENEZUELA ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, CARACAS, VENEZUELA



(canvas on wood), and Holbein's *Christ Dead at the Sepulcher*. The Bugallo installation constitutes a metaphor for the current state of affairs in a world that is in the process of a shipwreck, and for mankind, which is disoriented, hopeless and desperately seeking salvation. The above-mentioned works of art represent outstanding examples from the past two decades and have the further virtue of being designed with a mind towards a clear, moral concern. In comparison to many of the pieces of sculpture produced today, which evince mediocrity and emptiness, the works described above serve an important social purpose. We must encourage this type of undertaking in which the artist expresses specific content so that three-dimensional, plastic art does not stray from its course and, particularly, does not lose sight of or confuse its steadfast intention or determination to continually undergo a process of renewal.

Painting

In tracing the development of Latin American art over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, it would be fair to say that painting made a strong comeback during the first of these two decades, particularly in the representational style of the discipline. This comeback followed a certain predominance of experimental or conceptual art during the 1970s. The 1990s, however, were characterized by a mindset of deviation from the norm and, therefore, a return to different uncon-



• ARNALDO ROCHE RABELL
(PUERTO RICO) TELL ME IF WE ARE
NOT FEEDING A DEAD HORSE.
1995 ♦ OIL ON CANVAS ♦ 91.5 X
121.9 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF
GALERIA BOTELLO, SAN JUAN,
PUERTO RICO

ventional artistic manifestations, especially installations and video-installations. Nevertheless, there was no shortage of other types of artistic endeavors at this time, such as performances and land art. Many of these pieces showed a concern for reflection on social history, culture as memory, and the intimate self of the artist.

The point of reference for painting was European art of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which was characterized by the rebirth of easel paintings, often in large format and presented in an expressionistic style. This neo-expressionism had its international debut at the “Zeitgeist” exhibition held in Berlin in 1982, at which artists from several different countries were represented, including the United States. This show made it clear that, with few exceptions, there has been a return to an emotionally representational and more passionate and brutal art. Art had reached back into the expressionism of the early 20th century and was linked to the new objectivity, the new representational style, and the works of artists who were particularly concerned with “uncultured” or “non-highbrow” or outright crude manifestations. Many Latin American artists were connected with this neo-expressionism, and here we shall cite the names of some of them: Mexicans Arturo Marty and Germán Venegas; New York-based Cuban Luis Cruz Azaceta; Puerto Rican Arnaldo Roche Rabell; Colombian Lorenzo Jaramillo; Venezuelan Octavio Russo; Brazilians Sirón Franco, Alex Vallauri and Luiz Zerbini; Argentineans Armando Rearte, Ana Eckell and Guillermo Kuitca; Chilean Jorge Tacla; and Ecuadorian Marcelo Aguirre.

• **SIRON FRANCO (BRAZIL)**
OBJETO MÁGICO XXI [MAGICAL
OBJECT XXI], 1994 ♦ OIL ON CAN-
VAS ♦ 190 X 180 CM ♦ PHOTO BY
GUILLERMO SERRANO, COURTESY
OF ELITE FINE ART, MIAMI, FLORIDA



Less Conventional Alternatives

Art in the 1990s was subject to many different influences. As a point of departure for these influences, we can take the unorthodox work of Joseph Beuys, who died in 1986. According to Suzi Gablik, “teaching always was one of the main characteristics of his [Beuys] creative life. But what he is most concerned about is the capacity for radical transformation that schools of thought, matter and substances, states of mind and political and social reality [all] have.”⁶

The artists listed below are some of the most influential, who merit recognition because of their use of the most diverse and unusual materials, the symbolic weight of their endeavors, their eagerness to make bold statements of gender, race and identity, as well as their achievement in breaking down for good the boundaries between traditional art and installations: Louise Bourgeois, Robert Rauschenberg (who in 1985 exhibited in Mexico, Chile and Venezuela after exchanging experiences with artists and craftsmen from several different places in those countries), Joseph Kosuth, Eva Hesse, Rebeca Horn, Christian Boltanski, Tony Cragg, Katharina Fritsch, Jeff Koons and Bill Viola. Many Latin American artists have also distinguished themselves for these same reasons. This group of artists includes Luis Camnitzer, whose important body of conceptual work dates back to the 1970s; Hélio Oiticica, who achieved



greater fame in 1980, following his death; Cildo Meireles, who became world renowned in the early 1970s; and Alfredo Jaar, who is widely recognized for his installations that employ photographs, mirrors and boxes of light. A group of Latin American artists known as the “Grupo de los 13,” who were sponsored by the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC) in Buenos Aires and promoted by Jorge Glusberg at different exhibitions and in a variety of publications, must also be added to the list. Additionally, several Cubans painters, particularly artists who showed their work at the exhibition “Volumen I” (1981), such as José Bedia, Flavio Garcandía and Rubén Torres Llorca, must be included.

The following artists can be cited as examples of creators of unconventional art over the past two decades: Mexican Miguel Calderón, who makes films, videos, photographs and installations that highlight a very loud kitsch (in addition to participating in musical groups); Cuban-American Félix González-Torres, who died in 1996, and whose works ranged from pieces consisting of piles of paper with printed text and piles of candy for the taking, to billboards of the artist’s photographs for display in the city; Costa Rican Priscilla Monge, creator of objects, installations and videos in which she contrasts the feminine and masculine; Colombian José Alejandro Restrepo, who has vast experience in video installations that encompass a wide variety of anthropological, historical and social issues; Venezuelan Javier Téllez, who makes installations such as *La extracción de la piedra de la locura* [The Extraction of the Stone of Madness] (1996), in which the artist recreates a decaying hospital containing a psychopathological art workshop for the stimulation of creativity in patients; Brazilian Ernesto Neto, whose creations made of nylon stockings, tiny lead balls, nails, cumin and curry are indicative of the wide variety of materials that the artists of his country utilize in the never-ending quest for new life experiences that go beyond the visual; Argentinean Jorge Macchi, creator of objects (often made out of discarded everyday materials) and installations in which, according to his own statements, he is concerned with “showing the coexistence between the sacred and unattainable and the every-day, ephemeral and devalued”;⁷ and Peruvian Ricardo Wiesse, who along with photographers and video makers literally “painted” ten gigantic cantutas (native flowers from his country) directly on

• **PRISCILLA MONGE (COSTA RICA)** *LECCIÓN DE MAQUILLAJE* (MAKE-UP LESSON). 1998 (SEQUENCE) ♦ BETACAM ♦ 3:45 IN DURATION. DIGITAL IMAGE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

• **RICARDO WIESSE (PERU)** *LÍNEAS SUCESIVAS* (SUCCESSIVE LINES), 1995 ♦ INSTALLATION IN THE RUINS OF CAJAMARQUILLA, LIMA. EIGHTEEN MODULES OF TRUPAN, SAND AND PIGMENTS ♦ VARIOUS SIZES ♦ PHOTO BY EDUARDO GONZALES, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



the Andes mountains, as a tribute to the students and professors who disappeared from the campus of a university and were found dead and buried two years later. The list of such artists who pursue experimental endeavors could go on ad infinitum.

Photography

At present, photography constitutes one of the most fertile fields in the visual arts of Latin America. In this book, only five of the many names of noteworthy photographers from this region of the world shall be cited as a general overview of work in this milieu. The group includes Brazilian Sebastião Salgado (1944), Mexican Flor Garduño (1957), Guatemalan Luis González Palma (1957), Cuban Marta María Pérez (1959) and Brazilian Vic Muniz (1961). Salgado, who worked at Magnum Photos and Gamma Agency between 1973 and 1994, represents the tradition of photographic journalism. He became the photographer of the working man, the masses that toil in subhuman conditions, the thousands of refugees who have fled from their native towns for ideological, religious or racial reasons or as victims of natural disasters. His images make a lasting impact on the viewer not only because of the themes he addresses, but also because of their



• FLOR GARDUÑO (MEXICO)

MUJER QUE SUEÑA (DREAMING WOMAN), 1991 ♦ PHOTOGRAPH REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF ARTIST ♦ 40.2 X 50.8 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF SICARDI GALLERY, LATIN AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY ART, HOUSTON, TEXAS (© FLOR GARDUÑO)

disconcerting beauty. Salgado is a great artist who creates impeccable, fine grain, carefully composed photographs, manipulating light and shadow as well as the best of painters, forever mindful of bringing human dignity to the fore. In the view of this Brazilian photographer, “history is an endless spiral of oppression, humiliation and devastation, but also of the infinite human ability to survive all manners of plagues, all evil, even the cruelest thing of all: ambition.”⁸ Flor Garduño engages in a type of photography particularly linked to cultural anthropology. She has published several books, the most famous being *Testigos del tiempo*, which she worked on in Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador and Peru, and which shows, under very controlled lighting conditions, the indigenous population in its everyday life and surrounded by the landscape. In photographs such as *Reina* (1989) and *Mujer que sueña* (1991), she not only exalts the status of subjects plucked from the ancestral record, but usually transports us to a world that, no doubt, feels distant and mysterious: the “queen” poses priestess-like, donning a prickly pear cactus crown, and “the dreaming woman,” viewed completely from overhead, sleeps alongside two iguanas. González Palma is for the most part an artist who endeavors to express, through symbolic iconography, problems of a social and existential order. This photographer prepares his mestizo (mixed indigenous and Spanish blood) models, dressing them up, doing them up theatrically and, then uses a sepia-tone technique on the print. Next, he employs wax to create textures, tears the paper, sticks them together with tape, superposes images on them and, at times, creates veritable “polyptychs” or triptychs with more than

• **LUIS GONZÁLEZ PALMA** (GUATEMALA) *AMÉRICA*, 1998 ♦ HAND-PAINTED PHOTOGRAPH, SILVER LEAF AND CROWN ♦ 101.6 X 99 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF SICARDI GALLERY, LATIN AMERICAN CONTEMPORARY ART, HOUSTON, TEXAS



three panels. The result of this process is a highly elaborate, showy and nostalgic series of photographs that make religious references to Christianity or universal mythology. Marta María Pérez employs her own body in her work, mounting a true mise en scene to evoke personal experiences that specifically allude to motherhood and are linked to popular beliefs. According to Gerardo Mosquera, Pérez's work "is the only case of a 'feminism' focused on Afro-American world views. It also constitutes an example of the internalization of these visions in the new Cuban art."⁹ Lastly, Vic Muniz, as a versatile conceptual artist, questions the idea of perception and stresses the unstable nature of reality. He works with thin wires or wool strings to design objects that he then attaches to photographs, and with materials such as soil, sugar or melted chocolate, to represent, in his own way, images taken from reproductions of the history of art or from common photographs obtained in different places.

Perpetuating Traditional Crafts

It is necessary to point out that in addition to the group of fairly young creators cited above (the youngest is the Mexican born in 1971, and the oldest is the Pe-

ruvian born in 1954), many other painters, sculptors, draftsmen and print artists, despite their young age, remain faithful to working in traditional crafts. Examples include Ecuadorian Jorge Velarde (1969), who makes very fine self-portraits in oil on wood; Venezuelan Luis Lizardo (1956), an abstract painter and draftsman whose work shows naturalistic shades; Argentine Eduardo Alvarez (1966), a painter of images that look hyper-realistic at first glance, but yet are strangely blurred; Colombian José Antonio Suárez (1955), an artist known to draw in every available medium as well as a print artist who deals in a myriad of motifs, from the most simple and prosaic to designs taken from art history; Brazilian Osmar Dalio (1959), a sculptor who builds his pieces in the tradition of his compatriots Weissman and De Castro; and Mexican Julio Galán (1958), a painter who practices a type of iconography in which his personal life becomes mixed together with a subtle surrealism, rich in irony. Over the course of the last two decades of the 20th century, great works of art have also been developed by artists such as Nicaraguan Armando Morales, Uruguayan Nelson Ramos, Argentinean Antonio Seguí, Colombian Santiago Cárdenas, and Mexican Francisco Toledo. The work of all of these artists has greatly contributed to the prestige of Latin American art.

At present, we are blessed with a cast of artists whose work is so rich that it is pretty much impossible to define what art should be and, for that matter, what we could call Latin American art. The only sure thing is that there is a plentiful crop of artistic works (plastic, visual, conceptual, etc.) that have been made in Latin America by creators from more than 20 countries. Despite the ease of communication and exchange in this day and age, each one of these artists has succeeded in remaining distinct and unique, though more attuned to the art scene in the United States and Europe than to the art world in the rest of Latin America. As the 20th century came to a close, all signs seemed to point to a Latin America that does not constitute a homogenous bloc; a subcontinent with many historical, ethnic, political, social and cultural differences, although we must not forget that there are also many significant common features.

Exhibitions: Conflicts and Endeavors

Over the last two decades, many Latin American art exhibitions have been held both in Europe and the United States, as well as on the subcontinent. Most of these exhibitions have been group shows of an historical nature that focused on a particular period or group of artists who were selected because of certain common traits, as well as individual retrospectives or shows based on a specific group of artistic works. At least one Latin American artist usually takes part at the major international shows, even representatives from the most recent generation, but most of the time the Latin American artists are way outnumbered by participants from elsewhere. Latin American art is currently enjoying worldwide prestige and, at times, this situation leaves the impression that we are experiencing a “boom” similar to the literary boom of earlier decades. The reason for this is no secret: Latin



• **JORGE VELARDE (ECUADOR)**
FOSA COMÚN (COMMON GRAVE), 1999 ♦ OIL ON CANVAS
 ♦ 170 X 320 CM ♦ PRIVATE COLLECTION, GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR
 ♦ PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

America has very good artists in both conventional and unconventional art, and a substantial group of critics and curators have been promoting these artists intelligently and diligently.

The exhibition entitled “Art of the Fantastic: Latin America, 1920-1987,”¹⁰ which was held at the Indianapolis Art Museum in 1987, drew one major criticism: how could the show be saddled with such a restrictive label. Very few of the works by the selected artists would qualify as being “art of the fantastic,” which is actually a concept gleaned from literature, or more precisely, from the particular Latin American literature created by the likes of García Márquez. Could Torres García, Armando Reverón, Fernando Botero, Beatriz González, Rocío Maldonado and Germán Venegas be regarded as “artists of the fantastic”? The exhibition in fact featured many representational, realistic, abstract geometric and conceptual artists who have no proclivity toward the surrealistic. Critics such as Mari Carmen Ramírez, curator of Latin American art at the University of Texas in Austin’s Blanton Museum, argued that this type of marketing unfairly pigeonholes Latin American art and leads to misconceptions about it, particularly in the industrialized world.¹¹

Many of the artists who belong to the period of history covered by this book took part in exhibitions that were held to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the discovery of America. The following paragraphs offer only a sampling of the participating artists who were born after 1945 and some of the shows held between 1990 and 1993:



• GUILLERMO KUITCA (ARGENTINA) *ISLANDIA (ICELAND)*, 1988 ♦
OIL ON CANVAS ♦ 140 X 160 CM ♦
PHOTO BY FABIAN ALZATE, COURTESY OF LA GALERIA EL MUSEO, BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

“Figuración Fabulación: 75 años de pintura en América Latina,” curated by Venezuelan critic Roberto Guevara, held at the Museo de Bellas Artes de Caracas (1990). Participating artists: Colombians Antonio Barrera (1948-1990) and Alvaro Barrios (1945); Cubans José Bedia (1959) and Ana Mendieta (1949-1985); Brazilians Sirón Franco (1947) and Tunga-Antonio José de Mello Mourao; Mexican Julio Galán (1958); Argentinean Guillermo Kuitca (1961); Venezuelans Pájaro-Juan Vicente Hernández (1952), Pancho Quilici (1954), and Carlos Zepa (1950); and Puerto Rican Arnaldo Roche (1955).

“Transcontinental: Nine Latin American Artists,” curated by English art critic Guy Brett, in collaboration with Ikon Gallery of Birmingham and Cornerhouse of Manchester (1990). Presenting artists: Brazilians Waltercio Caldas (1946), Roberto Evangelista (1946), Jac Leirner (1961), Cildo Meireles (1948) and Tunga; and Chilean Juan Dávila (1946).

“Ante América,” curated by Gerardo Mosquera, Carolina Ponce de León and Rachel Weiss, held at the Luis Angel Arango Library of Bogotá (1992). Featured artists included Brazilian Maria Teresa Alves (1961); Uruguayan Carlos Capelán (1948); Chileans Arturo Duclos (1959) and Alfredo Jaar (1956); Cubans Juan Francisco Elso (1956-1988) and Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas (1962); Venezuelan José Antonio Hernández-Díez (1964); and Colombians Doris Salcedo (1958), José Antonio Suárez (1955) and María Fernanda Cardoso (1963).



• **CARLOS CAPELÁN (URUGUAY)**
 UNTITLED, 1994-95 ♦ INDIAN INK
 ON BARK (PARCHMENT PAPER) ♦
 120 X 240 CM ♦ PHOTO BY
 FABIÁN ALZATE, COURTESY OF LA
 GALERÍA EL MUSEO, BOGOTÁ,
 COLOMBIA

“Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century,” curated by American critic Waldo Rasmussen, at the New York Museum of Modern Art (1993). The participating artists were Brazilians Frida Baranek (1961), Leda Catunda (1961), Cildo Meireles, Ana Mendieta, José Resende (1945), and Tunga; Argentinean Jacques Bedel (1947); Mexican Rocío Maldonado (1951); Puerto Rican Arnaldo Roche; and Venezuelan Carlos Zerpa.

Lastly, “Cartografías,” curated by Brazilian critic Ivo Mesquita, held at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, Canada (1993). Participants included Colombians José Bedia and Germán Botero (1946); Cuban Marta María Pérez (1959); Brazilian José Leonilson (1957-1993); Venezuelan Alfredo Wenemoser (1954); and Mexican Nahum Zenil (1947).

The above-cited shows were prepared by recognized critics and curators and presented at major art institutions. The exhibitions “Ante América” and “Cartografías” traveled abroad. The fact that the names of more than 80 artists who are linked to the subcontinent (and were born after 1945) appeared on the lists of presenters at these six exhibitions bears witness to the richness of Latin American art, which obviously encompasses a wide variety of tendencies. Some of these artists have had important careers and become well known on the international art scene, while others are considered to be local artists, that is, they are only known throughout their native countries. Several of these artists have their very own style, others are endeavoring to find a unique means of expression, while others simply follow the general trends of the art world without injecting much originality into their own work. In that sense, the wide range in the quality of art produced in Latin America pretty much mirrors the rest of the world.

Of all of the art exhibitions mentioned in this section, “Figuración

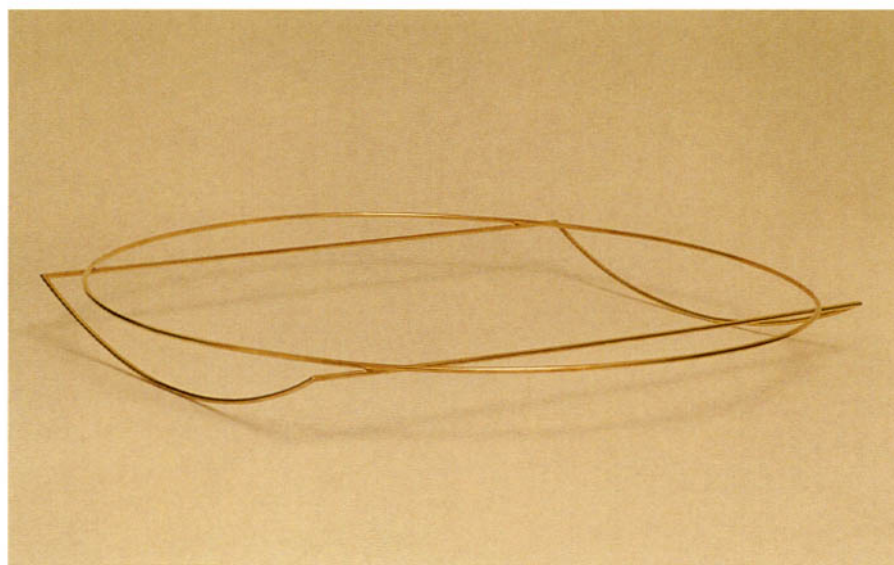


Fabulación: 75 años de pintura en América Latina is perhaps the easiest to review. The title is explicit inasmuch as it mentions the craft—painting—and the presence of representational art with a penchant for the marvelous and extraordinary. According to its curator, Roberto Guevara, “the conceptual support of the exhibition is fanciful representational art, whose double makeup makes it possible to approach the expressive discourse in an exacting manner and, at the same time, leave enough freedom to it so that it is mainly the artists’ imaginations that lead the spontaneous and open narration.” Although no chronological sequence was followed in the presentation of the pieces at this exhibition, the paintings were arranged in thematic groups (based on units of recurring motifs and related propositions): Between Humor, Violence and History; Natural Kingdoms, Fantastical Kingdoms, and the Rebellion of the Depths; The Stage of the Visible; and The Stage of the Possible and New Humanism.¹² It is plain to see that this exhibition focused on representational art of the fantastic. It was deliberately restricted to this aspect of Latin American art, which has many important exponents, including artists from the past two decades of the 20th century: Pancho Quilici’s vast landscapes, full of architectural references and infused with historical reminders; Guillermo Kuitca’s close-up scenes of characters who allude to private and social dramas; and Arnaldo Roche’s powerful beings, as real as they are fanciful.

Under the curatorship of Guy Brett¹³—one of the most well-versed European critics in avant-garde Latin American art from the sixties—“Transcontinental” focuses on examples of art from only three South American countries: Argentina, Brazil and Chile. The exhibition highlights the contemporary nature

• **ALFREDO WENEMOSER (VENEZUELA)** UNTITLED, 1976 ♦ HELIOGRAPHY ON PAPER, SERIGRAPH ON CEMENT AND BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS ♦ 30 X 135 X 90 CM ♦ COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, CARACAS, VENEZUELA ♦ PHOTO BY MIGUEL ÁNGEL CLEMENTE, COURTESY OF THE MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES OF CARACAS, VENEZUELA

• **WALTÉRCIO CALDAS (BRAZIL)**
DISSIPATORI 1 (1987) ♦ POLISHED
 METAL ♦ 2 M DIAMETER X 20 CM
 HIGH ♦ PHOTO FROM THE AR-
 CHIVES OF THE IDB CULTURAL
 CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C.



of some pursuits that have not drawn on the work of any Europeans or Americans, and make references to the particular situations and problems of these countries. These endeavors have materialized in the form of unconventional art work, executed with a variety of unusual materials such as magnets, feathers, bones and potatoes, as well as in the form of painting and photography. These are highly original creations, in several instances of a metaphorical nature, which range broadly from the abstract and conceptual (Caldas and Grippo) to the more prosaic and devalued (Dittborn and Jac Leirner).

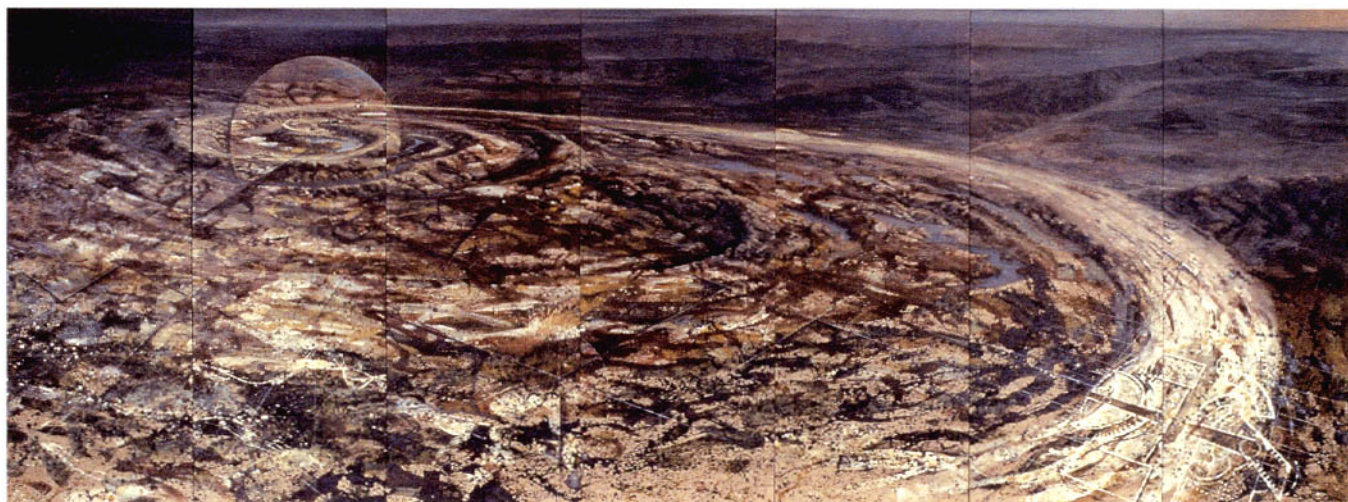
The 1992 exhibition “Ante América” is a declaration of the multiculturalism seen by Mosquera throughout the American continent, including the United States. According to the curator, “the selection encompasses the works of artists of multicultural roots—Afro or Native American or Caribbean artists, for example—in order to establish a nexus in imagery, beliefs and artistic practices. Therefore, there is participation of artists from the Latin American immigrant communities in the United States, as well as ethno-cultural groups of the same Latin American origin who are established there in that country, such as the Chicanos. Aboriginal artists of North America also take part, because they belong to the great ethno-cultural Indo-American branch and share with their brothers and sisters of the south a similar history and social situation. The same criteria has been used for the ‘imported aborigines,’ as Lipschutz called them, including Afro-American creators, whose work is more linked to the Caribbean, sharing the rich heritage of Africa in America.”¹⁴ The show explores the permanent relationships of the artistic works with their cultural and social contexts in Latin America. There are obvious connections to tradition, the masses and the vernacular, but also connections of the creators’ personal expressions to their surroundings on a sexual, economic and political level. “Ante

América” as a whole is therefore complex and unusual. The artists come from different generations, worldviews, religious and political beliefs, ideas and creative expressions. Nevertheless, Mosquera considers that the exhibition must be viewed as “a discourse of integration...as an enticement to view the art of the continent and the continent from the art, in a way that takes the problems of the region more into account.”¹⁵

The exhibition of the New York Museum of Modern Art, which was curated by Rasmussen (and several advisors), has been very controversial for reasons that range from the high number of pieces that were put on display (400 works by almost 100 artists), to the strictly chronological order used to present the art works. However, it cannot be denied that “Latin American Artists of the 20th Century”¹⁶ featured a major group of Latin American creators of art who were selected because of the world-class quality of their work and not because of how well-known they are in their respective countries, according to the explanation provided by the curator. The 22 artists belonging to the period that is the subject of this book are, for the most part, of a high caliber and represent the major trends of art on the subcontinent. The list includes representational artists such as Galán, Rocío Maldonado, Kuitca, Roche and Zerpa, and unconventional artists such as Bedel, Caldas, Meireles and Tunga. The list of participating artists at this exhibition is headed by Brazil, with the highest number of representatives (nine artists), followed by two Argentineans, two Cubans, two Chileans and two Mexicans.

Lastly, “Cartografías” is a show prepared by the Brazilian critic Ivo Mesquita for the Winnipeg Art Gallery. According to the curator, it sought to “present a selection of the contemporary ‘Latin American’ artistic body of work and participate in the current debate on this supposed artistic category.”¹⁷ For this purpose, the exhibition takes on the role of a cartographer (the person who detects unevenness in the landscape and points out ways to gain access through the terrain) and attempts, during these post-modern times, to design new maps to reveal other worlds in the highly complex artistic panorama of today’s world. A total of 14 very different artists participated in this show, and it is not very clear why each one was chosen. By no means am I implying that a lack of quality is evident in the work of any of them, but rather that there is no apparent relationship between any of the artists, or if such a relationship does exist, it would indeed be difficult to identify. The pieces presented include sculptures made out of a variety of materials, paintings and representational drawings, installations closely tied to painting or verging on sculptures, as well as photography. Because of the inclusion of this last discipline, this show is an exception to the rule, since photographs are usually excluded from plastic or visual art exhibitions. Nevertheless, the show falls into the trap of post-modern prejudice, that is, it labors under the false notion that Latin American art is synonymous with a hodgepodge of art.

In conjunction with the show “Ante América,” the curators also organized the photography exhibition entitled “Cambio de Foco” [Change of Focus], which included works by Cuba’s Consuelo Castañeda (1958) and Rogelio López-Gory (1953); Brazil’s Mario Cravo Neto (1947); Mexico’s Graciela Iturbide (1942); Argentina’s Leandro Katz (1938) and Gerardo Suter (1957);



• **PANCHO QUILICI (VENEZUELA)**

HACIA UNA VISIÓN IN Y EVOLUTIVA
(TOWARD AN INWARD AND EVOLU-
TIONARY VISION), 1991 ♦ OIL AND
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS MOUNTED
ON WOOD ♦ POLYPTYCH OF SEVEN
PANELS ♦ 300 X 305 CM TOTAL ♦
COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF
FINE ART, CARACAS, VENEZUELA ♦
PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEO
DE BELLAS ARTES OF CARACAS,
VENEZUELA

the Dominican Republic's Martín López (1955); Puerto Rico's Néstor Millán (1960); and Colombia's Miguel Angel Rojas (1946). According to Carolina Ponce de León, "the different approaches to the relationship between art and the cultural context present in 'Cambio de Foco' offer the opportunity to see multiple aspects of contemporary Latin American photography and the particular bias that it takes as an option to explore latent symbols of a reality obliterated by superficial conceptions."¹⁸ Even though the overall quality of the show is first rate, the work of three participants must be highlighted: Mario Cravo Neto, Graciela Iturbide, and Gerardo Suter. Like his father, Cravo Neto (also included in "Cartografías") was originally a sculptor. His photographs, impeccable both in color (on exteriors of Bahía) as well as in black and white, seem to allude to the magic of black culture. In the midst of shallow and dark spaces, human subjects and common objects stand out in beautiful black and white contrast, covering a surprising gamut of grayish tones. Graciela Iturbide was Manuel Alvarez Bravo's assistant. Her photographs of people (including celebrities) in different scenarios throughout the world (from Nayarit and Juchitán, Mexico to Stockholm, Paris or anywhere else) transcend the everyday and offer an unusual view of people, as well as their social and cultural surroundings. As Carlos Monsiváis states: "Graciela has seen painting, theatre and, of course, photography, and her idea of composition (focus and framing) is inspired by a variety of cultural traditions and fragments of the successive stages of the avant-garde. There are echoes of surrealism and of abstract artists, of Edward Weston and of Alfred Stieglitz, of documentary realism and of the ethnographic practice of Paul Strand and of Margaret Bourke-White."¹⁹ Finally, Gerardo Suter, based in Mexico since 1970, made a name for himself with photographs shrouded in the mystery of pre-Columbian walls and facades. Since 1988, he has been using the human body as a subject, with an emphasis on texture of the skin and ritual.

Although in Suter's original series he altered the images he photographed during the process of development, lately he has preferred to tamper with the subject of the photograph instead. Recently, he has also been producing computerized images that, by his own preference, are presented as a part of installations.

Biennials

Over the last two decades in Latin America, there have been an increasing number of group shows where artists may contrast their work with one another. The Biennial of Havana debuted in 1984 and has become specialized in the art of Third World countries, with an emphasis on Latin America. The International Biennial of Cuenca, Ecuador was first held in 1987, the Biennial of the Caribbean and Central America was first held in the Dominican Republic in 1992, and both the Biennial of Mercosur in Porto Alegre (Brazil) and the Biennial of Lima opened in 1997. Nevertheless, the art world of the countries on the sub-continent is still more in tune with artistic events and trends in Europe and the United States than in Latin America. Atlantic coast countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Venezuela are particularly geared towards the art world of the great cities abroad. Anywhere in Latin America, an artist or any other professional who achieves world renown, usually as a result of commercial success, immediately becomes a member of an elite club. The artist is then considered a special celebrity who has finally "made it" by entering the "mainstream" of the countries of the First World. For this reason, even though there are some common characteristics of Latin American art, it makes more sense to specifically address the artists of each Latin American country. This enables us to identify specific characteristics of each individual or of groups of artists, as well as to call attention to the most outstanding figures. This approach shall be followed using the artists of Mexico as a point of departure, making our way south to conclude with the countries of the Southern Cone.

Regions and Countries

Mesoamerica

In 1985, a group show of artists from the same generation (almost all born in the 1940s and 1950s) was held at the Museo Rufino Tamayo in Mexico City. Luis Roberto Vera wrote of the event: "Rich and varied, the art of Mexico today is presented to us in all its wide diversity. Today, just as in any historical period, there coexists different generations with different tendencies and training. These generations are not only distinct but sometimes even opposites. However, rather than being in confrontation, these positions are complementary. And together with the work of painters, photographers and sculptors who

are still living, we also possess all of the manifestations of our cultural past, probably the most extensive and longstanding of all of Latin America,. They are just as alive and relevant as the work of our living artists.”²⁰ This first-rate exhibition had something for everyone: painters, draftsmen, sculptors, both representational and abstract art, and a few photographers, including Gerardo Suter. Some of the participants also took part in other exhibitions during the years that immediately followed. These artists included Alejandro Arango (1950), Javier de la Garza (1954), Rocío Maldonado (1951) and Germán Venegas (1959), who were part of the Mexican art boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s. They undertook a type of representational art that was partly characterized by the manners, colors and motifs of the Mexican school of the early 20th century. Nevertheless, in addition to the works of Ismael Vargas (1945), Dulce María Núñez (1959) and Julio Galán (1958), to mention only a few, there were quite a few artistic creations influenced by neo-expressionists, such as Arturo Marty (1949), Alejandro Arango and Germán Venegas—who in the last few years has focused more on bas-relief— and even the abstract creations of Gabriel Macotella (1954) and Miguel Castro Leñero (1956). One name in representational art stands out from the names of other Mexican artists who have worked in this area during the latter half of the 20th century. This is Nahum Zenil (1945), whose mixed technique and, to a great extent, autobiographic drawings, revolve around his homoerotic inclinations and the social prejudices attached to these inclinations. We cannot fail to mention the great strides made by women in Mexican art. In addition to the above-cited female artists, Sylvia Ordóñez and Georgina Quintana (both born in 1956) are noteworthy. Other Mexican representational artists include Enrique Guzmán (1952-1986), who produced a modest-sized surrealist and anti-establishment body of work which, in the view of some, was a harbinger of the neo-nationalism of the 1980s; Sergio Hernández (1957), who, like Tamayo and Toledo, is a native of Oaxaca, and whose body of work in painting and prints show an influence of Posada, Picasso, Klee and others; and Roberto Márquez (1959) and Roberto Cortázar (1962), who both make references to the classics, although Márquez does not totally forsake surrealism.

In the field of three-dimensional art, two sculptors who started as painters have made their mark: Adolfo Riestra (1944-1989), who made ceramics and bronzes very heavily influenced by pre-Hispanic art; and Javier Marín (1962), who creates large format, very expressive and almost baroque terracotta pieces. Abstract sculpture in the Goeritz tradition finds worthy heirs in the recent works of Fernando González Gortázar (1942) and Sebastián-Enrique Carbajal (1947). A new school of three-dimensional artwork has emerged in which a variety of unusual materials are used to create sculptural pieces. A prime example of this new school is the work of Yolanda Gutiérrez (1970), an artist who is part of a new generation of Mexican creators who have forever broken ranks with the nationalists and who recently have undertaken unconventional and heterogeneous endeavors. What are these artists attempting to do? According to the comments



• **NAHUM ZENIL (MEXICO)**
 AUTORRETRATO CON ÁNGELES
 (SELF PORTRAIT WITH ANGELS),
 1992 ♦ INK AND COLLAGE ON PA-
 PER ♦ 97.8 X 77.5 CM ♦ COLLEC-
 TION OF GEORGE AND JEAN
 ADAMS, NEW YORK ♦ PHOTO
 COURTESY OF GEORGE ADAMS
 GALLERY, NEW YORK

of Paloma Porraz in the introduction to the 1996 art exhibition “Por mi raza hablará el espíritu” [The spirit shall speak on behalf of my race], “the artists of this exhibition comprise a diversity of subjective searches that have a common denominator: all of them have opted to make forays into an interior language that reclaims elements belonging to a cultural heritage. The critical eye decries the process of industrial development and the future it holds for everyone. This new school is moving away from everyday confrontation in order to concern itself with the issues of ecological destruction, to ponder the metaphysical questions of live and death, pain, the unyielding loneliness of man, and the quest for a self definition vis-à-vis oneself and society.”²¹ Yolanda Gutiérrez was one of the participants in this show. Her ecological creations feature flowers, birds and snakes made out of different materials, such as imaginary skeletons of birds made out of cow jawbones. Another outstanding presenter at this exhibition was Mónica Castillo (1961) whose great body of work evinces an obsession with self-portraits, which are created by using a variety of techniques (including embroidery and photography) and who particularly makes statements on the futility of defining an absolute identity. Humberto del Olmo (1961) connects violence and death in his video-installations, and Néstor Quiñones (1967) alludes, in his paintings and real objects, to the continuous movement of the driv-

ing forces behind nature and man as well. The artistic creations of Laura Anderson (1958) show great concern for the physical world. Originally, her work consisted of drawings and constructions made of found objects that made reference to the aboriginal and internal processes of nature; but now she also engages in photography and installation-making.

The tradition of mounting group shows featuring collective works—particularly with a political slant—had its roots in the 1970s and has lived on in the exhibition entitled “La Quiñonera.” This group show was founded in 1985 and included Diego Toledo, Claudia Fernández, Francisco Fernández (also known as Taca), Mónica Castillo and the Quiñones brothers, Néstor and Héctor, who were the owners of the eponymous mansion in Coyoacán, the group’s home base. The end of the 1980s saw the birth of Semefo, which put on performances and created photographs, videos, installations and music pertaining to research it conducted on pain and the notion of ritual. The name is an acronym for “Servicio Médico Forense” [Forensic Medical Service]. During the mid-1990s, Semefo presented *Lavatio corporis*, a large installation made out of horse cadavers, bones, iron and wood, in the form of a merry-go-round, which represented, in a most brutal way, the make-up of living beings and the changes that they undergo in dying, thus drawing a parallel with the painting *Los teñiles*, by José Clemente Orozco, in which reference is made to the conquest of Mexico.

In referring to the exhibition “México ahora: punto de partida” [Mexico Now: Point of Departure] featuring artists born between 1944 and 1968, which traveled between 1988 and 1999 to several cities, including in the United States, Pablo Helguera stated that “this exhibition shows such dissimilar works that it is difficult to find much in common between each artist, except for the fact that all of them spend their life in the same struggle to find a defining voice that transcends time, tradition and place. But even though it can be concluded that now less than ever we can group or ‘generationalize’ the artists of Mexico, we can appreciate connecting pathways. Yishai Jusidman, for example, who presented a series of sumo wrestlers and semi-invisible faces of clowns, alludes to themes related to perception and the act of painting itself. Whereas, Silvia Gruner, Betsabé Romero and Yolanda Gutiérrez, who belong to different generations, show the same passion for political iconography by using elements derived from reflection on both natural and social history.”²² As a conclusion to the section on Mexico, the following are artists from this country who also create unconventional works: Carlos Aguirre (1948), Eloy Tarcisio (1955) and Gabriel Orozco (1962). Orozco, who shuttles back and forth between Mexico and New York, makes photographs and installations that constitute veritable collages of sensations, including the sounds of his own piano. Music (particularly, trashy versions thereof) is also part of the endeavors of above-cited artist Miguel Calderón. It must be noted at this point that, mainly due to a lack of space, this review of Latin American art does not deal with Chicano art, whose main researcher and promoter in recent decades has been Shifra Goldman.²³

Mónica Kupfer, who wrote the chapter on Central American art in the



• BROOKE ALFARO (PANAMÁ)
 SANTA DEL PAPO, 1996 ♦ OIL ON
 CANVAS ♦ 116/8 X 162/6 CM ♦
 PRIVATE COLLECTION ♦ PHOTO BY
 WARREN LEON, COURTESY OF THE
 ARTIST

book *Arte latinoamericano del siglo XX*, states that the “cultural isolation of Central America and its multiethnic society have served as a breeding ground for the emergence of a type of special artist, influenced by the native landscape, the impressive indigenous heritage, social injustice and bloody wars, as well as by contemporary artistic currents and the art market. Despite the myriad of difficulties over past decades and during the 1990s, the most important Central American artists have interpreted the harsh reality of the region and have criticized it in their representational and abstract works by using tools such as realism, symbolism, fantasy and even humor.”²⁴ Central American art continues to be closely tied to traditional crafts: painting, drawing, prints and sculpture. In reviewing the collective body of work of these artists, it would be accurate to say that two different types of representational artwork are prevalent. One is a representational art with shades of surrealism, such as the style found in the paintings of Panamanian Brooke Alfaro (1942). The other type is an expressionistic style concerned with social problems, as can be seen in the paintings of Honduran Ezequiel Padilla (1944), or in the xylographs by Guatemalan Moisés Barrios (1964). Neo-expressionist influences are more evident in the work of more recent artists, such as Panamanian Silfrido Ibarra (1959). Traditional themes executed in individualized styles are still relevant: the landscapes of Nicaraguan Arnoldo Guillén (1941) are schematic and colorful and the still life works of Panamanian David Solís (1953) are painted over the surface of canvasses made to look like walls plastered with muted colors. There are also quality abstract painters such as Panamanian Roosevelt Díaz (1963).

• EZEQUIEL PADILLA AYESTAS
(HONDURAS) *PARQUE I*, 1990 ♦
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS ♦ 120 X
99 CM ♦ PRIVATE COLLECTION,
TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS ♦
PHOTO BY MARIO LÓPEZ, COUR-
TESY OF GALERIA PORTALES,
TEGUCIGALPA, HONDURAS



Women now have a broader presence among the creators of Central American art and are more devoted than their male counterparts to unconventional pieces. Currently, the most well-known female artist in this area of the world is Costa Rican Priscilla Monge (1968), who has made a name for herself with a “ready made” piece composed of a pair of overalls executed with women’s sanitary napkins, with her boomerang of invective, and with videos like *Lección de maquillaje* [Make-up Lesson], which shows a women with her face beaten, an obvious reference to violence against women, one of several recurring themes in her artistic discourse.

The Caribbean

In 1959, when Fidel Castro came to power in Cuba, the population of that country began an exodus to the United States in staggering numbers. Since that time, many fine Cuban artists have studied and made their careers in this country. One of the most accomplished of these artists is Luis Cruz Azaceta (1942), who has resided in the United States, mostly in New York, since 1960. His body of work has been totally geared towards urban life. At first, he made allusions to loneliness and exile, as well as inner-city violence, mixing in expressionist graphics and coloring that draw on elements of comics and graffiti. Subsequently, he toned down the color and made reference to different social problems, such as AIDS, which was the subject of a very dramatic series he created consisting of depictions of lone beds, skeletal figures, watches and statistics of the victims of that disease. Maintaining a vigorous rate of artistic out-



put, Cruz Azaceta now includes photographs, tacks, stuffed animals and various other items in his paintings. Another Cuban-born artist linked to expressionism was Carlos Alfonzo (1950-1991), who lived the last ten years of his life in Miami. His body of work seems at times to recall the work of Lam, and was characterized by turbulent images of foliage and symbols of Afro-Cuban religious beliefs crossed with shapes resembling knives and nails. On a more naturalistic note, we have Julio Larraz (1944), who settled in the United States in 1961. Heavily into oils, watercolors and pastels, this artist has addressed a variety of themes: still life (often only fragments of fruits), landscapes, interior spaces (almost always with windows that look out on the ocean), means of transportation (such as boats, airplanes and trains) and human subjects, which include hunters, demagogues, and grandes dames, many of whom are black. Always shrouded in a mysterious atmosphere, the paintings of Larraz stand out because of their finish, their composition and, especially, the artist's use of light and contrast, which truly possess Caravaggiesque shadowing and lighting. Another naturalist (actually a hyper-realist) is Tomás Sánchez (1948), whose landscapes date to the 1960s. On the merit of his own talent, he was included among the artists showing at the exhibition titled "Volumen I" (1981). This show was a very important event for Cuban art because it demonstrated that the Ministry of Culture, founded in 1977, had decided to change its policies and create a freer climate of creativity less geared towards political affairs to the exclusion of anything else. Although Sánchez's landscapes feature nature bursting with trees of exuberant foliage in painstaking detail, it is indisputable that his most accomplished acrylics transcend photographic realism, presenting a beautiful spiritual climate fraught with romanti-

• **LUIS CRUZ AZACETA (CUBA-USA)** *HOMAGE TO LATIN AMERICAN VICTIMS OF DICTATORS, OPPRESSION, TORTURE AND MURDER*, 1987 ♦ ACRYLIC ON CANVAS ♦ 194.3 X 426.7 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE ADAMS GALLERY, NEW YORK

• **CARLOS ALFONZO** (CLBA-EUA)
CÍRCULO NO. 8, 1990 ♦ ÓLEO SO-
BRE TELA ♦ 182,8 X 182,8 CM ♦
FOTO CORTESÍA DE GEORGE
ADAMS GALLERY, NUEVA YORK, EUA



cism (in the style of Friedrich), which is obviously not without a concern for ecology. Over the last few years, the artist has created some very dramatic landscapes in which nature appears to be invaded by refuse. Additionally, he has slowly begun to incorporate the human figure in his paintings, such as *Hombre crucificado en el basurero*, in which a Mantegna-style character, whose feet are located near the bottom of the landscape, teaches an explicit lesson about what he calls environmental suicide. Sánchez currently lives in Miami.

Félix González-Torres (1957-1995) and Ernesto Pujol (1957) are associated with another type of artistic endeavor. After living for a while in Puerto Rico, both came to live in New York City during the 1970s. According to Eduardo Pérez Soler, González-Torres' body of work "appears as a revision of the strategies of minimalism. Convinced that all cultural products are rarified by the systems of production of meaning that have been created by society, González-Torres attempted to endow the minimalist object with a strong subjective content, in an effort to subvert its supposed neutrality of meaning; he imposed biographic elements on a style that lacks in its origin a representational character."²⁵ In his artistic creations, especially his installations, he addressed social themes in which he explored the fine line between the public and the private, and connected his own awareness of the fragility of life to the common experiences of the passing of time, disappearances, and love. His works can be grouped in the following way: photographs (beginning in 1983), word portraits



• JULIO LARRAZ (CUBA-EUA)
 ANSATSU, 1989 ♦ ÓLEO SOBRE TELA
 ♦ 165,1 X 208,3 CM ♦ FOTO CORTE-
 SIA DE NOHRA HAIME GALLERY,
 NUEVA YORK, EUA

(beginning in 1986), piles of paper—one pile with the phrase “Algún lugar mejor que éste” [Any place better than this one], and the other pile with the phrase “Ningún lugar mejor que éste” [No place better than this one]—(starting in 1988), and his billboards (starting in 1989), the most famous of which has an empty bed covered with silky sheets and occupied only by the absence of his lover who died of AIDS. Ernesto Pujol is a painter, but is mainly engaged in presenting installations that make reference to exile, violence, marginality and alienation, as well as his own homosexual identity, often by means of objects usually linked to infancy. Ana Mendieta (1948-1985), who moved to the United States in 1961 but always deeply regretted her exile, is also worthy of mention. At the beginning of the 1980s, she returned to Cuba on two occasions, where she became close to artists connected with Afro-Cuban religious beliefs such as Ricardo Rodríguez Brey (1955), Juan Francisco Elso (1956-1988) and José Bedia (1959). The body of work produced by Ana Mendieta constitutes a sort of ritual in which she attempted to meld her being with nature, tracing her outline on the landscape with different materials, or fitting her body into the concavities of rocks and later sculpting the rocks to highlight her figure. She also engaged in performance art, with undertones of violence, and mounted many installations, some related to *ñáñigo* (Afro-Cuban) ritualistic burials and others with the recurring theme of her own outline carved out of or etched into stone,

• **TOMÁS SÁNCHEZ (EUA-CUBA)**
 VERDES Y OCRES, 1982 ♦ SERIGRAFÍA A COLOR, 30/95 ♦ IMAGEN 35,8 X 50,8 CM ♦ COLECCIÓN DEL BANCO INTERAMERICANO DE DESARROLLO ♦ FOTO DE WILLIE HEINZ (UNIDAD AUDIOVISUAL DEL BID)



clay or other materials. Rodríguez Brey, Elso and Bedia were among the artists invited to present at the exhibition “Volumen I.” Brey has presented installations made out of different materials, often drawing inspiration from the animist idea of endowing things of the everyday world with a soul. Elso created installations out of natural materials (clay, wood, branches, amate tree bark paper, the artist’s blood), which, based on his knowledge of Santería, evoked meanings linked to basic cultural and spiritual concerns of humanity. His greatest achievement was *Por América* (1986), a sculpture that brings together, in the figure of José Martí, on the one hand, the baroque (it is a wood carving with glass eyes), and on the other, the tradition of Santería (the carving has the artist’s and his wife’s blood on it, as well as red and green darts that give energy to the sculpture). Currently based in Miami, Bedia has said that his work is the result of a very personal interpretation of the primitive world. Acting like a true anthropologist, this artist sketches, paints and presents installations, almost always placing designs on walls and adding objects and sometimes photographs to the installations. Very much like kongo worship in Santería, he borrows from its symbols, as well as from those of other beliefs. According to Cecilia Fajardo-Hill: “The reason why Bedia’s work constitutes a veritable laboratory for the reassessment of critical and theoretical models of contemporary art, in the context of a pluralistic culture at the end of the century, lies in the invasion of the ‘otherness’ from inside, inasmuch as the artist pervades or suffuses one



• **JOSÉ BEDÍA** (CUBA-USA)
TUNKASHILA, 1995 ♦ ACRYLIC ON
 CANVAS ♦ 181.6 X 218.4 CM ♦
 COLLECTION OF RON AND LUCY
 WINTERS, ORANGE, CALIFORNIA ♦
 PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE
 ADAMS GALLERY, NEW YORK

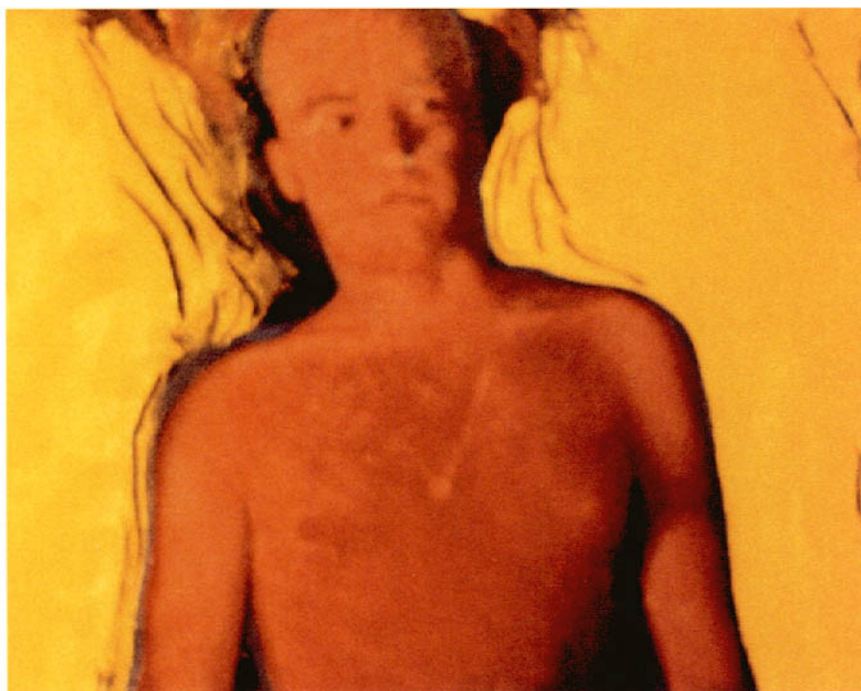
of the most ‘civilized’ systems of western culture, art, with a different system of cultural values and not with mere aesthetic or intellectual resonance.”²⁶ Manuel Mendive (1944) has also worked on the basis of Afro-Cuban religious beliefs. The artist practices Santería or the “rule of ocha,” and in his early works his knowledge of the myths of Yoruba origin were evident; however, with the passage of time, the creatures and scenes appearing in his paintings are more the fruit of his imagination. More recently, Mendive has also delved into interdisciplinary endeavors, painting the bodies of dancers to put on a performance mixing “body art,” sculpture and painting.

The number and variety of Cuban artists that have emerged over the past two decades is astonishing. After “Volumen I,” the shows “Volumen II,” “Arte Calle,” “Arte Puré” and several international exhibitions were held. These exhibitions included “Made in Havana,” presented in New South Wales and Melbourne between 1988 and 1989 (with Bedía, María Magdalena Campos, Consuelo Castañeda, Tomás Esson, Flavio Garcíandía, Rogelio López, Marta María Pérez, Rodríguez Brey and Rubén Torres Llorca); “Kuba ok” in Dusseldorf in 1990 (with most of the above-mentioned artists, plus Carlos Rodríguez Cárdenas, Glexis Novoa, Lázaro Saavedra, Ibrahim Miranda and Alejandro Aguilera); “The Nearest Edge of the World” in Brookline, Massachusetts (with many of the artists mentioned above plus Ana Albertina Delgado, Segundo Planes and Ciro Quintana); and “Los hijos de Guillermo Tell” in

Caracas and Bogotá (including Yaquelin Abdalá, Gustavo Acosta, Adriano Buergo, Kcho [Alexis Leyva], Tonel [Antonio Eligio Fernández], and Luis Gómez). These exhibitions were highly acclaimed, and many pieces featured in the show “Kuba ok” were acquired by the collection of Ludwig of Germany (and are currently on display in 10 different cities and 19 different buildings). Despite the differences between most of these pieces—which included traditional and nontraditional art—it would be fair to say that the new art in Cuba, in addition to the interest in the free Afro-Cuban religious interpretation, levels veiled criticism at the regime, employs humor and sarcasm, caters to the tastes of the masses, uses cheap objects and poor-quality materials, and shows keen awareness of contemporary art. Among the above-mentioned artists, two very young artists, Ibrahim Miranda (1969) and Kcho (1970), must be singled out. Miranda is an excellent print artist whose images mix the learned and the popular, the traditional and the modern. This xylograph maker invents his own mythology to allude to today’s problems, both those of society and his own personal problems. Kcho is an installation builder who puts his pieces together with vines and sticks and makes installations out of humble objects. He uses his constructions to allude ironically to underdevelopment, for example, in erecting the Latin American version of the Monument to the Third World, which is held together with vines. He also refers to the issue of Cubans who fled their country, such as in *Achipielago de mi corazón* (1997), an assemblage of different types of objects such as rickety, dilapidated rafts. Some of the most recent representational artists are collectively known as “Los carpinteros:” Alexandre Arrechea, Marco Castillo and Dagoberto Rodríguez. These artists came to be known by this moniker because of the inane furniture they make: *Archivo de Indias* (a high piece of furniture with little drawers that decrease in size from bottom to top), or *Gavetón* (a metal file cabinet with a huge wooden drawer in one of the spaces). Nevertheless, they also do drawings and installations in brick as well as mural designs, being that they are also bricklayers. Another outstanding artist is Carlos Garaicoa (1967), who has produced a highly varied body of work made up of installations, objects and drawings generally related to the city, especially old Havana, which he views with nostalgia and great imagination and regarding which, despite his sarcasm, he never ceases to be positive.

Among the plethora of artists from **Haiti**, most of whom have continued the tradition of producing folkloric, naïf paintings for tourists, the name of Edouard Duval-Carrié (1954) stands out. A resident of Miami, Duval-Carrié’s pieces show a very free interpretations of “vodun” or “voodoo” tradition, in which figures of Christianity, figures and spirits or “loas” of Afro-Haitian ancestry, military dictators and revolutionary heroes are all juxtaposed.

Two major figures who have emerged in the art world of **Puerto Rico** in recent years are ceramist Jaime Suárez (1946) and painter Arnaldo Roche Rabell (1955). Suárez studied architecture in the United States and since 1980 has devoted himself full time to the field of ceramics. His pottery and bas-relief pieces, which are characterized by their worn or distressed look, could easily be mistaken for relics of an ancient culture. He has also created installations and



• CARLOS COLLAZO (PUERTO RICO) SELF-PORTRAIT NO. 9 ♦ OIL ON CANVAS ♦ 50.3 X 60.9 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF GALERIA BOTELLO, SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

sculptures, the most widely known being *Totem telúrico* (1992), which is a 16 meter-high installation located in old San Juan. In the view of several Latin American art critics, Suárez is one of the best ceramist sculptors because of the way he works the material, highlighting the textures and tones of the clay, and because of his frequent experimentation in the process of making his pieces. He is also one of the most important promoters in his country of this very archaic craft. Roche Rabell, after studying architecture in Puerto Rico, trained as an artist in the United States and began to make a name for himself in the early 1980s. Roche Rabell is basically a painter, although he also does drawings. His pictures present powerful and strange images that, even though they may seem “primitive,” are connected to modern art, particularly to expressionism, surrealism and cubism. Figures are often seen from different angles, superimposed upon each other, without any regard for order in space and perspective. His paintings are self-portraits or are of opulent female figures, or fabulous or bible-related figures. These themes are expressed with a thick, pasty matter and almost always include the imprint of the model’s body. The painting of Roche Rabell is, therefore, complex and caked with multiple layers of meaning, expressing all the magic and exuberance of the Caribbean without any folkloric devise. Another painter who deserves recognition is representational artist Carlos Collazo (1956), who in his highly varied self-portraiture, far from being realistic, offers insights into his own human identity and the identity of anyone who views his work. To round out the field, the following abstract artists have

• JAIME ROMANO (PUERTO RICO)

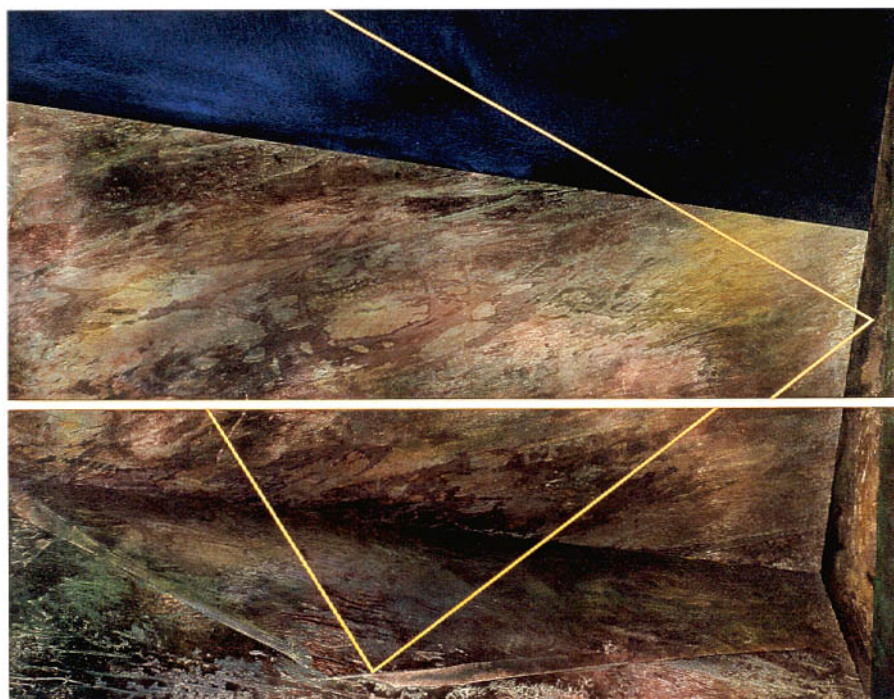
EL PARQUE DE LOS HECHIZOS (THE PARK OF SPELLS) (DIPTYCH), 1995

♦ ACRYLIC ON CANVAS ♦ 108 X

137.2 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF

GALERIA BOTELLO, SAN JUAN,

PUERTO RICO



produced a noteworthy body of work as well: Jaime Romano (1942), who has created paintings, some of them frameless, that strike a fine balance between free form blotches and geometric drawing; and Carlos Dávila-Rinaldi (1958), who makes potpourris of signs and graphics in oil and acrylic paint, which are reminiscent of Tobey’s “all over painting.”

An active artistic life has been flourishing in the **Dominican Republic**. As with other countries, it is hard to do justice in this book to the flurry of artistic endeavors undertaken in this island nation in recent years. A listing of the most accomplished Dominican artists must include José Perdomo (1943) and Alonso Cuevas (1953). Perdomo’s works verge on abstractions, while Cuevas’ contain many tiny and fragmented representational figures. Fernando Varela (1951) is definitely an abstract artist, and his creations are characterized by their sobriety and use of simple compositions, which verge on sensitive geometry. In the field of representational art, one artist who has excelled in the expressionist style is José García Cordero (1951), whose work comes quite close to fantastic realism, presenting pieces of a critical nature, with a particular penchant for symbolic figures. Tony Capellán (1955) is a versatile artist who originally became known for his prints and drawings, but later devoted himself to painting as well as installations. His paintings are characterized by their fine texture or their division into blocks, and his installations are reminiscent of Cuban Bedia’s work and, in some instances, those of the Englishman Tony Cragg. In both Capellán’s installations and paintings, symbolic elements of his own cre-



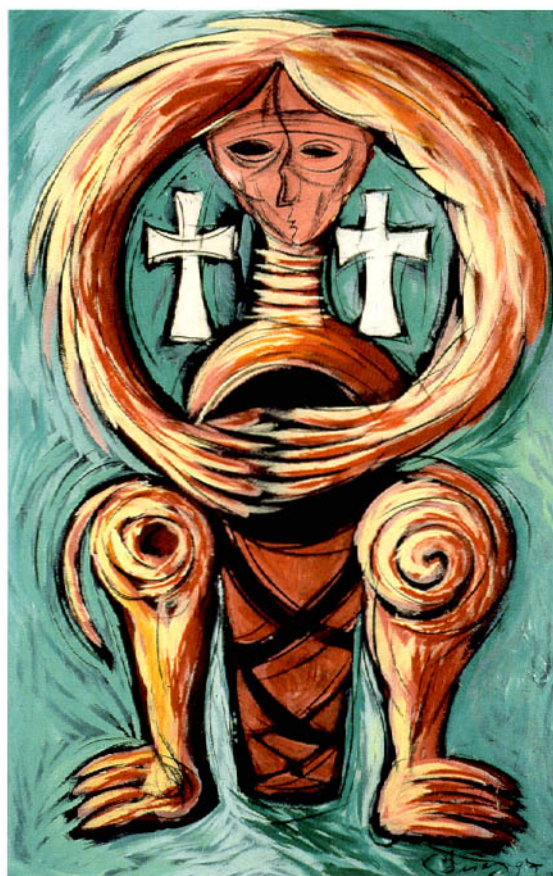
• TONY CAPELLÁN (DOMINICAN REPUBLIC) *EL BUEN VECINO* (THE GOOD NEIGHBOR), 1998 ♦ INSTALLATION ♦ WOODEN TABLE, CHAIRS, ELECTRIC SAW, RED CHILI POWDER ♦ VARIABLE DIMENSIONS ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF CARIFORUM, SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

ation and references to ritual abound. It is not surprising that the artist was included in the exhibition “Misterio y Misticismo en el Arte Dominicano” [Mystery and Mysticism in Dominican Art] held in 1997 at the IDB Cultural Center in Washington, D.C. Also participating in this show were Jesús Desangles (1961), who has consistently produced fine drawings, and Elvis Avilés (1965), among many others. One photographer, in particular, Martín López (1955), deserves recognition. He was included in the above-mentioned photography exhibition “Cambio de Foco.” “The Bienal de Pintura del Caribe y Centroamérica” [The Caribbean and Central American Painting Biennial], which is held in Santo Domingo and dates to 1992, serves as a reminder that this geographic area is not only culturally rich and diverse, but also has a large number of artists of great interest. Unfortunately, constraints on time and space make it impossible to list any of the creators of art from countries like Aruba, Barbados, Curazao, Guadalupe, Jamaica and Martinique.

The Andean Region

A list of some of the most accomplished artists in **Bolivia** in recent years would include Roberto Valcárcel (1951), whose representational painting and installations have always had critical connotations; Angeles Fabbri (1957) and Keiko González (1964), who paint in the abstract style; and Gastón Ugalde (1946) and Raquel Schwartz (1963), who specialize in installations, Ugalde using different natural materials, and Schwartz using ceramics with a variety of thematic con-

• **JESÚS DESANGLES** (REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA) *BODEGÓN ESPIRITUAL* (SPIRITUAL STILL LIFE), 1997 ♦ MIXED TECHNIQUE ON CANVAS ♦ 99 X 119.4 CM ♦ COLLECTION OF JOSÉ S. MUÑOZ, SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC ♦ PHOTO BY MARIANO HERNÁNDEZ, ARCHIVES OF THE IDB CULTURAL CENTER, WASHINGTON, D.C.



cerns. One of Schwartz' most important works is the installation *Dentro de la barca* (1997), which was displayed at the "Segunda Bienal de Lima" [Second Biennial of Lima] (1999). This was a metaphorical creation in which the artist made explicit reference to the cloistered feeling of her native Bolivia, because of its landlocked geographic location, by using a large central boat with many fragments of other boats trapped in the walls of the larger centerpiece.

At present, **Colombia** does not have any schools, prevailing trends, or master teachers with satellite schools in the art world. Such heterogeneity has been common to art throughout the world over the latter part of the 20th century. Artists have come to develop their own style with varying degrees of originality in setting trends in contemporary art. In the early 1980s, painting gained new representatives of expressionism who were somewhat influenced by European neo-expressionism, the most important one being Lorenzo Jaramillo (1955-1992). During his brief career, which began with an individual show in 1980, he developed a bountiful body of work consisting of paintings, drawings, prints and illustrations. All of his work revolved around the human figure and, even though he was a notable portrait artist in the German tradition of the early 20th century, his most characteristic subjects ap-



• BIBIANA VÉLEZ (COLOMBIA)
 LLAMA DE AMOR VIVA (FLAME OF LOVE), 1993-2000 ♦ ACRYLIC ON CANVAS ♦ 180 X 700 CM ♦
 PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

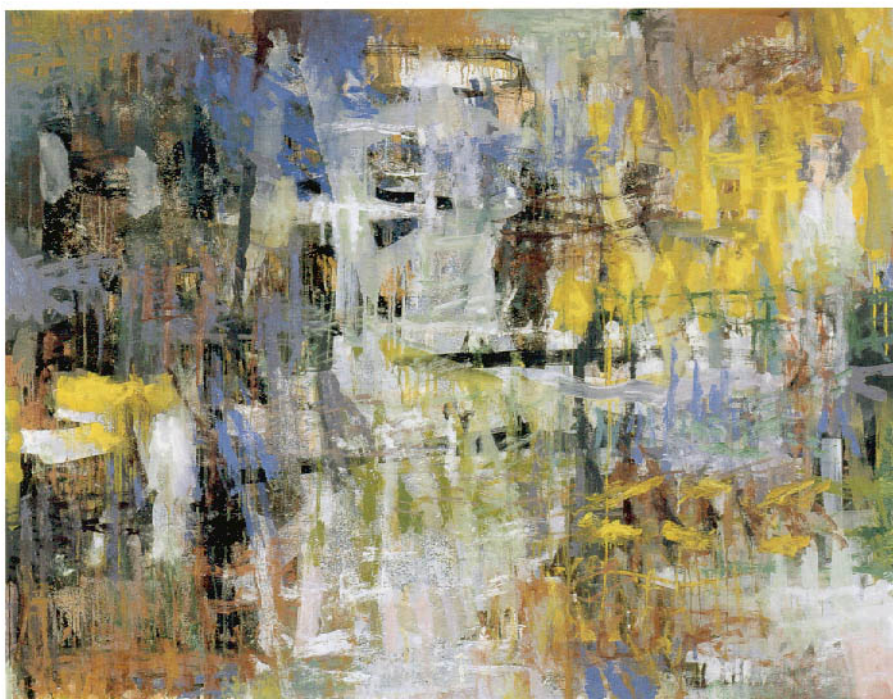
peared deeply distorted. He worked on the basis of thematic series (*Figuras*, *Talking Heads*, *Cabezotas*, *Angeles*, *Danzantes*), and although he was no stranger to contemporary urban life, his motifs were always rooted in cultural aspects: pre-Columbian art, colonial art, literature (Rilke, Pessoa) and music (Satie, Gershwin). Raúl Cristancho (1955), Víctor Laignelet (1955)—especially during the early stages of his career—and Bibiana Vélez (1956) are also members of the neo-expressionism school. Other representational artists not falling into that school are Alberto Sojo (1956), Carlos Salazar (1959) and José Antonio González (1959). It is worthwhile to list some of the accomplished graphic artists of Colombia. Miguel Angel Rojas (1946) has had a long career in which he has produced a varied body of work as a draftsman, print maker, painter, installation builder, and photographer (of partially developed pictures). His works always involve the urban world and the intense and conflictive reality of his country. Félix Angel (1949) has created powerful *Linóleos del milenio* and monotypes, with images that reinterpret his traditional themes and add new themes to his latest body of work. Ramón Vanegas (1950) has worked as a draftsman, print maker and painter, showing a most varied iconography, making installations and acting as the curator of several exhibitions. He is a fine illustrator and presents many of his drawings in the book *Un diccionario de sabiduría* (1995). Oscar Muñoz (1951) has recently presented the series *Pinturas de agua* (drawings of nudes in a shower on plastic) *Interiores* (operating rooms), *Superficies al carbón* (fragments of urban floors) and *Narcisos* (charcoal dust self-portraits executed on photo screens placed in shallow receptacles). Cristo Hoyos (1952) has developed a body of work consisting of drawings of great



• **FÉLIX ÁNGEL (COLOMBIA)** ♦
 I DO NOT HEAR A THING, LIGHT-
 NING, AND CYCLIST NO. 4. FROM
 THE MILLENNIUM PRINT SERIES,
 1999 ♦ LINOLEUM PRINT ♦ 30.5 X
 30.5 CM EACH ♦ COLLECTION OF
 THE MUSEO RAYO DE DIBUJO Y
 GRABADO LATINOAMERICANO,
 ROLDANILLO, VALLE COLOMBIA ♦
 PHOTO BY DAVID MANGURIAN

ideological continuity, in which he has reconstructed a world by memory that is rich in identity and makes references to both everyday and rural themes. Lastly, José Antonio Suárez (1955) makes drawings in notebooks and booklets based on a variety of themes and using the most diverse of techniques (graphite, ink with feathers, watercolors, magic markers). Representational art, particularly in the field of painting, is still prominent in a variety of styles in the works of Rafael Ortiz (1960), whose themes are very diverse and usually conceptual; Germán Londoño (1961), who paints stylized human subjects immersed in landscapes with historical references; Beltrán Obregón (1964), who verges on photographic image; Carlos Jacanamijoy (1964), who paints jungle landscapes of rich colors; Johanna Calle (1965), who draws, paints and embroiders themes drawn from the newspapers with images of deformed, exiled and abandoned children; and Jorge González (1969), who creates pastel paintings of characters belonging to an ugly and apparently depraved race. The work of the following artists shows that abstract painting is alive and well in Colombia: Margarita Gutiérrez (1951), who recreates nature with allusions to the work of Arp, Miró, and Calder; Luis Fernando Zapata (1951-1994), who bequeathed to the world a body of work consisting of unconventional, heavily textured paintings that make references to archeological and funeral sites; Luis Fernando Roldán (1955), who reviews different moments of expressionist abstraction; and Luis Luna (1958), who recreates landscapes by drawing on his experiences as a traveler and reader, riddling them with symbols and words. We can also include in this group Jaime Franco (1963)—painter of macerate surfaces that also bear scars of violence—as well as Danilo Dueñas (1956), Jaime Iregui (1956), Carlos Salas Silva (1957) and Delcy Morelos (1967), who each paint by making their own statement on the function and sense of painting in today's art, and mixing up their pictorial intentions with other media.

The list of Colombia's three-dimensional artists, some of whom undertake nontraditional endeavors, is just as long as the list of two-dimensional



• LUIS FERNANDO ROLDÁN (COLOMBIA) ♦ AMANSADORES, 1997
♦ OIL ON CANVAS ♦ 122 X 157 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF LA GALERIA EL MUSEO, BOGOTÁ, COLOMBIA

artists. Heading the list are the sculptors who were originally trained as architects and have amassed a major body of public work. The career of Germán Botero (1946) can be divided into two stages: the first in the late 1970s, consisting of primary structures (virtual cube towers), and the second involving an array of diverse materials that usually allude to known objects (machines out of use, the workplace of craftsman, tombs). The creations of John Castles (1946), however, are completely abstract and verge on “minimal art.” Originally, Castles only employed straight lines, but over the years he has also come to include elegant, pure curves with distant references to marine forms. The work of Alberto Uribe (1947) is a study in tension and balance. More recently, he has worked with a variety of materials, such as in his piece *Tres esquinas* (1989), consisting of the outline of a cube that emerges from the earth with only three of its corners visible. Finally, Ronny Vayda (1954), has not only produced large-scale works such as *La Puerta de San Antonio* (1994), which bears the name of the park in Medellín, Colombia where it is displayed, but has also created very refined series’ of small format pieces, such as the set of pieces titled *Yelmos* (deeply striated metal cylinders) and *Sables* (elongated weapons with incrustations of copper, steel, bronze and glass). In addition to these essentially formalistic works of art, it is fitting to mention the creations of Consuelo Gómez (1956), which are executed in a variety of materials and always make reference to prosaic objects or organic forms; and of Teresa Sánchez (1957), which include wood carvings in a diversity of natural mor-

phology that she has recently featured in different installations. Artists who basically use ready-made materials include Hugo Zapata (1945), Doris Salcedo (1958) and María Fernanda Cardoso (1963). Since 1983, Zapata has created his sculptures out of natural elements (all different types of rocks, plants, water, etc.), tampering with their natural beauty to make their qualities stand out (veining, color, texture). Doris Salcedo has received worldwide recognition. She employs old furniture (sometimes cement stuffing, bones, teeth, hair and shoes) to refer to violence, destruction and death. María Fernanda Cardoso has used different materials ranging from plastic with water during the early stages of her career, to snack food, piranhas and frogs, women's stockings and mud, plastic flowers and live fleas that she has used to put on circus-like shows. Colombian artists who work in representational terms include Luis Fernando Peláez (1945), Marta Combariza (1955), Nadín Ospina (1960) and Elías Heim (1966). Peláez uses ready-made objects to create small boxes in which he narrates travelers' chronicles. He also prepares a variety of objects and combines them with "ready-mades" to make "sculptures" as landscapes. Marta Combariza was originally a painter, and in the last few years has also prepared complex installations with different concerns, including necrological themes. Nadín Ospina originally built figures, particularly of animals, in polyester resin dripped with colors. Lately, she has created assemblages out of homemade pre-Columbian ceramics, representations of the Simpson family or of the most well known Disney characters. Elías Heim makes complicated, inane and impeccably crafted machines with which, in his own words, he "wants to create sensations and effects of memory ... [M]y game is not direct, it points to the shortages and the crisis of the end of the century, the impossibility of creating things just for the sake of it. My works are generally at the service of things, they are not the protagonists." This is evident in such works as *Dotación para museos en vías de extinción* [Gear for Museums on their Way to Extinction] and *Arrullador portátil para obras de arte* [Portable Whisperer for Artworks].²⁷ Finally, as examples of unconventional manifestations that are also produced in Colombia, we must recall two names in particular: María Teresa Hincapié (1956) and José Alejandro Restrepo (1959). Hincapié's performances are related to domestic activity or women's behavior, or constitute true pilgrimages that attempt to erase the borders between art and ritual. Restrepo has produced outstanding video installations, such as *Canto de muerte* (1999), a parable on death presented through the image of a boatsman who slowly moves forward and the voice of a singer from the savannas of Cordoba.

Ecuador has had a solid tradition of representational art that has continued into recent years. The most accomplished Ecuadorian artist to emerge from this school during the late 1970s is draftsman, print artist and painter Marcelo Aguirre (1956). At first, Aguirre painted very expressive landscapes in which the human figure could barely be discerned among broad, forceful and free brush strokes. After a foray into art verging on the abstract, he became a totally expressionist artist, influenced by such early 20th century mas-



• **PABLO CARDOSO** (ECUADOR)
YACER EN NEGRO. 2000 ♦ IRON,
 WOOD AND LEAD ♦ 37 X 28 CM ♦
 PHOTO BY JUAN PABLO MERCHÁN,
 COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

ters as Beckmann and Grosz and neo-expressionists such as Baselitz and Fetting. One of his frequent themes has been faces painted with visible brush strokes of intense color. In his drawings, especially those in charcoal, Aguirre demonstrates his command of tonal values and control of lines that get tangled up in desperation. Other representational artists of note hailing from this country are Hernán Cueva (1957)—a well-known print artist—Patricio Palomeque (1962), Pablo Cardoso (1965) and Jorge Velarde (1969). This last artist, who received his formal training in Spain, masterfully paints figures in the realistic style, particularly introspective self portraiture focusing on the themes of aging, deterioration and death. In addition to portraits, he also depicts landscapes presented in testimonial fashion.

Over the last few years, **Peru** has produced fine abstract or semi-abstract painters. One of the most outstanding of these is José Tola (1943), who after working with different materials (wood, metal sheets and nails), recently began to paint large-format oils characterized by the depiction of a multicolored world of many perfectly defined elements. His oils possess a varied morphology that ranges from very small to larger shapes and patterns, or from organic and sinuous to more geometric shapes. Tola has incorporated formal elements of rich coloring into his paintings, establishing very diverse and appealing baroque compositions. Next, the quality of the body of work pro-

• **RAMIRO LLONA (PERU)** *EL MONTE DE MARÍA HERMOSO* (THE WOODS OF MARIA HERMOSO), 1982 ♦ ACRYLIC ON CANVAS ♦ 157.5 X 182.8 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF NOHRA HAIME GALLERY, NEW YORK



duced by Ramiro Llona (1947) must be mentioned. In the course of his career, his work became totally abstract and organized into large areas of color in which subtle, almost always curvilinear, graphic elements appear. Llona is a fine colorist who employs a wide range of hues and shades of color and who effectively uses transparencies and priming in his works. Peruvian artists of note who were born after 1950 include Alberto Grieve (1951), Ricardo Wiese (1954) and Mariella Agois (1956). Grieve is a fine print artist who also makes paintings that are monochromatic and carefully textured by superimposing layers and dripping oil paint on them. Ricardo Wiese not only paints in nature, as was mentioned earlier in this book, but also makes paintings out of sand and pigment on which he draws controlled, automatic, vigorous and very subtle graphic elements. Shades of Tapiés' work are visible in his paintings. Mariella Agois, who began her artistic career as a photographer, paints surfaces as if they were knitted cloth or a weave of varied stitches in all directions. All of these artists received extensive training outside their country and show their work internationally, particularly Llona. In the field of sculpture, the name of Lika Mutal (1939) must be stressed. Born in Holland, she lived in Paris between 1968 and 1986, where she studied under Ana Maccagno and began her important career in marble sculpture. The prime of Mutal's artistic life took place during her Peruvian period, when she sculpted the series *Libros*, *Unos*, *Quipus* and *Laberintos*. This series led to the statement by Mario Vargas



♦ LIKA MUTAL (PERU) *WAKING UP*
 FROM THE SLEEP OF AGES, 1998 ♦
 GRANITE AND STONE ♦ 375.9 CM
 X 298.8 CM X 373.4 CM ♦ PHOTO
 COURTESY OF NOHRA HAIME GAL-
 LERY, NEW YORK

Lloso that Mutal's originality lies in the fact that she does not seem to force the marble in order to transform it into a humanized object, an image or a symbol. Rather, her direct sculpting of the material—with the help of assistants—may almost make you think of “a love expedition into the interior of the marble, into the soul of the granite, into the delicate innards of the travertine, in order to get to know them, caress them and then expose them as objects that, respecting their nature, attest to the reverence and fervor that inspire the artist.”²⁸ Other important sculptors are Carlos Runcie Tanaka (1958), who creates ceramics that he incorporates into installations, and Luis García-Zapatero (1963), who creates monumental objects out of cane, reeds, rush matting, twine and rope. Peru, of course, is not lacking in unconventional artistic manifestations, such as the installations of Rosario Wenzel (1958), Karen Michelsen (1969) and Miguel Aguirre (1973).

According to Federica Palomero, “in **Venezuela**, just like everywhere else, the 1980s was marked by eclecticism [...] The classical modern art of the 20th century imposed the concept of novelty, originality. On the other hand, the art of the 1980s rejected the concept of the avant-garde, it no longer wanted to be innovative and original. Paradoxically, it actually is precisely that—innovative and original—by virtue of this post avant-garde attitude. It returns to, analyzes, breaks up, draws from the more or less recent past, it mixes, sticks together [...] Just as the artist goes beyond the limits of time, he or she also ignores borders: in Venezuela, the art of the 1980s branches out into international trends. With the same freedom with which the artist moves around in time and space, the art-



• **CARLOS RUNCIE TANAKA**
(PERU) *CIEN ROSAS PARA CIEN ESPERAS* (ONE HUNDRED ROSES FOR ONE HUNDRED WAITS), 1997
♦ INSTALLATION, MUSEO PEDRO DE OSMA, LIMA ♦ CERAMIC, GLASS, IRON, STEEL CABLE, LIGHT AND PHOTOCOPIES ♦ VARIED MEASUREMENTS ♦ PHOTO BY HERMAN SCHWARZ, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

ist [also] utilizes, according to his or her expressive needs, the most diverse techniques. [Now] more than ever, the ends justifies the means. The sum of these positions could, broadly speaking, be identified with, even though the term and the concept are quite hackneyed, post-modernity.”²⁹ Indeed, during the 1980s, Venezuelan art encompassed a wide range of media: everything from unconventional artistic manifestations that were partly a product of the 1970s (especially performances by Pedro Terán, Carlos Zerpa, Yeni and Nan), to a large amount of representational and abstract painting and a great deal of sculpture, particularly traditional pieces. The major representational painters of Venezuela of recent times include Carlos Zerpa (1950), whose body of work is pictorial but is also interspersed with constructions made out of a variety of materials. In *Ese bolero es mío* (1981), Zerpa brought together objects and popular religious picture cards (José Gregorio Hernández, the Sacred Heart) with the idea of questioning the behavior, beliefs and tastes of our consumer-oriented society and, at the same time, leveling criticism against these aspects. In 1994, the artist presented 15 chairs that were as ludicrous as they were baroque, but which attested to the artist’s inventiveness and ability to break through all cultural conventions. As a painter, Zerpa has engaged in a broad range of iconography in which he mixes saints with comic strip characters, singers and popular celebrities, always intensely colorful, endeavoring to produce the type of painting not so easily found in museums. The images appearing in the paintings of Diego Barbosa (1945) and Pájaro [Juan Vicente Hernández] (1952) are also a mix, but in both



• **CARLOS ZERPA (VENEZUELA)**

ESE BOLERO ES MÍO (THAT BOLERO IS MINE), 1985 ♦ ASSEMBLAGE OF DIVERSE MATERIALS IN A WOODEN DISPLAY CASE ♦ 200 X 254 X 15 CM ♦ COLLECTION OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, CARACAS, VENEZUELA ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEO DE BELLAS ARTES OF CARACAS, VENEZUELA

instances, the sources of these images tend to be of a more cultured nature. Barbosa is very fond of art history, on which he draws heavily, altering its images and subject matter. Pájaro is an avowed surrealist who is a master of the discipline of drawing. Art history is also present in the paintings of Adonay Duque (1954) and Francisco Bugallo (1958). In Duque's portraits, many of which are of face only, references are made to Fayum's paintings, Byzantine icons, and to Van Gogh's self-portraits. Bugallo's extraordinary canvasses bring back outstanding examples of the finest painting of the past, using a technique characteristic of abstract expressionism. The paintings of Julio Pacheco Rivas (1953) and Francisco Quilici (1954) share a concern for geometry and space. Both of these artists have developed a body of work dominated by effective drawing, which has enabled Pacheco Rivas to present truly impeccable perspectives and objects, and Quilici to masterfully create planes and bird's eye views. Skillful drawing is also present in the paintings of Antonio Lazo (1943) and Ernesto León (1956). Lazo's work encompasses a variety of cultural interests that are sometimes mystical and other times formal, and occasionally seem to verge on written literature. Ernesto León's statements are different, and specifically pertain to the natural world. Three Venezuelan artists worth mentioning who are at a mid-point between representational and abstract art and also draw on nature are Víctor Hugo Irazábal (1945), Octavio Russo (1949) and Luis Lizardo (1956). The first of these artists has always presented signs of the real world. Since the early 1980s, Irazábal has focused on the section of the Orinoco

River region explored by Humboldt. These signs, therefore, are the impressions (fragments of an exuberant physical world) and emotions (regarding the region's magnificence, fear of the unknown) which, recreated in great depth, the artist now captures in paintings of mixed technique and drawings on prepared paper. After producing a few expressionist pieces that bordered on representational art, Russo in recent years has created very abstract paintings and drawings of his experiences on the banks of the Orinoco (the area of the savannas that becomes flooded when the river overflows during the rainy season). Lizardo has fashioned a special type of oil painting. Using large and small spots, he creates uneven planes that, when superimposed or juxtaposed with each other, constitute beautiful chromatic compositions, subtly suggesting fragments of gardens. The ranks of the many abstract painters include some outstanding representatives, such as Jorge Stever (1940), Jorge Pizzani (1949), Eugenio Espinoza (1950), Sigfredo Chacón (1950), María Eugenia Arria (1951), Susana Amundaraín (1954) and Félix Perdomo (1956). Espinoza and Chacón are distinguished by their conceptual leanings. Even without counting three-dimensional projected creations (such as Soto's work), it is astonishing to find such richness among sculptural works of art in Venezuela. Carlos Medina (1950), Sydia Reyes (1957), Javier Level (1960), Maylen García (1964), and José Fernández (1968) are all accomplished representatives of this discipline during the two most recent decades. The most abstract artist of this whole group is Medina, who focuses on pure forms controlled by geometry, particularly in marble sculptures—a craft that he learned in Carrara, Italy. The most representational of these sculptors is Level, who uses a variety of materials and assembles baroque pieces in which he mixes animal and vegetable elements together with gargoyles, chalices and crucifixes. Rolando Peña (1942) is a special case. Trained in dance and theatre, this artist began to present “happenings” during the 1960s. Starting in 1980, he drew inspiration from the theme of petroleum (the most important economic symbol of Venezuela), specifically incorporating barrels into his sketches, photographs, videos, installations and monumental sculptures (columns, totems and labyrinths). Before discussing the unconventional art of recent years in Venezuela, it is fitting to point out that some representatives of this genre from the late 1970s have remained prominent figures in the art world right up into the 1990s. Such is the case of the artists who participated in Yeni-Nan, an artistic community formed between 1979 and 1986 by Nan María Luisa González (1956) and Yeni-Jennifer Hackshaw (1948). Their joint endeavors, *Nacimiento* (1979), *Simbolismo de la identidad* (1981), and *Interrelación* (1984), among others, were outstanding because of the careful research put into them and the esthetic quality of their presentations, which addressed problems of human corporeity and the different moments of existence on the way to full realization. In 1991, González presented a video and installations with the title of *El vuelo del cristal*, which were based on, in the words of the artist, “the unlimited abstraction of man, on the creation of forms in the unconscious.”³⁰ Other artists of note working in this milieu include Héctor Fuenmayor (1949) and Antonieta Sosa (1949).

In 1993, the Museum of Fine Arts of Caracas unveiled a show called “CC-10: Arte venezolano actual,” an exhibition which, according to the organizers, would bring together 10 artists who, beginning in the 1970s, had put forth ideas on the creative process, and who also concur in “their concern for space and design; being masters of rich language in codes that interacts with the spectator, making the spectator both accomplice and creator; making ‘being an artist’ more than a vocation or a profession; their curiosity for the possibilities of science and technology, or for what could be discovered in the secrets of the old crafts; and lastly, an important trait, their keen sense of humor.”³¹ The artists included José Antonio Hernández-Díez (1964), Meyer Vaisman (1960) and Alfredo Wenemoser (1954), who were widely recognized both in Venezuela as well as abroad. Vaisman, who has been living in the United States for many years, is part of a school known as Neo-geo and Post-pop, along with Jeff Koons and Peter Halley and many others. At the “CC-10” show, Vaisman displayed the work *Verde por dentro, rojo por fuera*, which consisted of a brick hovel, the inside of which could only be seen through small holes. Inside, it had a typical, middle-class bedroom such as the one Vaisman lived in with his family when he was growing up. The artist has become famous for his Gobelin tapestries (reproductions of antique originals) featuring pastoral scenes with drawings from comic strips added to the tapestry, and for his stuffed wild turkeys covered with the pelts or feathers of other animals. In his work, Vaisman is specifically attempting to achieve the dissolution of meaning, visual pluralism and alteration of conventions. Almost always using organic materials (a bull’s heart, skateboards made with pieces of fried pork rinds, etc.), Hernández-Díez has made video installations in which, for the most part, he adopts a critical tone. Wenemoser has constructed strange contraptions that, according to Rina Carvajal, “strip objectivity away from perception to the point of rendering it hallucinatory.”³²

Throughout the 20th century, **Brazil** has been one of the world’s most creative countries. Decade after decade, new artists have come to the fore. More recently, yet another healthy crop of artists has arrived on the scene, many of them quite accomplished and some even internationally renowned. Therefore, Aracy Amaral has posed the following question: “Why is so much art made in Brazil, a contradictory country with paradoxical potential vis-à-vis reality? Could it be like devoted religious practice, which attracts people and takes the place of a hostile and unjust exterior world? Could it be because fantasy, in its self-engrossment, does away with the difficulty of confronting everyday chaos? Or could it be because by releasing ‘poetic permissiveness,’ people participate at the level of artistic activity of another Utopian universe?”³³ The answer to all of these questions could be “yes,” and this could also explain why amidst the high volume of artwork produced in Brazil, mediocrity also abounds. Quantity definitely does not always mean quality. Nevertheless, this is not meant to cast a dim light over the shining presence of Brazilian art in the world. Manifestations of representational and abstract art—both in painting and sculpture—are still noteworthy, as is exemplified by the works of painters such as Roberto



• **JOSÉ ANTONIO HERNÁNDEZ-DÍEZ (VENEZUELA)** *EL SEIBÓ*, 1998 ♦ VIDEO-INSTALLATION ♦ 90 X 210 X 60 CM ♦ COLLECTION OF THE ALEJANDRO OTERO MUSEUM, CARACAS, VENEZUELA ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF THE MUSEUM OF BELLAS ARTES DE CARACAS, VENEZUELA

Magalhães (1940), João Câmara Filho (1944), Antônio Dias (1944), Sirón Franco (1947), Alex Vallauri (1949-1987), José Leonilson (1957-1993), Luiz Zerbini (1959), Adir Sodré (1962), and the representational sculptors Gustavo Naklé (1951) and Florian Raiss (1955), who engage in a free, irreverent type of creativity with frequent references to surrealism and pop and a concern for social and ecological themes. Leonilson is perhaps a prime exponent of this type of representational art. In 1984, Frederico Morais stated that “Leonilson’s representational art is entirely new, self-assured, ironic, joyous, electric, fragmentary, explosive. A fiesta...”³⁴ And in 1991, Casimiro Xavier de Mendonça added, “from giant canvasses trimmed into irregular shapes, (Leonilson) went on to small objects that are reminiscent of reliquaries or religious pieces. Pearls, lace, velvet and canvas—fragments of cloth given to him by friends—everything is transformed into unmistakable iconography.”³⁵ In the field of abstract art, we find expressionist painters such as Luiz Aquila (1943), Paulo Pasta (1959), Paulo Monteiro (1961), Fábio Miguez (1962), Rodrigo Andrade (1962) and Marco Gianotti (1966) and concrete and neo-concrete painters such as Raymundo Collares (1944-1986), Paulo Roberto Leal (1946) and Manfredo de Souza-neto (1947). Two Brazilian painters are difficult to pigeon-hole into a category because they swing back and forth between representational and abstract art. The first is Daniel Senise (1955), who paints very refined pictures by simply suggesting images of familiar objects that are barely visible to the spectator and reminiscent of palimpsests. The other artist is Julio Villani (1956), who delves into a geometrical sensitivity, in which shapes allude to keyboards, houses, flags, envelopes and faces.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, a type of art that attempts to reach out beyond traditional painting and sculpture began to be disseminated and take a firm hold. Consequently, Ivo Mesquita states, and aptly so, “in the early 1990s, a new group of artists emerged who distinguish themselves from their predecessors by being less concerned about the past. Their imagination is marked by neo-dadaism, sensorial experimentation and exploration of materials typical of the 1960s. Their experimentation with different techniques and expressive resources leads them to work within the framework of high and low culture, with electronic media and industrial design, to explore issues related to anthropology, sociology and psychoanalysis, without forgetting art itself.”³⁶ José Resende (1945), Waltercio Caldas (1946), Cildo Meireles (1948) and Tunga (1952) are the forefathers of these innovative artistic manifestations. Resende has created three-dimensional works out of different materials (stone, wood, leather, copper, lead, paraffin, etc.), which always stand out in very simple conformations, making frequent allusion to familiar figures of reality. In 1970, together with Carlos Fajardo (1941) and others, Resende founded the Brazil School (Escola Brasil), which was devoted to the teaching of nontraditional art. Fajardo also has excelled in working with a variety of materials he displays in contrasting terms—tulle and marble, wax and granite—in an effort to highlight how they change with the passage of time. Caldas has executed sculptures that fall somewhere between “minimal art” and conceptual art, which the artist himself regards as “sensitive ideas.” Using wood, glass, stainless steel, yarn and other materials, Caldas makes subtle statements on the phenomenon of perception and always endeavors to draw attention to the materials, their shapes and sizes, the space between them and contrasts of light and shadow. The body of work developed by Meireles over the course of many years has made quite an impact, as the artist has attempted to question reality and put forth statements with a critical accent. Among the many installations he has built, we can cite *A través* (1983-1989)—a labyrinth of grating, netting or meshing, and barriers, and a floor covered with broken glass, which is a metaphor for the potentially hostile world in which we live—and *Desvío rojo* (1967-1984, with a recent version in 1998)—a completely red, spacious room, including red plants, furniture, appliances, books and paintings, thus reminding us that the color red is closely tied to the primordial experiences of man. Nevertheless, Meireles does not consider himself a conceptual artist—which is a creator who is forever attempting to communicate ideas—in the strict sense of the term. Therefore, in his view, his installation *El oleaje del mar* (1991-1997)—a large carpet of books opened to pages with marine photographs and through which one can walk on a wooden bridge, while you hear the word water repeated by several different voices in a variety of languages—is above all a work of amusement or fun, as well as a low technology construction of virtual reality. Finally, Tunga has taken the art world by surprise with his gargantuan sculptures and installations made out of rubber, felt, metals and magnets, which seem to be surrealist hybrids in which refinement is commingled with violence.

The following are Brazilian artists who readily move between the cre-

ation of three- and two-dimensional pieces using a variety of materials, and who are all concerned with experimenting with materials: Guto Lacaz (1948), who makes nonsensical constructions out of ready made objects; Marcos Coelho Benjamim (1952), who works in bas-relief employing thin sheets of zinc stuck with graphite; Jorge Barrão (1959), who mounts absurd assemblages using different objects and materials; Frida Baranek (1961), who makes enormous constructions out of iron bars that remind the spectator of an explosion; Jac Leirner (1961), who is known for his collections of devalued cruzeiro bills (the former Brazilian currency) or museum bags set out in artistic arrangements; Edgar de Souza (1962), who manufactures unreal and fun furniture; Artur Lescher (1962), whose pieces possess an architectural style, often defy gravity, and, on occasions, combine iron and mercury in a most extraordinary way; and Ernesto Neto (1964), who creates objects, often oversized pieces, out of nylon stockings and little polystyrene and lead balls, in an attempt to mix the sensual with a study of tension and density. Carmela Gross (1946), who has a great talent for design, and who now works by computer using a variety of materials, creates a sort of “painting” with cut cloth, arranged in layers. Hilton Berredo (1954) supports his paintings with twisted ribbons of resin that he covers with a variety of festive colors. Ana María Tavares (1958) presents installations in which she mixes volumetric elements with strokes and splotches on walls, in addition to assembling useless pieces of furniture that possess great beauty in form. Leda Catunda (1961) brings together a wide variety of woven and other materials, such as leather and plastics, to be used as supports for painting and to add to other textiles. Lastly, although we have by no means exhausted the endless list of Brazilian artists, the name of Adriana Varejão also deserves mention. This artist, who never stops using unusual materials (she employs tiles, for example) has returned to a conceptual, representational art in an effort to address themes of an historical and political nature (for example, the Conquest and domination, respectively).

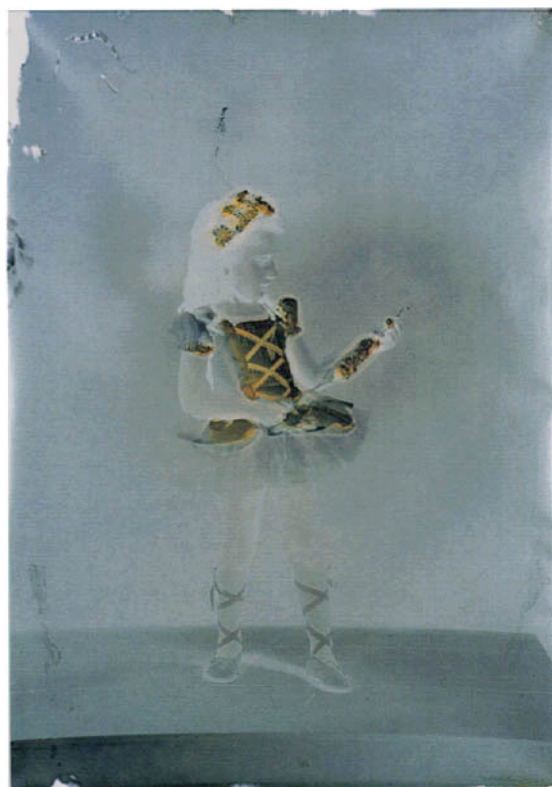
The Southern Cone

During the early 1970s, art critic Damián Bayón wrote: “In **Argentina**, the quality and abundance of artists between 1930 and 1970 was such that they got in each other’s way...”³⁷ This very same statement has continued to hold true over the course of the final decades of the 20th century. Argentina continues to produce many very fine artists. Over the last few decades, Argentinean painters and sculptors have especially made their mark though unconventional artists who carry on with the conceptual art of the 1960s and 1970s. According to Jorge Glusberg, “there are several explanations that have been given [...] regarding the return of painting at the end of the seventies (throughout the world). Some of these interpretations are economics-based: conceptual works [...] were not objects in the traditional sense of art and, therefore, did not supply the market, which fueled the rebirth of paintings. Other theories are sociological: conceptualism could not offer delight and entertainment to audiences

huddled en masse around traditional works [...] There is, lastly, an esthetic-based commentary: the ascesis of conceptual art triggered a return to the frequency and the handmade craft of painting, ceasing in this way the dematerialization of the work and the depersonalization of its making. But such judgements are linked to the philosophical change of direction—also from the late 1970s—which holds that the eruption of post-modernity in all fields of creation shall signal that it entailed the unraveling of the idealistic and historical-minded notion that viewed the development of art as a progressive and linear advancement, which also involved permanent subversion of esthetic orthodoxy and made it possible to connect with the movements because of its continual evolution. ‘Eclecticism is the zero grade of contemporary culture,’ wrote Jean François Lyotard, the author of the now almost legendary essay *La condición postmoderna* (1970) in the early 1980s. Since the avant-garde was over, the artists fell back on historical styles (beginning with those of the first half of the century).”³⁸

Since the beginning of the 1980s, a bumper crop of painters and sculptors has emerged in Argentina. Although a few of these artists have taken to abstract art, the avalanche is, for the most part, in representational art. According to accounts provided by Jorge López Anaya, several exhibitions were held in 1982 within this wave: one was called “Grupo IIIII;” another was titled “Anavanguardia;” and still another was organized by Glusberg and was dubbed “La Nueva Imagen.” There were others as well put on by independent artists.³⁹ The artists listed below are some of the most accomplished from this generation. Héctor Médici (1945) makes frequent references to traditional pictorial schools, with particular emphasis on landscapes. His work often verges on abstract art, he employs materials such as cloth and string, and he reflects on the fiction of image and reality. Armando Rearte (1945), in addition to being a draftsman, also paints pessimistic pieces about the current state of the world—when he is not producing drawings. Ana Eckell (1947), who began as a diehard neo-expressionist, began to paint in the 1990s by sketching a variety of human subjects in the most varied of circumstances who are occupying the same space, which alludes to current social problems. Eduardo Médici (1949), whose creations are very dramatic, often takes elements from art history and the bible or obsessively stresses the subjects of the human body, physical suffering and death. Gustavo López Armentía (1949) addresses a variety of themes in a neo-expressionist style, painting spaces, stories and human subjects over apparent illustrations, which are not without their humor and poetry. Alfredo Prior (1952) consistently makes reference to the history of culture (mythology, art, history) in paintings of mixed technique that are richly primed and, at times, border on the abstract. In Guillermo Conte’s (1956) works, there generally appear three elements: a carefully crafted background, a simple image (the structure of a bridge, a seat, dishes, balustrades, branches), and texts written in fine letters whose purpose is to suggest memories and emotions. Guillermo Kuitca (1961), the most famous of these artists, began by producing theatrical scenes and, in recent years, has painted city lay-

• EDUARDO MÉDICI (ARGENTINA) JULIA, 2000 ♦ PHOTOGRAPH ON FABRIC ♦ 120 X 90 CM ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF SICARDI GALLERY, CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN ART, HOUSTON, TEXAS



outs and maps on mattresses, after a stint with closed-in apartment floor layouts. In these paintings, according to López Anaya, “the tables, the chairs, the baby cradles and the absence of any human presence, suggests an ambiguous story in which love and fear, solitude and death are filtered out.”⁴⁰ Other motifs appearing in Kuitca’s work are crowns of thorns or barbed wire in the shape of planes, always alluding to the psychological havoc of the Holocaust. The list of artists who draw or paint goes on, but, in the interest of space, here we turn our attention to neo-conceptualist artists. In this field, our representative list includes Fabián Marcaccio (1963), Jorge Macchi (1963), Ernesto Ballesteros (1963) and Diego Gravinese (1971). Marcaccio presents pictorial installations, drawings and photographs with the intention of taking the rationalist discourse to the limits of the absurd. His works are very complex because of the mixture of supports he employs (canvasses, burlaps), and also because of the substances that he utilizes (oil, plaster, silicone). Macchi attempts to overcome today’s banality and, according to his own words, seeks to bring together the sacred and the mundane. The artists sets out to accomplish this through the creation of installations, objects and paintings of mixed technique. One example of this type of work would be the series *Herramientas místicas*, in which he utilizes a variety of tools, such as spatulas and trowels, to which he attaches photocopies of gothic arches. Ballesteros paints shape muta-

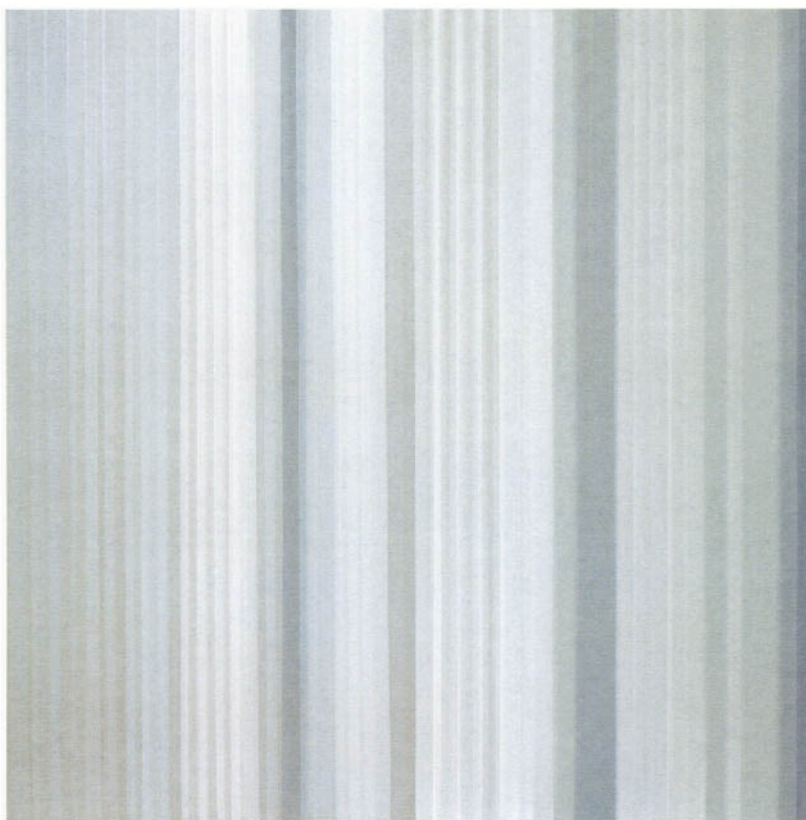


• ANA ECKELL (ARGENTINA) LA COLMENA (THE BEEHIVE), 1996-98
 ♦ OIL ON MONO-COPIES MOUNTED ON CANVAS ♦ 140 X 200 CM
 ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF SICARDI GALLERY, CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN ART, HOUSTON, TEXAS

tions of geometric models, such as cones, spheres and triangles in very skillfully-made boxes that look like computer monitors. In his art work, he stresses the influence of the mass media on present-day life. Gravinese also paints according to the images that we see today through the mass media. In his installations, images change rapidly and irregularly. Anything may appear: food, Disney characters, tools, common people in realistic terms and, at times, avalanches of fragments of the human body. The list of pure abstract Argentinean artists is also crowded. One very accomplished abstract artist is Pablo Siquier (1961). According to López Anaya, Siquier's "paintings—not at all pictorial—present, systematically, a simulation of abstract geometric squares. But these emblems have nothing in common with the self-references of the historical models of nonobjective art. They are a false abstraction founded on the representation of an imagery appropriated from the ornate suburban architecture and metal stamping or embossing that was familiar in Buenos Aires in the 1930s."⁴¹ In recent years, the sources of Siquier emblems have become less and less easy to pinpoint and in both his acrylic paintings as well as in his installations, he emphasizes very elaborate compositions of interwoven straight and curved lines, with an obvious concern for the interplay of light and shadows. It is also fitting to cite the work of two artists who have excelled in the field of print making, especially because of the experimental nature of their work: Matilde Marín (1948) and Zulema Maza (1949). During the 1980s, both of these artists were members, along with other print artists, of the Grupo 6. Marín also produced graphic works in volumes and lately has been utilizing video and photography (as in the series *Juego de manos*, in which

she uses strings, based on the rich tradition of playfulness with this material). During the 1990s, Zulema Maza has been focused on painting, the creation of objects and installations using toy animals, in an attempt to express the domination of man over nature. Finally, we turn to artists who work in three dimensions and the name of Miguel Angel Ríos (1943) comes to mind. He is a ceramist, sculptor, installation artist and painter who, in his pieces, generally alludes to Andean landscapes and the millenary relationship of man to the earth. Hernán Dompé (1946), draftsman and sculptor working in a variety of materials (wood, marble, leather), crafts objects endowed with a ritualistic presence in the shape of naves and weapons, which remind the viewer of ancient civilizations. Jorge Romeo (1949) uses paper, cardboard and marble for his nonembossed volumes, and wood, wire and rope for his relief creations. Romeo has always expressed a special concern for exploring the relationship between culture and nature. Finally, Pablo Reinoso (1955) fashions metals, wood, marble together with water, rice, salt, spices, etc. into pieces that look like archaic instruments, in order to poetically allude to hour glasses and sources of water, the true “passers of time.”

In **Chile**, the overthrow and death of Salvador Allende in 1973 and the subsequent dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet affected the development of art for many years. Guillermo Núñez (1930) is the best exponent of the violence perpetrated by the regime. He was imprisoned, tortured and expelled from the country in 1975, and returned for good in 1987. Even though a fair amount of Núñez’ body of work is expressionistic—originally verging on abstract art—beginning in the mid-1970s, this tendency became exacerbated, while the artist never wavered in making references to pain and torture. During the years of repression, several artists left the country. Those who remained in Chile either kept quiet or produced pieces in which they only dared to allude to the political situation in discreet fashion. This was the case of Eugenio Dittborn (1943). While presenting an exhibition of his work in 1976, he wrote: “The author owes his drawings to the observation of the vicissitudes of the human persona; owes his drawings to the observation of the human body, which is out of necessity related in a dynamic, discontinuous, disconnected, and contradictory way to another or other human bodies. To draw is to depict relationships. The author owes his drawings to the photogenic dispersion of the human body at rest, he owes his drawings to the theatrical concentration of the human body in movement; the author owes his drawings to the observation of the fractures of which the human persona is at the hands of another or other human persons. To draw is to construct reality by destroying the façade of reality.”⁴² During the late 1970s, Dittborn became a member of the group of artists known by the name of *Avanzada*. In 1983, he began to paint aerogramme paintings (aeropostal), which were actually sent to many different parts of the world and displayed with their envelopes. These works are a mix of text, drawings, photoserigraphs of anonymous people, and ready-made objects, and they refer to a variety of themes pertaining to the sociopolitical landscape. “The political drive and the dimension of the aeropostale paintings”—Víctor Zamudio-Taylor



• FRANCISCA SUTIL (CHILE)
 SPACES (ESPACIOS), 1999 ♦ OIL
 ON CANVAS ♦ 188 X 132 CM ♦
 PHOTO COURTESY OF NOHRA
 HAIME GALLERY, NEW YORK

has commented—“do not only lie in pre-established meanings with respect to Chile and Latin America, which Dittborn affirms, are never sufficient. The political aspects of his works, according to the artist, must be found on the pages of aerogramme paintings (like a poisonous dust) hidden therein.”⁴³ Gonzalo Díaz (1947) was also a member of the *Avanzada* group, even though he has been more engaged in questioning Chile’s popular myths and alluding to a variety of social, economic and religious topics, almost always in an ambiguous way. Juan Dávila (1946), who has been living in Melbourne since the 1970s, has been more concerned with sexual than political repression, a recurring theme that he addresses in sketches and paintings using a pornographic approach. In addition, he shows concern for individual or collective identity and the struggle for power. The creations of Alfredo Jaar (1956), who has lived in New York City since 1982, are overtly political in nature. His themes can be either very broad (for example, art and reality, reality and utopia, the twisting of ideological messages in advertising), or else quite specific and pertain to Third World country issues (labor-related abuses, the assault on natural resources, xenophobia in Europe, emigration to the United States). Jaar’s installations are always impeccably presented and include large photographs, television monitors, texts and mirrors. His extensive creations entail careful research of the site he is concerned

• **JORGE TACLA (CHILE)** *SOMBROS PARALELOS* (PARALLEL SHADOWS), 1995 ♦ SERIGRAPH, ACRYLIC AND OIL ON CANVAS ♦ 284.5 X 315 CM ♦ PRIVATE COLLECTION, MONTERREY, MEXICO ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF ARTIST



with, and the design of each installation is custom-tailored to the institution that invites him. His most outstanding art works include *El poder de las palabras* (1982), in which slides of terrible acts of violence are projected over the image of a typewriter reproduced on a sheet of Plexiglas. In *Utopía y realidad* (1987), two illuminated photo-murals are displayed: one shows a tank (*tanque cascabel*) “made in Brazil” (whose canon is projected into space with empty golden frames hanging from its body), while the other exhibits a beautiful wheat field. In *Caminando sobre las aguas* (1992), several TV monitors present illegal immigrants crossing the Rio Grande. Lastly, *Proyecto Ruanda* (1998) is a series of black boxes with concealed photos of the slaughter of one million persons of the Tutsi ethnic group at the hands of members of the Hutu ethnic group. Several other Chilean artists have also presented installations that address themes of a social, political and ecological nature: Lotty Rosenfeld (1943), Carlos Leppe (1952), Soledad Salamé (1954) and, with religious undertones, Fernando Prats (1967).

Among the many Chilean painters of the last two decades of the 20th century, particularly noteworthy are Francisca Sutil (1952), whose abstract body of work has undergone several different stages; Francisco Smythe (1952), a graphic artist and designer, with a festive body of work that combines “action painting” of the New York school with infantile art and graffiti; Ricardo Maffei

(1953), who creates realistic pastels with a classic accent, choosing his themes with painstaking care (a gray canvas and folds that cover the body, stagnant water that reflects a nude); Carlos Altamirano (1954), whose works of mixed technique and added objects show symbolic intent; Carlos Maturana-Bororo (1954), whose large formatted canvasses are characterized by automatic graphics and intense brushstrokes that establish compositions verging on abstract art; Ismael Frigerio (1955), whose work is also between representational and non-representational art and alludes to the ceaseless flow of time and the basic elements (earth, water, fire and air); Samy Benmayor (1956), who mixes “action painting” with all sorts of gestural and graphic elements as well as a few slightly representational signs; Jorge Tacla (1958), whose varied work at times mixes undefined signs and shapes and more representational and expressionistic images with primitive elements; and Arturo Duclós (1959), whose graphic design-based work is presented on different supports or on canvas without a stretcher, and draws on signs and symbols of all types (religious, political, commercial, etc.) to question the sense of the established shapes and images and to attempt to establish other meanings. Finally, some of Chile’s most accomplished sculptors of the last few decades include Mario Irarrázaval (1940), who suffered harassment by the dictator Pinochet; Francisco Gazitúa (1944), Osvaldo Peña (1950), José Vicente Gajardo (1953) and Francisca Núñez (1961). Except for Gazitúa, these artists work in the representational mode, and all of them employ a variety of materials in their sculptural creations.

When Alfredo Stroessner was ousted in 1989, **Paraguay** emerged from a protracted period of repression. At that time, not many noteworthy artists had developed. At present, however, Paraguay does boast some artists whose names merit recognition, such as Ricardo Migliorisi (1948) and Bernardo Krasniansky (1951), who create care-free and light-hearted works of incongruous figures and objects. Subsequently, others came onto the scene, such as Mónica González (1952), Marité Zaldívar (1955) and Fátima Martini (1959), who according to Ticio Escobar, “put forth an image connected to experimental searches in a post-conceptual direction.”⁴⁴ González presents installations with pipes and rear-view mirrors that invite the spectators to partake of a game of fragmented and distorted views. Another name that deserves mention is Osvaldo Salerno (1952), whose installations often constitute painful reminders of the days of Stroessner’s dictatorship. This is the case of his work *La pileta* (1997), a video-installation in which he obstinately repeats a phrase of writer Augusto Roa Bastos: “Salí del encierro oliendo a intemperie” [I emerged from confinement reeking of inclement weather]. Aptly so, Ticio Escobar states: “It is almost impossible for artistic movements to aspire anymore to become an avant-garde capable of altering the course of history by means of devices of form. But going against the grain of the trivialized syntax which promotes the hegemony of marketing, many artists are attempting today in Paraguay, as in Latin America in general, to produce new critical figures.”⁴⁵

In addition to its limited territory and small population, **Uruguay**, has been plagued by emigration, especially during the dictatorship from 1973-1984.

• **MÓNICA GONZÁLEZ** (PARAGUAY) **LOS GUARDA ESPALDAS** (BODYGUARDS), 1999 ♦ ARTICULATED METALLIC CONSTRUCTIONS, STONE AND REARVIEW MIRRORS ♦ VARIABLE MEASUREMENTS ♦ PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



• **MARITÉ ZALDÍVAR** (PARAGUAY) ♦ **CRUZ Y FICCIÓN**, 1996 ♦ SLING-SHOT OF RUBBER AND LEATHER, WITH VEGETABLE ROOT HANDLE, PROJECTILE IN CLAY IN THE SHAPE OF AN INDIAN HEAD ♦ 50 X 20 CM ♦ PHOTO BY JUAN CARLOS MEZA, COURTESY OF THE ARTIST



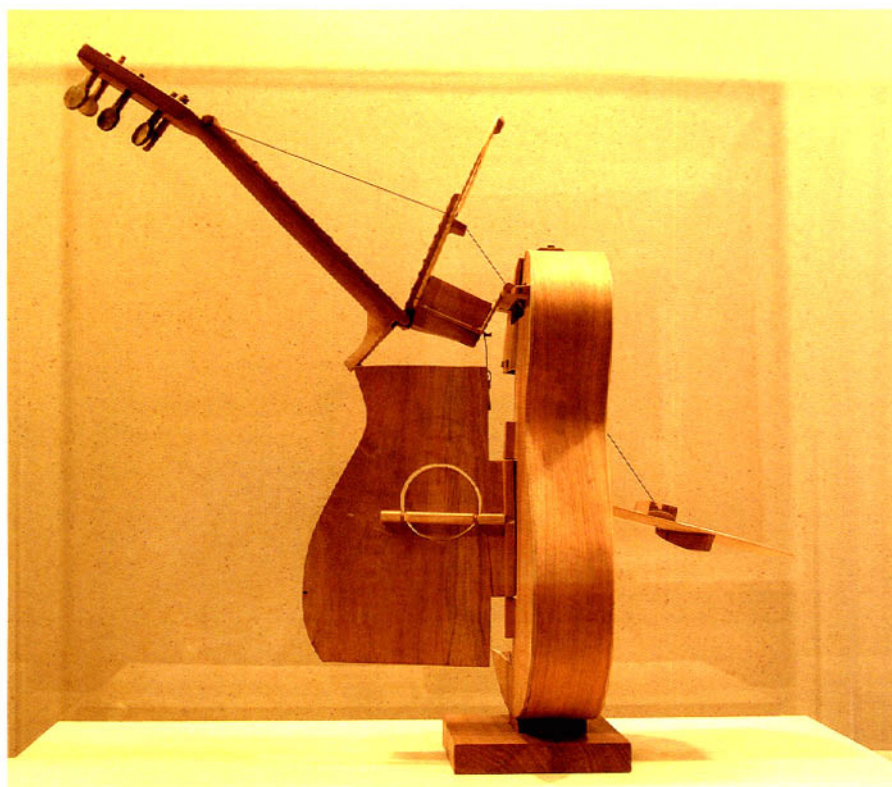


Thus, over the course of the 20th century, many major Uruguayan artists have lived abroad. Two of them are Joaquín Torres García (1874-1949), who lived more than 40 years in Europe after a brief stay in the United States; and Gonzalo Fonseca (1922-1997), who after making several trips to different places overseas and living in Paris for four years, moved to New York City in 1957. Two of the most outstanding figures in Uruguayan art during recent decades have continued the tradition of living abroad. These are representational painter José Gamarra (1934), who settled in France in 1963, and the conceptual artist and art theorist Luis Camnitzer (1937), who has resided in the United States since 1964 and was born in Germany. Gamarra has been successful at creating oil paintings of landscapes that are very pleasing to the eye because of their rich detail. In the midst of exuberant jungles, illuminated by the dawn's early light or the twilight of the afternoon, he depicts scenes and characters that seem anachronistic, since they make reference to the times of the Spanish conquest and to the presence of other nonspecific past invasions (with airplanes and helicopters appearing). Gamarra's landscapes not only possess a magical accent, but also denounce assaults against man and nature. In 1996, Angel Kalenberg wrote that Gamarra's work, after 33 years in Paris, is still linked to a mythical America.⁴⁶ Camnitzer represented Uruguay at the 1998 Venice Biennial, and his body of work dates back to the mid-1960s. It is characterized by taking a critical stand against the commercialization of art and political repression, espe-

• **FÁTIMA MARTINI (PARAGUAY)**
 HAMACAS. INSTALLATION. 1996 ♦
 PHOTOGRAPHS BOUND TOGETHER
 BY ADHESIVE TAPE ♦ VARIED MEASUREMENTS ♦ PHOTO BY ALBERTO
 JONQUIERES. COURTESY OF THE
 ARTIST

cially in Latin America. In 1971, Camnitzer presented *Firma por pulgadas*, in which he sarcastically established a formula to figure out the value of each and every letter of his own signature. On the issue of repression, in 1983 he unveiled the series *De la tortura uruguaya*, in which he showed small objects (pins) or remnants of objects (wires that could be associated with electric shocks) accompanied by the phrase: “Se acercó con una sonrisa, creyó que esta vez podría soportarlo cuando” (He approached with a smile, he thought this time he could bear it when). At the 1988 Venice Biennial, he depicted the cell of a prisoner, including objects and texts, to record the terror of being incarcerated. Two other accomplished Uruguayan artists who live outside of their country are Rimer Cardillo (1944) and Carlos Capelán (1948). Cardillo resides in the United States and has been a ceramist, but has turned to making installations in more recent years. In 1991, he presented *Charrúas y montes criollos* in Montevideo. This work was described by Alicia Haber as follows: “The installation revolves around the concepts of ecology, history and national identity. There is a rebellious, anti-establishment attitude with regard to the destruction of nature, the extermination of human beings and the disappearance of memory and the historical record. Also present are heartfelt tributes to fundamental aspects of the Uruguayan landscape, the decimated native woodlands, a touching evocation of the indigenous cultures that inhabited our lands and a painful denouncement of their extermination.”⁴⁷ Carlos Capelán (1948) has resided in Sweden since 1974, and in his artwork addresses themes pertaining to utopia, exile and identity in complex installations made of paintings and texts posted on walls and many different types of objects, such as furniture, books and plant-based elements. Capelán has also executed drawings and prints consisting of a mix of popular imagery with expressionistic themes.

Among Uruguay’s installation artists of note, Nelbia Romero (1938) must be cited. During the 1990s, Romero presented *Más allá de las palabras* (1992) and *Bye bye Yáugurú* (1995), two installations addressing the theme of national identity. Mario Sagradini (1946) has become famous for *Made in Uruguay* (1991), an installation consisting of ten traditional Sorocabana café tables covered with rectangles of turf, making reference to the country’s wealth of livestock, also icons of Uruguayan glories and myths (world champion soccer players, the “33 orientales” who helped gain the country’s independence, Gardel), and to complement it all, catheters used for blood transfusions. According to Alicia Haber: “Local pauperism has rarely been expressed as well as in this singular version that combines povera art, conceptualism and land art.”⁴⁸ Uruguay has had fine exponents of sculpture in a variety of materials. For example, the group of artists representing this country at the 1985 São Paulo Biennial was made up of Nelson Ramos (1932), Wifredo Díaz Valdés (1932), Hugo Nantes (1932), Enrique Silveira (1928), Jorge Abbondanza (1936) and Agueda Dicandro (1938). Ramos comes from the world of painting, and little by little has been switching over to wood carving. His work is very simple, and elegantly mixes art and craftsmanship, plane sculpture and design, abstraction and representational art (a variety of objects and human subjects performing in



• WIFREDO DÍAZ VALDÉS (URUGUAY) GUITARRA, 1991 ♦ CEDAR AND ZIZAL CORDS ♦ 83 X 34 X 64 CM ♦ IDB COLLECTION, WASHINGTON, D.C. ♦ CULTURAL CENTER ACQUISITION FUND, 1994

a variety of activities). Díaz Valdés is a cabinet maker who, aside from crafting furniture, doors and articulated boxes, creates carved and assembled sculptures that rise up in space like fragmented figures, or pieces that open up like trees or folded volumes with the possibility of expanding. Nantes, who was also a painter, constructs grotesque individual or group figures out of discarded materials. The duo of Silveira-Abbondanza originally worked in the field of utilitarian ceramics and has evolved toward the execution of sets of hundreds of miniature characters that are of different sizes and move differently in allusion to today's problem of overcrowding. Dicandro creates more or less representational sculptures and installations out of sheets of glass in a variety of shapes, which suggest the fragility of life. Without a doubt, the most outstanding Uruguayan painter in recent years has been Ignacio Iturria (1949). His body of work has become recognized worldwide. His pasty oils (ocher, gray and white), in many instances on corrugated cardboard, represent secluded peaceful places or furniture (tables, sofas, cupboards) covered in objects and human figures that appear in varied scales and in diverse arrangements in space. His paintings and pictorial sculptures, which are made out of cardboard and acrylic, seem like imaginative stage productions created by a man possessed by the soul of a child and wracked with nostalgic memories. With a body of work that dates back to the 1970s, Iturria made a name for himself with his very personal style during

the mid 1980s, after living for nearly 10 years in Europe. During this decade, according to Alicia Haber, “different painters, such as Lacy Duarte (1937), Virginia Patrone (1950), Carlos Musso (1954), Carlos Seveso (1954) and Fernando López Lage (1964), began to express themselves in atypical manners for the local milieu. Freely linked to neo-expressionism, these artists demonstrate the rebelliousness and nonconformist mentality of the generation that emerges in the midst of political conflicts, which has been given the name ‘Generation of the dictatorship.’”⁴⁹ More recently, new artists have emerged who attempt to continue within the parameters of the so-called “School of the South” started by Torres García during the 1930s. Some of the outstanding artists belonging to this group are Daniel Batalla (1960) and Gustavo Serra (1966), who studied under Francisco Matto and Augusto Torres. It is also fitting to cite the names of some the sculptors whose ideas are close to a concrete and universalist way of thinking, such as Roberto Píriz (1960), Marcelo Larrosa (1971)—who studied sculpting in Venezuela under Carlos Medina—and Luis Balbuena (1977), among others.

Conclusions

After covering such a wide-ranging topic, it is clear that it would be virtually impossible to formulate a definition that characterizes all Latin American art over the last two decades of the 20th century. Art in this region shows surprising diversity, and this is due not only to the broadening of the old definition of the plastic and visual arts, nor to the constant quest for finding new ways of representation, but also to the fact that there is no common purpose among the artists of the region, much less any apparent plans to establish rules or guidelines in the near future. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that art made in Latin America does exist, and that some of its protagonists are major figures and very much on a par with the artists of Europe and the United States. Perhaps it would not even be too audacious to affirm that, at times, some of the works produced on this subcontinent—despite its problems stemming from worsening underdevelopment—show signs that point toward other artistic languages, a new idiom foreign to the countries of the First World. This is evident when an attempt is made to blend our particular traditions and history into the spirit that the contemporary world is currently experiencing. Surely, the body of work of several of the artists mentioned in this book during the last two decades of the 20th century will live on, just as the work of many others will remain consigned to oblivion. Concepts, definitions and artistic tastes shall forever undergo a process of renewal. The most truly original artists, as well as those artists who have devised a way to open up new horizons of imagination, intelligence and sensitivity, shall live on.

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