Import/Export: Raw materials, hemispheric expertise, and the making of Latin American art, 1933-1945

by

Niko Vicario

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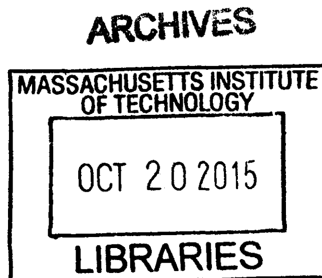

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Architecture: History and Theory of Art

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

September 2015

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Abstract

Historians have tended to characterize *Latin American art* either as a self-evident term or as a category designated by U.S. institutions. This dissertation argues instead that artists from the region were agents in shaping this emerging field through their selective cooperation with, and resistance to, the United States' Good Neighbor Policy networks. Artists, haunted by criticisms that art in Latin America was a "cultural import" from Europe, engaged with a U.S. market that treated their art as a source of "exportable prestige." This dissertation analyzes the entanglement of this cultural discourse of import/export with the mechanisms of commerce as a new paradigm for thinking about *Latin American art*.

The period that is the focus of this dissertation—1933 to 1945—represented a transitional era between Latin America's "export age" (1870-1930) and postwar modernization, import substitution industrialization, and the birth of what would come to be known as developmentalism (*desarrollismo*). Framed by the Great Depression and by World War II, this "long decade" was coeval with the Good Neighbor Policy, in which the nations of the Americas pledged non-intervention in the hemisphere and more intimate commercial and cultural ties. Through case-studies of Cândido Portinari, David Alfaro Siqueiros, Joaquín Torres-García, and Nelson Rockefeller, the dissertation places special emphasis upon the relationship between materiality, raw materials, and import substitution industrialization in analyzing works of art and the networks in which they were mobile.

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Acknowledgments

This dissertation was written thanks to support from a variety of sources. Research was made possible by the Mellon International Dissertation Research Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council. The project was also advanced by a Mellon Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship, also from the SSRC. I am grateful to the museums and archives that opened their vaults for me, especially to Mónica Montes at Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Alejandro Diaz and Mariana Casares at Museo Torres García, Fernanda Martins and Noélia Coutinho at Projeto Portinari, Monica Blank at the Rockefeller Archive Center, and Cecilia Torres. At MIT, I would like to thank Renée Caso, Kate Brearley, and Anne Deveau for their support.

Colleagues and friends offered camaraderie and inspiration. In Cambridge, Stephanie Tuerk, Mariana Mogilevich, Ana María León, Kelly Presutti, Rebecca Uchill, Nicola Pezolet, Lindsey Lodhie, Zeynep Oguz, Olga Touloumi, Simon Reader, Ateya Khorakiwala, Michael Kubo, Lori Cole, Jennifer Chuong, Jeanne Haffner, Jesse Feiman, Leah Aronowsky, Megan Sullivan, Albert Lopez, Irina Chernyakova, and Deepa Ramaswamy, among many others, provided a vibrant intellectual community. In Mexico City, Cristóbal Andrés Jácome, Natalia de la Rosa, and Miguel Legaria Fregoso were tremendous. Gabriel Peluffo Linari in Montevideo and Mauricio Lissovsky in Rio made a big impact with their knowledge and encouragement. Finally, I am deeply grateful to old and dear friends as well as to my family for their support, patience, and enthusiasm, especially Betsy Klein.

My dissertation committee improved the manuscript immeasurably. I am indebted to Robin Greeley for her thinking about the relationship between aesthetics and politics and for her generosity and rigor throughout the process. Arindam Dutta pushed me to cast a wider net and to dig deeper, and the dissertation benefitted from his incisive interventions. Timothy Hyde also contributed a valuable perspective in its final stages. Most of all, I thank Caroline Jones for her incredible support, generosity, humor, and insight.

Introduction

Nitrocellulose lacquer, animal hide, coffee plantations, and oil wells on fire. This dissertation focuses upon works of art produced between 1933 and 1945 and their relationship to materials—both raw and manufactured. This era was marked by the institutionalization of *Latin American art* as a geo-cultural idea bound up in geopolitical and geo-economic transformation.

Historians have tended to characterize *Latin American art* either as a self-evident term or as a category designated by U.S. institutions. This dissertation argues instead that artists from the region were agents in shaping this emerging field through their selective cooperation with, and resistance to, the United States' Good Neighbor Policy networks. Artists, haunted by criticisms that art in Latin America was a "cultural import" from Europe, engaged with a U.S. market that treated their art as a source of "exportable prestige." This dissertation analyzes the entanglement of this cultural discourse of import/export with the mechanisms of commerce as a new paradigm for thinking about *Latin American art*.

The period that is the focus of this dissertation—1933 to 1945—represented a transitional era between Latin America's "export age" (1870-1930) and postwar modernization, import substitution industrialization, and the birth of what would come to be known as developmentalism (*desarrollismo*).[1] Framed by the Great Depression and by World War II, this "long decade" was coeval with the Good Neighbor Policy, in which

[1] Although Brazil features prominently in this dissertation, I use the Spanish term throughout. For the term "export age," see amongst others Enrique Cárdenas, José A. Ocampo, and Rosemary Thorp, *An Economic History of Twentieth-Century Latin America, Volume 1: The Export Age* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

the nations of the Americas pledged non-intervention in the hemisphere and more intimate commercial and cultural ties. The dissertation analyzes an entanglement of artistic agency with political and commercial interests, arguing that the relationship between the region and global capitalism was central to the question of who possessed, named, and made *Latin American art*.

The dissertation begins with Brazilian painter Cândido Portinari, whose depictions of coffee plantations and their workers became a source of "exportable prestige" for both the artist and the Getúlio Vargas regime.[2] The chapter analyzes how the rise and fall of Portinari in both Brazil and the United States reflected Brazil's transition to import substitution industrialization. In the second chapter, we turn to Mexican artist David Alfaro Siqueiros who sought to modernize muralism using U.S.-produced nitrocellulose lacquer (principally Duco) and sprayguns. Spreading this industrialized muralism across the continent, Siqueiros moved from a rhetoric of anti-imperialism to one of "democracy," in the process altering the political project he ascribed to technology. In the third chapter, we focus upon Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García, whose "Constructive Universalism" sought to produce an abstract art for the continent that drew heavily from Pre-Columbian, and particularly Andean, aesthetics. While Portinari exported his export-themed paintings and Siqueiros was peripatetic in his spread of imported technologies and pigments, Torres-García enacted a form of import substitution of modern art from his base in Montevideo. Along the way, all three artists encountered Nelson Rockefeller, working for both the Museum of Modern Art and the

[2] The term "exportable prestige" is Lincoln Kirstein's. See Kirstein, "Preliminary Draft of a Plan for the Formation of a Department of Latin American Art in the Museum of Modern Art," 2, undated, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.C, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

Office of Inter-American Affairs. The fourth chapter thus turns to Rockefeller and his emissaries—namely Grace McCann Morley, Lincoln Kirstein, and Alfred Barr—and the means by which they institutionalized the *Latin American art* category through collecting and curatorial practices.

Each chapter covers roughly the same thirteen-year period (1933 to 1945) while also establishing pre-histories and post-histories for the developments of this particular "long decade." In refusing a chronological sequence in which one chapter moves forward in time from the preceding one, the dissertation's structure emphasizes that this era cannot be historicized from a single "locus of enunciation."[3] What's more, each thread is far from autonomous; for instance, characters such as Diego Rivera, Lincoln Kirstein, and Nelson Rockefeller appear in every chapter, before being more fully analyzed in Chapter 4. The dissertation thus attempts to make of text's obstinately linear progression a knotty web of objects, images, actors, and ideas. This approach is indebted both to Pierre Bourdieu's work on the field of cultural production and to Bruno Latour's actor-network theory.[4] Structurally, the sum of the chapters surveys the position-takings made possible by this field-in-construction. In turn, these position-takings defined the coordinates of the field.

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[3] Walter Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 5.
[4] See Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art: Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

What is Latin American art?

If a central claim of this dissertation is that *Latin American art* was a field produced by transnational networks, we must begin by asking questions of the term itself. We can start by problematizing the term *Latin America* itself as a late nineteenth century abstraction coined in France.[5] *Latin American art* is problematic for the same reasons, obscuring particularity in the name of generalization. We may also interrogate the geo-cultural logic underpinning such a term—i.e., that the art produced in a certain place shares characteristics with other art produced there. Accordingly, "Mexican art" and "Iranian art" are equally as tenuous, even if the territories they subsume are geographically smaller. I am not asking the reader to accept the autochthonous essence of *Latin American art* but rather to see it as a historical construction that was naturalized. In turn it has proved prescriptive for artists, curators, critics, historians, and larger viewing and reading publics—as a category to embody or just as often to evade. There is an ambivalence at its core.[6]

However, the constructed character of this field is too often neglected or taken for granted. The desire to dispense with it in favor of more universalizing categories (that have always nevertheless been geographically, geopolitically, and geo-economically slanted) such as *modern* art, *contemporary* art, or *art* will not replace the need for

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[5] See Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America* (Malden; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
[6] Gerardo Mosquera, in a number of publications, most notably the edited volume *Beyond the Fantastic*, has sharpened many of the critical tools for thinking through this topic. More recently, he has discussed the turn from a discussion of *Latin American art* to *art from Latin America*, largely because of the baggage the former category carries. See Mosquera (editor), *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America* (London: The Institute of International Visual Arts; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Mosquera, *Caminar con el Diablo: textos sobre arte, internacionalización y culturas* (Madrid: Exit, 2011).

historical excavation. As art history is often narrated, Renaissance Italy became Haussmann's Paris, which became Pollock's New York. Much as one would interrogate the genesis of this canon, it is valuable to historicize the production of the category *Latin American art*. The dissertation thus belongs to an intellectual tradition, indebted to Marx and Bourdieu, amongst others, that seeks to denaturalize what has been naturalized.[7] As such, it is indebted also to art historians who have employed this lens, such as Serge Guilbaut and Andrea Giunta.[8] Of course, even if it is frequently critical of it, this dissertation also participates in the discourse of *Latin American art*.[9]

Was *Latin American art* actually produced in this era? Was it *new*? The recent, pioneering research project directed by Mari Carmen Ramírez rigorously chronicles a longer history of these questions, compiling an array of valuable documents concerning art and culture from Latin America.[10] It is clear that certain questions and debates were already developing in the nineteenth century literary field, in the wake of Simón

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[7] See amongst others Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964); Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977); Bourdieu, see note 4.

[8] Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Andrea Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

[9] Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" (1969) in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 113-138; Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

[10] See the website for the ICAA Documents research project, based at the International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, Texas: http://www.mfah.org/research/international-center-arts-americas/icaa-documents-project/. See also Héctor Olea and Melina Kervandjian (editors), *Resisting Categories: Latin American and/or Latino?* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts Houston, International Center for the Arts of the Americas, 2012).

Bolívar's independence campaigns and the Monroe Doctrine.[11] By the end of the century, José Martí and José Enrique Rodó, amongst others, began to analyze the problems but also the potential for cultural production in the region. It was later, in the 1920s, that the question of what a specifically visual *American art* should be or look like began to seriously occupy critics from Cuba, Peru, Argentina, and Mexico, amongst others.[12] While this critical discourse is important and requires further scholarship, my dissertation rests on the idea that it was in the 1930s and early 1940s that these questions entered the *modes of making* of artists themselves.

Institutions are a crucial part of this story, but this dissertation diverges from the standard institutional histories by analyzing works of art as active (if often ambivalent) sites. This approach benefits from recent scholarship, such as Pamela Lee's dissection of works of art as both products and agents of globalization.[13] It likewise digests Jennifer Roberts's recent study of mobile images in early America, in which she analyzes how pictures engaged in a "formal preprocessing of the distances they were designed to span."[14] For instance, Wifredo Lam knew when making it in Cuba that his painting *The Jungle* (1943) would be shipped, hung, viewed, sold, and collected in New York. **(Figure**

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[11] This question has been more extensively explored by literary scholars, particularly those interested in how questions of national and regional identity were inextricably bound up with the production of culture for those territories. See Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996); Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: the National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Julio Ramos, *Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
[12] See Olea and Kervandjian, *op. cit.*; Harper Montgomery, *Rebellious Conformists: Exhibiting Avant-Garde Art in Mexico City and Buenos Aires, 1920-1929* (PhD dissertation: University of Chicago, 2010).
[13] Pamela Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).
[14] Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: the Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), 1-2.

0.1) This knowledge produced a brief, which in turn informed the way the painting took shape.[15] The dissertation also pays attention when works of art occlude that which the artists did not wish to make visible—the violence of slavery in Portinari's coffee plantation pictures, the semiotic evacuation of revolutionary politics in Siqueiros's murals, and the commercial undergirding of hemispheric integration in Torres-García's constructions.

It is the aesthetic remainder of works of art that provides the conception of history put forth in this dissertation.[16] This is not a materialism in which all ideation is determined by changes in the modes of production, nor is it the Hegelian inverse. Art's specific modes of production are too much of a hybrid for that—too artisanal. The Janus faces look forward and look back. This dissertation does not follow Siqueiros, for instance, who saw industrialization as the messianic, inevitable path. Rather, ideas coexist, overlap, collaborate, and compete, much as do the modes of production—the agrarian labor of coffee cultivation and the production of steel at Volta Redonda.[17]

Materiality, raw materials, and import substitution industrialization

The dissertation's investigation of this field concentrates upon materiality, raw materials, and import substitution industrialization as key terms, which we may summarize under the rubric of *import/export*. The theory of comparative advantage in international trade had governed the approach to export-led development in what has

[15] See Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 29-36.
[16] Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973).
[17] See Néstor García Canclini, *Hybrid Cultures: Strategies for Entering and Leaving Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

become known as Latin America's "export age" (1870-1930).[18] Following the precepts of David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, and others, this was founded upon the idea of a commodity lottery—bananas vs. petroleum vs. rubber—that enabled different countries to occupy variegated positions as producers and consumers in the world market.[19] While exportation has been the dominant term through which Latin America's position in the global economy has been understood, increasing attention to the directly proportional role of and desire for imports in Latin America has enriched our understanding of how commerce and culture came to intersect.[20]

Since the nineteenth century, intellectuals both inside and outside Latin America spoke disparagingly of the region's "imported culture." These claims had roots in the preceding centuries of imperialism and in the specifics of nineteenth-century informal empire. As early as 1846, one anonymous Brazilian critic wrote: "Europe, which sends us back our cotton spun and woven…is telling us the best way to write the history of Brazil."[21] As literary theorist Roberto Schwarz extrapolates from this quotation: "The nexus between economic exploitation (i.e. the export of raw materials and import of manufactures) and ideological subordination was beginning to dawn in our consciousness."[22]

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[18] Steven Topik and Allen Wells (editors), *The Second Conquest of Latin America: Coffee, Henequen, and Oil during the Export Boom, 1850-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998).
[19] Joseph Love, "Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1980), 48.
[20] Benjamin Orlove (editor), *The Allure of the Foreign: Imported Goods in Postcolonial Latin America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).
[21] As quoted in Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (London; New York: Verso, 1992), 35.
[22] Ibid.

Cuban writer José Martí likewise saw political, economic, and cultural independence as inextricably linked projects. In his seminal essay "Nuestra América" (1891), he wrote:

> The frock coats are still from France, but the thought now began to come from America. The youths of America roll up the sleeves of their shirts, sink their hands in the mass, and make it rise with the yeast of their sweat. They understand that we have imitated for too long, and that salvation is in creating. *Crear* is the password of a generation. If our wine is made from bananas, and if its taste turns out bitter, it is still our wine![23]

Martí here betrays some ambivalence—the wine is both "bitter" (aesthetically unpleasant) and "made from bananas" (produced incorrectly); its virtue is that it is "ours." Nine years later, using the framework of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó produced a model for the Latin American aesthete in the character of Ariel, as the rightful heir to the Americas, increasingly tyrannized by Caliban, a surrogate for the United States.[24]

Martí and Rodó were responding to conditions throughout Latin America, in which cultural importation mimicked conditions of economic dependency or what we might now term neo-imperialism. As Mexican sociologist Andrés Molina Enríquez observed in 1909:

> The foreigners and creoles who are the owners of our textile factories do not use the cloth that their factories produce. For the most part their clothing is of European cloth; they wear European or American-made hats, and walk on American-manufactured shoes. They ride in European or American carriages, and they decorate their houses with European art. In short, they prefer everything

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[23] José Martí, "Nuestra América" (1891), as quoted in translation in Ericka Beckman, *Capital Fictions: The Literature of Latin America's Export Age* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 39.
[24] José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel* (Montevideo: Impresora de Dornaleche y Reyes, 1900).

> foreign to everything that is Mexican, including their taste in paintings, literature, and music.[25]

As Schwarz points out, the ambivalence of "imported culture" was in fact class-specific—specific to those who could afford those imported items and those whose worldview or background led them to aspire to follow foreign habits of consumption.[26] Within this logic, culture was grouped with the imported luxuries and manufactured goods that were exchanged for Latin America's raw materials.[27]

The Great Depression of the 1930s shone a light on centuries of extraction, imperialism, and unequal terms of trade.[28] Revising the terms of trade was seen as crucial both to the economic survival of the region as well as to its autonomy. Industrialization—specifically import substitution industrialization—emerged by the end of World War II as the consensus.

This transition entered into the *modes of making* of artists from the region in a variety of ways—from Portinari's depictions of coffee cultivation to Siqueiros's use of nitrocellulose lacquer to Torres-García's turn to local materials. The problems these works hoped to solve included but were not limited to the notion of "imported culture" dominating Latin American imaginaries, the precarity of export-led growth, and the

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[25] As quoted in translation in Stephen Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: the Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 29.
[26] Schwarz, *op. cit.*, 11.
[27] Seeking to overturn this import/export equation, in the 1920s, the Brazilian avant-gardist Oswald de Andrade led a movement of poetry "for export" based on a metaphor of the *pau brasil* tree, the export commodity after which the country had been named. See Oswald de Andrade and Stella M. de Sá Rego, "Manifesto of Pau-Brasil Poetry," *Latin American Literary Review*, vol. 14, no. 27 (Jan.-Jun., 1986), 184-187. This manifesto was originally written by Andrade in 1924 in Portuguese.
[28] Love, *op. cit.*, 51.

allure of import substitution industrialization as a way out of neo-imperialist dependency.[29]

This art developed as Latin America's principal commodities—such as oil, coffee, rubber, sugar—became both real and symbolic sites of these political, economic, and cultural debates. Artists such as Cândido Portinari, but also Mario Carreño and several others, produced what I am terming an "art of raw materials." The emergence of *Latin American art* as a geocultural category frequently played out in representations of land and export commodities.[30] It was in this context that Siqueiros sought to produce an industrialized muralism, not just in Mexico but throughout the hemisphere, instead of "folk art for export."[31] It was likewise in this era that Torres-García urged artists to work with local stones and in which he experimented with animal hide in place of canvas. While these artists grappled with the relationship between figuration and abstraction, these more familiar, formal debates were likewise interwoven with and complicated by experimentation with the materials, tools, and functions of the work of art. This, I argue, is the key to unlocking the particular relationship between this art and the world in which and for which it was made.

Attention to materiality does not begin and end with analyzing the constituent matter of a work of art. It also foregrounds the work of art as a frequently mobile thing in the world (murals may be understood so much better when considered as sedentary

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[29] For analysis of works of art as attempts at problem solving, see Baxandall, *op. cit.*, 14-15.

[30] See Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[31] David Alfaro Siqueiros, "New Thoughts on the Plastic Arts in Mexico," lecture, Mexico City, February 10, 1933, in *Art and Revolution* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 31.

exceptions to this prevailing logic). Works of art shipped by Portinari from Brazil to the U.S., images reproduced in the pages of Torres-García's publications, and whole exhibitions rendered mobile across the hemisphere by the OIAA did not move alone. The era was also marked by the expansion of aviation, the construction of the Pan-American Highway, and the continental diffusion of radio networks and cinema technologies.

Why does this dissertation construct a link between Latin American art and questions of material? In part, it is to suggest that this art was on the cusp of a postwar transition in which materiality (and with it a materialist view of global economic relationships) would be repressed. For instance, in the postwar period in the U.S., questions of material would be fully subsumed into the question of medium itself, the work of art's value defined by its increasing self-reflexivity rather than its relation to the world.[32]

The dissertation both rests on and tests a premise—that consumer capitalism's dominant mode is both anti-historical and anti-material.[33] And what's more, art history has been primarily following suit. The attention to matter (be it the material of art, the raw materials of export commodities, or the materialism of Marx) is to ask where a thing was made, with what, by whom, under what circumstances and conditions, and how it came to the consumer (viewer) and at what cost. It is to understand the made thing in relation to history, geography, and trade. Blindness to labor and commodity chains signals a certain *privilege of low visibility* characterizing international divisions of labor

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[32] See Guilbaut, *op. cit.*; Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[33] While these ideas are most fully theorized in Marx, they have also been brought to the fore in recent scholarship. See for instance Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

that separate extraction from production from consumption. Economic depressions (such as that of the 1930s) and recessions (such as that under which this dissertation was written) tend to remind the privileged of these systems. Much of the analysis of works of art in this dissertation reconnects production with consumption, and the commodity with the labor that produced it, and foregrounds the transnational matrix often both constituting and circulating the work of art.

Chapter 1: Portinari's export painting

"Portinari has become, for export purposes, the great artist of Brazil."[34]

Cândido Portinari rose to prominence in both Brazil and the United States in the wake of the Great Depression, during the eras of the Good Neighbor Policy (1933-1945) in the United States and the *Estado Novo* (1937-1945) in Brazil. If Portinari did not actively model an art for the continent to mimic, as Siqueiros and Torres-García both did, he did embody the consummate "exportable artist."[35] His paintings circulated between Rio's Ministry of Health and Education, the galleries of the Museum of Modern Art, and the walls of Nelson Rockefeller's home, among other sites. In the process, he negotiated the precedent of Mexican muralism initially as an inspiration and later as a comparison he wished to transcend.

Portinari's reception in both Brazil and the United States centered upon pictures depicting the coffee plantation laborers powering Brazil's export economy. Over the course of the 1930s and early 1940s, his paintings were themselves exported, from the "Good Neighbor Hall" of Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer's Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair to a solo exhibition at MoMA to the walls of the Library of Congress. Alongside figures such as Carmen Miranda and the Disney parrot Joe Carioca, Portinari's paintings embodied a form of pictorial diplomacy between Brazil and the

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[34] Aracy Amaral, *Tarsila: sua obra e seu tempo* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1975), 315-317. "...Portinari passou a ser, para efeito de exportação, o grande artista do Brasil..." Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. Special thanks go to Paulo Padilla for his assistance.

[35] The term is Lincoln Kirstein's; see Kirstein, "Preliminary Draft of a Plan for the Formation of a Department of Latin American Art in the Museum of Modern Art," 2, undated, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.C, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

United States (the chief market for Brazilian exports), earning Portinari the status of "Good Neighbor emissary."[36]

How did Portinari's paintings register the shifting relationships between export commodities and modernization in Brazil? Portinari's career developed in tandem with trade negotiations between Brazil and the United States, which turned to strategic materials (from rubber to quartz to manganese ore) as both countries entered World War II. By 1943, it would be architecture that would come to dominate the images of Brazil sent abroad. Costa and Niemeyer, with whom Portinari had collaborated, modeled a new techno-modern vision of Brazil. By the 1950s, a younger generation of Brazilian artists rejected figuration and specifically the representation of Afro-Brazilian laboring bodies—two of Portinari's hallmarks—in favor of geometric abstraction to represent a rapidly modernizing Brazil. Indeed, as this chapter argues, Portinari's art marked a transition from an image of Brazil as exporter of coffee to a modernized nation engaged in import substitution industrialization.

Between Mexican muralism and the *fazenda*

With the conquest of Brazil by the Portuguese in the early sixteenth century, the cutting and exporting of brazilwood was the early "extractive basis" of the imperial economy.[37] Sugar followed, cultivated by waves of enslaved Africans and their

[36] "Portinari Comes as 'Good Neighbor' Emissary," *The Art Digest* 14 (September 1, 1940), 5, Portinari Archive.
[37] Roberta M. Delson and John P. Dickenson, "Perspectives on Landscape Change in Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1 (May, 1984), 103.

descendants, in addition to gold and diamond rushes during the eighteenth century.[38] In the nineteenth century, slave labor would be transferred to coffee, the export crop which would dominate the Brazilian economy until the Depression.[39] With the abolition of slavery in 1888, the booming Brazilian coffee industry attracted successive waves of immigration with government subsidies, particularly from Italy but also from Portugal and Spain. Immigrants entered São Paulo via the Santos port, from which coffee was exported.[40]

Born in 1903, Portinari grew up in Brodowski in the state of São Paulo, the child of coffee plantation laborers who had emigrated from Italy at the close of the nineteenth century. In his early childhood, Portinari's parents moved off of the plantation to become tradespeople.[41] The artist's humble beginnings and the consonance of those origins with the subject matter of his paintings would prove a constant lure for critics. As journalist Florence Horn would write in 1940 on the eve of Portinari's solo exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art: "he is still the simple son of the Italian coffee picker in Brodowski."[42]

Portinari moved to Rio in 1919, working odd jobs and beginning to audit courses at the ENBA, the national art school, the following year. In 1928, he was awarded a prize at the Thirty-Fifth General Exhibition of Fine Arts, enabling him to travel to Europe. On

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[38] Richard Graham, "Introduction," in Graham (editor), *Brazil and the World System* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 1.
[39] See amongst others Dietmar Rothermund, *The Global Impact of the Great Depression, 1929-1939* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996).
[40] Thomas Holloway, *Immigrants on the Land: Coffee and Society in São Paulo, 1886-1934* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 40-42; 24-25.
[41] Cândido Portinari, *Candido Portinari: o lavrador de quadros* (Rio de Janeiro: Projeto Portinari, 2003), 240.
[42] Florence Horn, "Portinari of Brazil," *Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. 7, no. 6 (October 1940), 8-9.

his trip, he was influenced by Picasso, Modigliani, and Matisse, and also by Renaissance painters Sandro Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, and El Greco.[43] As for many artists from Latin America in this period (including Siqueiros and Torres-García), cultural training in Europe was *de rigueur*.

During the painter's two-year absence, the coffee boom of the 1920s collapsed, amidst the wreckage of the global Great Depression, debilitating the Brazilian economy. Shortly thereafter, Getúlio Vargas seized leadership of the country in a military *coup d'état* known as the Revolution of 1930. Vargas's first regime, which would become a dictatorship lasting until 1945, brought with it sweeping institutional changes, not least in the state's relationship to culture. The Vargas government sought to dissolve regional differences, emphasizing national unity and industrialization, coupled with a program of weak populism.[44]

The early years of the Vargas regime offered new opportunities for the incorporation of modernist aesthetics into Brazilian institutions. In 1931, when Portinari returned from his travels in Europe, architect Lúcio Costa had briefly become director of the ENBA, creating an Organizing Commission for the Salon that included Portinari. While Portinari supported himself and his family producing portraits of Brazilian elites,[45] **(Figure 1.1)** his other paintings turned towards less privileged subject matter.[46]

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[43] Cândido Portinari, *No ateliê de Portinari, 1920-1945* (São Paulo: Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, 2011), 213.
[44] See amongst others Daryle Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001) and Robert Levine, *Father of the Poor?: Vargas and his Era* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
[45] Sergio Miceli has analyzed the artist's portraits at length, understanding them as "visual legitimation" (*legitimação*) for the political and intellectual elite during the

This dualism registered the context of a divided Brazil. In 1932 politician and journalist Plínio Salgado founded the right-wing *Ação Integralista Brasileira*, a para-military party aligned with European Fascism. The *Aliança Nacional Libertadora*, led by Luís Carlos Prestes, opposed Salgado's group, aggregating Communists, trade unionists, and antifascists. While Vargas did not support the AIB, the regime's increasing repression of Leftism led to the dismantling of the ANL in 1935.[47] It was in this context that Portinari spoke out for art's role within contemporary society, asserting that painting was never politically neutral.[48] In 1934, he signed a manifesto claiming artists must commit to "effectively impacting the artistic world according to a progressive ideal and within the social and economic conditions in which we live."[49]

Portinari's new social commitments, however vague, permeated his December 1934 exhibition in São Paulo, which including paintings such as *Lavrador de Café*. (Figure 1.2) The image juxtaposes a foregrounded laborer with the landscape architecture of export agriculture. Notably, the paintings in this exhibition were not portraits (the source of Portinari's subsistence), but representations of types. Rather than pale Brazilian elites with proper names, these are anonymous embodiments of the export economy. Portinari was not exceptional in depicting Afro-Brazilian subjects; Tarsila do Amaral and Lasar Segall had painted Afro-Brazilian figures in the 1920s. However, Portinari's

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Vargas regime. See Miceli, *Imagens Negociadas* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1996), 16.
[46] For a greater analysis of the context for "social" consciousness amongst Brazilian artists in this period, see Aracy Amaral, *Arte para quê? A preocupação social na arte brasileira 1930-1970* (São Paulo: Nobel, 1984).
[47] Levine, *op. cit.*, 41-42. See also Ronald H. Chilcote, *The Brazilian Communist Party: Conflict and Integration 1922-1972* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 38-39.
[48] Portinari, *No ateliê*, *op. cit.*, 234.
[49] Portinari, *O lavrador*, *op. cit.*, 242-246.

paintings were unusual in portraying them as laborers and, what's more, laborers in the Brazilian coffee industry.

The exhibition also included *Morro* (1933), Portinari's painting of a favela with Rio's coastal high-rises in the distance. **(Figure 1.3)** The painting contrasts shacks with skyscrapers, (rickets-afflicted?) foot traffic to airplane travel, the land-locked *morro* (hill) to the coast.[50] Portinari relegates modernist slabs—rendered opaque, windowless, in earthy tones—to the periphery of the periphery. He takes a favela's-eye-view of a modernizing city. This is not a radical resistance to modernization but an ethos of (segregated) co-existence that refuses to conceal poverty (albeit through figures hovering close to caricature).

Art critic Mário Pedrosa observed in Portinari's 1934 exhibition a "dialectical contradiction" between "the demands of the social subject matter in its dynamic complexity and the natural limits of specifically bourgeois representational art."[51] Pedrosa had joined the Brazilian Communist Party in 1926 and had become a Trotskyite in the late 1920s. While living in Berlin, he had become acquainted with Käthe

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[50] I would argue that the painting bears an unexpected influence, from Le Corbusier. In the architect's proposal for Rio in 1929, during his tour through South America, he imagined the topography of the city intersected by towering roadways dwarfing the favela-sited *morros*. **(Figure 1.4)** Portinari's painting appears to map the favela back onto Le Corbusier's image of the city. If the architect sees Rio from the airplane, the painter sees Rio from the ground—the *terra roxa* that would become Portinari's signature. Portinari met Le Corbusier during his visits to Rio and, particularly given his friendship and collaborations with Lúcio Costa, would have been familiar with the architect's Rio drawings. Le Corbusier, as analyzed below, would return to Rio later in the decade to advise the design of the Ministry of Education and Health building with Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer. For more information on Le Corbusier's tour of South American capitals including Rio, see Le Corbusier, *Precisions on the Present State of Architecture and City Planning* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991). The relevant texts therein were written by the architect in 1929.

[51] Mário Pedrosa, "Impressões de Portinari," *Diário da Noite*, São Paulo, December 7, 1934, as quoted in Portinari, *No ateliê*, *op. cit.*, 218.

Kollwitz's prints of workers' struggles, about which he would write his first art criticism.[52] Back in Rio in 1934, in a violent confrontation between the fascist AIB and the Leftist ANL in São Paolo, Pedrosa was shot in the leg and pursued by the police. According to Pedro Erber, Pedrosa found sanctuary in the gallery hosting Portinari's exhibition, where he hid for a number of days.[53] Pedrosa, seeking a politically engaged Brazilian art and in hiding from both the AIB and the police, saw something promising in Portinari's paintings.

According to Pedrosa, with *Lavrador de Café*, Portinari had "arrived at the fresco."[54] Although he was describing an oil painting, Pedrosa's invocation of fresco signaled links between Portinari's "social subject matter" and that of the well-established Mexican muralists. Arguably, the conflation of race and class buttressed the comparison to Mexican murals, with the potentially revolutionary Afro-Brazilian coffee worker standing in for the post-revolutionary, indigenous *campesino*.

Oswald de Andrade, the modernist poet famous for writing the *Antropofagia Manifesto* in 1928, made a similar association to Mexican muralism in his review, writing that Portinari had moved "beyond the easel painting:"

> The powerful details of his visual dream ripple in the muscles of *Mestiço*, on the fingers and the lips, break out of the frame in the Herculean *Preto de enxada*. He complains on the wall that Siqueiros and his group have managed to tear themselves away from the bourgeoisie in Mexico and California and that Rivera has seen the reaction wreak havoc in New York. Both are splendid raw materials for the class struggle. And both—workers and black people—want to break out of the educated stiffness of the painting, finally to reveal their mural teachings, that all may see and feel the exploitation by his fellow men of a man, who, in the

[52] Pedro Erber, *Breaching the Frame: The Rise of Contemporary Art in Brazil and Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 35.
[53] Ibid., 38.
[54] Pedrosa, *op. cit.*

> background, puts down lines of coffee plants for others. Portinari visibly takes the side of the revolutionary artists of our time.[55]

From these "raw materials," Andrade hoped to produce revolution. Andrade had joined the Communist Party in 1931. While one might expect that Andrade's generation of modernists would have rejected Portinari's art on formal grounds, as his paintings offered no clear stylistic innovations, both Andrade and painter Tarsila do Amaral wrote articles championing him. Amaral herself had temporarily traded in her playful, geometric style for a somber palette, a higher level of realism, and a proletarian cast of characters in paintings such as *Operários* [Workers] (1933).[56] **(Figure 1.5)**

Despite Andrade's invocations of "class struggle" and "revolution," and in marked contrast to Tarsila do Amaral's painting, Portinari depicts a group of workers who were not the organizing urban proletariat (represented by the ANL) but the largely unorganized agricultural workers. The effect of "class struggle" was evoked without recourse to particular contemporary events. Indeed, these paintings bear few historical markers, placing the figures in an ambiguous position between past and present. Are these nineteenth century slaves or 1930s day laborers? Or are they, rather, allegorical figures for the coffee industry itself? Contrary to Andrade's "revolutionary" interpretation, works such as *Lavrador de Café* could be seen to glorify Brazilian labor

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[55] Oswald de Andrade, "O pintor Portinari," *Diário de São Paulo*, São Paulo, December 27, 1934, as translated in Portinari, *No ateliê*, *op. cit.*, 246. This translation is part of the English section of the publication. There is an ambiguity both in the Portuguese original and in the English translation whether he is speaking of Siqueiros and Rivera or of "workers and black people" when he says "Both are splendid raw materials for the class struggle."

[56] The variety of skin tones and facial features offered to the viewer presents a compelling ambiguity. Are these the international workers of the world symbolically united or did the diversity produced by waves of slavery and immigration to Brazil make the Brazilian working class itself a microcosmic Petri dish of this internationalism?

and resources in a manner that posed little threat either to the government or the planter elite, upon whose portrait commissions Portinari still depended.

In an interview for the *Diário de São Paulo* in 1934, Portinari asserted the influence of both Mexican and U.S. mural painting and the deficiency of comparable resources in Brazil:

> As for modern painting, it is clearly leaning towards mural painting. [...] In Mexico and the United States, this tendency has been a reality for years, and in other countries one can see this same movement, which is bound to give painting a mass character. [...In Brazil] everything remains to be done, barring a few exceptional cases. And the reason for all this is still the government, which stubbornly refuses to show a direct interest in art, unlike the Mexican government.[57]

Portinari's invocation of both Mexican and U.S. muralism revealed the early stirrings of a hemispheric realism.[58] In the U.S., the WPA had begun commissioning artists to produce murals for public buildings, in part influenced by the precedent of Mexican state patronage.[59] It is possible that in citing not solely Mexican but also U.S. muralism, Portinari sought to emphasize government funding rather than the "revolutionary" ethos specific to the Mexican model, particularly amidst Vargas's intensifying intolerance for Communists. In Brazil, there were few outlets for artists to sell their work, making the

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[57] "Exposição de pintura Candido Portinari," *Diário de São Paulo*, November 21, 1934, as quoted in translation in Portinari, *O lavrador*, *op. cit.*, 247.

[58] Annateresa Fabris also highlights that "o realismo social é uma constante na arte do continente americano" (social realism is a constant in the art of the American continent) in the 1930s. Annateresa Fabris, *Portinari, pintor social* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1990), 88.

[59] See Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Andrew Hemingway, "American Communists view Mexican muralism: Critical and artistic responses," *Crónicas* nos. 8-9 (March 2001), 13-43; Francis V. O'Connor, "The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930s and After," in Cynthia Helms (editor), *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1986), 157-183.

idea of state patronage all the more appealing. We will remember that at this stage Portinari supported himself by painting portraits of Brazil's elites, rather than its coffee workers. While dedicated to producing a specifically Brazilian art in terms of subject matter, he imagined it in dialogue with the art of Mexico and the U.S.[60]

Exporting *Café*

Portinari's painting *Café* (1935) foregrounds the landscape and labor force that had driven the Brazilian export economy. **(Figure 1.6)** The artist's childhood spent on a plantation lent *Café* an aura of authenticity. Isolated, posed coffee workers had occupied earlier paintings such as *Lavrador de Café*. *Café* puts these figures back to work.

The large canvas is structured by the geometry of coffee cultivation, depicted from a particular angle. The V of green in the distance is the foliage of the coffee plants, tended by miniaturized laborers who turn their backs to us. In the foreground, we are met by workers operating at subsequent stages of the coffee's processing—heaving burlap bags, piled high. To their right, a paler figure, biceps flexing, braces a bucket filled with brown beans. A cycle of labor occupies the composition—picking, heaving, sorting, while in the middle distance a solitary figure, face shrouded in shadow from a wide-brimmed hat, points, appearing to organize the laborers with the steady insistence of his

[60] See Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg (editors), *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006). While the first commercial gallery did not open in Mexico City until 1935, there was nevertheless a market for Mexican artists' works, particularly among U.S. collectors and tourists. Artists such as Siqueiros, Rivera, and Orozco also showed with galleries in New York. It is fair to imagine that part of Portinari's appeal in the United States from the mid-1930s until the early 1940s lay in the consonance of his socially engaged but politically ambiguous paintings with those of his U.S. (and Mexican) contemporaries.

outstretched arm and its extended finger. Closer to us, a woman sits, passively observing the men working and the growing piles of beans and mounting piles of bags. Her sunken pose is mirrored by a stump that, as in *Lavrador de Café*, connects this coffee landscape both to the exportation of brazilwood as well as to the clear-cutting of forest required for coffee cultivation.

Café was far from an image of autochthony, bringing together as it does an imported crop, the history of slavery (forcibly imported, commoditized people), and implicitly the dependence of Brazil upon exportation. Thus, *Café* represented a Brazil always already entangled in a world system that crosses through the image in multiple vectors, tethering the present to centuries of intercontinental exchange.

Coffee was not native to Brazil; wild coffee had originated in sub-Saharan Africa.[61] The *arabica* bean became a commodity when produced by peasants in Yemen, sold for consumption in the Ottoman Empire, Persia, and India. The European yen for coffee led to its planting by Dutch imperialists in Java, where it was cultivated by forced labor. The Dutch transplanted coffee across the Atlantic in Dutch Guiana, and the French followed, enslaving and importing Africans for the coffee plantations of Martinique and Saint Domingue.[62] Coffee arrived in Brazil in 1720 and surpassed sugar as the country's

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[61] Steven Topik and William Gervase Clarence-Smith, "Introduction: Coffee and Global Development," in Clarence-Smith and Topik (editors), *The Global Coffee Economy in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, 1500-1989* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5.
[62] Topik, "Coffee," in Topik and Allen Wells (editors), *The Second Conquest of Latin America: Coffee, Henequen, and Oil during the Export Boom, 1850-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 41.

chief export a century later, inheriting sugar's plantation structure of production and slave labor system.[63]

Coffee required a form of "slash and burn" farming that involved frequent destruction of the land and reterritorialization. Steven Topik describes planters as "alchemists in reverse, turning fertile virgin forest into desert within three or four decades."[64] This quasi-nomadic production pushed what we might term the *coffee frontier* ever further into the forests of São Paulo, where the Kaingang and other semi-nomadic tribes lived. Coffee cultivation's planting, maintenance, and harvesting were all performed "by hand." The coffee berries were first dried in the sun, with the protective husks and filmy interior removed, sometimes by hand or increasingly by hulling machines. However, technological innovations of the early twentieth century primarily affected coffee once the berries left the plantation, and generally after they left Brazil, with developments in packaging, vacuum sealing, and the invention of instant coffee.[65]

While its export was responsible for a century of the Brazilian economy's booms and busts, coffee had proven almost entirely absent from nineteenth and early twentieth century Brazilian visual culture.[66] Roberto Schwarz has argued that underlying the Brazilian modernist project of the 1920s, epitomized by figures such as Oswald de Andrade and Tarsila do Amaral, was "the future that coffee was thought to have ahead of it, which made the universe of quasi-colonial labour relations that it maintained and

[63] Holloway, *op. cit.*, 6-7.
[64] Topik, *op. cit.*, 47.
[65] Ibid., 41-62.
[66] Myriam Ellis, *O Café: Literatura e história* (São Paulo: Edições Melhoramentos e USP, 1977), 11.

recreated appear not as obstacles in its path, but as a part of life and progress [...]."[67] Coffee was thus a type of subconscious motor for the urbane, modern Brazil whose wealth it had produced, a motor that Portinari's paintings began to foreground.

Café delimits itself to the plantation. It does not follow the coffee on its route to the port. After the processes of harvesting, drying, and processing, coffee would be taken to the harbor or, later in the history of its shipment, to the railroad station by oxcart.[68] Only one penny of the 25 cents paid for a pound of coffee in San Francisco or Chicago went to the coffee worker. This price in part reflected the costs of shipping, insurance, and exporter profits, all of which went to North American companies who transported, packaged and branded the beans.[69] Portinari leaves out the global commodity circuits in which the plantation labor was enchained and the industrial processes to which the coffee itself was subjected en route to its international consumers.

If we compare *Café* to an advertisement for Butter-Nut Coffee from 1922 targeting U.S. consumers, certain similarities and differences sharpen. In the advertisement, produced at the peak of Brazilian coffee's dominance of the world market, a planter reaches from his agricultural setting on the left side of the composition towards a consumer, in a bourgeois interior, on the right, who is raising up a steaming cup of coffee. **(Figure 1.7)** They are mirror-images in their outstretched gestures, though one gives while the other receives, one produces while the other consumes. The labor and workers that Portinari depicts are invisible in the advertisement but the endpoint,

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[67] Roberto Schwarz, *Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture* (London; New York: Verso, 1992), 120.
[68] Hildete Pereira de Melo, "Coffee and the Rio de Janeiro Economy, 1888-1920," in Clarence-Smith and Topik, *op. cit.*, 371.
[69] Topik, *op. cit.*, 59.

completed by consumption, is made visible.[70] As Marx noted of commodities, "the process is extinguished in the product."[71] The intermediary steps—processing, transporting, packaging, selling—are occluded in both images.

Paintings have conventionally represented a single space or landscape—how would they represent transnational networks? We may read their shortcomings, conscious or unconscious, as symptomatic of the international division of labor as well as reflective of the particular problem that the picture was designed to solve. Portinari, raised on a coffee plantation and working to develop a national art, represents Brazilian production as vigorous, earthy, and somewhat idealized. By contrast, in Edward Hopper's famous painting *Nighthawks* (1942), U.S. consumption is psychologically alienated (in parallel to the alienation of the consumed commodity from its place of origin and labor process). **(Figure 1.8)** *Nighthawks* contradicted the dominant image of coffee in U.S. mass media, as a fuel powering "an active, virile nation" that prized narcotic-assisted efficiency.[72] Coffee is *there* in *Nighthawks* but technically invisible, represented by generic white ceramic cups and the nozzled metal dispensers. Made in the wake of the Great Depression, during which that culture of caffeinated Taylorism had been replaced by

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[70] As Micol Siegel notes in her analysis of this advertisement, the precise nationality of both producer and consumer remains unnamed, rendered as generic Latin American producing for an assumedly U.S. customer. Micol Siegel, *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2009), 13.
[71] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 287.
[72] "Coffee increases factory efficiency," JC ad, 1921, 1, Box 28, Folder 3, Ayer Collection, NMAH, as quoted in Siegel, *op. cit.*, 26. As one 1920s advertisement had framed it: "This country drinks nearly one-half of all the Coffee grown in the world. [...] This liking for coffee by Americans is easily understood. America is an active, virile nation. As a nation we require food that sustains body and brain at high efficiency [...] It helps men and women to endure exposure and withstand hard work."

unemployment lines, *Nighthawks* takes coffee from this idealized realm of U.S. productivity to a gloomier vision of the U.S. psyche. For Hopper, where the coffee came from was beside the point. In Portinari's painting, this was the point exactly. In *Café*, coffee is identified as a product of earth, before it is launched into a circuit between laborers, their labor, the shrubs, the piles, and the sacks.

Was the coffee worker the potentially revolutionary subject Andrade saw in Portinari's paintings and which threatened Vargas's increasingly repressive regime? While coffee workers had held strikes in São Paulo on over one hundred occasions between 1912 and 1930, this had been primarily on a small scale.[73] Was the static pose of *Lavrador de Café* a trope borrowed from Portinari's society portraits or could one interpret this worker as on strike? By contrast, *Café*'s workers have not stopped to pose for Portinari's "camera"—they are productive, they have known no other life and do not appear to seek change.[74]

More puzzling is the relationship of *Café* to the historical moment of its production. Indeed, Portinari's parents had participated in a wave of immigration from Europe that replaced the slave labor force. What's more, these new immigrants increasingly participated in a system of coffee cultivation built around the family-run *colono* rather than around the large-scale *fazenda* represented in *Café*. Whereas slaves

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[73] Topik, *op. cit.*, 50.

[74] This analysis builds on the geometric abstract artists' dismissal in the 1950s of earlier, figural Brazilian art as "photographic" as well as on Beatriz Jaguaribe and Mauricio Lissovsky's brilliant analysis of the interplay of race and photography, from mock *cartes de visites* featuring slaves to *Estado Novo* propaganda to current digital photography initiatives in *favelas*. The authors understand all of these images as negotiating and haunted by the "specters of slavery." See Beatriz Jaguaribe and Mauricio Lissovsky, "The Visible and the Invisibles: Photography and Social Imaginaries in Brazil," *Public Culture* 21: 1 (2009), 175-209.

were "bought, maintained, and replaced like capital goods," immigrant coffee growers were more akin to feudal serfs.[75]

Thus, the racial, spatial, and labor relations depicted in *Café* locate it in the nineteenth century, further diminishing the likelihood that these are contemporary revolutionary subjects waiting to be activated by the painter's brush. However, this temporal dissonance did not prevent critics from both Brazil and the U.S. from assuming the authenticity of these images, as if they had been harvested from Portinari's own childhood memories.

In the 1930s, coffee occupied a position of symbolic crisis. Reeling from the effects of the Great Depression, Vargas's administration acknowledged the precarity of an economy based primarily on coffee exports.[76] In 1933, the Brazilian Ministry of Finance created the *Departamento Nacional do Café*, seeking to pull the coffee industry out of the bankrupt position into which it had fallen. The DNC's director Dr. Armando Vidal, who would serve as Commissioner of the Brazilian Pavilion at New York's World's Fair in 1939 (discussed below), experimented with sacrifice quotas and destruction of surplus coffee.[77] Another plan involved a scheme to produce a form of plastic from coffee, called *cafelite*.[78] Ultimately, expansion of the country's steel industry in the early 1940s and the move towards import substitution industrialization came to represent the means by which Brazil might surmount the economic instability endemic to its dependence upon foreign markets.

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[75] Holloway, *op. cit.*, 70-71.
[76] Delson and Dickenson, *op. cit.*, 116-117.
[77] Pamphlet: "Brazil Coffee in Word and Picture, New York World's Fair, 1939," Record Group 229, Box No. 170, Folder "Coffee," National Archives II.
[78] "Plastics: From Coffeepot to Ashtray," *Time*, September 1, 1941.

With *Café* (1935), the exportability of Portinari's work—what Lincoln Kirstein would later term the "exportable prestige" of *Latin American art*—became established.[79] *Café* was first exhibited at the Palace Hotel in Rio in a one-man show arranged by the *Asssociação dos Artistas Brasileiros* in June of 1935 before being sent to the Carnegie International in Pittsburgh immediately thereafter. [80] The 1935 exhibition marked the first inclusion of artists from Latin America. As art critic Edward Alden Jewell wrote: "Several new stations are hooked up in Pittsburgh's 1935 Carnegie International network: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico."[81] Jewell uses the language of both the railroad and the radio (stations, network), both of which were then rapidly expanding throughout the Americas.

The jury for the Carnegie's Brazilian roster, which included Lúcio Costa, was convened by the Carnegie Corporation's representative in Brazil, Aloysio Sales. Portinari's *Café* was shipped to Pittsburgh, alongside paintings by a handful of other artists.[82] As a representation of Brazil transported to a U.S. viewing public, *Café* visualized the laborers enabling the caffeination of the consumer-viewer. The relation

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[79] Lincoln Kirstein, "Preliminary Draft of a Plan for the Formation of a Department of Latin American Art in the Museum of Modern Art," 2, undated, Kirstein Correspondence, Series folder I.C, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Although it does not appear that Portinari painted *Café* expressly for exportation to the United States, the symmetry between the painting's content and its own mobility is worthy of note.
[80] Portinari, *O lavrador*, *op. cit.*, 247. The Carnegie International, the oldest recurring exhibition of contemporary art in the United States, had been taking place since 1896.
[81] Edward Alden Jewell, "Carnegie International," *Parnassus*, vol. 7, no. 6 (Nov., 1935), 3.
[82] Portinari, *O lavrador*, *op. cit.*, 248. The other Brazilian artists selected were Vittorio Gorbis, Alberto de Veiga Guignard, Lucio de Albuquerque, Eliseu Visconti, Enrique Cavalleiro, Lasar Segall, and Paulo Rossi Ossir. See Diana Wechsler, "Portinari en la cultura visual de los años treinta. Estéticas del silencio, silenciosas declamaciones," in Andrea Giunta (ed.), *Cândido Portinari y el sentido social del arte* (Buenos Aires: Siglo veintiuno editores Argentina, 2005), 36.

between rural production and urban consumption was both allegorized and transnationalized in the encounter between work and the spectator's gaze—between Brazilian coffee plantation and Carnegie International public.

In February of that year, a reciprocal trade agreement had been forged between Brazil and the United States by Brazilian ambassador Oswaldo Aranha and U.S. Secretary of State Cordell Hull. This agreement promised "unconditional and unrestricted most-favored-nation treatment" on "natural or manufactured products having their origin in the United States of America or the United States of Brazil."[83]

A press release explained:

> In return for the assurance of continued duty-free admission into the United States of coffee and a number of other Brazilian products—which together make up over 90 percent of the American imports from that country [...] manganese ore, Brazil nuts, caster beans, copaiba balsam, ipecac, and yerba mate [...] The commodities on which reductions in the Brazilian import duties are to be made include: Automobiles and trucks and parts therefor[sic], tires and tubes, rubber hose and tubes, rubber belting, radio apparatus and tubes, certain paints and varnishes, common soap, cotton shirts, certain oil cloth, surgical gauze, [...] spark plugs, steel furnitures [...] gasoline pumps [...] white cement [...][84]

Agricultural wealth and industrial machinery were exchangeable, but the terms of trade favored the exporters of manufactured goods, an asymmetry that would be more greatly understood in the postwar era thanks to the dependency theorists. Four months later, the Vargas administration also brokered an informal trade agreement with Germany,

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[83] "Text of trade agreement between the United States and Brazil, signed on February 2, 1935, by the honorable Cordell Hull, Secretary of State and his Excellency Oswaldo Aranha, Ambassador of Brazil," Record Group 229, Box 176, National Archives II.
[84] Press release, "Trade agreement between the United States and Brazil exchanges reciprocal concessions and assurances," Released for use not earlier than Thursday, February 7 1935, Department of Commerce, Washington, Record Group 229, Box 176, National Archives II.

exchanging Brazil's agricultural products for German manufactures.[85] The "trade rivalry" Brazil cultivated between the United States and Germany as both markets for exports such as coffee and for imports such as industrial machinery would linger until Brazil's official entrance into World War II on the side of the Allies in 1942.[86] Portinari's paintings would function within these U.S.-Brazilian negotiations as gifts, purchases, and loans, with Portinari rendered what I am terming a *pictorial diplomat*.

From 'revolutionary' to 'plantation owner'

The transition of the Vargas government to the *Estado Novo* in 1937 repressed civil liberties, dispensed with elections, and censored political dissent. Culture functioned in this regime largely through the initiatives of Minister of Education and Health Gustavo Capanema, under whom the *Estado Novo* employed modernists, from writer Mário de Andrade (no relation to Oswald) to architects Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer to Portinari.[87] The Brazilianization of culture that avant-gardes had initiated in the 1920s became a state project under the new dictatorship. The *Serviço do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico* was founded in 1937 and the *Conselho Nacional de Cultura* was created in 1938. In 1939, the formation of the *Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda* (Department of Press and Propaganda, DIP) comprised sections dedicated to propaganda, cinema and theater, radio, tourism, and press; these divisions served to both produce and

[85] Frank D. McCann, "The Military and the Dictatorship: Getúlio, Góes, and Dutra," in Jens R. Hentschke (editor), *Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 135.
[86] For an extensive analysis, see Stanley Hilton, *Brazil and the Great Powers, 1930-1939: the Politics of Trade Rivalry* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975).
[87] Williams, *op. cit.*, 81. While Niemeyer is remembered as a Communist Party member, he did not join until 1945 when the Party was re-legalized at the end of the *Estado Novo*. Notably this is also when Portinari officially joined its ranks.

censor cultural production.[88] As such, the DIP sought to control both Brazil's cultural imports and its cultural exports. In September of that year, Vargas passed a law that forbade the exportation of films seen to negatively portray Brazil.[89]

Meanwhile, Portinari's *Café* had been awarded the Second Honorable Mention at the Carnegie International. The painting's recognition in the United States had not gone unnoticed by Capanema. Indeed, at the close of the exhibition, Capanema purchased the painting for Brazil's national museum.[90] Portinari's quintessentially Brazilian images—from folkloric scenes drawn from his childhood in Brodowski to images depicting the labor cultivating Brazilian raw materials—entered this new realm of official culture. Paintings interpreted a few years earlier as "revolutionary" were rebranded for the purposes of the *Estado Novo*, both on Brazilian soil and in the United States.

In 1937, Portinari was invited by Capanema to collaborate in the creation of the Ministry of Education and Health building. The building's construction represented a move by the Vargas government to manifest the modernizing thrust of the regime, rising above the booms and busts of the coffee trade.[91] The building was designed by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, with Le Corbusier returning to Rio as a consultant. **(Figure 1.9)** A local granite gneiss clad the building's façade, while japuraná granite sheathed the prominent columns. These were complemented by Lioz limestone and *azulejos*, imported

[88] Ibid., 15-17; 67; 83.
[89] Lisa Shaw, "Vargas on Film: From the Newsreel to the *chanchada*" in Hentschke, *op. cit.*, 209.
[90] Fabris, *op. cit.*, 30.
[91] Zilah Quezado Deckker, *Brazil Built: The Architecture of the Modern Movement in Brazil* (London; New York: Spon Press, 2001), 15.

from Portugal, reflecting the idea that the nascent aesthetics of *brasilidade* must integrate the colonial legacy into a synthetic, national modernism.[92]

Portinari's contributions served to further Brazilianize the Ministry building, following what Mauricio Lissovsky and Paulo Sergio Moraes de Sá describe as the building's mixture of "universal forms" and "national contents."[93] The artist designed an abstract pattern to be produced as ceramic decoration for the building's exterior. He also produced a mural for the ministry's interior between 1938 and 1945, when the building was finally inaugurated. **(Figure 1.10)** In preparation for this mural cycle, Portinari conducted travel research, observing the traditions of different regions of the country. He was also given a reading list concerning recent theorizations of Brazil's history.[94] For instance, over the course of the 1930s, Afonso Arinos de Melo Franco had published a series of books describing the history of Brazil as one of consecutive economic cycles based around brazilwood, sugar, livestock, mining, coffee, and industrialization.[95]

These economic cycles in turn structured Portinari's mural, which winds around three walls of a room on the Ministry's second floor, partially lit by a window out onto a garden designed by Roberto Burle Marx (who apprenticed to Portinari as part of the mural team) and the Rio cityscape beyond. The fresco murals represent coffee cultivation—sacks of coffee recalling earlier works such as *Café*, as well as the felling of

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[92] Styliane Philippou, *Oscar Niemeyer: Curves of Irreverence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 60.

[93] Mauricio Lissovsky and Paulo Sergio Moraes de Sá, *Colunas de Educação: a construção do Ministério da Educação e Saúde* (Rio de Janeiro: MinC/IPHAN: Fundação Getúlio Vargas/CPDOC, 1996), xxi. "[...] transparece a vontade de rechear de conteúdos nacionais as formas universais dos estilos."

[94] Portinari, *No ateliê*, *op. cit.*, 219.

[95] Berenice Cavalcante, "'Las esperanzas que no mueren.' Portinari y la utopia comunista," in Giunta, *Cândido Portinari y el sentido social del arte*, *op. cit.*, 88.

brazilwood by the indigenous population. The mining of gold, animal husbandry, and steel production occupy other frames of the mural, enacted by a diversity of racialized types. The geometric composition of *Café*'s plantation scene is here more schematically developed; laboring bodies are set against abstracted blocks of color. Floating figures are sometimes borrowed from earlier paintings. For instance, the same stump-like, passive woman from *Café* appears in a panel dedicated to livestock.

Notably, the Ministry mural commission fulfilled the role Portinari had asked the Brazilian government to play in 1934—as a commissioning state following the Mexican and U.S. examples. However, Portinari was the only artist to receive such commissions; it was a gesture of state patronage for the benefit of one muralist. Oswald de Andrade, the modernist poet who had promoted Portinari earlier in the decade, now noted the degeneration of his art and disparaged his "monopoly on official frescoes." Whereas the poet had understood Portinari's 1934 paintings as proletarian in spirit, "the phenomenon he is becoming reminds one of the smugness of these plantation-owners deprived of their slaves."[96] Portinari had moved from his status as empathetic child of coffee plantation workers to symbolic "plantation-owner" in a few short years. While Portinari would be heavily criticized in Brazilian artistic and intellectual circles for his role as "official painter" of the Vargas regime, art historian Annateresa Fabris understands Portinari's cooperation with the state as "appropriation" (*apropriação*), harnessing "internationally recognized art for a country seeking international recognition."[97]

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[96] Oswald de Andrade, "As pinturas do Coronel," *Dom Casmurro*, Rio de Janeiro, no. 127, December 2, 1939, as quoted in translation in Portinari, *No ateliê*, *op. cit.*, 219; 247.
[97] "...arte reconhecida internacionalmente para um país em busca de reconhecimento internacional." Fabris, *op. cit.*, 30-31.

Mário de Andrade, who like Portinari collaborated with the Vargas regime, insisted that Portinari refused to "serve as a propaganda instrument" with the Ministry frescoes. For him, the mural "glorifies work, it explains work, it shows healthy figures of men—which is a good lesson for those passing by it." He characterized the murals as "nationally functional."[98] These images must be contextualized within a growing propaganda effort on the part of the *Estado Novo* to glorify labor, positioning Vargas as the nation's "number one worker."[99] As such, images of both the indigenous population forced into servitude and of slave labor were mobilized as testaments to a history of Brazilian vigor and productivity.

Whereas critics had been quick to compare Portinari to the Mexican muralists in 1934, by the end of the decade comparisons gave way to stark contrasts. Mário de Andrade continued:

> [H]e has made a clean break with the bitter and rancorous work of the likes of Rivera. Rivera is a combatant; Portinari is a missionary. Rivera is a fine exponent of the political turbulence of our age; Portinari is an educator.[100]

Portinari would likewise come to reframe the comparison:

> Only a person who knows little of art could compare me to Rivera [who] has dedicated himself to what has been called social art, putting art at the service of his political convictions. I do not do this... He is prisoner to his ideological convictions, while I have given myself to pictorial adventure.[101]

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[98] Mário de Andrade, "Candido Portinari," *Revista do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico* Nacional, no. 20, 1984, 87, as quoted in translation in Portinari, *No ateliê, op. cit.*, 223. This text was originally written in 1939.
[99] Levine, *op. cit.*; Jaguaribe and Lissovsky, *op. cit.*, 185; 188.
[100] Mário de Andrade, "Portinari," *Revista Acadêmica*, Rio de Janeiro, no. 35 (May, 1938), as quoted in translation in Portinari, *No ateliê, op. cit.*, 249.
[101] Portinari, interview re-printed in *O Imparcial* [São Luiz de Maranhão], January 2, 1941, as translated in Williams, *op. cit.*, note 52, 303-304.

Such rhetoric served in part to distance Portinari from the Communist affiliations of the Mexican muralists within the increasingly repressive context of the *Estado Novo*. Indeed, Capanema had arranged an *Exposição Anticomunista* as part of the *Exposição Nacional do Estado Novo* in Rio in December of 1938.[102] Vargas collaborators could claim Portinari as producing within a distinctive national tradition that need not be subordinated to Mexican precedents, despite the similarities between the artist's Ministry murals and those by Orozco and Rivera in Mexico City's Secretariat of Public Education made during the 1920s.

While the *Estado Novo* emphasized national unity above all, the Vargas regime nevertheless needed to negotiate the internal diversity of the Brazilian population and the shameful history of slavery. Jerry Dávila has characterized the *Estado Novo* as practicing a form of "soft eugenics" and architectural historian Fabiola López-Durán has argued for the Ministry of Education and Health building itself as an instance of eugenic design.[103] Nevertheless, the "whitening" discourse of the era was complicated by the concomitant study and rhetorical legitimation of historically criminalized Afro-Brazilian culture. While "eugenic education" was a component of the Constitution of 1934,[104] ethnographer Gilberto Freyre (who also collaborated with the Vargas regime) organized the first Afro-Brazilian Congress in Recife that same year. Mário de Andrade and Dina Lévi-Strauss

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[102] Daryle Williams, "Gustavo Capanema, ministro da Cultura," in Angela de Castro Gomes (ed.), *Capanema: o ministro e seu ministério* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora FGV, 2000), 263.
[103] See Jerry Dávila, *Diplomacy of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917-1945* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003); Fabiola López-Durán, *Eugenics in the Garden: Architecture, Medicine, and Landscape from France to Latin America in the early Twentieth Century* (PhD dissertation: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2009).
[104] Nancy Leys Stepan, *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America* (Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 126.

directed the Society of Ethnography and Folklore beginning in 1936. *Capoeira*, previously illegal, was named by Vargas the national sport in 1937 and *Candomblé* was legalized in 1938.[105] Under Vargas and Capanema, samba made a similar transition from favela subculture to national dance.[106] This context helps to explain the elevation of Portinari's paintings, frequently depicting Afro-Brazilian figures, to the level of official culture, both within Brazil and for export. Identification of these figures with economic cycles deemed outmoded by the most prominent Brazilian historians of the era may have further reconciled them with eugenicist thinking by positioning the black laborer as a figure linked to a historical stage crucial to, but left behind by, industrial progress.

Brazil's *World of Tomorrow*

As early as 1937, economist and businessman Valentim Bouças had written to Vargas, requesting his generous support for Brazil's participation in the World's Fair scheduled to open in New York two years later. Bouças sold the Fair as a means by which to expand and improve trade with the United States:

> [D]uring the past eleven years (1926 to 1937) the United States purchased from us Brazilian products to the total value of 16.660.101 contos of reis, with coffee, naturally, preponderating, whereas our imports of American products amounted to only a half (8.162.844 contos). Lately, the export of the most varied products of the Northern States of Brazil to that country has increased. New York is the center of American trade, and is visited by the leading businessmen of the whole world. Brazil must, therefore, be one of the best countries represented at this show, moreso[sic], because, of the whole of Latin America, she is the largest exporter to the United States, our best customer.
>
> All that we have to do now, in the face of such an important show, is to prepare ourselves so that Brazil may make a worthy showing. All our attention should now be

[105] Philippou, *op. cit.*, 31-3.
[106] See Marc A. Hertzman, *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

> concentrated on this point, by carefully studying the best means whereby our representation should be as perfect as possible.[107]

These commercial considerations soon became publicized as motivations for Brazil's showing at the Fair, with many details from Bouças's letter reproduced in a September 1937 article in the newspaper *O Globo*.[108]

Costa and Niemeyer, in the process of building the Ministry of Health and Education, were selected to design the Brazilian Pavilion, overseen by the Ministry of Labor, Industry and Commerce.[109] The pavilion may be understood as a Ministry of Health and Education for export. **(Figure 1.11)** Its version of Brazilian modernism was keyed to tourist tastes, from the coffee bar to the lilypad pond to the aviary. Portinari, Brazil's most exportable artist, would produce paintings for the central atrium, dubbed the "Good Neighbor Hall."[110] Costa stated the architects' intention thus:

> In an industrial and culturally developed land like the United States and in a fair in which countries richer and more 'experienced' than ours are taking part, it could not be reasonably thought to stand out through lavishness, monumentality or expertise. We tried to call interest in another way: by making a simple pavilion, unceremonious, attractive and cosy, which would impose itself, not by its scale—the site is not big—nor by luxury—the country is still poor—but through its qualities of harmony and equilibrium and as an expression, as far as possible pure, of contemporary art.[111]

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[107] Valentim F. Bouças, translation of the survey of the representation of Brazil at the New York's world exhibition in 1939 submitted to the approval of the president (no date), Box 302, Folder 6: PO.3 Brazil, 1937, New York World's Fair archive, New York Public Library.
[108] "Participará O Brazil Da Exposição de Nova York," *O Globo*, September 19, 1937, Box 302, Folder 6: PO.3 Brazil, 1937, New York World's Fair archive, New York Public Library. For a compelling comparison, see the analysis of Mexico's pavilions for international audiences in Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
[109] Quezado Deckker, *op. cit.*, 55.
[110] Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil*, *op. cit.*, 215.
[111] Lúcio Costa, "O Pavilhão Brasileiro na Feira Mundial de Nova York," *Arquitectura e Urbanismo* (May-June 1939), 471, as quoted and translated in Quezado Deckker, 56-57. See also Adrian Fonty, "Cement and Multiculturalism," in Felipe Hernández, Mark

Whereas Costa and Niemeyer had collaborated with Le Corbusier on the initial plans for the Ministry of Health and Education, in the New York World's Fair they would collaborate with U.S. architect Paul Lester Wiener. If Le Corbusier had proposed the initial schema which Costa and Niemeyer adapted, here the project was premised upon the exportability of Brazilian architecture, with Wiener providing technical supervision in executing the Brazilian architects' plan.[112]

Despite the desire to promote an image of an industrializing Brazil, coffee—the export commodity with which Brazil's image abroad was most identified—proved central to the pavilion's displays, extending to the coffee bar that proved hugely popular with fair attendees.[113] The Commissioner General of the pavilion, Dr. Armando Vidal, had in fact served as the director of the *Departamento Nacional do Café* earlier in the decade. As one document in the pavilion's archives puts it succinctly: "The cultivation and preparation of coffee will be emphasized and a cup of the fragrant beverage will be individually prepared for each visitor."[114]

Coffee was one resource of many displayed in the pavilion's interior. As Vidal outlined in one preliminary text from January of 1939:

> Brazil will endeavor to show in her Pavilion, the huge area of her territory, the untold possibilities of her agriculture, the unavailable [sic?] wealth of her mineral kingdom, as well as the amazing supplies she can store up for the world through stock raising on her almost endless pasture grounds. Brazil will show her export commodities which are at present: -Coffee, cocoa, mate, oranges, oils, and oleaginous seeds, such as the babassu nut, which offers better possibilities than

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Millington, and Iain Borden (editors), *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architecture in Latin America* (New York: Rodopi, 1998), 142-154.

[112] Quezado Deckker, *op. cit.*, 56.

[113] Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil, op. cit.*, 203-204.

[114] "Brazilian Restaurant," Box 302, Folder 1, New York World's Fair archive, New York Public Library.

> any other nut in the world's trade of the kind; the oiticica; the castor oil beans which can respond to all lubricant needs of aviation as well as of all industries of the world; the fibers; Rubber and Brazil nuts the timbó, as well as the carnauba wax, etc., and the great improvement reached in cotton growing. Minerals and timber will be particularly brought into relief. [...]
> The valuable co-operation both of North American enterprise and capital in Brazil will also be done justice to. [...] What Brazil aims at in the New York World's Fair 1939 is to reveal Brazil as Brazil really is, in all her features, both geographical and historical, as well as cultural and economical. What Brazil desires to show is her achievement and her most exceptionally inviting field for the investment of capital from all the world.[115]

This representation of Brazil as an "exceptionally inviting field for the investment of capital from all the world" took shape amidst the ongoing trade rivalry cultivated by Vargas's government, in which the United States and Germany sparred for supremacy.[116]

The display of Brazil's resources extended from the exhibition of materials to elements of the design itself, which showcased the abundance and diversity of Brazil's regions, all subsumed under the aegis of nationhood. The building's furniture was manufactured from jacarandá, a Brazilian hardwood. Brazilian industry was represented in the carpet, produced in São Paulo's Santa Helena factory, while curtains had been

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[115] Armando Vidal, "Brazil," January 10, 1939, Box 302, Folder 1, New York World's Fair archive, New York Public Library.

[116] Notably, the goods sent from Brazil to be exhibited in the pavilion were subject to shipping inspections and the common scrutiny, by amongst others the Division of Foreign Plant Quarantines. Permits were required for other displayed items such as saffron seeds and babassu nuts to enter the country. Letter from J. Gerald Cole, Supervisor of Import Clearance, to Mr. George C. Becker, Acting in Charge, Division of Foreign Plant Quarantines, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., April 20, 1939, and Letter from J. Gerald Cole, Supervisor of Import Clearance, to Mr. George C. Becker, Acting in Charge, Division of Foreign Plant Quarantines, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., April 28, 1939, Box 2214, Folder 1 (Brazil), New York World's Fair archive, New York Public Library.

produced in the Weber factory in Petrópolis. The Amazon was represented by forty-one specimens of birds roaming in the pavilion's gardens.[117]

Portinari's "murals" (technically large oil paintings made in Brazil and shipped to New York) for the pavilion's "Good Neighbor Hall" portrayed fishermen from the north of the country, *bahianas* of the Northeast, and *gaúchos* from the South.[118] **(Figure 1.12)** These paintings were among the many objects shipped for display, including manganese samples and brazil nuts.[119] The *world* that Portinari conjured was not that of *tomorrow* (as the fair's title charged) but of a present tied to the past. Some elements of these paintings were already a part of the painter's repertoire, with figural groupings borrowed directly from *Café*. However, despite the commercial prerogatives of the pavilion and its exhibits, Portinari left behind images of coffee workers, instead producing nostalgic paintings that avoided the direct representation of labor behind Brazil's primary exports.

Portinari as Good Neighbor artist

The critical attention garnered by the Brazilian Pavilion coincided with an exhibition of Portinari's paintings in Detroit. The artist Rockwell Kent and the journalist Florence Horn, both of whom had met Portinari during visits to Brazil, were important promoters of his work. Tailored to coincide with the fair, the MoMA exhibition *Portinari of Brazil* was held from October 9 until November 17, 1940. **(Figure 1.13)**

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[117] Antônio Pedro Tota, *The Seduction of Brazil: the Americanization of Brazil during World War II* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 61.
[118] Williams, *Culture Wars in Brazil, op. cit.*, 215.
[119] See Box 2220, Folders 1 and 2, New York World's Fair archive, New York Public Library.

That autumn, Nelson Rockefeller straddled his role as President of MoMA with his newly appointed leadership of the Office for Coordination of Commerical and Cultural Relations between the American Republics, which would soon become the Office of Inter-American Affairs. As analyzed in detail in Chapter 4, Rockefeller's MoMA became intimately entangled in the economic and political projects of the United States in Latin America during the war. An exhibition such as *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, which immediately preceded *Portinari of Brazil*, had been organized by Rockefeller and President Lázaro Cárdenas amidst negotiations between the Mexican government and U.S. and British oil companies. An exhibition such as *Portinari of Brazil* was motivated by more speculative interests that left behind fewer archival traces; nevertheless, it offered opportunities for Rockefeller and Vargas's government to develop diplomatic ties.

Portinari of Brazil included works that had been shown in Detroit, works brought from Brazil by Portinari, and works borrowed from U.S. collectors. These collectors included Secretary of State Cordell Hull,[120] who had brokered the reciprocal trade agreement between the U.S. and Brazil in 1935, and cosmetics titan Helena Rubinstein. The three murals Portinari had produced for the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair were also displayed. Amongst those invited to the exhibition's opening were Brazilian ambassador Dr. Carlos Martins and his wife Maria Martins (an artist who sometimes went by just her first name), Consul General of Brazil Oscar Correia, Commissioner-General of the Brazilian Pavilion Dr. Armando Vidal, and Mr. and Mrs.

[120] Alfred Barr, Letter to Cordell Hull, October 4, 1940, REG 108, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. This letter quotes a telegram Barr had sent to Hull, saying Portinari had "presented" Hull with two drawings of Indians and asking if these drawings could be included in the MoMA show.

Josias Leão of the Brazilian Consulate (early collectors of Portinari's work).[121] Alongside these diplomats, actress Mary Pickford, poet Edna St. Vincent Millay, critic Lewis Mumford, and composer Cole Porter were also invited.[122]

That same year, the book *Portinari: His Life and Art* was published by the University of Chicago Press. In his essay for the book, Rockwell Kent places Portinari's work in the context of inter-American cultural exchange, while stressing the artist's innocence of this context:

> On October 11 and 12, 1939, there was held in Washington, under the sponsorship of the Department of State, a Conference on Inter-American Relations in the Field of Art. [...] And meanwhile, knowing nothing of all this, young Candido[sic] Portinari in Brazil kept painting portraits to earn money to paint pictures that he liked. [...]
> Let nations quarrel over trade—in oil, silk, cotton, coffee, wheat, and wool, in minerals, in manufactured goods; let them plot to control the world's markets, conspire to enslave its people or crusade—let's call it that—for liberty... Beneath, above, and, somehow, through and through the barriers and smokescreens to understanding, which those *things*—the nations, *interests*, war—erect, comes art. [...] In [his paintings] we see the landscape, tread the soil; we see its workers and their poverty—not agonized about, just told. And told with love.[123]

While Kent positions Portinari's paintings as transcending ("beneath, above, and, somehow, through") the status of "oil, silk, coffee, wheat," and other materials, he nevertheless juxtaposes Portinari's exported art to these commodity chains.

Echoing Kent's insistence that Portinari participated "knowing nothing" of the commercial motivations behind cultural exchanges between Brazil and the United States,

[121] "List of South American Officials Invited to the Portinari of Brazil Opening at the Museum of Modern Art," REG 108, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[122] Invitation List for Portinari Opening, REG 108, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[123] Rockwell Kent, "Portinari—His Art," in Portinari, *Portinari: His Life and Art* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1940), 5-7. Italics in original.

was a text by Maria Martins, married to the Brazilian ambassador to the United States. Writing in Rio newspaper *A Noite* in December of 1940, Martins proclaimed:

> It seems to me that Portinari's presence in the United States represents the best propaganda for Brazilian intelligence that has been accomplished there so far. [...] Even if [Portinari] isn't conscious of the great work of exchange that is being made: he continues to possess that sincere, almost child-like, spirit, indifferent in the face of North American grandeur.[124]

Both U.S. and Brazilian commentators emphasized that Portinari was oblivious to the circuits within which he and his art moved between the two nations.

This portrait of Portinari as naïf would be reiterated two years later by Mário Pedrosa, then a visitor in the Editorial Division of the Pan American Union, in the PAU's *Bulletin*:

> A child of the people, his true education was received out of doors, in direct contact with the hard work that was the lot of immigrants, among the coffee trees growing in the red earth [...] Just as others learn the trade of the mason or marble cutter, he learned the trade of the painter. Even today, one of the most marked features of his artistic personality is precisely this artisan quality, which he has never lost [...] his realism is profound and organic, perhaps an echo of his peasant origin. This humble and rural element, which is innate in him, is what slows his hand or weights upon his brush—it may be preventing him from liberating himself completely or keeping him from wandering into the field of abstraction, of pure draftsmanship, unrelated to what he is representing.[125]

Several critics made reference to this "humble and rural" aspect of Portinari and his work and his corresponding ignorance of geopolitical and geo-economic strategizing. As was

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[124] Maria Martins, "A vitória de Candido Portinari na América," Rio de Janeiro, *A Noite*, December 3, 1940, as translated into Spanish in Raúl Antelo, "Portinari, entre modernismo y posmodernismo," in Giunta, *op. cit.*, 131-132. "Me parece que la presencia de Portinari en los Estados Unidos constituye la major propaganda de la inteligencia brasileña que se haya realizado en este lugar hasta el día de hoy. [...] Aunque él mismo no es consciente de la gran obra de intercambio que ha venido realizando: continua siendo aquel espiritu ingenuo, casi infantile, indiferente frente a la grandiosidad norteamericana."

[125] Mário Pedrosa, "Portinari: From Brodowski to the Library of Congress," *Bulletin of the Pan-American Union*, vol. 76, no. 4 (April, 1942), 199-200; 208.

likewise the case that year with the exhibition *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art*, it proved essential to assert the innocent, autonomous status of culture vis-à-vis politics and commerce. Asserting the rustic authenticity of Portinari's vision of Brazil was a means for figures ranging from Leftist artist (Kent) to entangled artist (Martins, wife of the ambassador) to critic (Pedrosa) to render the motivations for his exhibition above reproach.

While comparisons to Mexican muralists had been tempered in Brazil by 1939, they remained central to evaluations of Portinari's paintings made by U.S. critics. In 1939, Robert C. Smith, director of the Hispanic Foundation at the Library of Congress, had described Portinari as "the Brazilian Diego Rivera" as well as "one of the outstanding painters of the Americas."[126] A year later, Smith begins an article: "Just as the Indian and the mestizo have been of prime importance to those Latin American painters of the Mexican Renaissance, Charlot, Rivera and Orozco, the negro and the mulatto have been the principal inspiration of Cândido Portinari."[127] However,

> [u]nlike Rivera and the Mexicans he has no didactic social message to expound. But what he has observed he states with sympathy and dignity, untouched by propaganda. Upon such a firm basis Brazilian painting should continue to grow in importance and to play an increasingly significant role in the future art of Pan-America.[128]

These comparisons were buttressed in the United States by the fact that Mexican art was the primary precedent the U.S. public had for *Latin American art*. Rivera was the first point of comparison, rather than a U.S. painter and occasional muralist such as Thomas

[126] Robert C. Smith, "Brazilian Painting in New York," *Bulletin of the Pan-American Union*, vol. 73, no. 9 (September, 1939), 503.
[127] Smith, "The Art of Candido Portinari," *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, vol. 7, no. 6 (October, 1940), 10.
[128] Ibid., 12.

Hart Benton whose depictions of black people in the United States could be fruitfully compared to Portinari paintings such as *Morro*, likewise teetering between caricature and exaltation. **(Figure 1.14)**

Like Rivera, Portinari came to represent his country of origin, both based on state patronage at home and because of recognition abroad from institutions such as MoMA. While Rivera's patronage from the Rockefellers had ended in scandal with the censorship of the Mexican artist's mural for Rockefeller Center, Portinari presented a second opportunity for Nelson Rockefeller to engage in cultural diplomacy. This in turn was homologous to the shifting geopolitics of the region. In the wake of Cárdenas's expropriation of foreign oil companies' property in 1938, Mexico had proven a risky and combative diplomatic partner. Vargas's Brazil, by contrast, repressed dissidents. Nevertheless, it needed to be wooed away from its commercial partnerships with Germany, and cultural exchange was given a role to play.

While a formal partnership between the U.S. and Brazil would not coalesce until 1942, some U.S. critics probed the extra-artistic motivations behind *Portinari of Brazil*. An article in *The Art Digest* was boldly entitled "Portinari Comes as 'Good Neighbor' Emissary."[129] In the November, 1940 issue of the magazine *Parnassus*, Milton Brown described Portinari's exhibition as

> evidence of a trend. With the United States evincing a growing interest in Latin America, we will be hearing a great deal about our southern neighbors. [...] Portinari is the first ambassador in what we hope will be a fruitful new cultural relationship.[130]

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[129] "Portinari Comes as 'Good Neighbor' Emissary," *op. cit.*, 5.
[130] Milton Brown, "Portinari of Brazil," *Parnassus*, vol. 12, no. 7 (November, 1940), 37.

Brown characterized Portinari as "no propagandist" or "perhaps propaganda is implied and is simply not clear." Cynically, he notes that the paintings possess

> just enough social content to give the air of being uncompromising, enough of surrealism to be unreal, and enough of sheer decorative charm to be pleasing. They should sell.[131]

The cynicism attributed to the Good Neighbor Policy and its cultural entanglements was seen to be a calculating attribute of the work itself, in the business of selling itself, tailoring itself to both the State Department and the art market. By contrast with the other critics, Brown sees Portinari as lacking when compared to Mexican painters; he describes Portinari's works as

> a far cry from the powerful expressions of his Mexican contemporaries. Perhaps that has something to do with conditions under which they were produced.

Whereas the Mexican artists painted within the legacy of the Mexican Revolution, Portinari "is producing mural decorations for a semi-fascist government."[132] While the majority of critics appeared ignorant or negligent concerning the political repression of the *Estado Novo*, Brown foregrounded it. However, the term "semi-fascist" is telling, as it reflects the divergent readings of the Vargas regime, which failed to conform fully to European and U.S. models of statecraft.

In a pithy article for *The Nation*, Paul Rosenfeld wrote about *Portinari of Brazil*, noting MoMA's recent tendency to "confuse its function, which is that of an institution for the propagation of artistic values, with that of an educational plant—the dissemination of knowledge." Rosenfeld linked this "confusion" to Rockefeller's "double powers" as "guardian of the muses and coordinator of commercial and cultural relations between the

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[131] Ibid., 38.
[132] Ibid.

American republics" (the first incarnation of what would soon become known as the Office of Inter-American Affairs). While Rosenfeld characterized Portinari's painting as "not uninteresting, in some respects striking," he nevertheless asserted that the art is "as yet insufficient to justify its present prominent situation."[133] Typical of the U.S. reception of art from Latin America in this period, Rosenfeld's critique of extra-artistic motivations for cultural exchange left him defending values such as "quality." By logical extension, no work of art from Latin America in the early 1940s could occupy the autonomy required for such a "prominent situation," given the over-determined political framework of the Good Neighbor Policy.

Alfred Barr wrote to Rosenfeld in late December of 1940 that the latter's review had "caused both the artist and the Museum embarrassment." Barr proceeded to explain the origins of the exhibition in a chance meeting at the *Fortune* offices, asserting

> the exhibition was not brought to the Museum by Mr. Rockefeller at all—in fact he is not even on the committee that approved the exhibition nor had he any part in bringing the exhibition 'to these shores.' After the Exhibitions Committee decided to have the Portinari show Mr. Rockefeller was appointed to a position in the State Department having to do with cultural relations with South America. This appointment may explain why you assumed that there was a connection between the Portinari show and Mr. Rockefeller.[134]

If Rockefeller had not been the initiator of Portinari's solo exhibition, he did develop a substantial relationship with the painter by the following year.

[133] Paul Rosenfeld, "High Brazil," *The Nation* (October 29, 1940), 402-404, F-0602, PR 8324.01.01, Portinari archive.
[134] Alfred Barr, Letter to Paul Rosenfeld (*The Nation*), December 23, 1940, REG 108, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

Rockefeller acquired Portinari's portrait of Brazil's Director of Press and Propaganda Lourival Fontes in 1941, to be displayed in his office.[135] Meanwhile, Rockefeller commissioned Portinari to paint a portrait of his twin children and, in a gesture of mirroring, bought a portrait of the painter's own son Joao Cândido. Rockefeller also purchased the paintings *Woman with a Cock* and *Flying Kites* as a gift to the Edsel Ford family and *The Scarecrow* as a gift for his mother, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, a co-founder of MoMA.[136] In December of that year, Rockefeller sent a Portinari portrait to Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, who had headed the 1939 Pan-American Congress in Panama, as a Christmas gift.[137] In one letter to a friend detailing Rockefeller's purchases and commissions, Portinari complained that he had been working like a donkey ("burro de carga").[138]

While Rockwell Kent and Maria Martins claimed that Portinari was oblivious to the context in which his paintings functioned, a postcard from the artist to Minister Capanema suggests otherwise. Writing in November of 1940, at the tail end of his first New York visit, Portinari assured the Minister of Education and Health that in conversations with everyone from Nelson Rockefeller to the most humble people, all were convinced that Vargas was loved by the people, that Brazilian labor laws were the

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[135] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Portinari, November 25, 1941, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series C, Box 29, Folder 248.
[136] Rockefeller, Telegram to Maria Portinari, December 3, 1941, F-0532, CO-5144, Portinari archive.
[137] Sumner Welles, Letter to Rockefeller, December 28, 1941, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series C, Box 29, Folder 248.
[138] Portinari, Letter to unknown recipient, December 7, 1941, CO-4504.1, F-0198, Portinari archive.

most advanced in the world, and that Vargas defended the exploited people of Brazil.[139] Perhaps unaware that an occasional critic, such as Milton Brown, had characterized Vargas as "semi-fascist," Portinari reassured Capanema that the *Estado Novo* had been universally praised.

Circulating murals and pictorial exchanges

In 1939, Portinari had been in Rio when he produced his three paintings for the Brazilian Pavilion, which were then shipped to be displayed in Costa and Niemeyer's structure in Flushing Meadows. Next, the murals were removed, to be featured in the MoMA exhibition *Portinari of Brazil*, several weeks before the Fair's closing.[140] At the MoMA exhibition, one mural was shown in the gallery, one in the stair landing and the last across from the entrance.[141] The murals were subsequently sent "on the road" by the Department of Circulating Exhibitions.[142] By 1942, the Brazilian government offered the museum the choice of one of the three murals as a gift.[143] The mural *Festival of St. John's Eve* was selected.[144] **(Figure 1.15)**

[139] Portinari, Postcard to Gustavo Capanema, November 29, 1940, CO-4370.1, Portinari archive.
[140] Alfred Barr, Letter to William P. Munger, Jr., Arthur Kudner, Inc., January 3, 1941, REG 108, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[141] Elodie Courter, Letter to Mr. Clyde Burroughs (Detroit Institute of Arts), November 4, 1940, REG 108, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[142] Barr to Munger, *op. cit.*
[143] Alfred Barr, Letter to Ambassador [Carlos Martins], May 8, 1942, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series C, Box 29, Folder 248.
[144] Brazilian ambassador [Carlos Martins], Letter to Alfred Barr, June 12, 1942, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series C, Box 29, Folder 248.

The Brazilian government's gift of the mural was but one of several diplomatic offerings and exchanges. U.S. artist George Biddle was dispatched to Rio where he served in a reciprocal role as Good Neighbor artistic diplomat, parallel to Portinari. Accordingly, it was arranged by Brazil's Coordination Committee, a branch of the OIAA, that Biddle would paint the portrait of Brazil's Minister of External Relations Oswaldo Aranha's mother.[145] Portinari himself had begun a portrait of Nelson's mother, Abby, in 1941, though—in a compelling lag—it would not be completed and sent to the Rockefeller family until 1949.[146] **(Figure 1.16)** Biddle would likewise produce a mural in Rio's *Biblioteca Nacional*, a reciprocal production for Portinari's murals for the U.S. Library of Congress' Hispanic Section.[147] **(Figure 1.17)**

Portinari's murals for the Library of Congress were arranged through the Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations, overseen by Henry Allen Moe, also president of the Guggenheim Foundation. As such, in the OIAA archives, the mural commission is grouped with an interdisciplinary range of projects and exchanges including anthropologist Charles Wagley's work "training ethnologists" in Brazil and historian Arthur Whitaker's trip to "collect historical material and literature in

[145] Kenneth Holland, Letter to Berent Friele, November 6, 1942, Record Group 229, Box No. 417, Folder "Painting;" The Brazilian Division, Letter to The coordinator cc Mr. Holland, October 9, 1942, Record Group 229, Box No. 417, Folder "Painting," National Archives II.

[146] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Maria do Carmo (Mrs. Jose T. Nabuco), November 21, 1949, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series C, Box 29, Folder 248.

[147] Portinari, Letter to George Biddle, December 12, 1941, CO-809.1, Portinari archive. Biddle is an artist deserving of more attention, as he was a hinge figure in connecting Mexican, WPA, and Brazilian muralism in the 1930s and early 1940s. Portinari, who had been central in securing Biddle the library commission, counseled his U.S. friend about fresco technique in an extensive letter.

Peru, Chile, and Argentina."[148] Such activities were funded by the OIAA but overseen by Moe.

As a small catalogue marking the inauguration of the murals recounted:

> It had been decided that the theme of the paintings should emphasize the beginnings of Hispanic American history and culture rather than more recent developments. It was also felt that the subject should not deal with Brazil alone but should be applicable to the other parts of South and Central America as well.[149]

Smith did not use *Latin American* as the umbrella for what he was seeking; rather he wanted Portinari to produce a mural simultaneously *Hispanic American*, *Brazilian*, and *South and Central American*. This directive led Portinari to produce four fresco murals, depicting the "discovery of the land," "the entry into the forest," the "teaching of the Indians," and "the mining of gold," one for each wall of a vestibule connecting the Hispanic Foundation's Reading Room to the rest of the library's divisions. Portinari's brief to produce a mural that transcended Brazilian subject matter, notably through a process of generalizing content, so as to encompass *Latin America* paralleled critics—both from the U.S. and Brazil—who emphasized that Portinari was an "American" painter. This characterization coincided with the circulation of Portinari's images in the international press, including articles concerning his work published in Mexico and Argentina in 1942.

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[148] "Project authorization: Renewal of Contract with the Committee for Inter-American Artistic and Intellectual Relations," Record Group 229, Box 365, Folder "Creative Workers Interchange (Moe Committee)," National Archives II.
[149] Robert C. Smith, "The Paintings," in *Murals by Cândido Portinari in the Hispanic Foundation of the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1943), 10.

Initially, Archibald MacLeish, the Librarian of Congress, had offered Portinari $2,500 as a "fellowship honorarium" in August of 1941.[150] By the time of the mural's completion, the commission was described as equally co-funded by the Brazilian government "as a gift to the United States government" and the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.[151] Portinari was paid a total of $8,000—half from the Brazilian government and half furnished by the OIAA.[152] This arrangement, the product of incremental negotiations, reflected the desire of the Brazilian government to enter an agreement with the United States on equal footing, an allegory of equal partnership that the OIAA was eager to reinforce.

In December of 1941, Nelson Rockefeller publically announced the Library of Congress murals in a press release, referring to Portinari as "one of the foremost painters and muralists of the Western Hemisphere." Like Smith, Rockefeller did not use "Latin America" but in this case a broader term that included the United States in a Pan-American gesture. At the mural's unveiling, Rockefeller hosted a luncheon.[153] By that time, Portinari had returned to Brazil, dismissing the festivities surrounding the murals as excessively "gudeneibor" (Good Neighbor).[154]

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[150] Archibald MacLeish, Letter to Portinari, August 22, 1941, Record Group 229, Box 1213, National Archives II. Notably, Siqueiros was offered and paid this sum in 1943 for his mural of Martí and Lincoln, discussed in Chapter 2.
[151] Press release, December 19, 1941, Record Group 229, Box 365, Folder "Creative Workers Interchange (Moe Committee)," National Archives II.
[152] "Portinari, Candido," Record Group 229, Box 365, Folder "Creative Workers Interchange (Moe Committee)," National Archives II.
[153] Barclay Acheson, Telegram to Portinari, January 13, 1942, CO-17, F-0017, Portinari archive.
[154] Portinari, Letter to unknown recipient, December 26, 1941, CO-448.2, F-0134, Portinari archive.

Earlier that same year, back in Rio, Portinari had gained further employment designing and painting a set for George Balanchine's ballet *Serenade*, a production of the American Ballet Caravan. The ABC was overseen by Lincoln Kirstein, who would return to Latin America the following year to purchase works for the MoMA's Latin American art collection, as analyzed extensively in Chapter 4. Both of Kirstein's trips were funded by Nelson Rockefeller and the commission for Portinari to design a ballet set represented an opportunity to further employ Brazil's most exportable artist. Whereas *Portinari of Brazil* and the Library of Congress murals brought the artist and his works to New York, the *Serenade* commission was a means by which to support U.S.-Brazilian collaboration in Rio, literally giving the U.S. ballet "local color."

Portinari's role as pictorial diplomat developed in tandem with a plethora of cultural exchanges between the two countries, reaching fever pitch between 1941 and 1943. Most famously, the singing, dancing performer Carmen Miranda became an international celebrity, dressing like a *Bahiana* and commanding top billing in a number of Hollywood films. **(Figure 1.18)** In her signature outfit, fruit was piled high upon her hat—an offer of tropical abundance tied to her performance of tropical sensuality. Like Portinari's coffee paintings and like the Brazilian pavilion's exhibitions of manganese ore and brazilwood, Miranda's sensual persona presented Brazil as a fertile territory to be penetrated and consumed. Like Portinari, she also proved versatile in her hemispheric function. Much as Portinari had come to represent not just Brazil but "America" *tout court*, Miranda would star in films such as *Down Argentine Way* (1940) and *Week-End in Havana* (1941), blurring the U.S. movie-going public's perception of cultural distinctions between nations. As such, she was Brazilian and *Latin American* (in the aggregate of

Argentina and Cuba). As with Portinari, her prominent position in these Good Neighbor exchanges would taint her reputation for many Brazilians.[155]

The allegorization of Brazil's fecundity was contemporaneous with collaborations between Rockefeller and Vargas to open up the Amazon to a variety of initiatives. The OIAA proposed an Amazon Valley Corporation that would be intensively supervised by U.S. technicians. Namely, the opening of the Amazon would permit an alternate shipping route from the oil fields of Venezuela along the Orinoco River and the Amazon basin, particularly desirable given the U-Boat-infested waters of the existing routes.[156] While at times Rockefeller emphasized the geopolitical importance of the Amazon as a border to be surveyed for fascist penetration, the discovery of new and abundant Amazonian materials—in addition to the crucial rubber industry—might provide unforeseen opportunities. Rockefeller had read OIAA aide Earl Parker Hanson's book *Journey to Manaos* with interest, in which Hanson had written:

> [T]he settling of South America's interior would give another breathing spell to our civilized world. [...] I find myself confronted at every turn by the romantic argument that the conquest of South America's wilderness would do for the Western hemisphere what the conquest of the West did for the United States at a critical time.[157]

This passage confirms Fredrick Pike's theorization of Latin America as the U.S.'s "continental frontier" in this era.[158] As a reader of Hanson's book, Rockefeller would have been conscious of transposing the logic of Westward expansion from a national to a

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[155] See amongst others Tota, *op. cit.*

[156] Gerard Colby with Charlotte Dennett, *Thy Will Be Done: the Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 138.

[157] Earl Parker Hanson, *Journey to Manaos* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1938), 306, as quoted in Colby and Dennett, *op. cit.*, 138.

[158] Fredrick Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 174.

continental level. His understanding of capitalist expansion was keyed to the notion that undeveloped land was a crucial resource for further growth.

Alongside Portinari and Miranda, the Brazilian parrot Joe Carioca (sometimes billed as Zé or José) entered the hemispheric imaginary in 1942. If Portinari had come to disdain the cultural diplomatic work of the "gudeneibor," an animated parrot put up little resistance. Carioca was the creation of Disney animators who had been funded by the OIAA to take an inspirational research trip across Latin America. He would co-star in the films *Saludos Amigos* (1942) and *The Three Caballeros* (1945).[159] In the first film, Donald Duck befriends Carioca (the adjective for a resident of Rio), a dapper specimen in a striped suit wielding a walking stick. **(Figure 1.19)** He is represented as mildly pretentious but also thoroughly welcoming to the U.S. tourist (Donald). In a marvelously surreal sequence, Carioca leads Donald (and the viewer) through a phantasmagoric array of mirages—from the streets of Rio (complete with Roberto Burle Marx's signature patterned streets) to the splendors of the Amazon. At one point, Donald—drunk off the sights and sounds of Brazil—kisses the parrot, a homoerotic "mistake" that suggests a certain ambivalence. Did the sudden U.S. infatuation with Brazil go too far? Did Brazil present itself as a goddess of natural wealth (Carmen Miranda) only to reveal itself as an ingratiating parrot?[160] Perhaps Donald Duck and Joe Carioca were surrogates for

[159] In *The Three Caballeros*, duck and parrot are joined by Panchito, a Mexican rooster.
[160] As analyzed further in Chapter 4, Disney's allegorization of the U.S. and Brazil as birds may be further interpreted as a metaphor of capitalist mobility and circulation. This interpretation is inspired by the analysis of Audubon's *Birds of America* in Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: the Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014). The figure of the parrot—simultaneously exotic Amazonian specimen and mimic—also proves relevant for Portinari's reception. The frequent comparisons to Rivera in the U.S. press and the backlash against his work from figures such as Oswald de Andrade both focused upon the sense that the artist was not

Roosevelt and Vargas. So too could they be analogues for Portinari and Biddle, themselves "cultural diplomats" allegorizing state cooperation, more parrots in a recursive chain of parrots.

The limits to Brazil-U.S. cultural exchange were demonstrated by the censorship of Orson Welles's unfinished film *It's All True*, partially funded by the OIAA.[161] Welles's ambitious attempt to make a film that revealed the impoverished conditions of the favelas was ultimately shut down by the Vargas regime, as it highlighted two elements which the government sought to control—the representation of poverty and of Afro-Brazilians. Welles was a foreigner making quasi-ethnographic judgments about Brazil under the *Estado Novo*. Real black bodies (cinematically reproduced) were more threatening than painted black bodies (i.e., Portinari paintings, which sealed those bodies in an ambiguously passed "economic cycle"). Portinari, as a Brazilian, could be controlled and counted on to follow *Estado Novo* protocol. Welles, as a U.S. visitor, could not be as easily monitored, nor could the ultimate film be subjected to the DIP's scrutiny.

Correspondence preserved in the Portinari archive reveals that the artist was kept abreast of the Office of Inter-American Affairs' activities over the next couple of years, even in the absence of his own participation. Robert C. Smith, of the Hispanic Foundation at the Library of Congress, wrote to Portinari in April of 1942 that

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sufficiently original. This cultural discourse was homologous with that in the political sphere, in which the *Estado Novo* was variously painted as a distorted echo of Mussolini's Italy or of FDR's United States. Indeed, the parrot mimics indiscriminately—it sounds human in its ability to copy, but it does not cognize that which it repeats.

[161] See Catherine Benamou, *It's All True: Orson Welles's Pan-American Odyssey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

> Lincoln Kirstein is going to Rio on a mysterious and important mission. No one knows if he is going to paint the Corcovado purple or put on a ballet at Congonhas do Campo.[162]

Musicologist and frequent attaché for Rockefeller in Brazil, Carleton Sprague Smith, mentioned that "Philip Goodwin is planning a trip"—which would become the basis for the exhibition *Brazil Builds* (1943), which Goodwin curated—and asked Portinari to produce an image for a book produced by the OIAA.[163] Portinari's political stance over the course of his encounters with Vargas and Rockefeller remains ambiguous.

From Brodowski to Volta Redonda

In a remarkable analogy, Lincoln Kirstein linked the problem of Brazil's export monoculture to what we might term the monocultural exportation of Portinari. Kirstein wrote to Nelson Rockefeller from Rio in 1942 during his trip both to buy works of art for MoMA's Latin American art collection and to report back on the political climate:

> When Brazilians express cynically that, like the Germans, the U.S. will begin producing synthetic rubber and then goodbye development, I tell them "OK, but rubber is just a start; there's oil, wheat, minerals, everything here—the most wonderful wheat in the world rotted its bumper crop because there were no rails to take it to port."
> The painting problem is a reflection of all this. There is little good work besides Portinari who gets better as the rest get worse. He issued a splendid series of pieces about how swell you were to him—really spectacular—and he never fails to give you a real, generous, and touching support. [...] The rest don't really work. There's no market.[164]

[162] Robert C. Smith, Letter to Portinari, April 25, 1942, CO-5575, F-0052, Portinari archive.
[163] Carleton Sprague Smith, Letter to Portinari, February 18, 1942, CO-5549.1, F-0032, Portinari archive.
[164] Lincoln Kirstein, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, May 24, 1942, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 101, Folder 966.

Here Kirstein diagnoses Brazil's monocultural export economy—attention shifting from coffee to rubber—and stresses the need for diversification. Of course, this diversification was still based in raw materials for export. He swiftly makes a comparison to Portinari—"the painting problem is a reflection of all this." Kirstein, who wrote the same year about art as "one of Latin America's only sources of exportable prestige," analyzed further in Chapter 4, suggested that other artists required attention besides the monocultural export Portinari. These neglected, uncultivated artists are the cultural equivalent of rotting wheat "with no rails to take it to port." Not only did Portinari rise to fame with paintings of Brazilian monoculture; he was himself diagnosed as a monocultural product. Kirstein ends the letter on a more hopeful note, saying "There's nothing here that guts and steel and love can't cure."[165]

Portinari's role as pictorial diplomat—as Good Neighbor artist—was short-lived. In fact, the Library of Congress murals represented its endpoint. The Rio Conference of 1942 cemented Vargas's and Roosevelt's cooperation and the commitment of Brazil to the Allied cause. Brazilian resources were swiftly rebranded as "strategic materials" for the war effort—from Amazonian rubber for U.S. army vehicles to Brazilian quartz for the army's radio communications, immortalized in one OIAA-produced film *Brazilian Quartz goes to War* which traces the mineral's journey from mine to aircraft. This militarization of Brazilian materials came to dominate both the texts and images of inter-American solidarity.

The previous year, U.S. Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles had authorized a $20 million loan agreement to Vargas for the construction of a national steel mill. The

[165] Ibid.

deal required that Brazil purchase all its machinery from the United States. Construction was overseen by Arthur G. McKee & Company, which had also supervised the construction of the Magnitogorsk Iron and Steel complex in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s.[166] If the realization of the Volta Redonda steel mill became the most monumental symbol of Brazil's modernization at that time, historians have also seen it as a move towards an unprecedented dependency upon the United States.[167] Notably, the mill was constructed atop a former coffee plantation, in a symbolic transformation of Portinari's agricultural export landscape into the industrial behemoth of import substitution industrialization.

In truth, the industrialization of Brazil had been proceeding slowly since the nineteenth century. Between 1920 and 1940, plants had been created where iron, cement, electrical hardware, electric motors, agricultural implements, rayon textiles, and textile machinery were produced. But it was during the *Estado Novo* that this industrial development became a national project, epitomized by the modernist showpieces of Costa and Niemeyer's Ministry and their World's Fair pavilion. The Volta Redonda mill represented a juggernaut not just of industrialization but of import substitution industrialization, in which Brazil would no longer rely on the U.S. and Europe for the *matter* of modernity.

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[166] Oliver Dinius, *Brazil's Steel City: Developmentalism, Strategic Power, and Industrial Relations in Volta Redonda, 1941-1964* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 31-36.

[167] See Moniz Bandeira, *Presença dos Estados Unidos no Brasil (dois séculos de história)* (Rio de Janeiro: Civilizaçao Brasileira, 1973); Gerson Moura, *Autonomia na dependência: a política externa brasilieira de 1935 a 1942* (Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 1980); Thomas Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil, 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).

This industrial dynamism dominated the Museum of Modern Art's next foray into Brazilian-U.S. cultural exchange, the 1943 exhibition *Brazil Builds.* **(Figure 1.20)** The idea of a Brazilian architecture exhibition had been considered since 1939 (the year of Costa and Niemeyer's celebrated Brazilian Pavilion), but official preparations did not begin until early in 1942.[168] This exhibition foregrounded Brazil's new construction and distinctive architectural idiom, though it also reached back to the colonial period.[169] Press concerning *Brazil Builds* proclaimed that

> not all progress is confined to the U.S. Some of it is made in the United States of Brazil. [...] Brazil is now seen as something more than a producer of coffee.[170]

Another article asserted: "Along with coffee, cotton, canned meat, hides and skins, cocoa, canauba wax, castor beans and rubber, Brazil may be exporting to North America—when happier days of peace are won—ferro-concrete architecture with the welcoming addition of the 'sun break.'"[171] Coffee was not just a signifier of Brazilian's export-dependent problems to be eclipsed by the new export of modern architecture; it had in fact fallen to a 16 percent share of the Brazilian export market between 1939 and 1943.[172] Much as Brazil was "now seen as something more than a producer of coffee," so too was it seen with *Brazil Builds* to have produced more than Portinari. This diversification of Brazil's "exportable prestige" reflected both Vargas's and the Brazilian industrial elite's desire to portray Brazil as modernized, both at home and abroad.

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[168] Quezado Deckker, *op. cit.*, 112.
[169] See Philip Goodwin, *Brazil Builds: Architecture New and Old, 1652-1942* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1943).
[170] "Interest in Brazil," *Telegram* Worcester, MA (14 January 1943), PI, 60, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, as quoted in Quezado Deckker, *op. cit.*, 148.
[171] "Architecture of Brazil in Modern Museum," *Sunday Union and Republican* Springfield, MA (17 January 1943), PI, 60, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, as quoted in Quezado Deckker, *op. cit.*, 148.
[172] Levine, *op. cit.*, 3.

By contrast, Elizabeth Wilder, writing in *The Nation*, criticized the *Brazil Builds* exhibition's masking of poverty:

> It is only just to balance this enthusiasm by the observation that most of Brazil is still badly housed, that most of the country is without schools or hospitals of any sort, and that outside the few cities represented here the word functionalism has hardly been heard of. [...the architects] ought to be set to work on small hospitals for provincial towns, day nurseries, community centers, and subsistence housing for the people who now live between banana thatch and bamboo floor. Brazil needs all these things desperately, needs them rather than casinos and hotels.[173]

Nevertheless, the exhibition pleased the Vargas government, which transported it to the Ministry of Education and Health in the fall of 1943, "installed by Oscar Niemeyer and opened by Gustavo Capanema." Immediately thereafter, *Brazil Builds* traveled to São Paulo and other cities around Brazil.[174]

The contrast between *Portinari of Brazil* and *Brazil Builds* is overwhelming. Images of Afro-Brazilians, rural life, and coffee cultivation were replaced by largely de-populated images and architectural models of Brazil in construction, as a site of techno-scientific progress. As such, distinctions of class and race present in Portinari's work were rendered invisible by technocratic modernization. This transition had been held in suspension in the Brazilian Pavilion at the New York World's Fair in which Costa and Niemeyer's architecture housed the coffee bar, Portinari's paintings encircled the Good Neighbor Hall, and Brazilian raw materials were displayed in search of a market.

"New eyes"

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[173] Elizabeth Wilder, "Architecture of Brazil," *The Nation* (7 March 1943), The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York: PI, 60, as quoted in Quezado Deckker, *op. cit.*, 150-151.

[174] Quezado Deckker, *op. cit.*, 133.

In 1945, with the transition from the *Estado Novo* to the Eurico Gaspar Dutra presidency, Portinari joined the Communist Party (briefly re-legalized), participated in exhibitions supporting it, and became a candidate for the Party as a federal deputy for São Paulo in 1947. Accordingly, members of the Communist Party sought to reclaim Portinari's paintings for their cause. For instance, one article described *Morro* (1933) as a depiction of the "misery of the shack in contrast to the skyscrapers of the *Avenida* and the airplane."[175] The same authors reassess the Ministry of Education and Health mural cycle as "a powerful document of our current economic life, in which man is foregrounded [...] under the orders of an administrator with his finger extended, with boots and spurs, in contrast to the barefoot worker."[176] That the mural was commissioned by the Vargas government, which persecuted Communists, was omitted from this reappraisal.

The increasing violence against the Brazilian Communist Party led to Portinari's exile in Argentina and Uruguay in 1947.[177] As Gabriel Peluffo Linari has examined, Portinari's visit to the Río de la Plata region in the mid-1940s provided artists there with a middle ground within the Social realism vs. abstraction debates that had been sparked between followers of Siqueiros (who spent time in the region in 1933) and Torres-García,

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[175] Rui Facó and Rui Santos, "Cândido Portinari, artista do povo," *Tribuna Popular*, año 1, November 11, 1945, 7, as translated into Spanish in Cavalcante, *op. cit.*, 93. "...miseria del barracón en contraste con el rascacielos de la Avenida y con el aeroplano."

[176] Rui Facó and Rui Santos, "O pinto e militante comunista Portinari candidato a deputado federal por San Pablo na chapa do P.C.B.," São Paulo, *Hoje*, November 11, 1945, as translated into Spanish in Annateresa Fabris, "Portinari y el arte social," in Giunta, *op. cit.*, 118. "...un poderoso documental de nuestra vida económica actual, donde el hombre está en primer plano, abogiado por el trabajo, bajo las órdenes de un administrador con el dedo extendido, de botas y espuelas, en contraste con el obrero de pies descalzos."

[177] Fabris, *Portinari, pintor social*, *op. cit.*, 19.

a rivalry discussed further in Chapter 3.[178] Portinari's return to Brazil in 1948 coincided with the Communist Party's dissolution. The artist would reprise his function as official pictorial representative of Brazil one final time, in his murals for the United Nations headquarters in New York, a development project spearheaded by Nelson Rockefeller and the artist's final export collaboration with Costa and Niemeyer, during Vargas's elected presidency (1951-1954).

With the dissolution of the OIAA at the end of the war, Rockfeller turned to private enterprise as the new means by which to develop U.S.-Brazilian partnership. Founding the International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC) in 1947, Rockefeller emphasized private partnerships between U.S. capital and Latin American initiatives. U.S. desire for Brazilian raw materials persisted, with emphasis now shifted to manganese, iron ore, and monazite sands, the latter crucial to atomic warfare developments.[179]

Rockefeller also collaborated with the son of Brazilian industrialist Francisco Matarazzo in the founding of a museum of modern art in São Paulo (1948) and in the founding of the São Paulo Bienal in 1951.[180] If, as Aracy Amaral has claimed, Portinari became "for the purposes of exportation, the great artist of Brazil," the Bienal produced a

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[178] See Gabriel Peluffo Linari, "Social Realism and Constructivist Abstraction: The Limits of the Debate on Muralism in the Río de la Plata Region (1930-1950)" in Alejandro Anreus, Robin Greeley, and Leonard Folgarait (editors), *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2012), 196-207.
[179] Elizabeth Cobbs, *The Rich Neighbor Policy: Rockefeller and Kaiser in Brazil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 73.
[180] Warren Dean, *The Industrialization of São Paulo, 1880-1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 130; 61-73; Aleca Le Blanc, *Tropical Modernisms: Art and Architecture in Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s* (PhD dissertation: University of Southern California, 2011).

new clearing-house for cultural exchange, based in São Paulo rather than in New York, premised upon the metaphor of import substitution industrialization.

In the 1950s, in tandem with the growth of new institutions of modern art, a generation of Brazilian artists committed to geometric abstraction would reject Portinari's work on multiple grounds. Rather than emphasizing an image of the people, they produced non-objective images, filtering artistic production through a lens of machine rationalization.[181] **(Figure 1.21)** Critic Mário Pedrosa, who had praised Portinari's art in the mid-1930s (for its "dialectical" tensions) and in the early 1940s ("his realism is profound and organic"), now followed new criteria in assessing Brazilian artists. By 1952, he stated that abstract artists

> know that their documentary role is over [...] political revolution is on its way [...] But the revolution of sensibility, the revolution that will reach the core of the individual, its soul, will not come until men have new eyes, new senses to embrace the transformations that science and technology introduce day after day in our universe, and finally, intuition to overcome them.[182]

Both producer and consumer of the new art must be affectively "revolutionized" by "science and technology" as a stage towards a higher plane of aesthetic experience.

These artists aligned themselves with the work of industry whereas the diminutive Portinari remained the boy who grew up on the coffee plantation, working for any patron who would pay. His images reminded viewers of Brazil's past (and of aspects of its present), while geometric abstraction produced an image simultaneously futuristic, non-

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[181] See Erin Aldana, "Mechanisms of the Individual and the Social: Arte Concreta and São Paulo," in Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro (editor), *The Geometry of Hope: Latin American Abstract Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection* (Austin: Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, 2007), 38-49; Le Blanc, *op. cit.*

[182] Pedrosa, "Arte e revolução" (1952) in *Política das artes: Textos escolhidos I*, edited by Otilia Arantes (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1995), 98, as quoted in translation in Erber, *op. cit.*, 42.

specific, and universal. As a surrogate for the nation, Portinari was everything modernizing Brazil wished to escape. Indeed, the factory, rather than the coffee plantation, was the new paradigm for national productivity and developmentalist growth.

Of the artists analyzed in this dissertation, Portinari was the most cooperative with the Good Neighbor Policy objectives of cultural exchange. His renown developed from his paintings of export commodity production, but his role as pictorial diplomat was ultimately eclipsed by a new image of Brazil as industrializing juggernaut, rather than as export producer. In the analyses of David Alfaro Siqueiros and Joaquín Torres-García that follow, we will see how artists came to process this import/export topos into their particular *modes of making*.

Chapter 2: Duco muralism across the hemisphere

In the aftermath of the bloody Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), the government of Álvaro Obregón (1920-1924) sought to centralize the nation. In these years, Minister of Public Education José Vasconcelos famously fomented a state-sponsored program of mural commissions in public buildings, featuring Realist imagery that would fold peasants and workers into the national imaginary.[183] While by the 1930s Mexican muralism's initial cohesion had dispersed and state support was uneven, its reputation and influence had spread throughout the Americas. Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros, who would become known as *los tres grandes* of the movement, produced murals in the United States in the 1930s for commercial and municipal clients. What's more, the Mexican prototype provided a model for the WPA federal art project's own state-sponsored murals adorning public buildings.[184] In Peru,

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[183] Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros worked alongside a much larger group of artists that included Roberto Montenegro, Jean Charlot, and Fermín Revueltas. This art of "revolutionary nationalism" was bedeviled by unresolved ambiguities: Was Mexican muralism politically radical because it included representations of the workers and peasants previously excluded from the "lettered city," or did it merely coopt their likenesses to serve the prerogatives of the state? More generally, how "revolutionary" was the Mexican state and the art that it commissioned? See Robin Greeley, "Muralism and the State in Post-Revolution Mexico," in Alejandro Anreus, Robin Greeley, and Leonard Folgarait (editors), *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2012), 13-36. See also Leonard Folgarait, *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: Art of the New Order* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[184] See amongst others Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Andrew Hemingway, "American Communists view Mexican muralism: Critical and artistic responses," *Crónicas* nos. 8-9 (March 2001), 13-43; Francis V. O'Connor, "The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930s and After," in Cynthia Helms (editor), *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1986), 157-183.

Bolivia, and Ecuador, the role of *mestizaje* and *indigenismo* in post-revolutionary Mexican art proved influential.[185] Cuban artists produced a series of murals[186] and Cândido Portinari's murals in the Ministry of Health and Education in Rio (begun 1938) were understood to be heavily influenced by Mexican precedents, as analyzed in Chapter 1.

Amidst muralism's hemispheric diffusion, David Alfaro Siqueiros disseminated his distinct model in the United States, Argentina, and Uruguay in the early 1930s and again, a decade later, in Chile and Cuba. Siqueiros located the political power of his murals not discretely in their pictorial content but in the relationship between images, site, material, and process. Sprayguns and photographic projectors promised to supplant retrograde tendencies—imitation of European art and technical anachronism. Beginning in 1935, Siqueiros began using Duco, a nitrocellulose automobile lacquer developed by General Motors and DuPont in the 1920s. These tools and pigments countered what Siqueiros termed Mexico's "folk art for export," by which he referred to artists' proclivity to produce an art for tourists.[187]

If in the 1930s Siqueiros's work was explicitly linked to a rhetoric of proletarianization, by the early 1940s this industrially-aligned muralism proved more politically elastic, as demonstrated by his partnership with Nelson Rockefeller's Office of

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[185] See for instance Michele Greet, *Beyond National Identity: Pictorial Indigenism as a Modernist Strategy in Andean Art, 1920-1960* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).
[186] See Juan A. Martínez, "Social and Political Commentary in Cuban Modernist Painting of the 1930s," in Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg (editors), *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 21-41.
[187] David Alfaro Siqueiros, "New Thoughts on the Plastic Arts in Mexico," lecture, Mexico City, February 10, 1933, in *Art and Revolution* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 31.

Inter-American Affairs. What began as a "revolutionary muralism" transformed by the early postwar period into a project that saw technological development as both the means and the ends. In its first section, this chapter will chronicle and analyze Siqueiros's adoption and adaptation of industrial tools and pigments, developed between Mexico, the United States, and Argentina. In the second section, the chapter will analyze his proselytizing of "Duco muralism" through works of art produced in Chile and Cuba, his short-term partnership with the OIAA, and his return to Mexico.

In Siqueiros's art, embracing imported technologies was wrapped up with the processes of modernization. Industrialization had been a priority for Porfirio Díaz prior to the Revolution and for the Calles and Cárdenas regimes in the 1920s and 1930s but development had proceeded unevenly. The Ávila Camacho and Alemán presidencies of the 1940s intensified collaboration with the United States, based primarily on the transfer of U.S. technical expertise and industrial material.[188] Duco muralism offered a parallel model of technological transfer equating modernity, modernization and a strain of utopian technophilia. Notably, Siqueiros's first use of Duco occurred the year that General Motors—the producer of Duco—established its first plant in Mexico City.[189] Ultimately, the industrialization of painting in Mexico was entangled with widespread

[188] Alan Knight, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo, c. 1930-c. 1946," in Leslie Bethell (editor), *Mexico Since Independence* (New York; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 309.

[189] *General Motors de México, 1935-1987* (México: General Motors de México, 1987), 43-44. While it was originally thought that Siqueiros first used Duco for the painting *Proletarian Victim* (1933), made in Buenos Aires, recent forensic analysis of paintings by Siqueiros has established that the first Duco painting was his *Portrait of María Asúnsulo* (1935); see Elsa Arroyo, Miguel Ángel Fernández Delgado, Renato González Mello, América Juárez, and Sandra Zetina, "Low Viscosity: The Birth of Fascism and other solutions," in *Baja Viscosidad: El nacimiento del fascismo y otras soluciones* (México: UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2013), 195.

industrialization in a variety of fields, including the growth of the chemical industry and the industrialization of agriculture in the early years of what would become known as the Green Revolution. Whereas Portinari's painting modeled export art as a form of pictorial diplomacy, Siqueiros's Duco muralism used imported pigments and industrial techniques as a means to technologize the art of the hemisphere.

Part I: Industrializing muralism

Born in Chihuahua in 1896, Siqueiros was the son of a lawyer who managed *latifundios*, vast estates owned by the Mexican oligarchy. The Mexican Revolution sought to reorganize this social, economic, and political order, and the young Siqueiros, an art student at the Academia de San Carlos in Mexico City, left his studies to serve in the brigade of Venustiano Carranza.[190] Upon completion of his service, Siqueiros traveled to Paris and Barcelona, where he absorbed influences from Cubism and Futurism and produced art nouveau illustrations. He also served as art director for the cultural publication *Vida Americana* (1921), which included contributions from artists Joaquín Torres-García and Marius de Zayas.[191] Already in 1921, Siqueiros urged the "new

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[190] There is inconsistency regarding the year of Siqueiros's birth; some scholars cite 1896 and others 1898. Olivier Debroise, "Action Art: David Alfaro Siqueiros and the Artistic and Ideological Strategies of the 1930s," in David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Portrait of a Decade* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1997), 24. See also Philip Stein, *Siqueiros: His Life and Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1994), 15.
[191] Funded by Carranza, artists who had fought in the Revolution were sent to Europe, given posts as military attachés in Mexican embassies. See María José González Madrid, *Vida Americana: La Aventura Barcelonesa de David Alfaro Siqueiros* (Valencia: L'Eixam Edicions, Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, 2000); Diana Briuolo Destéfano, "Cuando David Alfaro Siqueiros se presentó ante José Vasconcelos. Documentación del archivo histórico de la Secretaría de Educación Pública," *Crónicas* no. 8-9 (March 2001), 217-230. The Mexican government supplied a subsidy for the publication of *Vida Americana.*

generation of American painters and sculptors" to eschew "archaic 'motifs'" and to "love the modern machine, dispenser of unexpected plastic emotions."[192]

The young Siqueiros returned to Mexico at Vasconcelos's invitation to participate in the post-revolutionary cultural project of the early 1920s. Siqueiros found a means to unite his artistic and political passions in the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, which emphasized solidarity between artists and workers. The Syndicate claimed as its "fundamental aesthetic goal" the desire "to socialize artistic expression and wipe out bourgeois individualism." This required artists to "repudiate so-called easel painting" in favor of "monumental art in all its forms, because it is public property."[193] However, despite his dogmatic claims in favor of monumental public art, prior to 1940, Siqueiros had produced only five murals in total and only two in Mexico.[194]

Indeed, in the first decades of his career, his artistic practice principally comprised easel paintings sold through galleries to private collectors and prints published in the Mexican Communist Party's official publication *El Machete*, which he co-edited with Rivera and Xavier Guerrero between 1922 and 1924. **(Figure 2.1)** Siqueiros's dismissal of easel painting as a symptom of bourgeois decadence did not preclude his own making and selling of easel paintings. Artmaking was interrupted by significant breaks, including between 1926 and 1930 when he organized miners' unions in Jalisco, after which he was imprisoned for his Communist ties.

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[192] Siqueiros, "A New Direction for the New Generation of American Painters and Sculptors" (1921) in *Art and Revolution, op. cit.*, 21.
[193] Siqueiros, "A Declaration of Social, Political and Aesthetic Principles" (1922) in *Art and Revolution, op. cit*, 24-25.
[194] Alejandro Anreus, "Los Tres Grandes: Ideologies and Styles," in Anreus, Greeley, and Folgarait, *op. cit.*, 51.

At the start of the 1930s, Siqueiros produced a series of crusty easel paintings made while under house arrest in Taxco, Mexico. In these works, he began experimenting with materials, as in the painting *Proletarian Mother* (1930) in which he combined local clays with resin, applying both to a fibrous jute surface.[195] **(Figure 2.2)** In depicting this matriarch, Siqueiros struck a balance between nobility and abjection, rejecting the pastoral imagery of *Mexicanidad.* By titling the painting *Proletarian Mother*, Siqueiros identified the anonymous subject—a type rather than an actual person—as a potentially revolutionary subject. Mixing resins with local clays applied to the rough jute produced a hybrid image—at the same time primitivizing and possessed of an industrial gleam. As such, *Proletarian Mother* materialized the revolutionary Mexican subject as a hybrid of the rural and the industrial. Nevertheless, sad and seated, she remains passive.

Progressively thereafter, Siqueiros extended proletarianization from "content" to the materials and methods of making. While as early as 1922, in organizing the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors, he had imagined artists as "unionized workers," it would be only in the 1930s that this logic entered the technics of his art. Freed from his house arrest in Taxco, Siqueiros traveled to Los Angeles in 1932 where he would execute three murals and organize the Bloc of Mural Painters.[196] **(Figure 2.3)** In conversation with Richard Neutra, an Austrian-born architect then living in California, Siqueiros refined his ideas of how to modernize muralism, namely through the use of

[195] Elsa Arroyo, Miguel Ángel Fernández Delgado, Renato González Mello, América Juárez, and Sandra Zetina, *op. cit.*, 193.
[196] The murals were *Workers' Meeting* at the Chouinard School of Art, *Portrait of Present Day Mexico or the Mexican Revolution Surrenders to Imperialism* at the home of filmmaker Dudley Murphy, and *Tropical America* for the Plaza Art Center. See Lawrence P. Hurlburt, *The Mexican Muralists in the United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

cement, industrial lacquers, sprayguns, and photographic projectors.[197] As Siqueiros would remember it decades later, he instructed students in California who were skeptical about the transition from paintbrush to spraygun:

> It is necessary, then, to unravel from our new tool its own voice, as well as the limits of its functional utility. Its new and novel possibilities must be extracted.[198]

If their industrial provenance drew Siqueiros to new tools, pigments, and techniques, unforeseen use values were for artists to *extract*.

While rhetorically an industrial art, Siqueiros's strain of muralism was far from a work of Taylorist efficiency. Collective work proved structurally crucial, though Siqueiros received the lion's share of credit as *author*. The artist adapted pigments, tools and techniques of mass production (for instance, from Fordist models of producing automobiles) to the creation of singular, auratic, immobile works (murals) made over a considerable span of time. As such, murals took a tool such as the spraygun out of the factory and re-directed its functions. While Siqueiros and his collaborators across varied sites in the proceeding decade would draw on influences from the realms of photography, cinema (Eisenstein in particular), and architecture, painting was always the endpoint. A tension was produced between the singular and the reproduced image, a tension isomorphic to that between the mural and the mass-produced automobile.

In preceding decades, intellectuals from Latin America had frequently distinguished themselves as aesthetes opposed to the United States' technicians. As Julio

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[197] Images projected on the wall could then be traced by the muralists. In subsequent murals, such as *Plastic Exercise* (1933) in Buenos Aires, the angles of the projections produced distorted perspectives and proportions mimicked by the painters.
[198] Siqueiros, *Me llamaban el coronelazo* (México: Grijalbo, 1977), 310. "Había, pues, que desentrañarle a nuestra nueva herramienta su propia voz, como las limitaciones de su utilidad funcional. Había que extraer de ella sus nuevas, novísimas posibilidades."

Ramos has argued, the very concept of *Latin American culture* may be understood to have been produced dialectically in contradistinction to a concept of a ruthless U.S. technocracy.[199] This spoke in part to the region's own stalled processes of modernization. More specifically, Mexico's path to industrialization had been stymied by what Stephen Haber describes as the "inability to export" and "an almost total dependence on imported technology."[200] U.S. corporations such as Ford Motors, ITT, and National City Bank arrived in Mexico by the 1920s.[201] Indeed, Rockefeller and his fellow capitalists would be lampooned in Rivera's murals of the 1920s. Murals were national, immobile, public property, in contrast to the foreign, private capital enterprises that mobilized resources such as oil out of the country. In the mid-1930s, the country's manufacturing intensively accelerated and expanded, in turn laying the groundwork for the postwar development boom that would become known as "the Mexican miracle."[202]

Siqueiros's technical renovation contrasted sharply with the initial materials and processes of early 1920s Mexican muralism. Artists such as Rivera had sought to blend the techniques of Italian Renaissance fresco with Pre-Columbian mural traditions. Fresh from his Cubist phase in Paris, Rivera had returned to Mexico City at Vasconcelos's request and toured the country. Rivera sought to fuse indigenous and European techniques, "using the same process to decorate the walls of the Ministry of Education as

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[199] See Julio Ramos, *Divergent Modernities: Culture and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001). See also Idelber Avelar, "Toward a Genealogy of Latin Americanism," *Dispositio/n*, vol. 22, issue 49 (1997), 121-133.
[200] Stephen Haber, *Industry and Underdevelopment: The Industrialization of Mexico, 1890-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 4.
[201] Julio Moreno, *Yankee Don't Go Home! Mexican Nationalism, American Business Culture, and the Shaping of Modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 49.
[202] See Haber, *op. cit.*, 3-18; Knight, *op. cit.*

the Aztecs had used at Tenochtitlán." At one early juncture he had incorporated cactus juice, which had caused the mural to decay.[203] The artist Dr. Atl (né Gerardo Murillo), an early mentor to many of the muralists, had experimented with producing new pigments, crafting Atl-colors in the early 1920s.[204] The muralists soon settled on the use of fresco or at times encaustic, with supports that have been revealed to contain hemp, straw, wood pulp, and flax.[205]

These material experiments developed in parallel to the expanded market for Mexican folk art and an upsurge in archaeological excavations. Cultural brokers exhibiting Mexican culture in the United States—notably René d'Harnoncourt and Frances Flynn Paine, both of whom are discussed in Chapter 4 in relation to their work with MoMA and the Rockefellers—had in the 1920s and early 1930s promoted rural craft traditions.[206] This project, emphasizing the timelessness of Mexico's rural peoples, conflicted with the proletarian sympathies of artists such as Siqueiros who sought to

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[203] Patrick Marnham, *Dreaming with his Eyes Open: A Life of Diego Rivera* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 170.

[204] See amongst others Antonio Luna Arroyo, *El Dr. Atl: paisajista puro* (México: Editorial Cultura, 1952).

[205] See Anny Aviram and Cynthia Albertson, "Agrarian Leader Zapata: Creative Process and Technique," in Leah Dickerman and Anna Indych-López (editors), *Diego Rivera: Murals for the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2011), 125-135. For a more extensive inventory of the materials used in early Mexican murals, see Orlando Suárez Suárez, "Técnicas empleadas en el muralismo mexicano" in his *Inventario del muralismo mexicano* (México: UNAM, 1972), 331-354.

[206] See Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1922-1935* (Tuscaloosa; London: University of Alabama Press, 1992); Mary Coffey, "Marketing Mexico's Great Masters: Folk Art Tourism and the Neoliberal Politics of Exhibition," in Dina Berger and Andrew Grant Wood (editors), *Holiday in Mexico: Critical Reflections on Tourism and Tourist Encounters* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2010), 265-294.

modernize rather than pastoralize the image of the Mexican people, connecting them to international rather than to national discourses.[207]

By the early 1930s, Siqueiros would reject the tropes of post-revolutionary Mexican art as both degraded and retrograde. In a lecture given in Mexico City in February of 1933, Siqueiros lambasted what he deemed "folk art for export," ironically "produced in industrial quantities" that "manifests itself in the tendency to paint the typical picture that the tourist wants." As such, "it is one of the effects of Yankee imperialist penetration." It was in fact "structurally an alien art dressed up in Mexican clothes."[208] For Siqueiros, "folk art" was capitalism disguised as artisanal craft. Rather, the artist must extract from industry the possibilities of its theretofore untapped potential. In his text "Los Vehículos de la Pintura Dialéctico-Subversiva," delivered at the John Reed Club in Los Angeles the previous year, Siqueiros had presented the dialectical logic of this industrially-produced muralism: "Technology without proletarian conviction is a dead instrument" but "conviction without the technology" likewise fails to give "political art" its proper "medium of expression."[209]

While Siqueiros suggested this as a radical rupture, aligning art with industrial production in fact echoed a shift in Mexican cultural policy during this period,

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[207] See in particular Rick López, *Crafting Mexico: Intellectuals, Artisans, and the State after the Revolution* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2010). As López chronicles, Mexican state officials in 1932 recommended that artisans "accept lower prices for their work, use cheaper materials, invest less time per piece, invent new crafts that could be produced more easily, and employ flashier decorations and brighter colors so that objects could appeal better to 'tourist tastes.'" López, 163.
[208] Siqueiros, "New Thoughts on the Plastic Arts in Mexico," *op. cit.*, 31.
[209] Siqueiros, "Los Vehículos de la Pintura Dialéctico-Subversiva" (1932) in *Palabras de Siqueiros* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996), 75. "La técnica sin la convicción proletaria es instrumento muerto [...] La convicción sin la técnica es pensamiento ahogado por falta del correspondiente medio de expresión."

characterized by historian Guillermo Palacios as a move from a *culturista* to a *productivista* orientation. As promoted by Minister of Education Narciso Bassols (1931-1934), the *productivistas* allied themselves with a Soviet model of modernization with which Siqueiros was likewise enraptured, institutionalized through the activities of the LEAR (Liga de Escritores y Artistas Revolucionarios/the League of Revolutionary Writers and Artists), founded in 1933 in close connection with the Mexican Communist Party.[210] Whereas Vasconcelos, who had left his post as Minister of Education in 1924, had promoted both classicism and an aesthetics of *mestizaje* in his cultural programs and patronage in the early 1920s, the 1930s were marked in Mexico by the expansion of industrialization.[211] This transition would develop under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940), who promoted a program of "Socialist education" alongside agrarian reform and heavy manufacturing.[212]

However, Siqueiros's political commitments rendered him a mobile citizen, developing this industrial art outside of Mexico. Exiled first from Mexico and then from the United States due to his Communist ties, Siqueiros would take his modernized muralism (fusing the revolutionary ethos of Mexico and the industrial technics of Los Angeles) to Argentina and Uruguay. In the Río de la Plata region, he lectured, produced works of art, and worked as a political organizer between June and December of 1933. In

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[210] See Guillermo Palacios, "Postrevolutionary Intellectuals, Rural Readings and the Shaping of the 'Peasant Problem' in Mexico: *El Maestro Rural*, 1932-1934," *Journal of Latin American Studies* no. 30 (1998), 309-339.
[211] For analysis of these shifts and their impact on representations of the rural worker, see Robin Greeley, "*El Maestro Rural:* Photography, the State and the Formation of the 'New Campesino,'" in *Between Campesino and State: Photography, Rurality, and Modernity in 20th-21st Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).
[212] Knight, *op. cit.*, 277-282.

Buenos Aires, he was sponsored by *Asociación Amigos del Arte*. The AAA had been founded in 1924 by Victoria Ocampo based upon what Harper Montgomery has characterized as "a desire to assert Buenos Aires' presence in both trans-Atlantic and hemispheric circuits of art and culture." *Amigos del Arte* developed a bourgeois funding structure for modern art in Argentina while also inviting European avant-garde figures to lecture, including Le Corbusier and Futurist icon Filippo Tommaso Marinetti.[213]

Whereas Mexican artists ambivalently engaged with the U.S. tourist market for arts and crafts, with the first Mexico City commercial gallery not opening until 1935, Buenos Aires, at the far end of the hemisphere, possessed stronger commercial and cultural ties to the European art market. Cultural flows were predominantly unidirectional, with the collecting of French and Spanish Impressionist and post-Impressionist art in Argentina in the 1920s paralleling the import of countless other European luxury items. An active system of galleries exhibited and sold European art and Argentine art that followed European trends.[214]

Siqueiros perceived this Europhilia in the art exhibited in the recently inaugurated XXIII Salón de Bellas Artes. In the newspaper *Crítica*, Siqueiros proclaimed:

> The XXIII Salón shows the infinite void that appears when the machinery of social conviction is missing in plastic work. [...The artists] pass from one imitation to the other. [...] They receive aesthetic concepts no more and no less than they receive preserved foodstuffs.[215]

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[213] Harper Montgomery, "Rebellious Conformists: Exhibiting Avant-Garde Art in Mexico City and Buenos Aires" (PhD dissertation: University of Chicago, 2010), 172-4.
[214] Ibid., 74; 89-92. The first commercial gallery in Mexico City was the Galería de Arte Mexicano, directed by Inés Amor. See Inés Amor, *Una mujer en el arte mexicano: memorias de Inés Amor* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2005).
[215] David Alfaro Siqueiros, "El XXIII Salón como expresión social. Exhibe lamentable pasividad," *Crítica*, September 21, 1933, Folder 9.1.22, Siqueiros archive. "El XXIII Salón muestra el vacío infinito que aparece cuando falta el engranaje sólido de la

Siqueiros noted Argentine artists' subordination to "the aesthetico-economic orders of the international stock market of plastic art whose seat is located in the Paris of the 'merchants' made wealthy by the money of the new international bourgeoisie produced by the War."[216] His comparison of "artistic concepts" to *imported* goods (vs. Mexico's "folk art for export") underscored the neo-imperial asymmetries he perceived in Argentina's *dependent modernism* which lacked the proper "machinery" to produce a revolutionary culture.

Nevertheless, Buenos Aires was a modern metropolis, with skyscrapers and a developed art market, in comparison to the largely rural reality of Mexico. As such, it proved fertile ground for an art movement that embraced technical innovation. As Siqueiros incited in one *Amigos del Arte* lecture, artists of the Americas should "lean towards the worker."[217] "Painters and sculptors," Siqueiros intoned, "we are working to create in Argentina and Uruguay (maybe in all of South America) the basis for a movement of monumental plastic art for the great popular masses."[218]

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convicción social en la obra plástica. [...] Pasan de una imitación a otra. [...] Se reciben los conceptos estéticos ni más ni menos como se reciben los productos alimenticios conservados."

[216] Siqueiros, "La Pintura en el XXIII Salon. Predomina Allí El Sentido Pintoresco y el 'Buen Tono,'" *Crítica*, September 27, 1933, 12, Folder 9.1.22, Siqueiros archive. "...a las consignas estético-económicas de la Bolsa Internacional de la plástica cuya sede radica en el París de los 'marchandes' enriquecidos con el dinero de la nueva burguesía internacional surgida de la Guerra..."

[217] As cited in Stein, *op. cit.*, 87.

[218] Siqueiros, "Un llamamiento a los plásticos argentinos," *Voz de Crítica*, June 2, 1933, Folder 9.1.22, Siqueiros archive. "Pintores y escultores estamos trabajando por crear en la Argentina y en el Uruguay (quizás en toda la América del Sud) las bases de un movimiento de plástica monumental descubierta y multiejemplar para las grandes masas populares."

In Montevideo, Siqueiros gave two lectures—"The Technical Experiences of the Mexican Renaissance" and "The Work of the Painter's Bloc of Los Angeles."[219] I wish to emphasize two points—firstly that Siqueiros's lecture on Mexican muralism focused upon its *technical* innovations, and secondly that he foregrounded these two sources of cultural capital—Mexico and Los Angeles—in the framing of his polemics. A plan to collectively produce a mural with Uruguayan artists was thwarted. Nevertheless, Siqueiros's visit helped to mobilize a group of Leftist artists, under the auspices of the Confederation of Intellectual Workers, who would soon square off against the school of Joaquín Torres-García, as analyzed in Chapter 3.

As with the Mutual Society of Visual Artists in Rosario, Argentina and the Painters' Union in Buenos Aires with which he became involved, such groups collectivized artists according to the prototype of workers' unions, following the model of the Syndicate of Technical Workers, Painters and Sculptors Siqueiros had organized in Mexico City a decade earlier.[220] Nevertheless, Siqueiros's proposals for the region were at this juncture bedeviled by three absences—that of a commissioning state (indeed, both Uruguay and Argentina were then under the governance of censorious dictatorships), that of an organized proletariat in Latin America (let alone a revolution like Mexico's), and that of the work of art that would mediate between the two.

Siqueiros was careful to distinguish the one mural he and a collective of Argentine artists did produce, *Plastic Exercise* (1933), from the "revolutionary" ideal. **(Figure 2.4)** He qualified this mural as an "exercise," a formal experiment of ghostly

[219] Stein, *op. cit.*, 85.
[220] Gabriel Peluffo Linari, "Social Realism and Constructivist Abstraction: The Limits of the Debate on Muralism in the Río de la Plata Region (1930-1950)," in Anreus, Greeley, and Folgarait, *op. cit.*, 199.

nudes appearing to revolve around the viewer, a work that Alejandro Anreus describes as "designed for the male viewer who is enjoying a cocktail."[221] The mural's production did conform to industrial models of organization (for instance, collective labor, including Argentine artists Antonio Berni, Lino Spilimbergo, and Juan Carlos Castagnino) and the use of spray guns, photographic projections and cement, as well as silica paint. However, it was produced for the home of a private patron. If *Plastic Exercise* avoided any politics in its content, it did produce a model of a 360 degree mural in which the viewer was rendered a "dynamic spectator," a model of viewing that would come to characterize Siqueiros's muralism in the subsequent decades.[222] Beyond content and material choices, for Siqueiros the phenomenological address of a mural that transcended flatness to immerse the spectator was central to its power as a potentially transformative agent upon its publics.

1933, the year that Siqueiros traveled to the Río de la Plata region, marked a pivotal juncture in hemispheric relations, not least as it initiated the Good Neighbor Policy at the International Conference of American States held in December of that year in Montevideo. There are traces in the Siqueiros archive indicating that the artist helped to organize an anti-Pan American Conference to coincide with the official program, though details remain vague.[223] In a document preparing for the intervention, Siqueiros asked:

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[221] Alejandro Anreus, "Siqueiros' Travels and 'Alternative Muralisms' in Argentina and Cuba," in Anreus, Greeley, and Folgarait (eds.), *op. cit.*, 178.
[222] Mari Carmen Ramírez, "The Masses are the Matrix," in *Portrait of a Decade*, *op. cit.*, 85. Ramírez links Siqueiros's conception of the "dynamic spectator" to precedents from Italian Futurism.
[223] Siqueiros, December 5, 1933, Folder 11.1.74, Siqueiros archive. Specifically, this text appears to address his comrades in this effort.

> Should the revolutionary intellectual contribute to the effective struggle against the imperialism that oppresses and tears at the peoples of Latin America? Can we remain inactive faced with the intervention of imperialism in Cuba, before the heroic example of the people of that country? Can we continue to passively contemplate the interminable slaughter in Chaco provoked by imperialist interests? What attitude should we have observing the Pan-American Conference taking place shortly in Montevideo?[224]

Siqueiros imagined a unified Latin America produced in resistance to imperialism. In organizing against the Pan-American Conference, Siqueiros's own hemispheric project represented a tactical resistance to the integrationist strategies of the Good Neighbor Policy, marked by anti-imperialist politics and a solidarity between artists and workers.

1933 also witnessed the controversy of Diego Rivera's mural for Rockefeller Center, analyzed further in Chapter 4. News of the mural's censorship circulated in newspapers throughout the Americas describing the confrontation between the capitalist Rockefellers and the Lenin-painting Trotskyite Rivera. If the coordinates of Rivera's muralism appeared to interweave Mexico with U.S. capital via the structure of patronage (Abby Rockefeller acquiring his works, his murals commissioned by Ford in Detroit and Rockefeller Center in New York), Siqueiros's contemporaneous itineraries appropriated the tools of U.S. modernity towards a more broadly hemispheric project.

By this time, Siqueiros's rivalry with Rivera, whose international fame far surpassed his own, accelerated. Expelled from Argentina in the wake of increasingly inflammatory lectures and political activity, Siqueiros would emigrate to New York,

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[224] Siqueiros, October 26, 1933, Folder 11.1.72, Siqueiros archive. "Es deber de todo intellectual revolucionario propiciar una lucha efectiva contra el Imperialismo que oprime y desgarra los pueblos de América Latina? Podemos permanecer inactivos frente a la ingerencia del Imperialismo en Cuba y ante el ejemplo heroico del pueblo de ese país? Podemos seguir contemplando pasivamente la interminable matanza del Chaco provocada por intereses Imperialistas? Que actitud debemos observar ante la Conferencia Pan-Americana a efectuarse próximamente en Montevideo?"

where in 1934 he would denigrate Rivera and his art both in public lectures and in the press. Rather than support Rivera as the victim of the Rockefeller empire's aggressions, in his article "Rivera's Counter-Revolutionary Road," published in the New York Leftist publication *New Masses*, he publically criticized his fellow muralist. He denounced Rivera as a "mental tourist," a "saboteur of the collective work," "the Aesthete of Imperialism," "the Millionaire's painter," and—notably—"technically backward." "He could not have found the technique of revolutionary art," Siqueiros asserted, criticizing the use of "anachronistic traditional fresco, the paint-brush, etc."[225]

Already at this time Siqueiros developed the idea for a workshop in New York in which artists would experiment with industrial technologies. Siqueiros imagined a setting in which "we shall both learn and teach our new art in the *course of producing it: theory and practice will go together.*"[226] However, the Siqueiros Experimental Workshop would not be founded until 1936, in the wake of the Popular Front-aligned American Artists' Congress, convening in New York in February of that year.

The American Artists' Congress commenced with an introductory lecture by Lewis Mumford and included presentations by painter Aaron Douglas on "The Negro in American Culture," a report by photographer Margaret Bourke-White on "An Artist's Experiment in the Soviet Union," and a talk on the subject of "Artists and Trade

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[225] Siqueiros, "Rivera's Counter-Revolutionary Road," *New Masses* (May 29, 1934), 16-19.

[226] Siqueiros, "Towards a Transformation of the Plastic Arts" (1934) in *Art and Revolution, op. cit.*, 46. Italics in original.

Unions."[227] Perhaps most famously, Meyer Schapiro delivered his text "The Social Bases of Art," in which he intoned:

> The common character which unites the art of individuals at a given time and place is hardly due to a connivance of the artists. It is as members of a society with its special traditions, its common means and purposes, prior to themselves, that individuals learn to paint, speak and act in the current manner. And it is in terms of changes in their immediate common world that individuals are impelled together to modify their no longer adequate conceptions.[228]

These "changes" in the "immediate common world" of artists included the Great Depression, the development of fascism, the rise of U.S. consumer capitalism and Soviet Communism, and the condition of race relations in the United States. Orozco and Siqueiros also spoke, the latter about "The Mexican Experience in Art." The inclusion of Mexican muralists in the proceedings indicated two things: 1) the influential role of Mexican muralism for U.S. artists and intellectuals in the 1930s (especially those concerned with "the social bases of art") and 2) the increasingly elastic signification of "American" in denoting a continental vs. a U.S.-specific referent.

In the wake of the Congress, at the New York-based Siqueiros Experimental Workshop, Siqueiros began actively theorizing Duco, the nitrocellulose pigment which he had begun to use the previous year. As asserted in a text issued by the workshop:

> A complete revolution in the chemistry of color has taken place and the so-called modern artist has not even been aware of it. [...Nitro-cellulose] is the most modern medium in the chemistry of colors. It was developed for purely functional reasons by the automobile industry. We believe that nitro-cellulose is, to this age, the revolutionary medium [...][229]

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[227] See the proceedings of the *First American Artists' Congress against War and Fascism* (New York, 1936), Siqueiros archive.
[228] Ibid.
[229] Text, Siqueiros Experimental Workshop, 1936, Folder 9.1.30, Siqueiros archive.

The use of the term "revolutionary" merits analysis. Siqueiros transmutes it from the context of the Mexican Revolution, and Siqueiros's adherence to the Soviet model for post-revolutionary Mexican development, to one of technological innovation. While industrial development was likewise at the core of the Soviet project, the slipperiness between a political-social "revolution" and a visual, technological one is the crux of this chapter. This rhetoric embodied Siqueiros's assertion that "the fundamental problem of revolutionary art is a technical problem, a problem of mechanization."[230] Already in 1930, *Fortune* magazine had hailed a "color revolution" that promised to emancipate "the Anglo-Saxon" from "his chromatic inhibitions," so as to "outdo the barbarians" in polychromatic splendor.[231] The specification of "the Anglo-Saxon" skittish about bright hues is notable. Ironically, Siqueiros—a Mexican artist—would turn away from his country's exotically colorful "folk art for export" (presumably in *Fortune*'s barbaric camp) in favor of a searing *chemically engineered* palette.

Before it became the artist's commodity fetish, Duco Finish had been developed in the early 1920s through a partnership of DuPont and the General Motors Corporation as a "quick-drying, durable, and inexpensive nitrocellulose lacquer that modernized automotive coatings."[232] Duco entered a market which had been dominated by the monochromatic Ford Motel T and was the emblematic pigment for a new era of consumerism, known for its vibrant, variegated colors. Its nitrocellulose base also formed the basis of photographic film, bakelite radios and jewelry, nylon used in flapper

[230] Siqueiros, "Carta a Blanca Luz Brum," June 9, 1936, Folder 9.1.30, Siqueiros archive.
[231] "Color in Industry," *Fortune* 1 (February, 1930), 85-94, as cited in Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *The Color Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2012), 1.
[232] Blaszczyk, *op. cit.*, 115.

fashions, and dynamite.[233] As such, nitrocellulose embodied the amorphous *stuff* invisibly yet ubiquitously bodying forth the modern. By 1928, Brush Duco had entered the marketplace, "a household paint for do-it-yourselfers."[234] Despite the radical tone of the Experimental Workshop, Siqueiros and his colleagues were just such "do-it-yourselfers," purchasing it alongside customers looking to spiff up a rusty cabinet or a scuffed chair.

One press release, typed on official SEW stationary, enthused that "the compressor and the air brush are the fundamental tools of the art of publicity." As such, "ther[sic] is nothing better for an art of propaganda and agitation." Siqueiros's interest in the "art of propaganda" would lead the workshop to study an "antecedent of immeasurable value," namely "the American art of publicity, which can say truly, 'we know how to reach your audience with color and synthesis.'"[235] Indeed, as Regina Lee Blaszcyk has chronicled, "color engineers defined themselves as social engineers," engaged in both anticipating the consumer's desire and "mood conditioning" the user via the "psychology of colors."[236] Much as the color engineers in the U.S. at companies such as DuPont sought to psychologically condition (and attract) the consumer via color, so too did Siqueiros seek to manipulate his public with paints designed by those corporations.

The Workshop's use of the term "propaganda" situates its activities in relation to the media wars erupting between U.S. consumer capitalist advertisements of "the good

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[233] Ibid., 115-136. While the discussion of Duco is thorough, she does not mention the incorporation of Duco into art by figures such as Siqueiros and Jackson Pollock.
[234] Ibid., 132.
[235] Text, Siqueiros Experimental Workshop, 1936, Folder 9.1.30, Siqueiros archive.
[236] Blaszczyk, *op. cit.*, 15-18; 121.

life," Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935), and idealized images of the Soviet Union in construction. As scholars such as Susan Buck-Morss and Wolfgang Schivelbusch have explored, these regimes actively borrowed each other's techniques, understanding that the aesthetics of persuasion could serve a variety of political, commercial, and cultural ends.[237] In a compression of these propagandizing regimes, the trio of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hearst protrude Hydra-headed from the vagina of an anonymous allegorical female figure, aboard a raft whooshing by a submerged Statue of Liberty, in Siqueiros's Duco *Birth of Fascism* (1936). **(Figure 2.5)**

Whereas advertisements such as billboards immersed their "audience" in a seamless, hygenic image of the good life, the role of "accidents"—the spill, the stain—was central to the experimental procedures of Siqueiros's workshop. While one handling of the spraygun could assure a quick-drying and slick surface unmatchable by oil paint applied by paintbrush, a more experimental approach to Duco led to unforeseen results. As Siqueiros wrote in one letter to his friend and occasional benefactress María Asúnsulo in 1936:

> I make use of a painting accident, through which two or more colours are sprayed on and as they become absorbed into each other produce the most fantastic and magical forms that can be imagined; it can only be compared to geological formations, to the multi-coloured and vari-shaped seams seen in mountains, to the cell-construction which can only be seen under a microscope. [...] a kind of tumultuous, stormy dynamism, a sort of physical and social revolution, which is quite frightening.[238]

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[237] Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Three New Deals: Reflections on Roosevelt's America, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany, 1933-1939* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).
[238] Siqueros, Letter to María Asúnsulo, 1936, as excerpted in *Art and Revolution, op. cit.*, 192.

As Workshop participant Axel Horn recalled: "we poured it, dripped it, splattered it, hurled it at the picture surface."[239] **(Figure 2.6)** Though Workshop participants may not have been aware, H. Ledyard Towle, who had founded the Duco Color Advisory Service in 1925, likewise argued as early as 1927 that innovations in the studio frequently developed from "accidents."[240]

As Siqueiros claimed decades later in his autobiography, his love for Duco led him to pursue a partnership with the DuPont corporation itself:

> I believed this practice would give me unquestionable rights, so that the big paint-producing companies would hand out for free all [the paint] that I could need. I had set my sights on DuPont, the giant American empire manufacturing the famous Duco. [...] I obtained an interview with the general manager, a typical high-level Yankee industrialist bureaucrat. Once before him, I told him categorically: 'I am the first artist to lay claim to the use of painting materials with a synthetic resin base. And already at this moment there are at least some fifty American or America-based painters who are following my example.'[241]

According to Siqueiros, the executive dismissed his request, citing that the market for artist's materials was negligible compared to that for cars, refrigerators, and airplanes coated in Duco. Indeed, the DuPont manager purportedly discouraged artists' use of Duco, fearful that they might discover the company's "industrial secrets."[242] Whether or not this story is apocryphal, it establishes Siqueiros's ambivalence—eager for corporate

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[239] Axel Horn, as quoted in Roberto Morse Crunden, *A Brief History of American Culture* (Helsinki: SHS, 1990), 276.
[240] Blaszczyk, *op. cit.*, 130.
[241] Siqueiros, *Me llamaban el coronelazo*, *op. cit.*, 314-5. "[...] creí que esta práctica me daría indudable derecho a que las grandes compañías productoras de pinturas de esa naturaleza me proporcionaran gratuitamente todas las que a mí me podían hacer falta. Para el objeto puse la mira en la Dupont, gigantesca empresa norteamericana fabricante del famoso Duco. [...] conseguí una entrevista con el gerente general, típico alto funcionario industrial yanqui. Ya frente a él, categóricamente le dije: 'Soy el primer artista pintor que reivindica el uso de materiales pictóricos a base de resinas sintéticas. Y ya en estos momentos hay cuando menos unos cincuenta pintores norteamericanos, o radicados en los Estados Unidos, que están siguiendo mi ejemplo.'"
[242] Ibid., 315.

sponsorship while clinging to a subversive ideal of the avant-garde artist positioned against the world of business, capable of "extracting" an unforeseen use value from the capitalist product.

While Siqueiros experimented with Duco's abstract effects, he never abandoned figuration as a tool of representation. The Experimental Workshop would disband in 1937, and Siqueiros left for Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War. In the postwar period, artists who had apprenticed at the Experimental Workshop, such as Jackson Pollock and Morris Louis, would develop an art of "accidents"—splatters and pours, respectively—in increasingly apolitical, autonomous directions.[243]

Duco muralism, 1939-1940

Climbing the curving stairwell to the second floor of the Electricians' Syndicate (SME) in Mexico City, one is immersed in a spiraling drama in which marching files of Nazi troops, ominous gas-masks, and churning machinery vie for attention. **(Figure 2.7)** The electrical worker—as the intended spectator—is confronted with a scene that conflates symbols of industrial development with those of fascism. The ascent begins with a parrot-headed dictator, rendered in sprays of pigment, who sets fire to a neoclassical structure from which billows a cloud of smoke uniting wall and ceiling. To the right, gold coins spill out from propulsive machinery that sprouts tentacles at its base. An eagle-headed hovercraft tears through the composition as electrical towers loom skyward. Once one reaches the top of the stairwell, an armed revolutionary juts out, confronting the parrot-headed leader below. This scenography is striking for numerous

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[243] For an extended analysis of the relationship between Siqueiros and Pollock, see Jürgen Harten, *Siqueiros/Pollock, Pollock/Siqueiros* (Cologne: Dumont, 1995).

reasons—its montage-like composition, its polymorphic perspective (produced through angled, distorted photographic projections, often of appropriated, re-contextualized photographs from the mass media), and, not least, a searing palette and airbrushed texture, achieved through the use of fast-drying Duco lacquer, applied through sprayguns.

The artists expressed their camaraderie and collaboration with the syndicate not purely through imagery but by doing their own industrial *work*. Indeed, the participating artists were each paid the salary of an SME officer.[244] The SME was a prominent labor organization whose new modernist headquarters, for which the mural was produced, was approaching completion in 1939.[245] In the mural, there is a symmetry—an organicist logic—between the industrial imagery limned and the industrial provenance of the pigment and tools doing the limning.

Initially titled *Monumento al Capitalismo* (Monument to Capitalism), preliminary plans outlining the intentions of the mural articulated that "Fascism is the natural product of capitalism [...] the most acute, the most brutal form of capitalist imperialism."[246] Now known as *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie*, the mural was produced between 1939 and 1940 by Siqueiros, Luis Arenal and Antonio Pujol from Mexico, Roberto Berdecio from Bolivia, and Spanish Civil War emigrés Josep Renau, Antonio Rodríguez Luna, and Miguel Prieto. President Cárdenas had offered asylum to these Spanish artists, with whom Siqueiros had fought against Franco the previous year. The initial proposal stressed

[244] Folgarait, *op. cit.*, 142.
[245] Jennifer Jolly, *David Alfaro Siqueiros, Josep Renau, the International Team of Plastic Artists and Their Mural for the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate, Mexico City, 1939-40* (PhD dissertation: Northwestern University, 2003), 9.
[246] "Pintura mural, 'El Fascismo' (1939)," Folder 11.1.78, Siqueiros archive. "El fascismo es el producto natural del capitalismo [...] la forma más aguda, más brutal, de Imperialismo Capitalista."

"collective production," requiring members of the team to "sacrifice their individual styles in favor of a common" aesthetic.[247] Nevertheless, Siqueiros would assume the role of director.[248] The process began with a "critical tour" of the murals produced in Mexico City in the preceding two decades, dismissed by the group for their "archaic" processes (fresco and encaustic) and their treatment of architectural space as a "succession of static panels" rather than as a "spatial unity."[249]

Leonard Folgarait and Jennifer Jolly have both masterfully reconstructed the narrative sequence of the mural according to the intentions of its producers who sought to guide the workers' visual reception based on studies of viewers' movement through the stairwell.[250] By contrast, here I emphasize the visual logic not of sequence but of simultaneity, of details that emerge, compete and retreat from vision. This corresponds to Siqueiros's preliminary notes that assert that the mural's

> spatial unity corresponds to the theme of political simultaneity [...] revolution and counter-revolution aren't found in different sites but live together and connect in political life.[251]

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[247] Ibid. "Producción colectiva [...] sacrifican sus maneras personales en favor de una forma común [...]"

[248] Siqueiros, "Criterio del suscrito sobre la pintura mural del edificio nuevo del SINDICATO MEXICANO DE ELECTRICISTAS," Folder 11.1.81, Siqueiros archive.

[249] Siqueiros, "Escrito sobre el mural del sindicato de electricistas por D.A.S. (1939)," Folder 11.1.87, Siqueiros archive. "[...] una gira crítica [...] por todos los lugares en la ciudad de México pintura mural [...] arcaico en mi concepto, de los prodecimientos usados [...] espacio arquitectural que consideraba como una sucesión estática de panneaux [...] y no como una unidad espacial..."

[250] See Jennifer Jolly, "Art of the Collective: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Josep Renau and their Collaboration at the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate," *Oxford Art Journal*, vol. 31, no. 1(March, 2008), 129-151; Folgarait, *op. cit.*, 142-161.

[251] Siqueiros, "Escrito sobre el mural del sindicato de electricistas por D.A.S. (1939)," *op. cit.* "[...] unidad espacial, correspondia un tema de simultaneidad politica [...] revolución y la contra-revolución [...] no se encuentran en campos diferentes sino que conviven y se enlazan en la vida politica."

Modifying the Syndicate's initial charge that three separate panels be produced, discretely representing *Imperialism*, *Fascism*, and *War*, Siqueiros and his team sought to produce one mural that enfolded all three and emphasized their interconnection.

The Mexican Electricians' mural represented the first attempt to spatialize Duco, in the meantime modernizing Mexico's public art movement by incorporating the technical experiments made over the previous decade. As such, the mural aggregates Siqueiros's projects in Los Angeles, in Buenos Aires, and New York and translates them back to the formative context of the "Mexican mural renaissance." It is a painting for Mexican workers about Europe using U.S. industrial paint and a demonstration of technophilic muralism about the catastrophe technophilia has wrought. The utopian dreamworld and the nightmare of fascism co-habitate from the molecular level of each bead of pigment to the composition in its architectonic totality.[252]

In this mural, there is no evidence of the *campesinos* that earlier murals sought to incorporate into the post-revolutionary state's visual idiom. The proletarian primitivist figures of Siqueiros's early 1930s easel paintings are likewise conspicuous in their absence. The post-national scenario conjured by the Electricians' Syndicate mural—itself a collaboration between Mexican and Spanish artists—summons a geopolitical space of international capitalism anomalous to the cultural nationalism from which the Mexican mural movement had been initiated. The muralists struggled to put a face on Mexico that was not "archaic." As such, Mexico is ghosted from the image.

Iconographically, the mural builds upon the Popular Front imagery of Siqueiros's paintings such as the early Duco *Birth of Fascism* (1936). Stylistically, the Electricians'

[252] Here I am invoking Buck-Morss, *op. cit*.

mural recalls the hallucinatory foreboding of *Echo of a Scream* (1937). **(Figure 2.8)** Likewise, the mural synthesized techniques from collaborators such as Josep Renau whose photomontages, such as those for the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 World's Fair, find their afterlives in the phantasmagoric Electricians' Syndicate imagery. As Romy Golan has analyzed, in 1930s Europe, the photo-mural had become a dominant form and Renau had been a notable participant in the development of this format.[253]

Duco and the art of expropriation

How can we reconcile Siqueiros's use of a capitalist product (Duco) in the service of what he considered a Communist-identified "revolutionary art?" As Buck-Morss has analyzed in the Soviet case of the 1920s, the transposition of technology to a context of underdevelopment often carried with it a utopian charge.[254] Siqueiros's appropriation of Duco likewise re-directed it into other relations of production, from the realm of industry into that of art and from the ideology of capitalism to his far-from-doctrinaire aesthetic of Stalinism.

The mural format was defined in part by what it was not—a circulating commodity object shaped by what Walter Benjamin in 1936 would term "exhibition

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[253] Romy Golan, *Muralnomad: The Paradox of Wall Painting, Europe 1927-1957* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 123-162. Because the Mexico City mural drew from photography both as source material for its images and as an element of production (photographic projection), it may be considered within a lineage of photo-murals as well as within that of the painted murals it sought to modernize. Indeed, the distorted proportions of elements in the SME mural is reminiscent of the manipulation of scale prevalent in 1930s photo-murals.
[254] Buck-Morss, *op. cit.*, 105. "[F]or the proletariat of the Soviet Union industrialization was still a dreamworld when, for workers in capitalist countries, it was already a lived catastrophe."

value."[255] Thus the dialectical operations of a mural made using Duco paint and airbrush derived not purely from "content" but from its ontological status as a sited image. Already in 1922, Siqueiros had deemed murals "public property" versus the circulating commodity of the easel painting. According to this logic, this "monument to capitalism" thus resisted the circulatory nature of capitalism in its very fixity, in its sitedness.

The mural enacted a form of expropriation of Duco—that capitalist pigment—in service of a new program. This interpretation of the mural extends from the materiality (the appropriation of Duco) to the content of the imagery itself. At the apex of the mural's pyramidal composition, the aggregation of trains and what appear to be petroleum storage tanks (the two industries Cárdenas had recently nationalized), along with an electrical tower raising the flag of the syndicate, reach from the depths of the mural towards a sun-drenched sky.

In 1938, Cárdenas had fulfilled Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution, nationalizing petroleum resources, and thus expropriating subsoil rights from U.S. and British corporations. That Mexican modernization could proceed upon a path consistent with anti-imperialist and redistributive policies suggested a Socialist rather than a capitalist future. However, historians disagree concerning the actual radicalism of Cárdenas's presidency, particularly because Cárdenas would capitulate to U.S. corporations and curtail the radicalism of his rhetoric by 1940.[256]

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[255] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 217-251.
[256] See Knight, *op. cit.*; Knight, "Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 26: 1 (Feb., 1994), 73-107; Ben Fallaw, *Cárdenas Compromised: The Failure of Reform in Postrevolutionary Yucatán* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

Despite his stated commitment to collective production, during the making of the Electricians' mural, Siqueiros temporarily abandoned his work at the Syndicate so as to produce paintings for an exhibition in New York at the Pierre Matisse Gallery. Matisse, son of famed painter Henri, scheduled this exhibit to coincide with the exhibition of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* at the Museum of Modern Art in the spring of 1940.[257] As analyzed in Chapter 4, in the wake of the oil expropriation, *Twenty Centuries* was one of a number of brokering tools between Nelson Rockefeller and Cárdenas in the process of reaching an agreement amenable both to the Mexican government and to the U.S. oil companies (if not to the Mexican oil workers themselves who had temporarily taken leadership of some of the oil companies' operations).

Matisse organized Siqueiros's exhibition in collaboration with the Galería de Arte Mexicano, the first private gallery in Mexico City, which had been founded five years earlier. GAM's director Inés Amor acted as intermediary between Siqueiros and Matisse, a role which included arranging the shipping of paintings from Mexico City and sharing in the profits. Amor wrote to Teeny Matisse, the gallerist's wife, in November of 1939:

> The Siqueiros show left today for New York. It will be there, at the latest, in ten days. We sent it by express to our Custom House Agents in Laredo, the Roberto Zúniga Co., 2103 Lincoln St., Laredo, Texas. They will reship it to you and send you all the documents necessary for clearance at the New York Customs House. [...] Titles were translated literally from Spanish and may be changed if you wish it so.[258]

Two weeks later, upon receiving the shipment of paintings from Mexico City via Laredo, Pierre Matisse wrote to Amor about damage incurred during transit:

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[257] See Jolly, "Art of the Collective: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Josep Renau and their Collaboration at the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate," *op. cit.*

[258] Inés Amor, Letter to Teeny Matisse, November 30, 1939, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

> The Siqueiros[sic] have arrived in the gallery. They are beautiful and will make a nice show. Two or three of them have been scratched owing to the packing which was none too good. The scratches can be fixed easily and I shall attend to it.[259]

A few days later, Matisse sent a telegram to DuPont Paint Company in Wilmington, Delaware, the maker of Duco:

> WE ARE OPENING ON JANUARY NINTH AN EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS MADE WITH DUCO PAINT BY INTERNATIONALLY FAMOUS MEXICAN PAINTER DAVID ALFARO SIQUEIROS STOP EXHIBITION EXPECTED TO BE SENSATION FROM ARTISTIC AND TECHNICAL VIEWPOINT STOP FOR INFORMATION ON SIQUEIROS [sic] ARTISTIC STANDING INQUIRE DIRECTOR MUSEUM OF MODERN ART NEWYORK [sic] STOP IF INTERESTED AS I THINK YOU SHOULD BE COMMUNICATE WITH ME IMMEDIATELY PIERRE MATISSE[260]

While it appears the DuPont Paint Company remained unresponsive, as they had been when Siqueiros had approached them for sponsorship four years earlier, Duco was nevertheless a magnet of fascination for the art press. A review of Siqueiros's exhibition in *Art News* foregrounded the industrial materials and methods of these easel paintings which he "has composed in Duco paint with an air-brush, or, if you prefer the service station's word for it, a blow gun." The journalist lists Siqueiros's reasons for using Duco as two-fold—firstly, as a means of "bringing painting within the reach of the worker" and, secondly, based on "the strength of design and color" made possible by "gun and Duco."[261]

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[259] Pierre Matisse, Letter to Inés Amor, December 15, 1939, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

[260] Pierre Matisse, Telegram to D.V. Bauder, DuPont Paint Company, Wilmington, Delaware, December 20, 1939, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

[261] J.W.L., "Siqueiros Air Brushed Pictures in Duco," *The Art News*, January 13, 1940, B99A, PMG Exhibition Review Clippings, 1925-1943, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library. See also Jerome Klein, "Blow Gun Effects," *New York Post*, January 13,

The emphasis upon the modern medium and processes behind these paintings did much to distinguish Siqueiros's paintings from those Mexican easel paintings the artist had earlier in the decade denounced as "folk art for export." In a review for *The Art Digest*, the writer enthuses:

> None of the hackneyed Mexican subjects are in Siqueiros's work—no peasants bowed under grain stacks, none of the swept forms of revolutionists with arms akimbo and huge knots in their shirts, none of that run-into-the-ground iconography of the peon. [...] what Siqueiros has done with paint and color tones counts most.[262]

Here, the contrast between modern technique and "hackneyed Mexican subjects" serves the New York journalist's thesis that technique eclipses political intent.[263] While the exhibition may have included reasonably benign images (a forest, a woman crying), a closer analysis of two paintings in the exhibition—*Ethnography* and *Oil Well on Fire*—complicates this purely formalist argument.

Ethnography takes the form of a portrait, but the portrait subject is anonymous, wearing both peasant garb and a Pre-Columbian mask. **(Figure 2.9)** While the painting may be seen to equate the *campesino* and the ancient American—seeing the former as an incarnation of the latter, both the title (designating the figure as the object of social scientific expertise) and the use of Duco disturb pastoral essentialism. This denial of "folk art for export" in an easel painting for export, shipped from Mexico City to New

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1940, B99A, PMG Exhibition Review Clippings, 1925-1943, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

[262] "No Bent Peons," *The Art Digest,* January 15, 1940, 19, B99A, PMG Exhibition Review Clippings, 1925-1943, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

[263] This recalls Frances Flynn Paine's essay for Diego Rivera's MoMA exhibition nine years earlier—"Diego's very spinal column is painting, not politics." Frances Flynn Paine, "The Work of Diego Rivera," in *Diego Rivera* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1931), 35.

York by train via Laredo, extends to the use of Duco thickly applied in an ominous, stormy palette of chalky grays. What's more, Siqueiros includes a dwarfed factory building as an almost-subliminal blip on the canvas's screen (dotting a hill at the lower right of the composition), further disturbing any notion of the timelessness of "Mexican culture."

But these contradictions remained outside the reception of *Ethnography*. Matisse sold the painting to MoMA for $700.00.[264] *Ethnography* was swiftly included in the modern section of *Twenty Centuries*, as selected by polymath Miguel Covarrubias, one of the exhibition's organizers.[265] Within the context of that exhibition, *Ethnography* synthesized the Pre-Columbian (mask), the pastoral trope (peasant), and the modern (Duco), in the process compressing twenty centuries into one small painting.

Oil Well on Fire belongs to a larger cluster of exploding, swarming images Siqueiros produced with Duco in this period, such as the hallucinogenic *The Tempest* (1940), allowing the techniques of the aerograph and the particular materiality of Duco lacquer to produce hazy, ominous aggregations that border on non-objectivity. **(Figure 2.10 and 2.11)** However, the title orients the abstract billow towards the contemporary politics of oil expropriation. By producing this work for the New York exhibition, Siqueiros implicates the circuit of the artwork's own mobility as isomorphic to that connecting Mexican raw material to U.S. market. However, the circulation of oil was then in a state of indeterminate immobility. Indeed, perhaps the New York critics'

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264 "Stockbook Sales 1932-1946," Box 172, Folder 5, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

265 Pierre Matisse, Letter to Inés Amor, January 20, 1940, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

emphasis upon the technical innovation of Siqueiros's paintings consciously camouflaged the most pressing questions regarding U.S.-Mexican exchange then occupying the news media.

During the run of the Pierre Matisse exhibition, Amor wrote to Matisse about two developments. The first was the most pervasive, concerning Mexico's economic difficulties and diplomatic tensions in the wake of the 1938 oil expropriation, which had trickled down to affect the market for her gallery, dependent as it was upon U.S. collectors visiting Mexico City. The second development concerned Siqueiros more directly. In May of that year, Siqueiros had left his work at the Electricians' Syndicate again, this time not to produce Duco easel paintings for the New York art market but to lead an assassination attempt on Leon Trotsky, then given asylum in Mexico City. Though he adamantly denied it, Siqueiros had been recruited by the KGB while serving in the Spanish Civil War. While the attempt was unsuccessful (an attempt by another group of KGB agents would prove fatal a few months later), Sheldon Harte, Trotsky's assistant and bodyguard, had been killed in the attempt, and Siqueiros had gone into hiding.[266]

Amor wrote to Matisse:

> Mexico is very quiet in every way, including business. [...] I think it is out of the question to think of another exhibition of David. They have not found him and there are persistent rumours that he has been killed. It is dreadful.[267]

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[266] See amongst others Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
[267] Inés Amor, Letter to Pierre Matisse, July 10, 1940, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

While discussing Siqueiros's predicament, the letters between the two gallerists frequently turn to the potential for greater collaboration "between the two countries." As Matisse wrote to Amor: "We are really serious about Mexico but owing to the general situation," referring to the expropriation crisis and consequent tensions between the U.S. and Mexico, Matisse would need to "wait for developments."[268]

Once Siqueiros had been found alive and swiftly put into prison, Matisse wrote to Amor:

> The news about David made me happier and I like [sic] to follow your suggestion of a possible show of new work. [...] I realize also that you probably have a very good market with all the distinguished visitors which will be pouring in, now that everything is alright again with the two countries.[269]

Siqueiros's imprisonment coincided with new resolutions in U.S.-Mexican diplomatic relations concerning the oil dispute. Siqueiros's crimes did not deter Matisse from an interest in exhibiting and selling more paintings by the artist in New York. Indeed, by February of 1941, Matisse was impatient to further collaborate with Amor: "How about our exhibitions? Are your painters on strike and jails too uncomfortable to paint?"[270]

And what of the incomplete Electricians' mural? Back in Mexico City, Renau was left to complete the mural during Siqueiros's disappearance and subsequent imprisonment. The final appearance of the work may be largely attributed to decisions made by Renau, including the late addition of the armed revolutionary figure at the top of

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[268] Pierre Matisse, Letter to Inés Amor, July 6, 1940, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.
[269] Pierre Matisse, Letter to Inés Amor, December 9, 1940, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.
[270] Pierre Matisse, Letter to Inés Amor, February 10, 1941, Box 96, Folder 2, PMG-Dealers and Galleries International Mexico Galería de Arte Mexicano 1940-1942, Pierre Matisse Gallery archives, Morgan Library.

the stairwell. As Jolly has analyzed, the inclusion of this militant may be seen to reflect a shift in Comintern doctrine between the conception of the mural in 1939 and its completion in 1940—namely a move from an anti-war position understanding war as the highest stage of imperialism to a pro-war position.[271] This shift likewise proves relevant to analysis of Siqueiros's subsequent mural, *Death to the Invader* (1941-1942) as well as to his promotion of an "art of war" by 1943.

The revolutionary figure's gun serves as an analogy for the muralists's spray guns. Although Mexico would not enter the war until 1942, veterans of the Spanish Civil War—namely Siqueiros and Renau—conflated armed militant, electrical worker, and industrially-outfitted artist. In fact, it seems possible that this 'revolutionary' is in fact a veiled portrait of Siqueiros himself. In this interpretation, Siqueiros's armed storming of Trotsky's home is transmuted here into an armed, heroic worker arriving on the scene to stop fascism. In this interpretation, Siqueiros's absence at the time of the mural's transformation and ultimate completion is figured as a spectral presence, conflating Duco spraygun and deadly firearm. **(Figure 2.12)**

PART II. Exporting Duco muralism

In the previous section, I have analyzed Siqueiros's attempt to modernize and industrialize muralism. This process was realized collaboratively with teams of artists across the hemisphere, in Los Angeles, Buenos Aires, and New York. With the Electricians' Syndicate mural in Mexico City, Siqueiros and his team executed the first Duco mural, synthesizing the imported technologies and products, murals, experiments,

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[271] Jolly, *David Alfaro Siqueiros, op. cit.*, 163.

and discourses developed over the course of the 1930s. In this section, I turn to the exportation of Duco muralism to Chile and Cuba between 1941 and 1943, and the entanglement of these works with the project of hemispheric integration analyzed in each chapter of this dissertation. In particular, Siqueiros's brief engagement with the Office of Inter-American Affairs and the Museum of Modern Art opens up onto the question of *Latin American art.*

Bi-national muralism, 1941-1942

Approaching the southern wall of the library of the *Escuela México* in Chillán, Chile, one is confronted by a barrage of figures, blazing violently towards the spectator. **(Figure 2.13)** An outraged Mapuche warrior—Galvarino (died 1557)—lunges forward, his tense legs echoing with the effect of photographic double exposure. His outstretched arms, their hands severed by the Spanish, rise punishingly above fallen soldiers. To his right, Chilean independence leader Bernardo O'Higgins (1778-1842) waves the national flag, while to his left Chilean poet Francisco Bilbao (1823-1865) gazes out at the spectator. A mirroring sea of limbs extends to his left, distortedly refracted above where the figures melt into a pool of non-objective form. A blazing yet earthy palette dominated by reds and browns contrasts with the gray pallor of the fallen invaders. Across the room, to the north wall, a calmer composition awaits, in which slain, armored soldiers are frozen in stages of defeat, observed calmly by a cluster of figures to either side—including Cárdenas, representing the most recent phase of Mexican independence. The two scenes are stitched together by a pattern of geometric abstraction that stretches from the ceiling to coagulate into the figural representations on each wall.

After a year in prison, Siqueiros had been granted exile in Chillán by Cárdenas's successor, Manuel Ávila Camacho in 1941. This arrangement had been brokered by poet Pablo Neruda, then Chile's ambassador to Mexico, and the Mexican ambassador to Chile, Octavio Reyes Espíndola.[272] In the wake of a devastating earthquake in Chillán in 1939, Cárdenas had proposed the construction of the *Escuela México*, an elementary school for local children.[273] Siqueiros's charge was to produce a mural for the school's library, which he would title *Death to the Invader* (1941-1942).[274] In Chillán, where Siqueiros arrived in May of 1941, the innovations of Duco muralism, developed at the Electricians' Syndicate, were stretched to fit the brief of a diplomatic gift from one American Republic to another. The mural enabled Siqueiros to model muralism abroad, and to function as an official emissary of "revolutionary art," albeit within the paradoxical roles of ambassador and exile.

Death to the Invader was unveiled publically on March 25, 1942 with Aguirre Cerda and Reyes Espíndola in attendance. As Ernesto Eslava wrote in 1943: "The paintings in the Mexico School [...] constituted the first objective contact between the modern Mexican mural movement and the Chilean artistic field and the first effort at a

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[272] Siqueiros, Letter to Manuel Ávila Camacho, April 19, 1941, Folder 11.2.146, Siqueiros archive.

[273] See *México a Chile, 1939-1942* (Santiago: Empresa Editora Zig-Zag S.A., 1942).

[274] Alongside Siqueiros, Mexican artist Xavier Guerrero, a participant in the first phase of Mexican muralism, produced a mural while other artists produced portraits of the presidents of the American Republics. Beyond the mural, Siqueiros was responsible for the portraits of Mexican President Ávila Camacho and Chilean President Aguirre Cerda, which were to frame the library's doors. Ernesto Eslava, *Pintura mural: Escuela México de Chillán* (Santiago: Escuela Nacional de Artes Gráficas, 1943), 13-15.

public art in our country."[275] In *Death to the Invader*, Siqueiros and his Chilean team drew exclusively from the histories of Chile and Mexico. Presidents of the republics and emancipatory warriors are divided according to nationality, spread apart to opposite ends of the room—fittingly, Chileans to the south and Mexicans to the north. They nevertheless make of the room the stage of their operations and thus immerse the viewer. Difference between the two nations is manifested in the disposition of each national drama but the room itself synthesizes the two, each a layer in the viewing subject's circumambulatory absorption of the mural.

Whereas the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate mural projected the atrocities in fascist Europe upon its Mexico City site, *Death to the Invader* remapped the geography of the "revolutionary" imaginary to Mexico and Chile. As Siqueiros would recall in his autobiography:

> I did not want to paint some facts about the history of the two countries, as important as these were. I wanted to paint the entire history, or at least the fundamental motor drive of the entire history of both peoples, and still the historical simultaneity of their struggle, for both are people of Latin America.[276]

Siqueiros's mural in Chile (as well as those produced in Havana in 1943) would eschew the direct representation of fascism that had dominated his works of the late 1930s, instead focusing on a repertoire of specifically hemispheric content. In the process, the mural enacts what would persist in much of Siqueiros's subsequent production—the rendering of history as allegory. Much as the shift in Comintern doctrine from an anti-war to a pro-war position in 1940 had influenced the final version of the Mexican

[275] Ibid., 10. "Las pinturas de la Escuela México, que nos ocupan, han constituido el primer contacto objetivo del movimiento muralista mexicano moderno en el ambiente artístico chileno y el primer esfuerzo del arte público en nuestro país."
[276] Siqueiros, *Me llamaban el coronelazo*, *op. cit.*, 405, as quoted in translation in Stein, 134.

Electricians' mural, so too did this shift inform the idealization and near-mythological exaltation of violence in *Death to the Invader*. However, this violence is displaced onto historical figures who fight for freedom and independence. Notably, the contemporary figures are placid and static compared to the visceral dynamism of long-dead warriors brought back to life.

If in the 1930s Siqueiros had stressed the importance of contemporary subjects for "content," the mural in Chillán marked a shift towards historical imagery. The mural compresses figures such as Cuauhtémoc (the ruler of Tenochtitlán murdered by Cortés) and Galvarino into pictorial spaces that include contemporary figures as well. *Death to the Invader* thus enacts a compression of both time (from the Conquest to 1942) and space (Mexico and Chile). The mural's staged antagonism between local heroes and titular invaders suggests a transnational representation of anti-imperialism unifying Cuauhtémoc and Cárdenas, Galvarino and Bilbao. Here the spatial and temporal conflation of these figures around a theme of "native" resistance obfuscates difference and essentializes Latin America as a unified subject.

This displacement from the contemporary to the distant past may be interpreted as a symptom of Siqueiros's precarious position in Chillán. He was simultaneously an exile from Mexico and a representative of the Mexican state which controled the terms of his freedom. Though archives offer little clarification, his ties to the KGB were likewise most probably tenuous. Having failed in his attempt on Trotsky's life, Siqueiros would have lost his use for the KGB. It was at this conjuncture that the tether between Siqueiros's aesthetics and his politics lost their last shreds of entanglement.

The two national dramas are sutured by a dynamic geometric pattern radiating from a central point on the ceiling towards each scene. As one photo of the mural-in-process evinces (with Siqueiros's daughter dutifully providing a sense of scale), the geometric pattern was not a later addition to unite disparate figural scenes but rather an initial schema for the mural's spatial logic. **(Figure 2.14)** Indeed, the sketches for the figural scenes demonstrate that undergirding the profusion of figures is a dynamism of form maintained in the geometric abstraction painted on the ceiling in the final mural.[277] This abstract ceiling closes the gaps between national boundaries and vast geographical expanses, across historical time, and between formal languages—distances allegorized in the space of the room itself. The room is put to work—to bind what remains unbound. As such, we may interpret it as a surrogate for *Latin America* (that which is common to Mexico and Chile), more an idea than a precise geometry, more an abstraction than a material entity. Alternately, or in addition, we may see this geometric suture as a surrogate for *technology* as a binding agent that will lead the past and the present into an industrial future.

I want to turn to the spectatorial logic within which these heterogeneous elements are mobilized. The spatialization of muralism had been attempted previously in Siqueiros's *Plastic Exercise* in Buenos Aires and more recently in the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate. In the latter, a torqueing staircase produced a template for a revolving narrative. Here, the mural expands to fit its architectural container. The mural

[277] This unusual synthesis of realism and non-objective form gives particularly vivid realization to Devin Fore's recent formulation of "realism after modernism," which he identifies as a conscious strategy to revive figuration in a historical moment of *rehumanization*. See Devin Fore, *Realism after Modernism: The Rehumanization of Art and Literature* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2012).

exceeds a singular viewing position and evades photographic reproduction. While Siqueiros's muralism was deeply indebted to photography, it frustrates its own photographic indexing at every turn. Literally, the viewer must turn, spiraling up a flight of stairs in Mexico City or must spin around to produce the Chillán mural as a zoetropic whole. This kinaesthetic viewer was thus both activated as a participant in the synthesis of the murals and as an over-saturated sensorial object of an immersive scenography.

Chillán did not offer the same access to imported lacquers and tools as could be found in Mexico City. As Siqueiros wrote to Mexican president Ávila Camacho in June of 1941: "The materials and tools that I use in my work—nitrocellulose, pyroxylin, airbrush, compressors, etc.—are particularly expensive and difficult to find here." Siqueiros concluded that the "only possible solution" would be the "rapid donation" of said materials from the Mexican government.[278] The team ultimately obtained OPEX nitrocellulose lacquer, a pyroxylin paint similar to Duco produced by Sherwin Williams,[279] which filters the historical past into an industrial present and future.

At the end of his time in Chile, Siqueiros would publish his manifesto "In War, An Art of War!" in the Chilean journal *Forma*. According to a handwritten note in the Siqueiros archive, this text was simultaneously reproduced in the Chilean newspapers *La Nación*, *La Hora*, and *El Siglo* and subsequently in the Argentinian periodicals *Crítica*,

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[278] "Los materiales que uso en mi trabajo—nitro celulosa, piroxilina, aerografos, compresores, etc—son particularmente costosos y hasta dificiles de encontrar aquí [...] La unica solución possible sería en mi opinion obtener del gobierno del país, que uted[sic] precide, la rapida donación [...]" Siqueiros, Letter to Manuel Ávila Camacho, June 7, 1941, Folder 11.2.146, Siqueiros archive.
[279] Elsa Arroyo, Anny Aviram, Chris McGlinchey and Sandra Zetina, "David Alfaro Siqueiros and the Domain of Industrial Materials 1931-1945" in *Baja Viscosidad*, *op. cit.*, 243.

Ahora, and *Orientación*. It was further reproduced abroad by the Associated Press.[280] In this manifesto, the artist encouraged artists, writers, musicians, and actors "of America" to go beyond "personal participation in anti-fascist activities" so as to "transform art into a weapon of combat," understanding its power as "an exceptional emotional product."[281] Calling upon governments to provide patronage for this "art of war," Siqueiros signed the manifesto "David Alfaro Siqueiros, representing the multiple Mexican, North American, Argentinian, Spanish, and Chilean painters who, theoretically and practically, have united with my efforts in the past twelve years in favor of public art."[282] Here Siqueiros aggregated his collaborations across the hemisphere (including with Spanish artists in Mexico and artists in the United States) as a source of substantial cultural capital. However, this collective was now marshaled towards an "art of war," a tweak of the anti-fascist and Communist discourses that dominated his work in the 1930s.

If *Death to the Invader* may be understood to be linked to Siqueiros's activities organizing artists in an "art of war" against fascism, then the "invader" would suggest the fascist penetration of the continent. However, this Nazi threat is nowhere apparent in the mural, as it had been in the Swastika-bearing troops two years earlier in the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate mural. In 1941-2, was the contemporary invader U.S. imperialism

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[280] Annotated reproduction of "En La Guerra, Arte de Guerra! Manifesto," January 18, 1943, Folder 8.4.37, Siqueiros archive.
[281] Siqueiros, "En La Guerra, Arte de Guerra! Manifesto," *Forma* no. 8-9 (January-February, 1943), Folder 8.4.37, Siqueiros archive. "Pintores, escultores, grabadores, poetas, novelistas, escritores en general, músicos y actores de América: No basta con la participación personal de ustedes en las actividades antifascistas [...] la elocuencía incomparable de su excepcional producto emocional [...] el arte puede llegar a convertirse en un arme de combate [...]"
[282] Ibid. "David Alfaro Siqueiros, en representación de los multiples pintores mexicanos, norteamericanos, argentinos, españoles y chilenos que, téorica y prácticamente, se han unido a mis esfuerzos de doce años en favor del arte público."

or Nazi penetration? The unspecified identity of the mural's "invader" not only blurs the histories of Mexico and Chile but also blurs the past and the present. It likewise blurs anti-imperialism and anti-fascism so as to deter a pointed interpretation.

Rockefeller's Duco

Despite its remote location in Chillán, the mural (fixed in space) nevertheless circulated within the press across the hemisphere. In an article about the mural published in Havana by curator-critic José Gómez Sicre (who would meet Siqueiros in 1943), Siqueiros is referred to as possessing "an urge to mechanize, civilize, and synchronize spiritual production with contemporary resources."[283] Another article appeared in the Chilean journal *Forma*, "Through an Alien Eye," written by Lincoln Kirstein.[284]

1942 was the year that Kirstein traveled to cities across Latin America funded by the Office of Inter-American Affairs, as analyzed extensively in Chapter 4. While Kirstein reported back on fascist sympathies and anti-Americanism in the sites he visited, he also collected works of art from each country so as to form the Museum of Modern Art's Latin American Art collection, subsidized by Nelson Rockefeller's Inter-American Fund, and exhibited *en masse* in the spring of 1943. As part of this latter work, Kirstein arrived in Chillán for the unveiling of *Death to the Invader.*

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[283] José Gómez Sicre, "Frescos de Siqueiros en Chile," April 25, 1943, Havana, unknown publication, Folder 11.1.90, Siqueiros archive. "Siqueiros, con su afán mecanicista, civilizador, sincronizador de la producción espiritual a los recursos actuales."
[284] See for instance Volodia Teitelboim, "La más reciente pintura mural de David Alfaro Siqueiros," *"Qué hubo en la* semana," Sección Arte, Santiago, May, 1942, Folder 11.1.96; Jesualdo, "La Oratorio Pictórica de Siqueiros en Chile," *El Mercurio*, Santiago, Chile, May 8, 1942, Folder 11.1.94; Gómez Sicre, *op. cit.*

Kirstein asserted that *Death to the Invader* was evidence of "a tremendous plastic and spatial revolution [...] the most important new synthesis of plastic elements since the Cubist Revolt in 1911." Kirstein referred to Siqueiros's Chillán mural as the most important work of art in the hemisphere, a claim he would reiterate in his catalogue for the Museum of Modern Art's Latin American art collection exhibition the following year.[285] In his article, Kirstein is quick to decouple the formal from the political in *Death to the Invader*: "The paintings are certainly polemical but it is incorrect to assume they are political polemic. [...] The polemic is essentially a technical polemic."[286] Much as Siqueiros had blurred the boundaries between political and technological "revolution" as early as 1936, Kirstein was inclined to make an apolitical reading. In part, we may understand this as a desire to repress controversy surrounding Siqueiros's recent imprisonment and Communist affiliations. However, I would argue, it also reflected a certain resistance in *Death to the Invader* itself, a certain incommensurate fissure between rhetoric and image.

Death to the Invader was not Siqueiros's conscious bid to seek the attention of the Office of Inter-American Affairs. Nevertheless, the mural was the most powerful, monumental, and commensurate expression Kirstein could find of a project his own collecting and writing activities were also supporting. Further, Kirstein's mission to collect *Latin American art* for MoMA primed him to appreciate a work that synthesized the histories of Mexico and Chile, made by an artist from one country living in another.

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[285] Lincoln Kirstein, "Through an Alien Eye," *Forma* (October 1942); Lincoln Kirstein, *The Latin-American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1943).
[286] Kirstein, "Through an Alien Eye," *op. cit.*

Siqueiros's encounter with Kirstein in Chillán led to a greater territorialization of his Duco muralism, for which he sought funding from the Office of Inter-American Affairs, overseen by its Coordinator Nelson Rockefeller. In this proposal, he would surpass even Brazilian artist Cândido Portinari as a nomadic pictorial diplomat. Though Portinari's reputation was tarnished for many artists and intellectuals in Brazil and the United States for his role as the Good Neighbor Policy artist *par excellence*, Siqueiros would maintain his revolutionary persona throughout, not least because his involvement with the OIAA was not publicized at the time.

Funded by the OIAA, Siqueiros established the Provisional Continental Committee of Art for the Support of the Victory of the Democracies, followed by a lecture tour in Lima, Peru, Guayaquil, Ecuador, and Panama City in the spring of 1943. On this tour, Siqueiros's lectures emphasized anti-fascism and inter-American cooperation, but omitted more inflammatory content. Concomitantly, Kirstein promoted the idea of a solo exhibition for Siqueiros at MoMA, a prospect that excited the artist. In tandem, Nelson Rockefeller offered the opportunity to produce a mural to be painted by Siqueiros and a collective of U.S. and Latin American collaborators in New York upon completion of his hemispheric campaign inspired by a theme of continental unity.[287]

During the OIAA campaign, Siqueiros's rhetoric moved further from its militancy to a more vaguely limned politics. Now, he emphasized an "art of democracy," palatable to a wide variety of tastes and consistent with the expanded phenomenon that Serge

[287] Stein, *op. cit.*, 136-138; Siqueiros, Letter to Lincoln Kirstein, December 4, 1942, reproduced in *Palabras de Siqueiros*, *op. cit.*, 188.

Guilbaut has termed that era's "de-Marxification."[288] This transition echoed that of Mexican President Ávila Camacho whose rhetoric emphasized "liberty, democracy (often counterposed to Communism) and, above all, *unity*."[289] As with Ávila Camacho, it was the rhetoric required to make Siqueiros safe for U.S. investment.

Siqueiros arrived in Havana in 1943, planning to travel to the United States soon afterwards. While in Havana, he produced a set of artworks, including a mural for María Luisa Gómez Mena's home, *Allegory of Racial Equality in Cuba*, upon which Gómez Mena's husband Mario Carreño collaborated, discussed further in Chapter 4. **(Figure 2.15)** In an article for the Mexican newspaper *Excélsior*, Siqueiros described the mural as a model for an art for "economically advanced democratic states in the postwar era."[290] Siqueiros saw a triumphant postwar climate as the key condition for his muralism's viability as a form of transnationally adaptable civic art.

This "art of democracy" was further modeled in a mural produced for the Sevilla Biltmore Hotel. *New Day for Democracy* represented a spectral figure—a Phrygian-capped allegory of democracy with fists raised triumphantly over the peaks of three volcanoes. **(Figure 2.16)** The monumental mural, seven and a half meters squared, would have dwarfed the spectator.[291] Was the titular new day for democracy propaganda for the constitutional democracy ushered in by Fulgencio Batista's presidency, which had

[288] Siqueiros, "Mis tres cuadros murales en la Habana. Una humilde experiencia para los artistas humildes de Cuba," December 16, 1943, *Revista Hoy*, Mexico, Folder 9.2.9, Siqueiros archive. See Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
[289] Knight, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo," *op. cit.*, 297.
[290] Siqueiros, "Alegoría de la Igualdad Racial en Cuba," *Excélsior*, Mexico, 1943, Folder 11.1.114, Siqueiros archive. "Un arte [...] en los estados de democracía económica avanzada que traerá consigo la posguerra."
[291] Siqueiros, "Mis tres cuadros murales en la Habana," *op. cit.*

dramatically expanded the rights of Cuban citizens? Or was it a hopeful portrait of the triumph of the Allied troops against fascism? The volcano imagery suggests a tie to the Mexican landscape, famously represented by nineteenth century painter José María Velasco and more recently by Siqueiros's early mentor Dr. Atl. Spontaneous eruption suggested the dynamism of revolutionary change, rendered both natural and native via a geological metaphor.

However, in Havana, both Carreño and curator-critic José Gómez Sicre were skeptical about the "revolutionary" potential of Siqueiros's Duco muralism. As Gómez Sicre would write to MoMA's director Alfred Barr, with whom he would co-curate MoMA's *Modern Cuban Painters* exhibition the following year:

> Siqueiros is here trying to get murals. All Cuban painters wish to see him painting and I think [it] would be very useful for all of them to see the development of his technics problem. [...] although I personally do not believe in his political theories into [sic] the painting. [...] Carreño is painting duco now with a great success in the use of colors and qualities.[292]

Like Kirstein, Gómez Sicre regarded Duco muralism as a *technical* rather than a *political polemic*. While one may attribute their dismissal of Duco muralism's "revolutionary" power to their own relatively moderate political positions, it is also true that Siqueiros's own radicalism and the coherence between his political claims and his artistic production were in doubt.

In one photograph, Siqueiros stands alongside his painting *Two Mountains of America: Lincoln and Martí* (1943). **(Figure 2.17)** In a manner comparable to Siqueiros's juxtapositions of Chilean and Mexican histories in *Death to the Invader*, here Siqueiros depicts Abraham Lincoln of the United States and José Martí of Cuba. The two figures

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[292] José Gómez Sicre, Letter to Alfred Barr, June 19, 1943, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 1.81, mf2169.229-mf2169.230, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

are conjoined, contrasted to the spatial separation Siqueiros performed in Chillán, casting Mexico and Chile to opposite sides of a room. In their contiguity as equivalent "mountains" of democracy, Siqueiros significantly occludes the differences between the two men's Americas. The painting simultaneously compresses time and distance and eclipses difference. By choosing two figures long-dead to represent Cuba and the United States, Siqueiros avoids literal evocation of the political present. Cuba's status as semi-colony to the United States in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War, in which Martí died, is invisible. Rather, the present is constructed as a space of harmonious cooperation between the nations of the hemisphere, even those with the troubled conjoined histories of Cuba and the United States.

This painting is an artifact of a financial transaction and a botched plan. A folder entitled "Paintings, Misc." in the OIAA archives includes the minutes for a meeting in the spring of 1943, discussing the denial of the visa that would have permitted Siqueiros to enter the United States. This foreclosed his proposed MoMA exhibition and the mural to be produced in New York with a group of unspecified U.S. and "Latin American artists," to have been funded by Rockefeller. Siqueiros's assumed membership in the Communist Party and his involvement in the Trotsky assassination attempt were cited as insurmountable obstacles. Nevertheless, the artist needed to be pacified and compensated:

> It is believed that if he is given some work to do, and if tact is employed in the treatment of his case, the ill effects of the cancellation of the visa can be overcome. Otherwise it is feared that the effects might be very harmful, as Sr. Siqueiros is undoubtedly a very influential person in artistic circles. Mr. Rockefeller has suggested that the committee have Sr. Siqueiros paint a mural, and the committee agreed that this was perhaps the best solution to the problem.[293]

[293] John Akin, Minutes of Meeting for Nelson Rockefeller, May 27, 1943, Record Group 229, Box 367, Folder "Paintings, Misc.," National Archives II.

Siqueiros initially proposed a mural for Havana's Biblioteca Nacional "symbolizing the historic, democratic relationships between Cuba and the United States," to be produced in collaboration with "a group of outstanding Cuban artists" at a cost of $16,000. As Assistant Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs Wallace K. Harrison wrote to Siqueiros in July of that year, such an ambitious project "is unfortunately entirely beyond the scope and authority of this office."[294] It was ultimately agreed that Siqueiros would produce a painting for the Cuban-American Cultural Institute in Havana for a fee of $2,500.[295] U.S. ambassador to Cuba Spruille Braden, writing to Nelson Rockefeller, summarized that in a discussion with the OIAA's Coordination Committee for Cuba, "we all came to the conclusion that under the circumstances it was about the cheapest way out of this situation."[296] Rockefeller replied to Spruille Braden: "I can't tell you how grateful this office is to you for this entire transaction."[297]

Two Mountains of America: Lincoln and Martí was the work Siqueiros ultimately produced. Measuring four and a half meters squared, the format exists somewhere between a mural and an easel painting. As Siqueiros noted in one Havana newspaper article, "the surface is concave at the top and flat at the base," embodying what he termed a "cuadro mural"—somewhere between a mural and a discrete, mobile easel painting.[298] He wrote that he based the portraits of Lincoln and Martí on "the best-known" and "most

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[294] Wallace K. Harrison, Letter to David Alfaro Siqueiros, July 6, 1943, Folder 3.1.194, Siqueiros archive.
[295] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Spruille Braden, June 4, 1943, Record Group 229, Box 367, Folder "Paintings, Misc.," National Archives II.
[296] Spruille Braden, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, May 26, 1943, Record Group 229, Box 367, Folder "Paintings, Misc.," National Archives II.
[297] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Spruille Braden, *op. cit.*
[298] Siqueiros, "Mis tres cuadros murales en la Habana," *op. cit.*.

popular" "documents" so as to ensure the easiest identification for the public. "We don't forget that in political art the essential thing is its eloquence and in this virtue its clarity."[299] This emphasis upon "clarity" and legibility marks a stark contrast to the Electricians' Syndicate mural and *Death to the Invader* which both overwhelm the viewer with a surfeit of visual information and, in the case of the Chillán mural, a panoply of historical figures from both Chilean and Mexican history. Whereas Siqueiros's murals in Buenos Aires, Mexico City, and Chillán had challenged photographic reproduction, here the image is designed to be reproduced, telegraphing its message with an economy of means.

Siqueiros had thus radically rethought his approach to "political art." His "art of war" had become an art of peace in the image of hemispheric solidarity. The distinction between Pan-Americanism and Latin Americanism was intentionally blurred by Siqueiros, so as to domesticate his previously outspoken anti-imperialism and Communism, attempting to make it palatable to a project of hemispheric solidarity coordinated by the Rockefeller matrix of OIAA/MoMA.

Ten years after Diego Rivera's Rockefeller Center mural controversy and two years after Cândido Portinari's successfully completed murals at the Library of Congress, Rockefeller continued investing in what we might term *mural diplomacy*. However, whereas Rivera had represented Mexico and Portinari had represented Brazil in those pictorial "transactions," here Siqueiros was a Mexican artist limning Cuban-U.S.

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[299] Ibid. "Tratando de retratos [...] escogí los documentos más conocidos. Los más divulgados, aquellos que han obtenido mayor popularidad, ya que estimo que el mayor retrato de un prohombre es aquel que major sirve como medio de identificación pública. No olvidemos que en el arte político lo esencial es su elocuencía y en esa virtud, su claridad."

relations, a testament to the interwoven state of the field of hemispheric relations in 1943. The commissioning of a work of art from Siqueiros in 1943 proved particularly cynical, using cultural exchange as a means by which to pacify the artist, one whose animosity could prove "very harmful," in an echo of the Rivera controversy of a decade prior. The placid immobility of the bodiless Lincoln and Martí allegorized Siqueiros's own immobility. Denied entry to both Mexico and the U.S., he likewise had no legs to stand on. Like Cuba, he was an island.

While Siqueiros's painting could most obviously be read as a pendant portrait of Cuba and the United States—and perhaps Lincoln and Martí as surrogates for F.D.R. and Batista respectively, I want to proffer another interpretation that reflects an allegory for the artist-patron relationship. In this reading, José Martí stands in for Siqueiros and Lincoln stands in for Nelson Rockefeller. Like Martí, Siqueiros had traversed the hemisphere seeking to combine the roles of revolutionary and cultural producer. Like Lincoln, Rockefeller sought to unify North And South both commercially and politically (though Lincoln's efforts were national and Rockefeller's were continental). The use of Duco, I would argue, subliminally implied industrialization as the *medium* of hemispheric solidarity, the viscous, binding agent that could deliver an emancipatory future.

The photograph is also telling. Siqueiros positions his own body next to the imposing crania of the two famous dead men, as if to suggest a parallel between the work of his art and Lincoln's and Martí's projects of the American imagination; they form a trio. Between these two "mountains" in the distance appears an unoccupied volcano from which hangs suspended a plume of smoke or lava in the shape of a question mark (or, for that matter, the undulations of a Phrygian cap). Likewise, the volcano introduces a

"Mexican" geological element (with pedigree from Velasco's and Dr. Atl's landscapes) into a scene dominated by figureheads of Cuba and the United States. If we understand this photograph to be evidence of the OIAA-Siqueiros "transaction," the intended viewer (Rockefeller) completes the image's allegorical surrogacy in the act of looking. One imagines its caption: "Siqueiros painted this, as requested" or "as agreed upon by the artist and the Coordinator." As such, it is an artifact of a relationship that would dissolve immediately thereafter.

Developmentalist muralism and the afterlives of Duco

Permitted to re-enter Mexico in December of 1943 after two years of exile, Siqueiros's first commission from the Mexican state upon his return resulted in the Duco painting *New Democracy* (1945). **(Figure 2.18)** It was produced for the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, where it would join murals by Rivera and Orozco. Notably, a new version of Rivera's Rockefeller Center mural (Lenin's face intact), completed in 1934, had been the first of the three commissions.[300] As such, the Palacio served simultaneously as patron to *los tres grandes* of Mexican muralism and, less explicitly, as repository for the art rejected by the U.S. over the course of the previous decade.

New Democracy consolidated iconography and tropes from the murals produced in Chillán and Havana earlier in the decade. The central figure, a bare-breasted allegory for democracy, wears the Phrygian cap of the figure dominating *New Day for Democracy* (1943) in Havana's Sevilla Biltmore Hotel. As in the Cuban mural, the layers of de-

[300] See Mary Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums, and the Mexican State* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2012), 35-38.

Communization, national allegory, and anti-fascist commemoration converge and blur. However, the prestige of the work was amplified by a change in institutional framing, from a hotel lobby in Havana to a central location in the Palacio de Bellas Artes, symbolizing Siqueiros's recognition by the Mexican state which had only recently imprisoned and exiled him.

Like the allegorical figure at the Sevilla Biltmore, her raised arms recall those of Galvarino in *Death to the Invader* and, like him, she triumphs over the fallen, sallow body of the "invader," here legible as a Fascist soldier rather than as an armored sea of *conquistadores*. The immediate postwar context for the mural sealed the violence safely in the (immediate) past. The composition is reduced in complexity, as with *Two Mountains of America: Lincoln and Martí* in which an economy of means emphasizes unity and legibility. She erupts from a volcano not unlike those from which Lincoln and Martí emerged. While conventionally understood within the nationalist framework of Mexican muralism, the painting in fact compresses elements from preceding murals produced across Latin America in the previous half-decade, newly glossed with a gleaming Mexicanist top coat.

That same year, the National Polytechnic Institute in Mexico City introduced a workshop for the study of modern painting materials, especially plastics (*El Taller de ensayo de materiales de pintura y plásticos*), directed by José Gutiérrez, an artist who had participated in the Siqueiros Experimental Workshop while living in New York in 1936, and chemist Manuel Jimenez Rueda.[301] The "revolutionary" claims made by Siqueiros

[301] Reading about the development of a new acrylic paint by the New York-based Rohm and Haas Company in the mid-1950s, Gutiérrez developed his own version, patented in 1956 as Politec, which became popular amongst Mexican artists. Jan Marontate,

for synthetic paints in the 1930s and early 1940s appeared subsumed into the "revolution" of industrial progress, in parallel to the subsumption of the most radical redistributive proposals of the Mexican Revolution into the logic of consumer capitalism.

As Sarah Babb has summarized in her history of Mexican economic development, the governments of Ávila Camacho (1940-1946) and Miguel Alemán (1946-1952) marked the dawn of what is known as the "Mexican miracle," favoring private enterprise, improved relations with the United States, and a reduction of the Socialist tenor of the Cárdenas years.[302] Mexican modernization in the 1940s was a rhetorically nationalist project characterized by import substitution industrialization, but it cooperated intensively with U.S. capital. Ávila Camacho's presidency was marked by a diminishment of workers' control and the expansion of private and foreign investment (particularly in the manufacturing industry).[303] Alemán's tenure (1946-1952) only expanded this pro-business stance, heightened by the increasing pressures and new alliances of the Cold War.[304]

Synthetic Media and Modern Painting: A Case Study in the Sociology of Innovation (PhD dissertation: University of Montreal, 1996), 157; 169. As Marontate notes, in the immediate postwar period, artists whom Siqueiros had associated with "archaic" materials and methods—namely Rivera but also Orozco—would come to use synthetic paints. As Siqueiros would tell it in the preface to Gutiérrez's 1966 English language book *Painting with Acrylics*: "So it was that our Mexican artists moved from the methods of the Cholula to the industrial knowledge of the United States. [...] Out of these experiments were born the practical theories and formulas of José L. Gutiérrez." Siqueiros, "Preface," in José L. Gutiérrez and Nicholas Roukes, *Painting with Acrylics* (New York: Watson-Guptil, 1966), 8-9.

[302] Sarah Babb, *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 78.

[303] Knight, "The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo," *op. cit.*, 302; 305.

[304] Stephen R. Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1999), 189-200.

Siqueiros's Duco imaginary would prove *workable* within the developmentalist ethos of the Mexican state as it grew through the 1940s and 1950s. There was a notable shift in the artist's language in this era—from the use of the word "técnica" to the use of the word "tecnología." In his book *Cómo se pinta un mural* of 1951, he speaks of cement, plastic, and "materials created by modern organic chemistry" as "technology" but also of "pictorial and sculptural technology" and of "psychological-political technology."[305] The appendices to this book list a type of biography of synthetic pigments, accompanied in instances by their chemical formulae.[306] The synthetic chemicalization of muralism participated in a larger pattern of development in Mexico, which included the growth of the chemical industry and the early agricultural experiments that would become known as the Green Revolution. Notably, this modernization of agriculture was funded in large part by Nelson Rockefeller.[307]

Siqueiros moved from espousing the importance of collective work to a role as single author. Whereas his projects of the 1930s and early 1940s had been driven by an internationalism, aligned first with the Comintern and subsequently with a hemispheric imaginary, his postwar artworks increasingly positioned the Mexican nation-state as the frame for discussion and for institution-building. Nevertheless, his muralism remained surrounded by "revolutionary" rhetoric, consistent with the "revolutionary" rhetoric maintained by the developmentalist state. Whereas works such as the Electricians' Syndicate mural had conjured a phantasmagoric struggle in the apocalyptic vein, the

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[305] See Siqueiros, *Cómo se pinta un mural* (México: Ediciones Mexicanas, 1951), 14-15.
[306] Ibid., 166-167.
[307] For a brief account of the early history of the Green Revolution in Mexico, see Chapter 5 of John Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution: Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 102-117.

work Siqueiros made upon his return to Mexico in 1943 emphasized the triumphant and the heroic and rarely represented contemporary figures or events. Rendering figures such as Cuauhtémoc in Duco, I argue, subliminally cast the project of the Mexican state as an industrial, modernizing enterprise.

In 1951, Siqueiros would produce a small mural for the Fábricas Automex, a Chrysler Corporation assembly plant. **(Figure 2.20)** Here, Duco was brought full-circle; from a U.S. car factory to a mural pigment to the walls of a U.S. car company's Mexico City plant. Duco's industrial provenance would also prove cohesive with murals such as *For the Total Safety of all Mexicans at Work* (1952-4) in which the pigment is used to depict the facticity of Mexican industry in full throttle. **(Figure 2.19)** However, now industry, as a given of daily Mexican work, threatens to alienate the worker and, in the case of *For the Total Safety*, can even kill the worker in the grip of its steely efficiency. But despite this potentially dangerous interface between machinery and worker, the worker is nevertheless *produced* by industry. This constitutive function (of worker, by machinery) is made clear by the position of the dead worker on the assembly line, as if he had in fact been manufactured by the whirling apparatuses out of which he has traveled.

The fact that an industrialized muralism failed to survive as a hemispheric practice is an important qualification to overstating the influence of Siqueiros's project. The artist's collaborator in Buenos Aires, Antonio Berni, would later note the lack of translatability of muralism for countries without state support for the arts, further criticizing what he perceived as the lapse in Siqueiros's own political commitment.[308]

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[308] Antonio Berni, "Evocación de Antonio Berni: Siqueiros Aquí," *Clarín*, Buenos Aires (January 31, 1974), as cited in Anreus, "Siqueiros' Travels and 'Alternative Muralisms,'" *op. cit.*, 191.

However, much as Duco muralism became an aesthetic complement for the developmentalist Mexican state, so too would artists throughout Latin America turn to industrial lacquers to produce an art aligned to modernization in their respective nations, albeit taking a non-objective guise rather than a monumental realist appearance. Venezuelan artist Alejandro Otero would come to use Duco in the mid-1950s in his geometric abstractions.[309] **(Figure 2.21)** Meanwhile, Brazilian artists Aluísio Carvão, Ivan Serpa, and Lygia Clark incorporated automobile paints and other synthetics using Eucatex and Kemlite—particleboards made in Brazil beginning in the early 1950s.[310] In the U.S., the synthetic paint Magna, an early acrylic, was used by artists such as Jackson Pollock and Morris Louis, both of whom had been participants in the Siqueiros Experimental Workshop before moving towards Abstract Expressionism and color-field painting, respectively. **(Figure 2.22)** Magna would also become the material preferred by Kenneth Noland, Helen Frankenthaler, and later by Frank Stella and Roy Lichtenstein, both of whom further embraced its aura of innovation.[311]

By the end of the 1960s, high-tech art struck many Leftist intellectuals in Latin America as a cultural barometer of dependency.[312] Argentinian art critic Marta Traba and Uruguayan artist Luis Camnitzer would both argue that artists in Latin America who used expensive and high-tech materials produced an art unfitting with the unevenly developed

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309 See Rina Carvajal (editor), *Resonant Space: The Colorhythms of Alejandro Otero* (Milan: 5 Continents Editions, 2014).
310 Aleca Le Blanc, *Tropical Modernisms: Art and Architecture in Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s* (PhD dissertation: University of Southern California, 2011), 258.
311 Marontate, *op. cit.*, 124-131.
312 See in particular Andrea Giunta, *Avant Garde, Internationalism and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

sites of its production.[313] As such, it embodied a symptom of neo-imperialism. Traba and Camnitzer's positions were shaped by the tense interface between the Cuban Revolution (1959), the U.S. Cold War programs of the Alliance for Progress, the sweep of developmentalist dictatorships in Latin America in the 1960s, and the rising profile of dependency theory. Both argued that to produce an authentically, politically engaged art in Latin America required the rejection of technophilia.

This chapter has analyzed the particular transformations of Siqueiros's Duco muralism. With crucial differences, the shift towards technology, rather than politics, as the site of "revolution" paralleled Mário Pedrosa's call for a "revolution of sensibility" in 1950s Brazil.[314] By contrast, in the chapter that follows, Joaquín Torres-García would produce an influential model of art that was simultaneously modernizing and primitivizing, evincing a greater ambivalence concerning the effects of industrialization in the Americas.

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313 See Luis Camnitzer, "Contemporary Colonial Art"(1969) in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (editors), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 224-230; Marta Traba, *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas*, 1950-1970 (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2005). While taking distinct positions concerning the form art should take in Latin America, both Traba and Camnitzer were both writing in response to the embrace of technologies and materials by artists across the Americas in the 1950s and the 1960s (one thinks of Op Art by Soto and Cruz-Diez in Caracas or the media experiments of avant-gardists in Buenos Aires such as David Lamelas and Marta Minujín, who used elements such as neon and television monitors).

314 Mário Pedrosa, "Arte e revolução" (1952) in *Política das artes: Textos escolhidos I*, edited by Otilia Arantes (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1995), 98, as quoted in translation in Pedro Erber, *Breaching the Frame: The Rise of Contemporary Art in Brazil and Japan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 42.

Chapter 3: Constructivist morphologies and the unification of America

While Portinari produced a variety of "export painting" based on the representation of export agriculture and its laborers, Siqueiros modeled an industrialized muralism using imported pigments that might usher in a new art for the continent. By contrast, Joaquín Torres-García sought to "unify the art and culture of America" through what he termed "Constructive Universalism."[315] Adapting the European avant-garde's grids to house "Indo-American" pictograms, Torres-García enacted a form of import-substitution in the cultural sphere.

How may the political and commercial forces of the time—which Torres-García claimed to transcend—be found in the specifics of his aesthetic project? Namely, how did his morphological approach to Constructivism—for instance, drawing parallels between Incan stonework and Mondrian's grids—produce a mode of art that in its very structure for a time embodied the unification of the continent?[316] Beginning as a form of import substitution abstraction, it would come to produce works of art, such as the animal hide painting *Indoamérica* (1941), that metabolized the import/export logic that is the subject of this dissertation.

Whereas Portinari served as a "Good Neighbor emissary" and Siqueiros engaged more ambivalently with the OIAA/MoMA, Torres-García's contemporaneous project

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[315] This quotation comes from the subtitle of Torres-García's published collection of lectures. Joaquín Torres-García, *Universalismo Constructivo: contribución a la unificación del arte y la cultura de América* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poseidón, 1944).
[316] Here I am using the term "America" in all its ambiguity—somewhere between José Martí's *América* (which usually excluded the United States) and a definition inclusive of the "Colossus to the North." As this chapter will argue, the United States became part of Torres-García's "imagined community" for Constructive Universalism in 1941.

emerged largely in isolation from the Good Neighbor Policy's reach. Torres-García claimed that art transcended both politics and commerce. Conversely, politics and commerce had little use for him; the United States had little need or desire for Uruguay's chief exports—its canned meat, its hides, and its wool.[317] Despite his relative isolation from the OIAA/MoMA matrix, Torres-García did encounter it. The chapter will analyze his lecture given in 1941 at the *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana*, the exhibition organized by the OIAA to circulate across Latin America, analyzed extensively in Chapter 4. In 1942, Lincoln Kirstein visited his studio and purchased a single painting during his buying spree that year for the MoMA's Latin American art collection, also analyzed in Chapter 4. The emerging dominance of the United States in world trade and in international relations would inform Constructive Universalism's territorial boundaries, which shifted over the course of the 1930s and early 1940s to include the "colossus of the North."

Constructivist primitivism in Paris

Torres-García was born in Montevideo in 1874 to a Catalan father and Uruguayan mother. The family ran a general store, selling imported goods from Europe that had entered through Montevideo's port.[318] The port, as a symbolic and as a literal entrance point for imported goods, would later become a subject for the artist's lectures and paintings.

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[317] For instance, in 1938, the United States was the market for only 8.3 percent of Uruguay's meat, 2.8 percent of its hides, and 1.7 percent of its wool. See Arthur P. Whitaker, *The United States and the Southern Cone: Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay* (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Press, 1976), 378.
[318] Claude Schaefer, *Joaquín Torres-García* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Poseidón, 1945).

Uruguay had achieved political independence from Spain in 1830 but the country soon entered a relationship of informal empire with Great Britain.[319] Beginning in the 1860s, sheep and cattle farming and meat processing, intended primarily for the European market, became Uruguay's chief industries. In the 1880s, British capital funded the expansions of this industry's machinery and of the country's railway networks. British investments inflated land values, attracted waves of immigrants, and facilitated construction booms. However, this speculation-based dependent capitalism faltered with the Baring Crisis of 1890, saddling Uruguay with suffocating debt.[320]

In the wake of these booms and busts, the Torres-García family emigrated to Spain in 1891 when Joaquín was sixteen years old. The young Torres-García apprenticed himself to Antoni Gaudí, assisting with the architect's *Sagrada Familia* project in Barcelona. Beginning in 1904, he published texts concerning the need to develop a Catalan aesthetic, drawing from Greco-Roman classicism.[321] Torres-García produced a series of paintings and murals of toga-ed figures in frieze-like compositions with an earthy palette, adapting the prototype developed by the French mural painter Puvis de Chavannes in the late nineteenth century. **(Figure 3.1)** Moving to New York in 1920, he designed a series of wooden toys and tried his hand at interior decoration and stage

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[319] The concept of "informal empire" comes from John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *The Economic History Review* 6: 1 (1953), 1-15.
[320] Peter Winn, "British Informal Empire in Uruguay in the Nineteenth Century," *Past and Present* 73: 1 (1976), 100-126. The Baring Crisis was precipitated by the bankruptcy of the Barings Bank in London, which had invested extensively in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay, producing a financial crisis in all countries involved.
[321] Cecilia Buzio de Torres, "The School of the South: The Asociación de Arte Constructivo, 1934-1942," in Mari Carmen Ramírez (editor), *El Taller Torres-García: the School of the South and its Legacy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 9.

design, while producing paintings and collages representing the bustling metropolis.[322] The artist returned to Europe in 1922, ultimately settling in Paris. Sale of his works in 1927 to dealer Georges Bine allowed him to dedicate himself exclusively to painting.[323] In the following years, he developed a synthesis of geometric form and figuration, primitivism and Constructivism.

Before analyzing how Torres-García adapted it, we must briefly establish a genealogy of Constructivism. In 1921, the Working Group of Constructivists, which included Aleksei Gan, Aleksandr Rodchenko, and Varvara Stepanova, produced non-objective works based on a philosophy that the experimental object could embody a revolutionary program.[324] While these objects took material as a starting point, artists across Europe were concomitantly exploring geometric abstraction in painting. As productivism began to supplant it in the Soviet context, Constructivism "began its migration westward."[325] In May 1922, Lissitzky, Theo van Doesburg, and Hans Richter founded the *Internationale Faktion der Konstruktivisten* in Düsseldorf, bringing together *De Stijl* members with groups from Romania, Switzerland, Scandinavia, and Germany. By September of that year, the revolutionary tenor of Constructivism had been tempered,

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[322] See Joaquín Torres-García, *Trazos de New York* (Montevideo: Museo Torres García, 2011); Torres-García, *Aladdin: juguetes transformables* (Montevideo: Museo Torres García, 2005); Deborah Cullen (editor), *Nexus New York: Latin/American Artists in the Modern Metropolis* (New York: El Museo del Barrio in association with Yale University Press, 2009).
[323] Pedro da Cruz, *Torres García and Cercle et Carré: the creation of Constructive Universalism: Paris 1927-1932* (PhD dissertation: Lund University, 1994), 35.
[324] See Maria Gough, "Faktura: The Making of the Russian Avant-Garde," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* no. 36 (Autumn, 1999), 23-59; Gough, *The Artist as Producer: Russian Constructivism in Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
[325] Cristina Lodder, "El Lissitzky and the Export of Constructivism," in Nancy Perloff and Brian Reed (editors), *Situating El Lissitzky: Vitebsk, Berlin, Moscow* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2003), 28.

supplanted by sentiments declaring art "a universal and real expression of creative energy" and a "tool of universal progress." By 1924, Richter lamented:

> Today what goes by this name has nothing to do with elementary formation [...] Arrangers, oil painters, decorators...are all marching under [the banner of] Constructivism...as long as the catchword is fashionable.[326]

By 1925, Lissitzky too became dismissive of Constructivism's increasingly vague mutations.[327] It was perhaps Naum Gabo whose career best epitomized the de-politicization of Constructivism.[328]

In the midst of Constructivism's discursive drift, Torres-García joined its ranks. Between 1928 and early 1929, while living in Paris, the artist began dialogues with van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian, and Michel Seuphor, amongst many others. He began producing gridded compositions from blocks of color, organized according to the Golden Section.[329] **(Figure 3.2)** In other works, these gridded blocks became niches for the representation of objects—a clock, a fish, a man, a wine bottle.[330] **(Figure 3.3)**

Torres-García's introduction to Constructivism coincided with his first incorporations of primitivizing motifs. Take *Hombre con planos de color* of 1929 **(Figure 3.4)**. For this small wooden sculpture, Torres-García sawed out a figure from a

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[326] Ibid., 31.
[327] Ibid., 37.
[328] Naum Gabo, "The Constructive Idea in Art," in Stephen Bann (editor), *The Tradition of Constructivism* (New York: de Capo Press, 1990), 204-214.
[329] Cruz, *op. cit.*, 48-51.
[330] This transformation of the non-objective grid into a type of window frame for the representation of objects was roughly contemporaneous to Magritte's gridded compositions. That the Constructivists' market in Paris was threatened by the new vogue for Surrealism makes this simultaneity all the more intriguing.

larger piece of wood, and decorated it with a Mondrian-esque grid of primary colors. The man has no face, no genitals, no feet, no arms.[331]

Such a figure was not yet geoculturally specific—it was broadly primitivist.[332] Reminiscent of Torres-García's toys of the early 1920s, it also bears more dispersed referents. In these years, Torres-García had experimented with both African and Pre-Columbian formal referents, incorporated into paintings of varied styles, such as *Untitled (Figures)* of 1927, which metabolizes Gauguin, Cézanne, and Rivera. **(Figure 3.5)** That same year, ethnologist Franz Boas had published his book *Primitive Art*, positing a category inclusive of aesthetic traditions spanning the globe.[333] Like Boas, Torres-García drew liberally from a repertoire culled from around the world. The artist's primitivism was thus universalizing, to be rendered more regionally specific in the following decade when he sought to produce a "Constructive tradition" specific to America.

The year before making *Hombre con planos de color*, Torres-García would have seen a number of small wooden statues from the coast of Peru in the exhibition *Arts Anciens de l'Amérique* at the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, on view in May and June of 1928. **(Figure 3.6)** The exhibition drew from the collection of the Trocadéro, from private and museum collections in Europe, and from the Museo Nacional de Arqueología in Mexico City. The exhibited objects included Nazca pottery from Peru, masks and

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[331] The particular sculptural tradition of fusing totemic "primitive" forms with those of streamlined modernism was most iconically explored by Constantin Brancusi. Paul Klee's work offers another point of comparison in its fusion between the geometric and the child-like, the non-objective and the figural.
[332] I use the terms primitivist and primitivism, rather than the uncritical "primitive," to refer to the European avant-garde appropriation of non-European cultural forms from those societies perceived as closer to nature and less corrupted by modern "civilization."
[333] Franz Boas, *Primitive Art* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co.; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).

stone sculpture from Mexico, and totems from Alaska and British Columbia.[334] The museum defined these objects as *American* in the broadest sense and as *art* for their aesthetic rather than purely ethnological value. As scholars have noted, this exhibition inspired Torres-García to incorporate Pre-Columbian and Indo-American motifs and offered a buffet of styles from which to draw.[335]

Through this exhibition, Torres-García befriended Paul Rivet, an Americanist who became the director of the Trocadéro that year. Torres-García's son, Augusto, soon began working at the Trocadéro, cataloguing Nazca ceramics. [336] As is well known, it had been at that museum that Picasso and his colleagues had encountered many of the African objects that had proved highly influential upon their modernism earlier in the century. In effect, Torres-García performed a similar operation with Pre-Columbian and indigenous art of the Americas, but would increasingly connect this project to a culture he claimed as his own upon his return to Montevideo in 1934.

Torres-García was not alone in his desire to mediate the non-objective with a return to the figure. Romy Golan has analyzed the means by which French artists and architects in the interwar period "rusticated" and "humanized" their modernism. In 1927 Le Corbusier initiated an influential "return to man" in his writing, designs, and

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[334] *Les arts anciens de l'Amérique* (Paris: G. van Oest, 1928).
[335] Margit Rowell, *Grid, Pattern, Sign: Paris-Montevideo, 1924-1944* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain), 13.
[336] Barbara Braun, *Pre-Columbian Art and the Post-Columbian World: Ancient American Sources of Modern Art* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1993), 259. In this context, the "Americanist" label referred to Rivet's ethnological and archaeological specializations in Pre-Columbian and indigenous traditions of the Americas. Rivet would go on to write the book *The Last Charrúas*, documenting the extermination of the indigenous population of Uruguay and the display of some of the last remaining individuals in Paris in 1833. One imagines this book in particular would have impacted Torres-García. Paul Rivet, *Les derniers Charrúas* (Montevideo: El siglo ilustrado, 1930).

paintings. Golan argues that these artists and architects represented France as "dialectically poised between past and present, nature and industry," attributing this chastening of machinic modernity to a growing leeriness concerning the emerging power of the United States on the world stage as well as to the stutterings of France's own modernization project.[337] What Golan terms a "crisis of confidence" in the forward thrust of techno-modernity proves useful for an analysis of Torres-García's melding of non-objective form and representational content, between a language tied to modernization and a search for universals connected to spiritual and transhistorical constants.

Torres-García's use of the grid speaks of this amalgamation of modernity and universality. Rosalind Krauss has understood this tension as always already inscribed within the grid itself. Krauss argues that

> although the grid is certainly not a story, it *is* a structure, and one, moreover, that allows a contradiction between the values of science and those of spiritualism to maintain themselves within the consciousness of modernism, or rather its unconscious, as something repressed. [...] I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that behind every twentieth-century grid there lies—like a trauma that must be repressed—a symbolist window parading in the guise of a treatise on optics.[338]

By treating the grid as a niche for objects, Torres-García enacted what Krauss, in her psychoanalytic reading, might term a return of the repressed.

Torres-García's more dogmatic contemporaries sought to manage the hybridity of his Constructivism. Van Doesburg wrote hopefully in 1929 that Torres-García's art

> will eventually lead to constructive painting, to *scientific painting*. In the future, a painting will have its own immutable laws and will be constructed with as much certainty as a bridge, a skyscraper or a boat.[339]

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[337] Romy Golan, *Modernity and Nostalgia: Art and Politics between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 65-95.
[338] Rosalind Krauss, "Grids," *October* vol. 9 (Summer, 1979), 55; 59.
[339] Theo van Doesburg, "Torres-García's Planism," May 13, 1929, as reprinted in translation in Rowell, *op. cit.*, 102.

Jean Hélion, Georges Vantongerloo, and Michel Seuphor all diagnosed Torres-García's hybrid constructivism as the result of either confusion or indecision, the latter characterizing him as "opting finally for a middle term."[340] When van Doesburg approached Torres-García that year about the need to create "a group which organizes things like manifestos, exhibitions, etc,"[341] Torres-García hesitated:

> the rest of you will not be losing much if I stay out of it, since my collaboration is not really along your lines: you know I am incapable of staying totally within a framework of completely abstract and pure art, which is what is necessary within such a group. And what is more my construction is a bit doubtful would you not say.[342]

Yet Torres-García did co-found the group and publication *Cercle et Carré* with Michel Seuphor in 1929. *Cercle et Carré*'s exhibitions and publications included both representational and non-objective art. The disintegrating *De Stijl* movement fed into *Cercle et Carré* with Mondrian and Vantongerloo joining its ranks in addition to Wassily Kandinsky, Fernand Léger, Lászlό Moholy-Nagy, Walter Gropius, Siegfried Giedion, Hannes Meyer, and Le Corbusier. Soon after, van Doesburg organized a rival group in 1931 called *Abstraction-Création,* asserting that modern art would be non-figurative, with no place for a "middle term" artist like Torres-García.[343] This debate would be echoed in the face-offs between Torres-García's group in Montevideo, on the one hand, and the young Buenos Aires artists belonging to the Madí and *Arte Concreto Invención*

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[340] Michel Seuphor, *Le Style et le Cri-Quatorze essais sur l'art de ce siècle* (Paris: Éditions de Seuil, 1965), 111, as cited in Cruz, *op. cit.*, 80.
[341] Theo van Doesburg, Letter to Joaquín Torres-García, November 1929, as reprinted in translation in Rolinka Kattouw (editor), *The Antagonistic Link: Joaquín Torres-García, Theo van Doesburg* (Amsterdam: Institute of Contemporary Art, 1991), 32.
[342] Torres-García, Letter to Theo van Doesburg, December 3, 1929, as reprinted in translation in Ibid., 34.
[343] Cruz, *op. cit.*, 88-89.

groups fifteen years later. These artists would likewise diagnose Torres-García's hybrid modernism as "pseudomoderno."[344]

Montevideo, between Mexico and Paris

If Torres-García's position in Paris was precarious due to his "middle term" modernism, in Uruguay his Parisian credentials endowed him with substantial cultural capital. In April 1934, after more than four decades abroad, Torres-García returned by boat to Montevideo, where he would live until his death in 1949. Upon his arrival, he informed the local press that he planned to "create in Montevideo a movement that will surpass the art of Paris."[345] Extending the branching vectors of Constructivism, Torres-García introduced the term to Uruguay. Far from signaling the implied end of painting (as Yve-Alain Bois argues of Mondrian),[346] Torres-García treated Constructivism as a fertile grammar transplanted to South America.

Juan Ledezma describes Torres-García's project in Montevideo as characterized by "contradictions," foremost the "interest in seeking progress by means of a return to the primitive" as well as by

> its strange combination of avant-garde and reactionary elements [...] Yet such contradictions only add to the project's historical import: They are an early indication of the hurdles lying in the way of any program oriented to making abstraction, purportedly a universal 'language,' the basis for the construction of a local, Latin American identity.[347]

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344 See Tomás Maldonado, "Torres-García contra el arte moderno," *Boletín de la Asociación de Arte Concreto Invención*, no. 2 (December 1946).
345 "Volvió a Montevideo Torres-García: El pintor uruguayo después de 43 años de ausencia," *Hoy* (Montevideo), April 30, 1934, Cecilia de Torres archive.
346 See Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).
347 Juan Ledezma, "The Sites of Abstraction: Notes on and for an Exhibition of Latin American Concrete Art," in *The Sites of Latin American Abstraction* (Miami: CIFO, 2006), 30. While I am an admirer of Ledezma's text, by citing Krauss and Golan on the

That Torres-García had already produced a "hybrid" modernism in Europe, prior to his return to Montevideo in 1934, complicates the geo-positioning of his art. Was this a symptom of his Latin American-ness (with which he did not apparently yet identify) that made him think twice about the dogma of abstraction or was this the product of other factors? I don't plan to answer that question but find raising it to be important for what follows, not least in troubling the posthumous receptions and reclamations of Torres-García's work.

The project of modernism in Uruguay had been developing since the late nineteenth century when the best-known Uruguayan painter, Juan Manuel Blanes, frequently portrayed the *gaucho* as a mascot of Uruguayan nationalism in an academic style.[348] In the nineteen-teens, Pedro Figari had sought to create an arts and crafts movement in Montevideo and in the 1920s produced paintings depicting Afro-Uruguayan populations in a primitivist style.[349] Torres-García had frequently corresponded with Uruguayan artist Rafael Barradas in the 1920s, whose "vibrationism," fusing Futurist and

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ambivalences undergirding modernism's ties to industrial progress *in Europe* I hope to complicate the context of Torres-García's polyglot Constructivism. As scholars of European art have demonstrated, there is a lineage of anti-modernization modernism, most iconically represented by van Gogh and Gauguin. Thierry de Duve goes so far as to write that "modernism in painting [...] is perhaps nothing but the history of the obstinate—and to this day, continued—resistance that painters opposed to the division of labor with which industrialization was threatening them." Thierry de Duve, "The Readymade and the Tube of Paint," in *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1996), 176.

[348] See Fernando O. Assunção, *Juan Manuel Blanes: pintor de la patria* (Montevideo: Instituto Histórico y Geográfico del Uruguay, 2002).

[349] Gabriel Peluffo Linari, *Pedro Figari: Arte e Industria en el Novecientos* (Montevideo: Consejo de Educación Técnico Profesional, Universidad del Trabajo, 2006).

Expressionist elements, proved influential upon Torres-García's New York paintings.[350] **(Figures 3.7 and 3.8)**

But Uruguay possessed no private art market and few venues in which artists could exhibit. Whereas in Paris Constructivism had contended with Surrealism as its rhetorical antagonist, in Montevideo it entered a field dominated on the one hand by academic Impressionism and on another by social realism heavily influenced by the Mexican mural movement. At the time of his 1934 return, Torres-García was greeted with suspicion by Communist artists, many of whom had banded around Siqueiros during the Mexican artist's time in Montevideo the previous year, discussed in Chapter 2. In May of 1933, Siqueiros had organized the *Confederación de Trabajadores Intelectuales del Uruguay* (CTIU), which cohered until 1936. This group included Norberto Berdía, who in the Leftist periodical *Movimiento* accused Torres-García of promoting and producing a "purist art belonging to capitalist decadence."[351]

Since the early 1920s, friends living in and visiting Mexico had kept Torres-García abreast of the unfolding Mexican mural movement.[352] Notably, he had considered moving to Mexico City from Paris but ultimately decided upon Montevideo.[353] His response to Berdía's critique reveals his knowledge of the muralists: "If in my exhibition

[350] Pilar García-Sedas, *J. Torres-García y Rafael Barradas, un diálogo escrito: 1918-1929* (Barcelona: Parfisal Ediciones, 2010).
[351] Norberto Berdía, "El Arte de Torres-García," *Movimiento* [Montevideo] (June-July 1934), as quoted in translation in Buzio de Torres, *op. cit.*, 10.
[352] See Rafael Sala, Letter to Torres-García, November 4, 1923, C-23-6; Sala, Letter to Torres-García, January 22, 1924, C-24-1; Germán Cueto, Letter to Torres-García, May 27, 1932, C-32-37, Museo Torres García archive. Torres-García had befriended Siqueiros in Europe fifteen years earlier, contributing to the single issue of the latter's *Vida Americana* publication in 1921.
[353] Torres-García, *Historia de mi vida* (Montevideo: Asociación de Arte Constructivo, 1939), 300.

I had made a portrait of Lenin then all would have been in order." Here, Torres-García nodded more generally to the Communist allegiance of critics such as Berdía, and more specifically to Diego Rivera's scandalous censored mural for Rockefeller Center the previous year.[354] He proceeded to compare himself to Siqueiros—"like my old friend Siqueiros, I too have thought about symphonic art." He informs the reader that he had likewise produced murals "and before Siqueiros and Diego Ribera[sic]."[355] While Berdía had accused him of being "impotent" when confronted with reality, causing him to "seek refuge in abstract forms," Torres-García retorted that the Mexican muralists continued to use anachronistic styles, while he produced "constructive art for an era that is also constructive."[356] As such, Torres-García produced a binary between Constructivism (modern) and Realism (antiquated), in the process caricaturing his own more complex, ambivalent relationship to industrialization and its aesthetics.

In essence, Torres-García and Berdía were staging a Hegel-Marx debate, the Constructivist arguing for the primacy of Idea and the realist arguing for the primacy of material life. Torres-García's position was consistent with van Doesburg's Hegelianism,

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[354] Rivera was a Trotskyist who had been expelled from the Communist Party.
[355] Here, Torres-García was referring to the murals he had produced at the Generalitat in Barcelona in the 1910s.
[356] Torres-García, "Contestando a N.B. de la C.T.I.U," August 10, 1934, N-34-16, Museo Torres García archive. It appears that this was an unpublished lecture. "Si en mi exposición hubiese habido un retrato de Lenin ya todo se arreglaba—pero no ha sido así. [...] como mi antiguo amigo Siqueiros, yo también he pensado en ese arte sinfónico [...] Dice también N.B. que sintiéndome impotente para enfocar el problema frente a la realidad busco refugio en las formas abstractas. [...] ya, si bien dentro de otra modalidad, he tratado, en grandes superifices murales este tema. Y antes que Siqueiros y Diego Ribera[sic] [...] Es decir, arte de propaganda si, pero no el arte constructivo que corresponderia a una época también constructiva."

trans-Atlantically transposed.[357] The standoff between Torres-García and Berdía crystallized what would be historicized more vaguely as a debate between Torres-García and Siqueiros, who in fact had little contact in the 1930s and 1940s. Nevertheless, this dissertation likewise understands them and their art as two conflicting models that proved tremendously influential throughout the continent.

The inverted map and the "School of the South," 1935

Despite his desire to differentiate himself from the Mexican muralists, upon his return to Montevideo Torres-García sought funding "similar to the Mexican government's support for the mural movement in its initial phase" from the Terra administration in Uruguay.[358] In August 1934, Torres-García sent a letter to Uruguay's Minister of Public Instruction, José A. Otamendi, proposing the creation of an Institute of the Morphology of the Plastic Arts [*Instituto de Morfología de las Artes Plásticas*]. From there, the artist imagined delivering a number of lectures, addressing the great absence of "comprehension of the plastic arts and the study of Art History" in the region. According

[357] For analysis of van Doesburg's Hegelianism, see Annette Michelson, "De Stijl, Its Other Face: Abstraction and Cacophony, or What Was the Matter with Hegel?," *October* vol. 22 (Autumn, 1982), 3-26. As Christopher Green writes of van Doesburg and Mondrian: "[...] van Doesburg saw history in the largest human terms as the repeated surfacing of a single central theme from the chaos of events, and in art as in life that theme was the evolution towards a final synthesis of the spiritual and material sides of man: mind and matter. [...] Like Mondrian, van Doesburg identified a single, essential need for 'harmony' as the drive behind all art: harmony to be contemplated in formal 'relationships.'" Christopher Green, *Cubism and its Enemies: Modern Movements and Reaction in French Art, 1916-1928* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1987), 224.

[358] Jacqueline Barnitz, "An Arts and Crafts Movement in Uruguay: El Taller Torres-García" in Ramírez, *op. cit.*, 139.

to this proposal, the institute would in turn lead to the formation of a Morphological Museum [*Museo Morfologico*] in Montevideo.[359]

While this institute and museum were never formed, they are important to mention for a few reasons. Firstly, this proposal evinces Torres-García's desire for state support from Terra's government. Secondly, if given the resources, Torres-García would have founded a museum. Thirdly, it confirms that Torres-García did not identify Constructivism purely with a modernizing drive but saw geometry as existing both in and out of modernity. Morphology, from Goethe to Aby Warburg, provided an alternative to a teleological model of art's stylistic progression, instead stressing continuity and resemblance. For Torres-García, a morphological perspective illuminated the recurrence of "structure" across space and time.[360]

Torres-García pursued funding from the Terra dictatorship (and would receive some), convinced that art transcended the material realities of both politics and commerce. Although Terra's government had suspended Congress and imprisoned dissenting intellectuals since 1933, Torres-García generally remained mum on the subject.[361] However, one 1935 lecture did analyze conditions in Uruguay more specifically:

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[359] Torres-García, Letter to José A. Otamendi, Ministro de Instrucción Publica, August 2, 1934, C-34-17, Museo Torres García archive. "Existe en nuestra cultura general un gran vacío en lo que respecta a la comprehensión de las artes plásticas y al estudio de la Historia del Arte."
[360] Torres-García, *Estructura* (Montevideo: Biblioteca Alfar, 1935).
[361] There is remarkably little scholarship about the Terra dictatorship in either Spanish or English. The best English language source appears to remain Philip B. Taylor, "The Uruguayan Coup d'état of 1933," *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 32, no. 3 (Aug., 1952), 301-320. The Terra regime did not make substantial changes to the industrial program of the country.

> This is a country that, due to its social machinery, makes living impossible [...] In this sense independence is not possible. For these reasons, firstly, this is not a free country, and secondly, all other valorization, that is not of the political order, is null. [...] All activity has to conform to this, keyed to political interest. The most absolute realism dominates. And this mentality drives one to be interested in things of the same order. [...] The worst is that one can't do anything with the hope to subvert the order of things [...] If one values a work of art for the social position of the artist, the positive value of art doesn't count. If the state, on the other hand, doesn't recognize this value, that which it [the state] doesn't possess, nothing can be tried. [...] Life outside this organization isn't possible [...] in relation to public employment—one can deduce that an artist who bases his hope in the intrinsic value of his works is condemned to perish.[362]

Here, Torres-García's critique of the social realists who had gathered around Siqueiros at the C.T.I.U. converges with an implicit critique of the Terra dictatorship—he sees them both as products of a restrictive worldview intolerant of the aesthetic. In the process, Torres-García collapses and conflates both ends of the political spectrum. Indeed, in opposing the aesthetic to the political he foreclosed the avant-garde's most transformative proposals.

Since returning, Torres-García had been lecturing and gathering artists at the *Escuela Taller de Artes Plásticas* (ETAP). He separated from the ETAP in August of 1934, four months after his arrival in Montevideo, and founded the *Asociación de Arte*

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[362] Torres-García, "El mundo y el hombre," October 15, 1935, N-35-25, Museo Torres García archive. "Este es un país, que por su engranaje social, no permite vivir [...] Por estas razones, tenemos, en primer lugar, que este no es un país libre, y en segundo que toda otra valorización, que no sea de órden politico, es nula. Por esto, la actividad de todos, tiene que convergir en el sentido de actuar de acuerdo con eso, y de ahí que el interés politico, prime sobre todos los demás. [...] Domina por esto el realismo más absoluto. Y esta mentalidad conduce a interesarse por cosas del mismo orden. [...] Lo peor es que nada puede hacerse, debido al engranaje social antes aludido, con proposito de subvertir el orden de las cosas. [...] Si se valoriza una obra de arte, por la posición social del artista, el valor positivo del arte, ya no cuenta. Si el estado, por otra parte, no reconoce más que aquel valor, el que no lo posea, nada puede pretender. [...] no es possible la vida fuera de esa organización—es decir, con relación al empleo público—de ahí tiene que deducirse, que un artista que funde su esperanza en el valor intrinsico de sus obras, está condenado a no poder subsistir." These lecture notes were found in the archive but the intended context and public for this lecture is unknown.

Constructivo (AAC) in May of 1935. In the interim, he had written a series of articles for the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación* in November 1934 including one about Piet Mondrian and one about Amedée Ozenfant.[363] His lectures, both at the AAC and in other institutions, were frequently accompanied by slide lantern projections, primarily images cut out from magazines he had brought, or had sent to him, from Paris. He began editing the journal *Círculo y Cuadrado*, a Spanish-language adaptation of *Cercle et Carré* with translated texts by Parisian luminaries and, increasingly, original texts by Uruguayan artists and writers.[364]

In 1935, Torres-García produced the first version of what has become his most iconic image—the hand-drawn, inverted map of South America. **(Figure 3.9)** As Sebastián López has noted, the inverted map "does not include Mexico, as though he wanted to distance himself from the mural painters of that land with whom he was in disagreement."[365] Torres-García inverts and subverts the conventional map of the Western Hemisphere, highlighting Montevideo exclusively. Notably, at this point, in 1935, Torres-García spoke and wrote about both the "art of America" and that of "South America" as the interchangeable imagined communities for the AAC's new mandate.

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[363] Cristina Rossi, "Joaquín Torres García y su Taller en las galerías porteñas de los 40," in Ma. José Herrera et al, *Exposiciones de Arte Argentino y Latinoamericano: El rol de los museos y otras instituciones culturales en la exhibición y legitimación del arte* (Buenos Aires: Artexarte, 2013), 263.
[364] Buzio de Torres, *op. cit.*, 11.
[365] Sebastián López, "The Founding of the South, Circulo y Cuadrado 1936-1943," in Kattouw, *op. cit.*, 136.

Torres-García produced the first version of this map to illustrate his lecture entitled "The School of the South," delivered in 1935.[366] In the original lecture notes, the text began:

> The School of the South—because it is our North. We put the map upside-down—and—thus—we have the correct idea of our hemisphere.

The artist proceeded to focus upon the local:

> In certain places in Montevideo, one wonders if one is really here: there are so many imported things around. People will say: hasn't modern life brought them here? I say: not at all; it is commerce and industry from other countries that have already invaded this country.

Torres-García characterized "the artist of today" as one "who prefers to go to our port (and not for its picturesque qualities), salutes the great transatlantic liner, observes the cranes, the piles of merchandise, and the man who is working there."[367]

Torres-García's Constructivist proposal for Uruguayan art urges the reader not to

> exchange what belongs to us for the foreign (which is unpardonable snobbery) but, on the contrary, convert the foreign into our own substance. Because I believe that the epoch of colonialism and importation is over (I am now referring to culture more than anything else), and so, away! With anyone who uses any other language than ours, for literature (and I don't mean the criollo language), whether he is writing, painting, or composing music. If he didn't learn a lesson from Europe at the right time, so much the worse for him, for that moment has passed. But if he believes that the other, folkloric, way is better, he is deceiving himself; it is worse, unbearably worse. Besides, that too is out of date.[368]

In several respects, this 1935 lecture recalls Siqueiros's two lectures of 1933, delivered in Mexico City and Buenos Aires respectively. In Mexico City, Siqueiros had critiqued the

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[366] While Torres-García's group is often referred to as the "School of the South," this was never an official name. Rather, the groups were the *Associación de Arte Constructivo* (1934-1942) and the *Taller Torres-García* (1943-1962), the latter continuing long after Torres-García's death in 1949.

[367] Torres-García, "School of the South," reprinted in translation in Ramírez, *op. cit.*, 55-57.

[368] Ibid.

ersatz nature of "folk art for export" keyed to tourist tastes.[369] In Buenos Aires, like Montevideo conditioned much more by a tradition of cultural importation from Europe, Siqueiros had lambasted the production of art as if it were "preserved foodstuffs."[370] While promoting a very different aesthetic project (and detached from the proletarian ethos of Siqueiros's activities across the hemisphere in 1933), Torres-García nevertheless diagnosed similar infirmities in the art produced across the continent, using the same metaphors of import/export. While it is ironic that the artist made these critiques while relying on the cultural capital of his own participation in the European art world, he saw himself as the expert to "convert the foreign into our own substance."

In his "School of the South" lecture, Torres-García proceeded to emphasize that this process would be characterized by construction: "we want to construct with *art* (which means with knowledge), and with our own *materials*. For we are now adults." The claim that Montevideo had surmounted a culture of importation and matured beyond childhood participated in a more general anxiety in Latin America concerning the social, cultural, economic, and political costs of centuries of imperialism and the more recent century of economic dependency, primarily upon British capital. Torres-García's project proposed an import substitution industrialization for artists. While this process recalls the digestive metaphor of *antropofagia* developed by Oswald de Andrade in Brazil in the previous decade, Torres-García's emphasis upon "construction" and "our own materials" makes the metaphor one of industrial *production* rather than one of cannibalist

369 David Alfaro Siqueiros, "New Thoughts on the Plastic Arts in Mexico," lecture, Mexico City, February 10, 1933, in *Art and Revolution* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 31.
370 Siqueiros, "El XXIII Salón como expresión social. Exhibe lamentable pasividad," *Crítica*, September 21, 1933, Folder 9.1.22, Siqueiros archive.

consumption. However, Torres-García's emphasis upon the consonance between his own Constructive art and "an era that is also constructive" was not to say he would use Duco applied by spraygun in collective teams, as Siqueiros was in the process of doing. Rather, Torres-García's art, as with the majority of artistic production, was closer to artisanal work. The industrial tenor of the AAC would undergo revision in the second half of the 1930s with Torres-García retreating from the modernizing rhetoric that characterized these early Montevideo lectures, largely through the rise of an "Indo-American" strain of Constructivism.

The rise of the "Indo-American"

In the first decades of the twentieth century, artists and writers in Europe engaged in various forms of primitivism as well as what James Clifford has termed "ethnographic surrealism."[371] In Latin America, meanwhile, beginning in the 1920s, artists frequently turned to both anthropology and archaeology in producing a national culture that integrated to varying degrees both the Pre-Columbian past and living indigenous populations. In Mexico, Adolfo Best Maugard developed a visual lexicon of forms derived from Pre-Columbian artifacts while Diego Rivera produced murals drawing from contemporaneous studies by state-sponsored anthropologist and archaeologist Manuel Gamio.[372] In Brazil, Gilberto Freyre (who, like Gamio, had studied with Franz Boas at

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[371] See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).
[372] Adolfo Best Mauguard, *Método de dibujo* (México: Departamento editorial de la Secretaría de educación, 1923); Renato González Mello, "Manuel Gamio, Diego Rivera, and the politics of Mexican anthropology," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics* vol. 45 (Spring 2004), 161-185.

Columbia University) would write on the history of race relations, in turn influencing Cândido Portinari's representation of Afro-Brazilians, discussed in Chapter 1.[373]

Uruguay lacked a figure such as Gamio or Freyre, let alone an administrator like Mexico's José Vasconcelos or Brazil's Gustavo Capanema to organize the nation's artists to execute a vision of national culture.[374] Indeed, the country lacked the state support that had cultivated the strong nationalist bent of artistic production and scholarship in Mexico and Brazil. Further, Uruguay lacked an indigenous population to be treated as an ethnographic object of study, having exterminated the Charrúas by the 1830s. Rather than drawing upon a local Other, Torres-García looked further afield to the former territory of the Incan empire, in turn modeling an art that was *American* rather than nationally framed. We might see Torres-García as loosely attempting to fulfill the functions of archaeologist, anthropologist, and artist, in the absence of both a local indigenous population and substantial state support.[375] As such, his project may be positioned somewhere between official *indigenismo* and the primitivism popular in Europe. In fact, Torres-García's work permits us to see these cultural projects on a continuum.

[373] See Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves* (New York: Knopf, 1956) and Freyre, *The Mansions and the Shanties* (New York: Knopf, 1963). These were initially published in Brazil in 1933 and 1936, respectively.
[374] For an extended comparison of Torres-García and José Vasconcelos, see Valentín Ferdinán, "Mimesis/Abstraction: Modernity in Latin America between the World Wars," in César Paternosto (editor), *Abstraction: The Amerindian Paradigm* (Valencia: Institut Valencia d'art Modern, 2001), 233-245.
[375] As mentioned, Torres-García did receive some modest state support but it was a far cry from the public commissions received by artists such as Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in Mexico and Portinari in Brazil.

As early as July 1934, Torres-García had written about "the concept of structure as a sign of the future art of America."[376] More specifically, Torres-García's morphological approach to "structure" located a middle term between Mondrian's grids and Incan stonework. In 1936, he and AAC artist Amalia Nieto produced miniature prototypes for *mojones*, abstract tectonic structures they proposed as public art for Montevideo. **(Figure 3.10)** Notably, amongst other translations, *mojón* signifies a *boundary stone* for marking territory. Understood as a *boundary stone*, we may interpret this unrealized public art proposal in various ways. Were the artists claiming Montevideo as the territory of a tectonic Constructivism? As such, did the *mojones* represent a civilizing mission in a city resistant to abstract art? Another interpretation does not contradict the first—that in marking Montevideo with a structure derived from Incan stonework, Torres-García and Nieto were claiming the city as a *South American* territory rather than as a national and/or Europhilic space.

As Carolyn Dean has analyzed, in the ancient Andes, "stones were often perceived *as* inhabitants of settlements; in fact, they were believed to be the original owners of certain territories [...]."[377] As such, the proposed *mojones* public art project bears a very different relationship to the ideas of land analyzed elsewhere in this dissertation. Whereas artists such as Portinari saw land as the productive, if scorched, ground for agricultural production and Rockefeller saw it as the means by which to

[376] Torres-García, "Cambio de plano...," July, 1934, N-34-24, Museo Torres García archive. "Tal podría ser, por ejemplo, el concepto de estructura, como signo del futuro arte de América."
[377] Carolyn Dean, *A Culture of Stone: Inka Perspectives on Rock* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2010), 8. Italics in original. Dean asserts that Incan stonework was not substantially appreciated for its aesthetic appeal until the mid-twentieth century; she does not mention Torres-García, whose interest constitutes an exception.

extend the "continental frontier" of wealth—from rubber to petroleum, Torres-García sought a Pre-Columbian conception of land as what the Inca termed a *waka*—"a sacred thing, landscape feature, or shrine [...] part of the earth and part of human society."[378] It was a raw material left semi-raw.

If state-sponsored muralism in Mexico emphasized didactic realism, Torres-García's and Nieto's proposed public art was abstract. What we might term abstraction was central to Incan culture—from stonework to the recording system of the *quipu* (or *khipu*) knot system whose various functions include but are not necessarily limited to census recorder, mnemonic for storytelling, and aesthetic object in its own right.[379] The influence of Incan stone work also entered Torres-García's paintings, with an apparently non-objective work such as *Construction in White and Black* (1938) fusing influences from both Pre-Columbian America and modernist Europe. **(Figure 3.11)** While in the postwar period Torres-García would be credited for introducing geometric abstraction to Latin America, his incorporation of Incan aesthetics existed outside of this framework of transatlantic "importation," instead demonstrating a longer history of an autochthonous tradition of geometric abstraction in the Americas, independent of the European avant-garde.

In 1938, Torres-García produced a singular tectonic public sculpture entitled *Monumento Cósmico*, rendering pictograms into a gridded structure of local granite, sited

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[378] Ibid., 2; 14. It is not clear how knowledgeable Torres-García would have been of such Incan beliefs and traditions.
[379] See Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton, *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); Gary Urton, *Signs of the Inka Khipu: Binary Coding in the Andean Knotted-String Records* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Elizabeth Hill Boone and Gary Urton (editors), *Their Way of Writing: Scripts, Signs, and Pictographies in Pre-Columbian America* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2011).

in Montevideo's Parque Rodó. **(Figure 3.12)** José Enrique Rodó, the writer for whom the park was named, had in 1900 produced a model for Latin American culture positing the aesthete Ariel as the rightful heir of the Americas, as opposed to the technocratic brute Caliban, a surrogate for the United States.[380] Given its site in Parque Rodó, this monument may be analyzed as an interpretation of *Arielismo* in the form of a work of art. As other scholars have noted, *Monumento Cósmico* resembled the *Gate of the Sun*, a stone arch produced by the residents of Tiwanaku in the year 700 in what is now Bolivia. A replica of the *Gate of the Sun* had been on permanent display at the Trocadéro in Paris.[381]

Torres-García chose the term "Indo-American" to describe the cultural influences from which he drew in the 1930s, a term that could liberally encompass elements from the Pre-Columbian past as well as from more recent indigenous traditions. However, he critiqued the *indigenismo* he perceived in the Mexican muralists' images, as well as in artists working in a related mode such as José Sabogal in Peru and Camilo Egas in Ecuador. While Incan stonework had entered the lexicon of the AAC, Torres-García's 1939 book *Metafísica de la Prehistoria Indoamericana* clarified that it was a question of adaptation rather than of imitation:

> I do not need to say that our art must not even take a single line, a single motif from the Inca art, or any other from South America. From a given rule, we must create with our own materials and according to our own inspiration. We must not repeat what many artists of the Continent are doing, namely to copy this art.[382]

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380 José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel* (Montevideo: Impresora de Dornaleche y Reyes, 1900).
381 Rowell, *op. cit.*, 17. The replica had been on view since the Universal Exposition of 1878; see Braun, *op. cit.*, 259.
382 Torres-García, *Metafísica de la prehistoria indoamericana* (Montevideo: Asociación de Arte Constructivo, 1939), 16.

While Torres-García sought to valorize the "Indo-American" for its aesthetic traditions, his ventriloquism of the "Indo-American" was subject to the same ethical questions raised by the appropriation of these aesthetics by his European and U.S. contemporaries.

In 1938, the AAC added the subtitle "The Constructive Tradition of America" to its name. That same year, *Círculo y Cuadrado* published texts by archaeologists and included an image of a Pre-Columbian statue from Bolivia on its cover. **(Figure 3.13)** As Torres-García wrote in one undated text:

> It will be an Association for studying the idea of construction and by extension for the study of Indo-American culture. Under these two aspects, our activity will remain interesting. Because, in effect, more and more, a sensual and instinctive art won't suffice and—a little everywhere—one sees manifested signals of wanting to reinforce this sphere and arrive at something more universal and consistent. At the same time, there is a desire to possess one's own art and—above all—the unification of that art can also be felt in South America. [...] America has to wake up from its lethargy. [...] It could be the importance of the work that we will do based in this double aspect: the construction and the reconstruction that will be one and the same. This at least is my criterion. And this double aspect of these studies—could explain why this Association keeps its name, while adding the subtitle Constructive Tradition of America. Since both will need to be studied together. [...] In each moment, the constructive rule and the historical realities [...] synchronically will have to adjust themselves—with that which characterizes both. A greater clarity will depend upon the incessant confrontation of the abstract and the real—of the universal and the particular of an epoch [...] It must be difficult, for the man of today, to form a concept of the world of this primitive [...] if we want to forget the learned—to go to our own creation, which is to say, to labor for the future culture of America.[383]

[383] Torres-García, "Al salir el hombre del cuaternario," July 17, no year recorded, N-s/d-86, Museo Torres-García archive. "Será—pues—ésta—una Asociación para estudiar entorno a la idea de construcción y por extensión de estudios de cultura indo-americana. Bajo estos dos aspectos—aún será interesante nuestra actividad. Porque—en efecto—de más en más—que no satisfice un arte sensual y instintivo y—un poco por todas partes—se ven señales manifiestas de querer reenforzar esa esfera y llegar a algo más universal y consistente. Por otro lado—también se deja sentir en Sudamérica—deseas de poseer un arte propio y—sobre todo—de unificación de ese arte. [...] América ha de despertar de un letargo en que estuviera y [...]por ese doble aspecto: el constructivo y el de reconstrucción que—si bien se mira tendrán que es uno en lo mismo. Tal es al menos mi criterio. Y este doble aspecto de tales estudios—puede explicar el porque de que la Asociación conserve su nombre, y él de reañadar el subtítulo de Tradición Constructiva

Students at the AAC integrated Pre-Columbian referents into their paintings and sculptures, from the playful anthropomorphism of Nazca ceramics apparent in the installation view of a 1938 AAC exhibition **(Figure 3.14)** to the figure of Rosa Acle's *Norte* (1938) in which a grid becomes anthropomorphic. **(Figure 3.15)** Placing the word *Sur* at the top and *Norte* at the bottom, Acle's image echoes Torres-García's inverted map. Indeed, the contours of the inverted continent are subliminally visible in the composition. But in Acle's painting the map transforms into a benevolent deity in a palette of browns, oranges, and blues. For other AAC artists, Indo-American influences entered in a more primitivist mode. **(Figure 3.16)** In 1942, AAC members would embark upon a research trip to Peru and Bolivia, visiting Machu Picchu, Lake Titicaca, Sacsayhuamán, Cusco, and the Urubamba Valley.[384] Torres-García himself would sometimes depart from the tectonic regularity of the *mojones* and *Monumento Cósmico*, as in a series of primitivist wooden totems made between 1942 and 1944. **(Figure 3.17)**

The growing prominence of Indo-American motifs and structures in the art of Torres-García and his students developed in tandem with an expanding web of communication tying together artists and intellectuals from across Latin America between 1935 and 1945. The Torres-García museum's archive provides this crucial

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de América. Pues ambas tendrán que estudiarse conjuntamente. A travès—pues—de esa [...] selva de la prehistoria Americana [...] A cada momento—pues—la regla constructiva y las realidades históricas [...] sincrónicamente tendrán que ajustarse—con lo que ganarán ambas cosas. Una mayor claridad se dependerá de la incesante confrontación de lo abstracto y lo real—de lo universal y lo particular de una época que quiso realizarse en lo primero. [...] Pues, aún con la mejor voluntad tiene que ser dificil—al hombre de hoy—formarse concepto del mundo de aquel primitivo[...] si queremos—olvidando lo aprendido—ir a la creación propia, es decir—laborar para la futura cultura de América [...]"

[384] Buzio de Torres, "The School of the South: El Taller Torres-García, 1943-1962," in Ramírez, *op. cit.*, 122.

context for thinking through the continental nature of the artist's proposals. A letter from Chilean professor Eduardo Lira Espejo in May of 1935 expresses his interest in cultivating an exchange with Torres-García and his students so as to "cement the spirit of our time."[385] In August of that year, Lira Espejo writes again, congratulating Torres-García on the "movement that is developing there [...] in a spirit that is frankly new and American." Lira Espejo writes that he has announced the publication of Torres-García's book *Estructura* (1935) both on the radio and in various magazines.[386] He proceeds to ask Torres-García if he would write something for the catalogue of an exhibition of Chilean painters, perhaps "related to America confronting New Art or, better said, the attitude of American artists in relation to the new spirit of art."[387] Seeking solidarity with Torres-García, Lira Espejo writes:

> We want to foment a movement of the new spirit through all the forces of these American lands. I will write you at length to tell you many things about this and about the work that we can do to create a collectivity with you and your students.[388]

As Torres-García wrote in one letter to "friends in Chile:" "We have here in Montevideo the problem of our art, which is the art of all South America."[389] In one

[385] Eduardo Lira Espejo, Letter to Torres-García, May 23, 1935, C-35-3, Museo Torres García archive. "cementar el espíritu de nuestro tiempo."
[386] Eduardo Lira Espejo, Letter to Torres-García, August 1, 1935, C-35-16, Museo Torres García archive. "Mucho alegría nos ha producido su carta y una profunda admiración por el intenso movimiento que allí se desarrolla. [...] con un espíritu francamente nuevo y americano."
[387] Ibid. "Quizás se me occure, que usted podría sacar partido a algún tema relacionado con América frente al Arte Nuevo, o mejor dicho la actidud de los artistas Americanos en relación con el nuevo espíritu del arte."
[388] Ibid. "queremos fomenter un movimiento del nuevo espíritu a través de todas las fuerzas de estas tierras de América. Le escriberé muy largo para decirle muchas cosas acerca de esto y del trabajo que podamos efectuar en colectividad con ustedes."
[389] Torres-García, "Para los amigos de Chile," August 4, 1935, N-35-1, Museo Torres García archive. "Nos tuvimos aquí en Montevideo, el problema de nuestro arte, que es él de todo Sudamérica."

lecture, he speaks about images by artists in Buenos Aires, Chile, and Mexico—"all a reflection of Europe [...] it doesn't have its own impulse. And I don't know a South American artist who has it." While North America had developed a distinct culture based in "industrial and commercial organization, we must awake to a distinct culture—one of the spirit."[390]

By 1938, the territory for Torres-García's project had expanded. In April of that year, the artist received a letter from "C. Cardenio" requesting an exhibition of works from the AAC for Mexico City and a text by Torres-García for the Mexico City-based Popular Front publication *Frente a Frente*. Torres-García replied:

> Not being able to send regularly sized works due to the cost of transport, we will need to content ourselves with sending small works [...] For the moment we are sending you some issues of our magazine. [...] I hope our exchange [intercambio] will be active. In our magazine you can see our position and if it accords with yours, maybe we will be able to produce a collective action with respect to our America.

In return, he requested that Cardenio mail him material about Mexican art activities.[391]

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[390] Torres-García, "Cual debe ser nuestra posición definitiva en el arte," 1935, N-35-14, Museo Torres-García archive. "He visto estos días una revista que publican los estudiantes de arte de Buenos Artes. La impresión que dá es buena. [...] Falta absoluta su orientación. [...] Que todo esto es reflejo de Europa, que no hay que decirlo. No tiene pues un impulso propio. Y no sé de artista sudamericano que lo tenga. [...] Si la América del Norte—que es nación que con esa conciencia de si misma—despertá a la organización industrial y comercial y hizo su siglo—y hasta impuso mucho al mundo—nosotros tendremos que despertar a otras cosas—a otra cultura bien distinta—a la del espíritu [...]"

[391] Torres-García, Letter to C. Cardenio, Sección de Artes Plásticas de la L.R.A.R.[sic], Mexico, DF, April 1, 1938, C-38-8, Museo Torres García archive. "No pudiendo mandarles obras de regular tamaño, por los costos del transporte, tendremos que contentarnos con mandarles obras chicas [...] Por el momento les enviaremos algunos números de nuestra Revista [...] Y sirva ésta solo para tomar contacto, ya que espero que nuestro intercambio, será activo. Por nuestra Revista verán en que posición estamos, y si ésta no discrepa de la de ustedes, quizás podremos entendernos para una acción conjunta con respecto a nuestra América."

Also in 1938, Torres-García communicated with the Colombian Minister of Education with whom he exchanged publications—the Colombian *Revista de los Indios* in exchange for books published by the AAC.[392] That same year, Torres-García had hoped to attend the Inter-American Congress of Indianists in La Paz, Bolivia, initiated by Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas, which would be dedicated to land reform and asserting the juridical status of indigenous groups.[393] Two years later, a letter from Eduardo Víctor Haedo in Paraguay solicited Torres-García's involvement in a museum he was developing there dedicated to "cultivating the spirit of the child."[394] Spanish exile Juan Larrea, editor of the Mexico-based publication *Cuadernos Americanos*, wrote to Torres-García in 1945 after buying a copy of *Constructive Universalism* (1944), which he identified as "a book for meditating for those on this continent who feel the vocation for art." He asked if Torres-García would contribute a text to *Cuadernos Americanos*.[395] Torres-García responded, noting the tremendous overlap between his own and Larrea's thinking, imagining "what if Mexico and Uruguay could be the two poles of this marvelous realization!"[396]

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[392] Torres-García, Letter to Ministerio de Educación Nacional, República de Colombia, October 18, 1938, C-38-28, Torres García archive.
[393] Ultimately, the Congress was held in Patzcuaro, Mexico in 1940. Laura Gotkowitz, *A Revolution for Our Rights: Indigenous Struggles for Land and Justice in Bolivia, 1880-1952* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 160.
[394] Eduardo Victor Haedo, Letter to Torres-García, June 17, 1940, C-40-13, Museo Torres-García archive. "un pequeño museo, con una alta finalidad pedagógica, como es la de cultivar el espíritu del niño, en el logro de una mayor educación merced a la contemplación de obras de arte."
[395] Juan Larrea, Letter to Torres-García, July 13, 1945, C-45-2, Museo Torres-García archive. "Su *Universalismo Constructivo* [...] debía ser libro de meditación para cuantos en este continente sientan la vocación del arte."
[396] Torres-García, Letter to Juan Larrea, *Cuadernos Americanos*, Mexico City, August 10, 1945, C-45-14, Museo Torres-García archive. "esa deliz coincidencia entre el

Contemporaneous to the Good Neighbor Policy, Torres-García participated in a network whose motivations appeared purely cultural, nevertheless paralleling the cultural exchanges entangled in political and commercial strategy sponsored by the OIAA/MoMA matrix, analyzed further in Chapter 4. It is tempting to imagine what might have developed with financial resources comparable to those at the disposal of the OIAA and the MoMA. As Torres-García had noted to Cardenio, shipping "regular-sized" artworks was financially prohibitive. Alternatively, what if Torres-García had been as mobile as Siqueiros, who traversed the hemisphere spreading his aesthetico-political doctrine between 1932 and 1943 (explored in Chapter 2)? Torres-García would make only scattered trips to Argentina, and otherwise remained in Montevideo. Paper was less expensive to mobilize than canvases, stone monuments, or human bodies and it would be the primary medium for the transnational diffusion of Torres-García's Constructive Universalism in the 1930s and 1940s.

***Indoamérica* (1941) and the OIAA/MoMA matrix**

The status of the United States in Torres-García's development of a broadly "American art" was ambiguous and complex. If in 1935 the inverted map excluded all territory north of the Equator, by 1941 the United States was on the artist's radar. In Torres-García's childhood it had been British capital that had spurred Uruguay's modernizing efforts, harnessing the country to the fickle booms and busts of the global economy. Great Britain maintained its commercial sovereignty as chief importer of Uruguayan meat and wool and chief exporter of manufactured goods to that nation.

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pensamiento suyo y el mio. Si México y el Uruguay pudieran ser los dos polos de esa maravillosa realización!"

However, the prospect of U.S. hegemony had already inspired José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* in 1900, identifying Latin America as the terrain of the refined aesthete in contrast to the United States' tyrannical and brutish Caliban.[397]

By the early twentieth century, it was U.S. capital, expertise, and technology that enabled breakthroughs in Uruguayan freezing plants, most notably at the factory in Fray Bentos.[398] In the wake of World War I, the United States, rather than England, represented the encroaching superpower with which Uruguay might ambivalently engage. The Great Depression revealed the precarity of this global economic system. The Seventh Annual Conference of American States, held in Montevideo in 1933, is frequently cited as the dawn of the Good Neighbor Policy, solidified as World War II precipitated renewed calls for hemispheric solidarity.

In one undated lecture, entitled "The Influence of North American Art," Torres-García articulated his position concerning the contributions of U.S. culture to international aesthetic developments. "[F]or years, in an indirect manner, the United States has influenced the entire world." Torres-García asserted that "the American Way has revealed a new psychology" with its largest impact in

> the world of business. And what a shame that of this, one takes more of its vices than its virtues. [...] Its machines and systems arrived at every port. And with this, the bluff, the ad, the cry of the industrialist and the salesman. And from there, already an art, although small: commercial art. Not only the poster, but the arrangement of packages and vitrines, illumination, etc. This, in all the world, changed the appearance, in part, of the cities. Thus, how could one doubt that this could influence art?

[397] Rodó, *op. cit.*
[398] Winn, *op. cit.*, 110-116.

Torres-García proceeded to speak about how "the industrial object models a new sensibility."[399] Not only has this influence pervaded magazines and advertisements but it has also "structured the art appreciated in Europe in recent years" which has mimicked this "new orientation" alongside "the new architecture," "skyscrapers," "standardization, hygiene, the economy." Notably, given the rivalry between Torres-García's Constructivism and Mexican muralism, the artist even perceived the influence of U.S. culture upon the "gigantic" proportions of murals.[400]

Torres-García's analysis of the sometimes subliminal influence of North American culture and values upon international aesthetics updated what Rodó, at the turn of the twentieth century, had termed the *Nordomania* against which Latin American intellectuals must gird themselves. A century later, scholars such as Idelber Avelar saw this resistance to *Nordomania* as crucial to the dialectical production of Latin Americanism as a discourse.[401] While Torres-García's rhetoric primarily critiqued the dependence of artists of the Americas upon "imported" aesthetics from Europe, the specter of North American commerce and industry was a more subtle antagonist. Torres-García's "inverted map" of 1935, an image that would recur in publications from 1936 to

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[399] Torres-García, "Influencia del arte de Norteamérica," no date, N-sd-149, Museo Torres-García archive. "De años, en esta manera indirecta, ha influido Norteamérica en todo el mundo. [...] Un modo americano (norteamerícano) nos reveló una nueva psicología. [...] en el mundo de negocios. Y que lástima que, de esto, se tomaran más que sus vicios que sus virtudes. [...] Sus máquinas y sus sistemas llegaron a todos los puertos. Y con esto el bluff, el annuncio, el grito del industrial y vendedor. Y, de ahí, ya un arte, aunque chico: el arte comercial. El cual, no solo compendió el afiche, sinó el arreglo de envases y vitrinas, la iluminación, etc. Esto, en todo el mundo, cambió el aspecto, en parte, de las ciudades. [...] El objeto industrial, pues, modela una nueva sensibilidad."
[400] Ibid. "[...] van estructurar de arte apreciado en Europa en los ultimos años. [...]nueva orientación [...] la nueva arquitectura [...] rascacielos [...] el sentido práctico, en la estandardización, hygiene, la economía, [...] mural de sus gigantescas realizaciones..."
[401] Idelber Avelar, "Toward a Genealogy of Latin Americanism," *Dispositio/n*, vol. 22, issue 49 (1997), 123.

1943, could be seen to implicitly address *Nordomania.* Ostensibly, Torres-García's desire to produce a hemispheric art simultaneously combatted Europhilia, *Nordomania,* and what we might term *muralmania,* which had held artists in Uruguay and Argentina in its sway in the wake of Siqueiros's activities in the region since 1933.

Although Torres-García would continue to frequently paint with oil on canvas, *Indoamérica* (and the granite *Monumento Cósmico* of three years earlier) made good on his directive in 1935 for artists to work with their own materials, in part as a means of eschewing imported materials. In addition to the tube of paint's status as imported good, it also represented what Thierry de Duve has termed "industrialization's penetration into the painters' practice."[402] In this way, whether Torres-García considered this or not, it was but one more way industrialization had influenced the work of art. Indeed, it had standardized painting's very substance.

In Torres-García's work *Indoamérica* (1941), the inverted map of South America forms the dark interior of the composition, within which palm trees, a snake, a teepee, an inverted Uruguayan flag, and a representation of the Andes share space, amongst other pictograms. **(Figure 3.18)** This continental form is surrounded by yet other symbolic forms, a logo for the AAC, and the artist's own initials rendered as a "J.," an encircled dot, and a bisected square, in a typography he developed over the course of the 1930s. The work's title and date are incorporated at the upper left. The composition bears a marked resemblance to works from 1938, the apex of Indo-American influences in the art of Torres-García and his students (such as Rosa Acle's *Norte*).

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[402] de Duve, *op. cit.*, 176.

What is distinct about this work is the choice to paint not on canvas or burlap but upon an animal hide.[403] As analyzed above, Uruguay's principal industries revolved around livestock, producing meat and hides from cows and wool from sheep as primary exports. While painting on animal hide did take place amongst other populations on the continent, it was a practice most commonly observed of the Native Americans of North America. Accordingly, I want to suggest that it was significant that Torres-García produced this work in 1941.

Firstly, it was that year that Torres-García received word (and apparently the catalogue) of the Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Indian Art of the United States*, organized by Rene d'Harnoncourt.[404] This landmark exhibition included a live demonstration of sand painting and painted animal skins, including an elk hide from the Central Plains.[405]

1941 also marked the arrival in Montevideo of the OIAA-sponsored *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana* in Montevideo (the exhibition and its touring circuits are analyzed in depth in Chapter 4). Whereas MoMA exhibitions such as *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (1940), *Portinari of Brazil* (1940), and *Brazil Builds* (1943) constructed solidarity (in the realms of politics and commerce via culture), no such exhibitions of Uruguayan cultural production were organized. Uruguay's exports were not needed by the U.S. and the country was perceived as politically stable under the

[403] There is an ambiguity about what type of animal this hide came from. The owner of the work, Cecilia Torres, believes it is a sheep but is not certain. Cecilia Torres, email to the author, April 7, 2015.
[404] Frederic H. Douglas and René d'Harnoncourt, *Indian Art of the United States* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1941); Joan Agell (Forest Hills, N.Y.), Letter to Torres-García, March 3, 1941, C-41-1, Museo Torres García archive.
[405] A color photograph of this elk hide is reproduced in Douglas and d'Harnoncourt, *op. cit.*, 26.

presidency of Alfredo Baldomir, whose election in 1938 had put an end to the repressions of the Terra regime. The country was likewise relatively unthreatened by the fascist influences being monitored in Argentina and Brazil. Nevertheless, Montevideo was one of several cities hosting the *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana* in the autumn of 1941.[406]

Torres-García was invited to give a lecture at the exhibition on September 5, 1941. The artist began his presentation stating he did not wish merely to evaluate these artists of "that friend-country" but "to see in what sense their work relates to the larger problem of the art of our hemisphere [...] with which we are also preoccupied."[407] He referred to the Good Neighbor Policy ["esta feliz política de buena vecindad"] undergirding the exhibition. While noting that the work ranged from excellent to mediocre to bad, Torres-García asserted that certain U.S. painters in the exhibition had produced something unique—"their own modality [...] based in an impeccable technique: these aspects of industrial media, these visions of factories and their elements."[408] While Torres-García submitted that this aesthetic fell short of the "universal," he nevertheless congratulated these artists for representing "your America" ["bien muchachos, porque estáis haciendo artísticamente vuestra América"].[409] Torres-García then returned to the topic of structure as the "base and key of a new art of

[406] It is unclear what level of contact Torres-García had with the exhibition's organizers.
[407] Torres-García, *Mi opinion sobre los artistas norteamericanos* (Montevideo: La Industria Gráfica Uruguaya, 1942), 6. "ese país amigo [...] de ver en que sentido de orientación están con respecto a este problema magno del arte de nuestro hemisferio [...] como estamos, en esa misma preocupación."
[408] Ibid., 7; 12. "un modalidad propia [...] basada en una técnica impecable: esos aspectos de los medios industriales, esas visiones de usinas y elementos de ellas [...]"
[409] Ibid., 12. This phrasing is notably an inversion of Martí's "nuestra América."

America."[410] Because "I believe that the North American artists (like us) do not yet believe that they possess their own art," they are thus "involved in the great future art of the continent."[411]

He concluded the lecture speaking about the "coexistence of two parallel civilizations," "the world of artists and thinkers" who "invoke abstract principles" and "the men of action, business, and politics" who believe both that "all change comes from below, from the material, in other words, the economy" and that "force is that which dominates the world, and that is its reality."[412] He concludes that it is "necessary to realize that each world is as real as the other and that the best for humanity depends on the harmonious accord" between the world of art on the one hand and the worlds of politics and commerce on the other.[413] "We will labor for the spiritual unification of all America together with those, on other terrain, who tirelessly work for this same end."[414] Here Torres-García diverges from Rodó's binary between culture and commerce; rather, he wishes to harmonize the two by analogy.

While Torres-García remained somewhat vague, much as he had in 1935 when alluding to the limitations upon freedom imposed by the Terra dictatorship, it is clear that

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[410] Ibid., 15. "base y clave del arte nuevo de América."
[411] Ibid., 14. "No creo que los artistas norteamericanos (así como también nosotros) crean que ya posean un arte propio. Por consiguente, menos aún, involucrado al gran arte future del continente."
[412] Ibid., 15-16. "coexisten dos civilizaciones paralelas [...] mundo de artistas y de los pensadores [...] invocar principios abstractos [...] y mundo de los hombres de acción, negociantes y políticos [...] es cierto que todo cambio viene desde abajo; de lo material; o dicho de otro modo: de lo económico. Y sabe, además [...] que la fuerza es lo que domina el mundo; y que es su realidad.
[413] Ibid., 16. "tendría que reconocerse al fin, que tan real es un mundo como el otro, y que de la concorde armonía de emtrambos."
[414] Ibid., 19. "laboremos la unificación espiritual de toda América y por esto conjuntamente con los hombres que, en otro terreno, trabajan infatigablemente para el logro de esa misma finalidad."

he intended a collaborative effort to "unify all of America" with the parallel efforts of politicians and men of business, conjuring the image of Nelson Rockefeller's joint allegiances to business and the OIAA. As such, 1941 marked a brief moment of convergence between his Constructivist project and that of the Good Neighbor Policy. However, while the OIAA's projects appeared to make culture a pawn of politics and commerce, Torres-García argued for the equivalent force of each parallel world.

It is tempting to interpret Torres-García's speech, delivered to an audience that included OIAA delegates, as a bid for greater visibility on the hemispheric stage, potentially courting patronage for his project of "Constructive Universalism." Indeed, Torres-García's brand of Constructivism—emphasizing the universalism of "structure"—made unification the basis of artistic composition itself. This unification of the work of art's structure was a model for the "unification of the art and culture of America" which Torres-García increasingly promoted between 1934 and 1944. In his pedagogy, the morphological continuity of *Estructura* could reconcile Mondrian with the Incas and in the process meld the diverse cultures of the Americas—U.S. industrial commerce and Pre-Columbian tradition, as well as Rodóian Latin Americanism and the politics of the Good Neighbor Policy—into a balanced whole. Torres-García's dismissal of political art in his debate with Berdía six years earlier here morphs into an idea of art and politics as homologous fields across which artists and politicians may collaborate by toiling towards related goals in their respective territories. Rather than a direct intervention of art into politics or of politics into art, this cooperation (this Good Neighbor project) could function analogically. This model would permit Torres-García to maintain the autonomy

of his practice while nevertheless contributing to "the unification of the art and culture of America" in parallel to the political and commercial projects of the OIAA.

How can we think through *Indoamérica* keeping this in mind? Produced the year that *Indian Art of the United States* came to MoMA (and to Montevideo via its catalogue) and the *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana* arrived in Montevideo, this work on animal hide expanded the imagined community of Torres-García's "Constructive Tradition of America" to include the First Peoples of the United States, who had been excluded from the inverted map. Torres-García did not engage with the "impeccable technique" and imagery of factories and machines of the contemporary U.S. artists; rather, he appropriated the traditions of its indigenous peoples by painting on animal hide. In the process, Torres-García engaged with material produced by Uruguay's export industries—animal hide—to produce an import/export object. Nevertheless, *Indoamérica* remained a private work—it did not enter the arena of trade.[415]

Beyond the lack of strategic value Uruguay held for U.S. commerce and warfare, why Torres-García did not become more enmeshed in the OIAA/MoMA matrix is further suggested by his encounter with Lincoln Kirstein the following year. In 1942, Kirstein visited Torres-García during his South American tour. Kirstein had been funded by Nelson Rockefeller to traverse the continent both to purchase works for the MoMA's collection and to report back concerning fascist activities in the region, as analyzed

[415] The work was brought to New York as part of the estate of Horacio Torres, which forms part of Cecilia Torres's personal collection. It does not appear that *Indoamérica* was ever exhibited during Torres-García's lifetime. The first record of its exhibition was at the Hayward Gallery in London where it was shown in *Torres-García: Grid-Pattern-Sign: Paris-Montevideo 1924-1944* (November 14, 1985-February 23, 1986). It has since been exhibited in Spain, the United States, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Cecilia Torres, email to the author, April 7, 2015.

further in Chapter 4. In the journals Kirstein kept during his travels that year, he wrote of his visit to Torres-García's studio:

> 1941-42 'Constructivist' panels have a certain charm in spite of muddy color. Talks about 'purism': won't eat meat. [...] subsists on government pension of 110 pesos a month (wife and three children). [...] A type like Elbert Hubbard, Frank Lloyd Wright. Feels left out and abandoned in Montevideo. [...] wants to print his 500 constructivist lectures. Obviously a good teacher. [...][416]

Kirstein proceeded to purchase the oil painting *The Port* (1942) for the MoMA's collection. **(Figure 3.19)** As Torres-García had analyzed in his 1935 "School of the South" lecture, the Montevideo port represented the city's connection to the international flow of commerce and culture. He had himself set sail from this port when moving to Europe in 1891. He had returned via this port in 1934. While *Indoamérica* would remain in Uruguay (for the time being), *The Port* would travel to the MoMA in New York. If the animal hide painting *Indoamérica* (1941) represented an experiment with an import substitution model of art (transforming the foreign into the local using local materials), *The Port* maintained the porous border of inside-outside, local-international, import/export. The formal language that translates horse, boat, train, water, and buildings into boxy units resembles staggered piles of shipping containers similar to those imports delivered to Montevideo by boat, suggesting that all elements of the scene are imported—from the technology of transport to the architecture. While the hovering fish and sun to the upper right of the composition make the image playful—arguably even goofy, understanding the port as the permeable membrane connecting Montevideo (the local) to the outside world suggests new interpretations for the painting.

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[416] Lincoln Kirstein, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder II.2, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

Notably, Kirstein purchased for the MoMA's Latin American Art collection neither a totally abstract grid nor a work with "Indo-American" motifs. It is unclear whether this is because Torres-García did not show and/or did not offer to sell him these works or because such works were not to Kirstein's taste. We know that Kirstein published a diatribe against non-objective art shortly after his visit to Torres-García, characterizing abstraction as a "Mild Case of Cerebrosis" in 1943. What's more, it appears Kirstein had no awareness of the hemispheric dimensions of Torres-García's art and pedagogy.

The *Taller Torres-García* and "New Realism"

"If I remember it correctly, you asked me if your constructivism could bring about a new art of America. [...] I am absolutely in agreement about the necessity to return to structure, and the moment seems opportune that from America could emerge a new art. Not American art in the localist continental sense, but understood as a new art. [...] I believe—and I said something of this in Sur—that if you were to found a school attended by only twenty good young American artists, perhaps it would exercise a decisive influence upon continental art. The unfortunate thing is that, to be a worthy disciple of you, there would need to be many more than the community of mortals [...] I cannot pretend that there are in America twenty, nor ten, nor five, nor three men of this caliber."
–Julio Payró, Letter to Torres-García, April 29, 1942[417]

The growing regard for Torres-García's work in Buenos Aires, notably through a much-discussed exhibition at the Galería Müller in 1942, appears to have contributed to

[417] Julio Payró, Letter to Torres-García, April 29, 1942, C-42-13, Museo Torres García archive. "Me pregunta si, a mi entender, su constructivismo puede determinar un nuevo arte en América. [...] Estoy absolutamente de acuerdo en que ha dado Ud. en la tecla en cuanto a la necesidad del retorno a la estructura, y me parece oportuno el momento para que de América salga un nuevo arte. No arte Americano en un sentido continental localista, sino entendido como arte nuevo [...]Yo creo—y algo de eso dije en "Sur"—que si Ud. estuviera al frente de una escuela visitada aunque solo fuera por veinte Buenos jovenes Americanos, ejercería una influencia acaso decisiva sobre el arte continental. [...]Lo malo es que, para ser digno discípulo suyo, hay que ser mucho más grande que el común de los mortales. [...] no puedo Ud. pretender que haya en América 20, ni diez, ni cinco ni tres hombres en tales condiciones."

his renewed efforts to lead a movement for this future art of America, with the founding of the *Taller Torres-García* in 1943.[418] Explicit references to Indo-American art were largely excised from the texts and art generated from this workshop. Take for instance a geometric Rosa Acle painting from 1944 that bears scant resemblance to the playful Indo-American map of her 1938 painting *Norte*. **(Figure 3.20)** The anthropomorphism of bull's horns is apparent, but sublimated into a re-disciplined grid.

Torres-García's command in 1935 that artists in Montevideo turn away from the port, and its imported goods, so as to produce with their own materials had migrated from metaphor to the stones composing the *Monumento Cósmico* (1938) to the animal hide of *Indoamérica* (1941). At the TTG, this form of import substitution translated to a resourcefulness concerning the recycling of a range of materials. Cardboard and burlap sacking from a flour warehouse replaced canvas while packing crates from warehouses and wool and leather export companies provided the wood for sculptural assemblages. The *Taller* students used less conventional materials, such as bone, ivory, and mother of pearl, all from a Montevideo button factory, in their experimentation with furniture design.[419] While these material choices may have been in part the result of financial necessity and material scarcity, this scarcity itself spoke to wartime austerity, import shortages, and a resulting culture of frugality and adaptability.

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[418] The average age of TTG members was twenty years old. While some worked day jobs, others lived on small allowances from their families. Some students who could afford it paid a fee towards monthly expenses. By 1945 there were 99 members (66 students, 29 sponsors, 4 honorary members); 24 percent lacked resources and paid nothing; 40 percent paid one Uruguayan peso; this paid the rent, electricity, taxes, and the expenses for publishing its new journal *Removedor*. Cecilia Buzio de Torres, "The School of the South: El Taller Torres-García, 1943-1962," *op. cit.*, 108-110.

[419] Barnitz, *op. cit.*, 148.

In 1944, the Saint Bois hospital in Montevideo commissioned a suite of murals from the TTG. **(Figure 3.21)** As Torres-García wrote to Argentine art critic Romualdo Brughetti in June of 1944: "Finally Constructivism on the wall of an official building!"[420] Curiously, Torres-García described the Saint Bois murals as an instantiation of a "new realism." "New realism" appeared to mimic Mondrian's article, "A New Realism," written in New York in 1943, in which the artist analyzed the relationship between art and space. With the Saint Bois murals, Torres-García and his students used a palette of primary colors—closer to Mondrian than the palette of the preceding "Indo-American" works—and a stricter adherence to geometry, largely eschewing the most radically primitive aspects of works made in the preceding years.

The fact that Torres-García's works at Saint Bois were murals and a state commission gives his use of the term "new realism" yet another inflection. Like the Mexican muralists, he had early on sought out state funding to make his Constructivism a national project, but had received little support. His proposed *mojones* for public spaces had never been produced, though his *Monumento Cósmico* had realized a monumental public art of Constructive Universalism. By claiming his Saint Bois murals as "new realism," perhaps he was using Mondrian (uncredited) against Mexican muralism's figural, didactic realism.

Torres-García between Buenos Aires and New York

[420] Torres-García, Letter to Romualdo Brughetti, June 19, 1944, Archivo Gabriel Vázquez, as cited in Rossi, *op. cit.*, 273. "Al fin el constructivismo en una pared de un edificio oficial!"

Torres-García continued to oscillate concerning the proper art for the region, writing in 1946 that non-objective, geometric art was not well-suited for warm climates, that it could and should not be an imported aesthetic. Bristling at this claim, the young painter Tomás Maldonado in Buenos Aires would retort that a rational, precise geometry allied with industrial production standards was the only true modern art. Maldonado accused Torres-García of being "pseudomoderno" with Mondrian held as the example against which to measure *the modern.*[421]

As Cristina Rossi has analyzed, young Buenos Aires artists looking for a regional role model had looked to Torres-García in the early 1940s.[422] In 1944, young Argentinians Gyula Kosice and Tomás Maldonado and the Uruguayan artists Carmelo Arden Quin and Rhod Rothfuss were frequent guests to the TTG.[423] According to Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, Arden Quin even subscribed to "a universalist view of art that was based to some extent on the views of Torres-García."[424] But by 1946, Kosice, Arden Quin, and

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[421] See Torres-García, "Nuestro problema de arte en América: leccion VI del ciclo de conferencias dictado en la Facultad de Humanidades y Ciencias de Montevideo," *Removedor: revista del Taller Torres-García* (Montevideo), vol. 2, no. 14 (August-September-October 1946), 2-8; Tomás Maldonado, "Torres-García contra el arte moderno," *Boletín de la Asociación de Arte Concreto Invención* (Buenos Aires), no. 2 (December 1946).

[422] Cristina Rossi, "Escritos y Testimonios. El caso del 'Manifiesto de cuatro jóvenes,'" in *VII Jornadas Nacionales de Investigaciones en Arte en Argentina. Los desafíos del arte en el año del Bicentario* (CD-ROM, Facultad de Bellas Artes, UNLP, La Plata, October 29, 2010), 8.

[423] Buzio de Torres, "The School of the South: El Taller Torres-García, 1943-1962," *op. cit.*, 135, note 24.

[424] Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, "Buenos Aires: Breaking the Frame," in Pérez-Barreiro (editor), *The Geometry of Hope: Latin American Abstract Art from the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection* (Austin: The Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, 2007), 36.

Rothfuss had formed the Madí group and Maldonado had founded another, *Arte Concreto Invención.*[425]

Both groups found fault with the Taller Torres-García. Kosice wrote to Torres-García in December of 1946 that "all representative, expressive, or signifying art has finished its cycle" and that "constructivism is one of those."[426] Much as in Paris fifteen years earlier Torres-García's hybrid works had been dismissed by contemporaries as confused or indecisive, now again artists promoting a scientific, rationalist modernism lambasted Torres-García's idiosyncratic and polymorphous method. Although the Montevideo *Taller* would operate until 1962 with artists such as Gonzalo Fonseca and Francisco Matto resuscitating the primitivist legacy of the AAC, artists in Buenos Aires such as Maldonado and Kosice would produce a technophilic abstraction allied with industrial progress. Whereas Torres-García argued for the autonomy of the aesthetic, Maldonado asserted the Communist character of his own art. Notably, the Paris-based publication *Abstraction, creation, art non-figuratif*—formed in contradistinction to Torres-García's and Seuphor's more formally promiscuous *Cercle et Carré* in the early 1930s—was among Maldonado's chief inspirations. Whereas Torres-García saw the picture plane as a site of morphological semiosis, Maldonado was dedicated to what

[425] See Pérez-Barreiro, *The Argentine Avant-Garde: 1944-1950* (PhD dissertation: University of Essex, 1996); Nelly Perazzo, *El arte concreto en la Argentina en la década del 40* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1983); Mario Gradowczyk and Nelly Perazzo (editors), *Abstract Art from The Río de la Plata. Buenos Aires and Montevideo 1933-1953* (New York: The America Society, 2001); María Amalia García, *El arte abstracto: intercambios entre Argentina y Brasil* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno; MALBA; Fundación Costantini, 2011); Megan Sullivan, *Locating Abstraction: The South American Coordinates of the Avant-Garde, 1945-1959* (PhD dissertation: Harvard University, 2013).
[426] Gyula Kosice, Letter to Torres-García, December, 1946, C-46-41, Museo Torres García archive. "[...] todo arte representativo, expresivo o significativo ha cumplido su ciclo, el constructivismo es uno de ellos."

Megan Sullivan has termed "painting's progressive purification of illusion."[427] **(Figure 3.22)** For Madí artists, attention to the frame became the recursive preoccupation, rather than the sign system displayed therein. **(Figure 3.23)**

Meanwhile, in the United States, expressionist painting was developing in an unlikely parallel to the *Taller Torres-García.* As César Paternosto has argued, like Torres-García, New York artists in the 1940s such as Adolph Gottlieb, Barnett Newman, and Mark Rothko were "laying the foundation for an abstract art of tectonic principles that was spawned by a cross-fertilization with native cultures of the Western Hemisphere."[428] These artists adopted what Michael Leja has termed an aesthetic philosophy of "Modern Man primitivism."[429] Like Torres-García, Newman drew from a range of influences, but in the early 1940s, Pre-Columbian and "Indo-American" art were dominant among them. Writing in 1943, Newman asserted:

> The growing aesthetic appreciation of Pre-Columbian art is one of the satisfying results of our inter-American consciousness... The excitement of the aesthetic experience will achieve the very aims of statesmen and scientists who feel that our common hemispheric heritage is a vital link in inter-American understanding. [...] here we have ready-made, so to speak, a large body of art which should unite all the Americas since it is the common heritage of both hemispheres. [...] Here in this art is the moral base for that intercultural community that is the foundation of permanent friendship.[430]

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[427] The Paris journal was published between 1932 and 1936. Giacinto Di Pietrantonio, "Interview with Tomás Maldonado," in *Arte Abstracto Argentino*, exhibition catalogue, English supplement (Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2004), 24, as cited in Sullivan, *op. cit.*, 37; 33.
[428] César Paternosto, *The Stone and the Thread: Andean Roots of Abstract Art* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996), 221.
[429] Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism: Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 66.
[430] Barnett Newman, "Pre-Columbian Stone Sculpture" (1944), as anthologized in Barnett Newman and John Philip O'Neill, *Barnett Newman: Selected Writings and Interviews* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 61-62.

Notably, Newman also organized the exhibition *The Ideographic Picture* held at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1946.[431] While Torres-García's work was not included in the exhibition, despite his work's presence in New York collections, his hybrid modernism, dismissed as ambivalent and confused both in Paris and in Buenos Aires, had produced a powerful precedent for ideographic modernism.

Both Leja and David Craven have argued for the influence of the 1941 MoMA exhibition *Indian Art of the United States* upon young artists in the U.S. such as Jackson Pollock.[432] Earlier in this chapter I have argued that this exhibition—represented by its mobile catalogue—had been influential on Torres-García's decision to paint the hide of *Indoamérica* (1941). Numerous critics noted the resemblance between Adolph Gottlieb's gridded pictograms and those made earlier and simultaneously by Torres-García.[433] **(Figure 3.24)** New York art critic Dore Ashton would write in 1960 that Torres-García was the only artist from Latin America of his era who had "marked a durable trace in contemporary art" and Clement Greenberg even mentioned him as a proponent of "all-over painting."[434] But when New York emerged as the self-anointed capital of the art world in the 1950s, critics such as Greenberg had little use for such entangled origin stories.[435]

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[431] Paternosto, *op. cit.*, 224-225.
[432] Leja, *op. cit.*, 87; see also David Craven, "The Latin American Origins of 'Alternative Modernism,'" *Third Text* 36 (Autumn 1996), 29-44.
[433] Ramírez, "Re-positioning the South: The Legacy of El Taller Torres-García in Contemporary Latin American Art," in Ramírez, *op. cit.*, 254; Paternosto, *op. cit.*, 222.
[434] Dore Ashton, "New York découvre Torres-García," *XX siècle* (December, 1960), 122; Clement Greenberg, *Art and Culture: Critical Essays* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 106; both cited in Cruz, *op. cit.*, 84.
[435] See among others, Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) and Caroline A. Jones, *Eyesight Alone:*

Torres-García and the pseudomorphism of *Latin American art*

If largely absent from a history of art focused upon consecrating the novelty of the New York School, Torres-García has proven central to the field of *Latin American art* as that field has been recast in the postwar period. As Mari Carmen Ramírez has summarized:

> After 1945, a new generation of critics turned to Torres-García's constructive universalism in order to substantiate their own concerns with the emergence of a rational order developing in Latin America. In an attempt to 'correct' the stereotypical version of Latin American art as fantastic and primitive promoted by advocates of surrealism, critics like Frederico Morais sought to establish a 'constructivist will' (*vontade construtiva*) that preceded the European presence on the continent and have consequently made Torres-García the precursor in revealing this process. Their discourse emphasized the potential of constructivism and abstraction as correctives to the condition of chaos and instability on the continent. This type of discourse in its evolutionary perspective can be associated more with the ideology of *desarrollismo* developed in the context of the 1960s than with the act of regression and the metaphysical orientation implicit in Torres-García's system of constructive universalism.[436]

Indeed, Torres-García's example proved useful for a number of agendas. Constructive Universalism also provided an alternative to Mexican muralism during the Cold War, in the wake of the Cuban Revolution, and during the wave of repressive developmentalist dictatorships that reigned during the 1960s through the 1980s. Curators, critics, historians, artists, and collectors eager to promote a version of *Latin American art* distinct from Mexican muralism or what was in the 1980s branded as "the art of the fantastic" have made Torres-García the shared protagonist of diverging narratives.

Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[436] Ramírez, *op. cit.*, 259. *Desarrollismo* is the Spanish word for "developmentalism."

The 1992 exhibition *The School of the South*, organized by Ramírez and Cecilia Torres (the artist's daughter-in-law), was an opportunity for reevaluation. In the catalogue, Torres posited that "the uniqueness of Torres' proposal consisted of his incorporation of essential elements of indigenous American art into the basic principles of European constructivism and geometric abstraction."[437] Similarly, in her contribution to the catalogue, Jacqueline Barnitz writes: "Although other artists in Latin America had depicted Indian and pre-Hispanic themes in naturalistic scenes since the nineteenth century, Torres-García was the first to propose such a fusion in abstract form."[438] Ramírez asserts that Torres-García's "synthesis provided the key for Latin American artists to engage their own cultural legacy while at the same time being within the parameters of artistic modernity."[439] The question of what constitutes "their own cultural legacy" has haunted this chapter. For instance, are symbols drawn from Incan objects the inheritance of an artist from Uruguay?

The hybrid character of Torres-García's work has been downplayed by more recent exhibitions and publications produced by the Cisneros Foundation, the most influential player in the field of Latin American art of the early twenty first century.[440] As

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[437] Buzio de Torres, "The School of the South: The Asociación de Arte Constructivo, 1934-1942," *op. cit.*, 8.
[438] Barnitz, *op. cit.*, 146.
[439] Ramírez, *op. cit.*, 255.
[440] As Luis Pérez Oramas succinctly states in one catalogue: "Patricia and Gustavo Cisneros began their art collection in the early 1970s in Venezuela, at a time when a twofold enthusiasm filled the Venezuelan art world and society with optimism: an enthusiasm for optical experience that revealed itself in the kinetic works of a group of Venezuelan artists who had begun their explorations in the distant 1950s, in Paris; and a collective euphoria marked by a move towards economic development that was based and projected on the high price of oil, one of Venezuela's most plentiful resources." Luis Enrique Pérez Oramas, "The Cisneros Collection: From Landscape to Location" in Yve-Alain Bois et al, *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art from the Patricia Phelps de*

collector Patricia Phelps de Cisneros wrote in her preface to the catalogue for the exhibition *The Geometry of Hope* (2007): "geometric abstraction and the art that has emerged from it represent hope and potential for Latin America, concepts that are very distant from the stereotypes that are too often associated with the continent."[441] The catalogue proceeds to construct a teleology beginning with Torres-García in Montevideo in the 1930s and extending to the geometric abstraction of Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Rio, Paris, and Caracas through the 1970s. By organizing itself around cities, the exhibition and catalogue made strong connections between the projects of modernism and modernization in the spread of geometric abstraction across Latin America. The alignment of geometric abstraction with modernity requires an airtight narrative that denies the possibility of anthropomorphism.[442] It is ironic that Torres-García becomes the pioneer in these narratives of Latin American modernism/modernization. This Torres-García seems to have very little to do with the Torres-García who painted Indo-American symbols on animal skin or who contrasted the spiritual work of art with the machine logic of commerce.

While Portinari's export pictures and Siqueiros's imported Duco occupied inverse positions in this transitional period, Torres-García produced a hybrid abstraction that embodied the logic of import substitution. However, his was not an industrialized art, but

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Cisneros Collection (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Art Museums; Caracas: Fundación Cisneros; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 42.

[441] Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, "Preface" in Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro (editor), *The Geometry of Hope*, *op. cit.*, 8.

[442] For instance, in a note from his introduction, Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro refers to "Mari Carmen Ramírez's remarkable claim that Rhod Rothfuss's geometrical compositions recall 'eyes,' or carnival masks from Montevideo," an assertion that "can be read as a subtle continuation of stereotypes presenting Latin America as a land of anthropomorphism and carnivals[...]" Pérez-Barreiro, "Introduction" in Ibid., 15.

an approach to modernization with ambivalence at its aesthetic core. The final chapter turns to the OIAA/MoMA network that has occupied a spectral role in the first three chapters. In its attempts to curate and collect art from Latin America, this matrix, whose shared term was Nelson Rockefeller, was central to producing the category, *Latin American art*, which it claimed to observe.

Chapter 4: OIAA/MoMA: The Rockefeller matrix of *Latin American art*

This chapter analyzes the project of *Latin American art* developed by the Office of Inter-American Affairs (OIAA) in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Nelson Rockefeller linked these two institutions, serving as the Coordinator of the former (1940-1944) and as the president of the latter (1939-1941). Rockefeller coordinated a network of actors in a hemispheric project. Exhibitions, mural commissions, and various cultural exchanges were initiated in efforts to unify the Americas, premised upon the idea that the circulation of art objects would model cooperation in the commercial and political spheres.

MoMA organized exhibitions of art from Mexico, Brazil, and Cuba between 1940 and 1944.[443] In 1943, the museum exhibited its Latin American art collection, largely amassed by Lincoln Kirstein the previous year with funds anonymously donated by Rockefeller. This chapter situates these exhibitions as one node in a larger network of cultural coordination. For instance, in 1941 and 1942, the OIAA funded exhibitions of both "North American contemporary art" and "Latin American art" that circulated across Latin America. Traveling exhibitions imagined *Latin America* as a *coordinated public* while collecting practices produced a *coordinated geocultural object* called *Latin American art* in a dual logic of circulation and centralization.

The first section of the chapter analyzes the emerging interest in and promotion of art from Latin America in the United States in relation to the Rockefeller family's business and philanthropic investments in the region, leading most famously to the Diego

[443] The exhibitions *Portinari of Brazil* (1940) and *Brazil Builds* (1943) are primarily analyzed in Chapter 1.

Rivera mural commission for Rockefeller Center (1933) and the MoMA exhibition *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (1940). The second section analyzes the circulating exhibitions funded by the newly-formed OIAA in 1941 and 1942. The chapter proceeds to look at Lincoln Kirstein's "spying and buying" tour of Latin America in 1942.[444] The final sections look at the relationship between MoMA and Cuban art, principally through analysis of the painting *Sugar Cane Cutters* (1943) by Mario Carreño.

Over the course of the 1930s and the early 1940s, the U.S. emerged from the Great Depression and an era of isolationism. For many U.S. politicans and businessmen, Latin America came to embody what Fredrick Pike has termed a "continental frontier."[445] As such, the region was invested with the numerous, often contradictory qualities of the "frontier"—the idyll of unspoiled nature, the limitless economic potential of undeveloped territory, and the border that must be militarized. As analyzed throughout this dissertation, the Good Neighbor Policy (1933-1945) was defined by a commitment to non-intervention in the Western Hemisphere.[446] Following Robinson and Gallagher, we may understand this as a relation of "informal empire" or "imperialism on the cheap" in which commercial advantage could be taken by the United States without the responsibilities or expenditures of political sovereignty.[447] However, this partnership was

[444] I borrow the phrase "spying and buying" from Claire Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnestota Press, 2013), 70.
[445] Fredrick Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Policy: Sixty Years of Generally Gentle Chaos* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995), 174.
[446] All governments of the American republics committed to non-intervention in the hemisphere at the Seventh International Conference of American States, held in Montevideo in December of 1933.
[447] John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, "The Imperialism of Free Trade," *Economic History Review*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1953), 13.

not in practice self-sufficient. Rather, culture was introduced as a form of immeasurable currency.

If conventional accounts of "cultural imperialism" emphasize the diffusion of propaganda materials from the imperial center to its periphery, the practices of the OIAA/MoMA matrix require a more complex theoretical model. While Nelson Rockefeller, among others, was certainly invested in producing consumers across the hemisphere for U.S. products, an ethos of reciprocity and exchange was central to its legitimation. As this chapter will analyze, the category *Latin American art* became institutionalized in the process.

"Lessening the antipathy"

In 1859, in Titusville, Pennsylvania, Edwin Drake discovered that subsoil petroleum could be extracted by drilling. The U.S. soon became the primary producer and primary exporter of oil, at that time principally used for illumination and not yet for fuel.[448] Eleven years later, John D. Rockefeller founded the Standard Oil Company in Ohio. Within the decade, the company commandeered 90 percent of U.S. oil refining and fourteen thousand miles of pipeline. Already in 1885, 70 percent of the company's business was conducted with international markets.[449] By 1904, Standard Oil was depicted by caricaturists as an octopus spreading its tentacles to ensnare Congress while reaching out across the ocean to claim global supremacy. **(Figure 4.1)** More than a sinful

[448] Jonathan C. Brown and Peter S. Linder, "Oil," in Steven C. Topik and Allen Wells (editors), *The Second Conquest of Latin America: Coffee, Henequen, and Oil during the Export Boom, 1850-1930* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 126-127.
[449] Richard Norton Smith, *On His Own Terms: A Life of Nelson Rockefeller* (New York: Random House, 2014), 9-12.

serpent, this allegorical beast possessed eight menacing limbs and was liquid in its mobility (much like the commodity it extracted, refined, shipped, and sold, not to mention the capital it accumulated).[450]

In 1911, the Standard Oil Trust, which had grown into an agglomeration of thirty-nine companies, was prosecuted for its monopolization of the oil business and dissolved by the Supreme Court.[451] While the colossal growth of the automobile industry at this time led to an unprecedented boom, new restrictions on U.S. extraction led oil companies to seek out new international sites for petroleum drilling.[452]

The international growth of the oil industry and the public shaming of the Supreme Court case were quickly followed by the formation of the Rockefeller Foundation and the International Health Commission in 1913 by Rockefeller and his son "Junior." Rockefeller philanthropy, seeking to burnish the family's tarnished reputation, began in the American South and was soon exported to Egypt, Ceylon, Brazil, Mexico, and the Andes in the fight against hookworm, malaria, and yellow fever. While foreign resources, investments, and markets undergirded this international philanthropy, so too did the tax incentives. Indeed, the Rockefeller Foundation was created the same year that philanthropic ventures were named as the sole exception to the new U.S. income tax.[453]

Between 1913 and 1940, the Rockefeller Foundation spent $13 million on its Latin American programs, surveying conditions and developing medical, scientific, and

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[450] For an analysis of how oil's liquid form rendered it more globally mobile than other forms of fuel such as coal, see Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil* (London; New York: Verso, 2011).
[451] Smith, *op. cit.*, 34.
[452] Brown and Linder, *op. cit.*
[453] Olivier Zunz, *Philanthropy in America: A History* (Princeton; New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2012), 2-41.

public health programs in Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Venezuela, and other Central American and Caribbean countries.[454] As Steven C. Williams argues in his study of the Foundation's work in Brazil, while improving quality of life, these health programs directly and indirectly

> promoted the productivity of workers throughout the world as a means of enhancing the international division of labor between producers of raw materials and finished goods. Theoretically, productivity gains not only translated into increased raw-material output but also broadened the prospects of opening new consumer markets in regions of the globe that had been inaccessible to products of U.S. big business.[455]

Mexico, however, proved a particularly resistant context for these commercial and philanthropic expansions.

California oilman Edward L. Doheny had opened the first oil field in Mexico in 1901 and by 1910 the discovery of new wells precipitated a "Mexican oil boom."[456] Competing with British and U.S. oil companies already expanding in Latin America, Standard Oil of New Jersey purchased its first Mexican oil wells in 1917, the very year Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution proposed the nationalization of foreign oil companies' holdings. In the volatile context of the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), the Rockefeller Foundation's initial attempts at outreach were thwarted by anti-U.S. sentiment. The Rockefeller name was strongly associated with Standard Oil and the

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[454] Marcos Cueto, "Introduction" in Cueto (editor), *Missionaries of Science: the Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), x-xii.
[455] Steven C. Williams, "Nationalism and Public Health: The Convergence of Rockefeller Foundation Technique and Brazilian Federal Authority during the Time of Yellow Fever, 1925-1930," in Cueto (editor), *op. cit.*, 27.
[456] Brown and Linder, *op. cit.*, 133-134.

Rockefeller Foundation instantly identified with imperialist (anti-revolutionary) forces.[457] While some oil companies profited from the disorganization of the revolutionary context of the 1910s, many companies abandoned Mexican oil sites in favor of Venezuelan and Colombian reserves over the course of the 1920s.[458]

Within this context, as early as 1928, impresario Frances Flynn Paine argued that the arts were a means of "lessening the feeling of antipathy Mexicans feel for us."[459] Paine directed the short-lived Mexican Arts Association, founded in December of 1930, gathering at the Rockefeller family home on 54th Street. The MAA's operations were principally funded by Junior. Paine advised Junior's wife, Abby Rockefeller, who had co-founded the MoMA the previous year, in expanding her collection of Mexican art.[460] As a *New York Times* article reported, the MAA comprised "a group of wealthy Americans interested in promoting friendship and cultural relations between the people of Mexico and the people of the United States."[461] Cultural exchange, like philanthropic efforts,

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[457] Armando Solarzano, "The Rockefeller Foundation in Revolutionary Mexico: Yellow Fever in Yucatan and Veracruz," in Cueto, *op. cit.*, 52-54.
[458] Brown and Linder, *op. cit.*, 136; 160-161.
[459] Frances Flynn Paine, Letter to Charles E. Richards, May 19, 1928, Rockefeller Archive Center, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Papers, Series 2, Box 7, Folder 97. Paine, born in Laredo, Texas to a father with substantial business interests in Mexico, had lived in Mexico for many years. Her efforts in the 1920s to promote U.S.-Mexico cultural exchange were centered upon the marketing and exhibition of Mexican folk arts and crafts. See Anna Indych-López, *Muralism without Walls: Rivera, Orozco, and Siqueiros in the United States, 1927-1940* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 89-95.
[460] Frances Flynn Paine, Letter to Abby Rockefeller, October 21, 1930, Rockefeller Archive Center, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Papers, Series 2, Box 7, Folder 97. With a delay of the original date of the exhibition, MoMA director Alfred Barr visited Paine at the Mexican Arts Association office to discuss the hosting of other Mexican artists' work in the meantime, which ultimately came to naught.
[461] "Organize to Foster Artistry in Mexico. Cultural Leaders Here Plan Also to Promote Friendship with the Southern Republic," *New York Times*, December 10, 1940, Rockefeller Archive Center, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Papers, Series 2, Box 7, Folder 97. The association was overseen by banker Winthrop W. Aldrich (Abby Rockefeller's

promised to recast the U.S. corporation as socially benevolent and politically benign both at home and abroad. Conspicuous consumption and what we might term conspicuous philanthropy entangled themselves around Mexican art.[462]

While the MAA did not last long, Paine's entrepreneurial approach to cultural diplomacy would soon link various Rockefeller institutions to the project of Mexican art. At the MoMA, Paine organized a Diego Rivera solo exhibition, on view between December of 1931 and January of 1932. As several scholars have analyzed, Mexican muralism would in turn provide inspiration for the U.S.'s own state-sponsored art projects—often taking the form of murals for public buildings—under the WPA.[463] While many intellectuals and artists in the United States were drawn to Rivera's Leftist pedigree, Paine sought to downplay Rivera's radicalism.[464] In the catalogue for Rivera's

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brother), publisher Frank Crowninshield, and Emily Johnson de Forest (married to the president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art). The MAA's most ambitious undertaking was an exhibition of Mexican art held at the Metropolitan Museum in 1930, funded by the Carnegie Corporation. For analysis of the exhibition, see Indych-López, *op. cit.*
[462] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: an Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1912).
[463] For analysis of Mexican muralism's influence on the WPA and on U.S. artists more generally, see Anthony W. Lee, *Painting on the Left: Diego Rivera, Radical Politics, and San Francisco's Public Murals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Andrew Hemingway, "American Communists view Mexican muralism: Critical and artistic responses," *Crónicas* nos. 8-9 (March 2001), 13-43; Francis V. O'Connor, "The Influence of Diego Rivera on the Art of the United States during the 1930s and After," in Cynthia Helms (editor), *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1986), 157-183. See also Alejandro Anreus, Diana L. Linden, and Jonathan Weinberg (editors), *The Social and the Real: Political Art of the 1930s in the Western Hemisphere* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006).
[464] Notably, the idiosyncrasy of Rivera's Communism made him a more palatable figure than a more militant artist such as David Alfaro Siqueiros. Likewise, it is important to emphasize the much greater openness with which capitalists and Communists interacted and at times collaborated prior to the Cold War. See amongst others Lee, *op. cit.*

MoMA exhibition, Paine wrote: "The Revolution that he had seen begun by Zapata was bankrupt, a failure. [...] Diego's very spinal column is painting, not politics."[465]

The problem of Rivera's Leftism nevertheless flared in the controversy surrounding his mural for Rockefeller Center in 1933, a commission brokered by Paine and overseen by Junior and Abby's young son, Nelson Rockefeller.[466] **(Figure 4.2)** As is well known, diverging from his initial sketches, Rivera painted a portrait of Lenin in his mural. Nelson Rockefeller hoped to reason with Rivera, urging him to replace Lenin's with an anonymous face.[467] Alan Blackburn, then briefly the MoMA's Executive Director, suggested the transfer of Rivera's mural to the museum. Apparently, seen within the latter institutional frame, the mural would be tolerated by both the Rockefellers and the general public.[468] Stuck at an impasse, the mural was soon destroyed, with its fragments crated out in empty petroleum barrels.[469]

If the Rockefellers had sought to "lessen the feeling of antipathy Mexicans feel for us" by acting as Rivera's patron, in the process proving they could "take the joke" (Rivera had caricatured them in Mexican state-sponsored murals in the previous decade), the destruction of the Rockefeller Center mural had the opposite effect. On the eve of the

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[465] Frances Flynn Paine, "The Work of Diego Rivera," in *Diego Rivera* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1931), 28; 35.
[466] Frances Flynn Paine, Letter to Alfred Barr, July 2, 1931, REG collection, Folder 14, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[467] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Diego Rivera, May 4, 1933, Rockefeller Archive Center, Office of the Messrs. Rocekfeller, Record Group 2, Series C, Box 94, Folder 706.
[468] John R. Todd, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, December 15, 1933, Rockefeller Archive Center, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller, Record Group 2, Series C, Box 94, Folder 706; Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Alan R. Blackburn, Jr., December 16, 1933, Rockefeller Archive Center, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller, Record Group 2, Series C, Box 94, Folder 706. Todd was the chief managing agent of Rockefeller Center.
[469] Cary Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller: Worlds to Conquer* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 110.

Good Neighbor Policy's calls for cultural understanding and interchange across the hemisphere at the Seventh International Conference of American States in Montevideo that December, newspaper articles in Spanish and English appeared throughout the Americas detailing the antagonism between the Rockefellers and the famous Mexican muralist.[470] Indeed, beyond the U.S. and Mexico, the Rockefeller Center scandal had reverberations for artists in both Brazil and Uruguay, as discussed briefly in Chapters 1 and 3. Rivera thanked U.S. "artists and workers" who protested the mural's destruction in a text signed in solidarity by Mexican artistic luminaries such as Juan O'Gorman, Carlos Chávez, Rufino Tamayo, Carlos Mérida, Fermín Revueltas, María Izqueirdo, and Manuel Alvarez Bravo.[471] While this scandal ironically did produce solidarity between Mexicans and U.S. "artists and workers," it was solidarity *against* rather than in support of the Rockefellers. The following year, Rivera would replicate the destroyed mural in a commission from the Palacio de Bellas Artes in Mexico City, rebranding as Mexican national property what had been intended for the hub of the Rockefellers' media empire.[472]

Nelson Rockefeller's Latin America

Upon graduating from Dartmouth in 1930, Nelson Rockefeller had gone to work for his uncle on his mother's side, Winthrop Aldrich, the President of Chase National

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[470] Public relations specialists Ivy Lee and T.J. Ross compiled articles covering the controversy, as now gathered in the Rockefeller archives; Rockefeller Archive Center, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller, Record Group 2, Series C, Box 94, Folders 707-708.
[471] Diego Rivera, untitled document, Rockefeller Archive Center, Office of the Messrs. Rockefeller, Record Group 2, Series C, Box 94, Folder 707.
[472] Mary Coffey, *How a Revolutionary Art Became Official Culture: Murals, Museums, and the Mexican State* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2012), 35-38.

Bank.[473] He soon left Chase to learn the ropes of real estate development, working on the nascent Rockefeller Center complex.[474] The young Nelson Rockefeller's ascendancy in the realms of art and real estate was tested by the Rivera mural controversy. Ironic considering the public humiliation of the scandal, Rockefeller would later cite 1933 as the year in which he developed a passion for Latin America and its culture. That same year, he traveled to Mexico where he began collecting Pre-Columbian art under Paine's guidance.[475] Olmec heads by long-dead, anonymous artisans were a safer investment than living Communist artists' murals. Lenin's face would not appear where it was not expected.

By 1937, Rockefeller was named a director of the Standard Oil subsidiary Creole Petroleum, based in Venezuela. That year, he traveled throughout Latin America with Joseph Rovensky (an economist at Chase) and Jay Crane (treasurer of the Standard Oil Company), amongst others. Starting in the oil fields and refineries of Caracas, he toured the continent and observed relations between U.S. oil companies and local labor forces.[476] When in Cusco, Peru, he bought "vast armloads" of textiles and four ancient "mummy bundles" which he donated to the American Museum of Natural History.[477]

This Latin American tour convinced Rockefeller that the U.S. corporate presence in the region was precarious.[478] Bolivia had nationalized its reserves (including Standard Oil's holdings there) already in 1936. The Great Depression had fomented economic

[473] Aldrich was also a member of Paine's Mexican Arts Association.
[474] Smith, *op. cit.*, 83-84.
[475] Ibid., 100; Joanne Pillsbury, "The Pan-American: Nelson Rockefeller and the Arts of Ancient Latin America," in *The Nelson A. Rockefeller Vision: Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014), 18.
[476] Smith, *op. cit.*, 125.
[477] Pillsbury, *op. cit.*, 18-19.
[478] Smith, *op. cit.*, 126.

nationalism and "militant unionism" in Mexico, which would lead to the nationalization of oil by President Lázaro Cárdenas in 1938 in belated fulfillment of the 1917 Constitution's Article 27.[479]

Rockefeller's political, economic, and cultural commitments began to merge. In May of 1939 he assumed the presidency of the Museum of Modern Art, co-founded by his mother ten years earlier. That same year the museum moved to its permanent address, on the site of what had been the Rockefeller family mansion (former site of the MAA, now site of the MoMA). At the dawn of the 1940s, he reimagined the museum as an active collaborator with the State Department and in the war effort more broadly. President Roosevelt delivered a live radio broadcast at the inauguration of the new building in 1939, and in the following years patriotic exhibitions, most famously *The Road to Victory* (1942), were organized via a series of war contracts with the State Department.[480] Rockefeller's new role in the New York art world did not foreclose his jointly commercial and cultural interests in Latin America. Indeed, as this chapter will analyze, he was responsible both directly and indirectly for a Latin American art boom at the museum that synthesized his diverse interests in the region.

In October of 1939, five months after assuming the presidency of MoMA, Rockefeller returned to Mexico, this time traveling to Michoacán as a "private individual, unauthorized by the oil companies," to meet with President Lázaro Cárdenas. He spoke with Cárdenas primarily to negotiate terms amenable to both the Mexican government

[479] Brown and Linder, *op. cit.*, 166.
[480] See Mary Anne Staniszewski, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), 224-231. Exhibitions such as *Road to Victory* (1942) and *Airways for Peace* (1943) were two of the more explicit examples of MoMA projects associated with the war effort. In all, the museum held 38 wartime contracts with State Department agencies, including the OIAA.

and the U.S. oil companies.[481] Ceding in the Mexican expropriation struggle would set a dangerous precedent:

> The whole institution of foreign investments in Latin American countries is at stake. [...] the present spoliation must be resisted for it can only lead to deterioration of economic relations in the American continent.[482]

Rockefeller understood the resolution of the Mexican oil expropriation as crucial for U.S. business interests in Latin America more generally.

At Rockefeller's meeting with Cárdenas, the politically innocuous MoMA would provide leverage. Rockefeller proposed an exhibition of Mexican art to be hosted by the museum, organized and funded in collaboration with the Mexican government. Much as Rockefeller insisted that the oil negotiations required collaboration between Mexican "supply" and U.S. funding and technical expertise, so too would *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* require Mexican "supply" and U.S. financial and technical cooperation. MoMA staff would work with the Museo de Arqueología's Alfonso Caso, artist Roberto Montenegro, and polymath caricaturist Miguel Covarrubias.[483]

As Monroe Wheeler, then MoMA's Director of Exhibitions, reported from Mexico City in a letter to Rockefeller on May 1 of 1940: "The first thing we did was to

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[481] Unknown author, "MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN GENERAL LAZARO CARDENAS, PRESIDENT OF MEXICO, AND MR. NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER, IN THE PRESENCE OF MR. WALTER DOUGLAS, JIQUILPAN, MICHOACAN, MEXICO, OCTOBER 14th and 15th, 1939, Rockefeller Archive Center, Record Group 4, Series E, Box 52, Folder 437. Walter Douglas was a representative of the Southern Pacific Railway.

[482] "Present Status of the Mexican Oil Expropriation, Memorandum for the Department of State," Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series E, Box 52, Folder 437.

[483] Caso was a major public intellectual in Mexico; his archaeological work and writing contributed to the construction of *Mexicanidad* in post-revolutionary Mexico, which drew heavily upon substantive links with the Pre-Columbian past.

install a central office, or clearing house in the Museo Nacional."[484] *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (May 15-September 30, 1940) brought "three box car loads of material" shipped aboard freight trains, which took ten days to travel from Mexico City to New York.[485] **(Figure 4.3)** The contents comprised ancient, colonial, and modern art, supplemented by works available locally, including from Rockefeller's own collection of Pre-Columbian art.[486] Beyond logistical difficulties, there was also substantial resistance to the transportation of these treasures outside of Mexico. Most pointed were protests in Monte Albán condemning the loan of artifacts.[487] The Monte Albán dispute was thus isomorphic to the dispute over petroleum as contested property—national patrimony or exploitable export commodity. *Twenty Centuries* was based on the premise that art and oil could be both at once.

The desire to compile, ship, and exhibit two millennia of Mexican art demonstrated seemingly contradictory yet ultimately reconcilable goals. The first was to make the internal diversity (and thus cultural richness) of Mexican art ontologically present in New York. The second goal, after having assembled Mexico's cultural patrimony at MoMA, was to smooth over difference and the passage of time with a curatorial frame of geo-cultural continuity. In this exhibition, any radicalism of the Revolution and the post-revolutionary muralists was subordinated to a horizontal leveling

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484 Monroe Wheeler, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, May 1, 1940, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 138, Folder 1354.
485 John Abbott, Letter to Nelson Rockefeller, March 12, 1940, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 138, Folder 1354.
486 See *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, in collaboration with the Mexican government, 1940).
487 For clippings from Mexican newspapers on the controversy, see Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 138, Folder 1354. Monte Albán is a Pre-Columbian archaeological site in the Mexican state of Oaxaca, which Caso had been central in studying beginning in 1931.

under two millennia of depoliticized, decontextualized objects. At the time, Rockefeller called it "the greatest installation ever undertaken in the museum."[488]

In Miguel Covarrubias's caricature of the exhibition's opening, commissioned by *Vogue* magazine, a crowd clusters around a statue of the Aztec goddess Coatlicue, then on view in the MoMA's sculpture garden, having been shipped from Mexico City. **(Figures 4.4 and 4.5)** Mexico-born, New York-residing Covarrubias represents the ancient statue as just one of several types in a multicultural crowd that includes Paul Robeson and Greta Garbo. Caricature—often based in the semiotics of phenotypic ethnic stereotypes—does a number on this crowd, including Covarrubias himself, represented as a buck-toothed provocateur to the left of the Aztec goddess. Coatlicue is both humorous and somewhat ominous, with many hands, fanged mouth, and phallic snake, looming over a crowd that hardly seems to notice her presence.[489] The blue birds displaying the pink banner at the top of the image connote peace and harmony (framing Covarrubias's caricaturing of difference) between the diverse crowd and this loaned artifact.

While oil interests do not figure literally in this image, Covarrubias was far from oblivious as to the importance of petroleum for both U.S. capitalists and Mexican nationalists. For instance, in October 1938, coinciding with the Mexican oil expropriation, Covarrubias had illustrated a cover for *Fortune* magazine. **(Figure 4.6)** In this image, a native woman (a trope of non-modernity) is juxtaposed to the pipeline leading out of the frame, the snake to her Eve. This pipe is not the menacing octopus of

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[488] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Mr. Douglas L. Baxter, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 138, Folder 1354.
[489] Coatlicue is an Aztec earth goddess, symbolizing both creation and destruction. This statue was initially sited at the temple of Tenochtitlán before being buried by the Conquistadors, not unearthed until 1790. The statue now resides in the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City.

Standard Oil-maligning caricatures from earlier in the century. It is rather a study in contrasts, possessed of a deadpan facticity. However, the octopus did resurface in expropriation-themed caricatures drawn for Mexico's Leftists periodicals, including one for *Futuro* by Luis Arenal, who would collaborate with Siqueiros and others on the Mexican Electricians' Syndicate the following year, as discussed in Chapter 2. **(Figure 4.7)**

Like Frances Flynn Paine a decade earlier ("Diego's very spinal column is painting, not politics"), Rockefeller stressed the "entirely cultural nature" of the exhibition.[490] While it would be necessary to mention the Mexican government's "cooperation" in the exhibition, it would remain essential that the exhibition not be seen as

> being used by the Mexican government as a method of political propaganda, or that we are being used by the American government as a means of spreading propaganda concerning the so-called 'good neighbor policy' which in the eyes of many business men has become a farce as far as Mexico is concerned.[491]

That Rockefeller would enter a government position a few months later as Coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Affairs renders the latter assertion particularly ironic. Indeed, *Twenty Centuries*' rhetoric of pure "cultural" value was directly proportional to its political and economic undercurrents.

While Mexican cooperation remained crucial to both U.S. business and to the U.S. government, the role of Brazilian raw materials would soon emerge to dominate the hemispheric spotlight. What Rivera's cooperation had promised, before backfiring in

[490] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to Dick Abbott, February 14, 1940, REG 104, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. "Dick" was in fact John Abbott's nickname.
[491] Ibid.

1933, Brazilian artist Cândido Portinari briefly delivered in the early 1940s, as analyzed extensively in Chapter 1.[492] Access to Brazil's bountiful raw materials (from quartz to rubber to quinine) and curbing Fascism in the country were paramount. The exhibitions *Portinari of Brazil* (1940) and *Brazil Builds* (1943) were key chapters in this narrative.

Circulation

Just before the closing of *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* in September and the opening of *Portinari of Brazil* in October of 1940, Rockefeller left New York for Washington, D.C. where he assumed his position as Coordinator of the Office of Inter-American Affairs in 1940.[493] While he would remain President of MoMA until 1941, his relationship with the museum developed into a less formal arrangement, nevertheless densely entangled.

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[492] It is important to mention that with these 1940 exhibitions the MoMA *coordinated* more than it produced *ex nihilio*. For instance, the *Twenty Centuries* exhibition adapted a plan for a Mexican art exhibition intended for the Jeu de Paume in Paris. The *Portinari of Brazil* exhibition originated in Detroit. As such, like the OIAA that would come into existence that same year, the strategy was premised upon networking extant institutions and drawing upon extant expertise.

[493] The organization now most commonly known as the Office of Inter-American Affairs began its life in August, 1940 as the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics. As its original name indicates, the office was understood to marry commercial interests with cultural ambitions, a dyad that became more officially politicized in July of 1941, as indicated in the shift to the name Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, in which projects connected to health, sanitation, and information in the Americas became central. The economic prerogatives of the office were re-asserted in 1943 with the headlining of projects relating to industrial development and transportation initiatives in Latin America. It was not until 1945 that the office bore the name Office of Inter-American Affairs, just months prior to its official dissolution on December 31 of that year. For the sake of consistency, and in line with the majority of historical accounts, I use "OIAA" throughout this dissertation.

Despite his lack of formal experience in politics, Rockefeller was uniquely suited to direct the OIAA, as his connections and spheres of influence spanned from the world of business to the world of art, not to mention the Latin American outposts of the Rockefeller Foundation's philanthropic projects. In the New Deal, Roosevelt sought to harness the power, resources, and expertise of private capital for government-led projects.[494] Hiring a Republican-voting Rockefeller heir to run the Latin American office of the State Department reflected the alliances required for such a project of state-private partnership.

While anti-fascism was the dominant rationale for the OIAA's activities in Latin America, the United States had not yet entered the war. Rockefeller moved from preventing oil nationalization in countries with significant U.S. corporate presence to the eradication of fascist sympathizers in Latin American businesses. In either case, the common goal was maintaining and growing the U.S. business world's strong position across the Americas. As such, the early days of the OIAA, located in the Commerce Building and dedicated to "Cultural and Commercial Relations," diffused the soft power tactics of informal empire. Somewhat uniquely, the OIAA directed its propaganda efforts both domestically and hemispherically.[495]

As Rockefeller would write in an article entitled "To Open the New Frontiers," Latin American countries were both sources of raw materials and "markets" with

[494] Zunz, *op. cit.*, 125-127.
[495] Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch, "Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs and the Quest for Pan-American Unity: An Introductory Essay" in Gisela Cramer and Ursula Prutsch (editors), *¡Américas Unidas!: Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940-46)* (Madrid; Orlando: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2012), 19.

extensive room for growth.[496] Latin Americans represented the present and future consumers of U.S. products, industrial technologies, and technical expertise.[497] When the U.S. entered World War II in December of 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the OIAA's mission would become more explicitly war-related. Raw materials (up to that point protected from German markets and stockpiled for U.S. use) became "strategic materials"—for instance the quartz, rubber, copper, and petroleum needed to build, operate, and fuel army aircraft. However, already in 1943, preparations for a postwar future re-coded the OIAA's attention towards the industrialization of Latin America as once again a predominantly commercial enterprise.

In December of 1940, the OIAA organized a Committee on Art, which included MoMA's director Alfred Barr and Executive Vice-President John ("Dick") Abbott.[498] While MoMA had organized exhibitions of Mexican and Brazilian art earlier that year, the OIAA's committee began planning an exhibition of contemporary U.S. painting for circulation in Latin America. As a preliminary step, San Francisco MoMA director Grace

[496] Nelson Rockefeller, "To Open the New Frontiers," *Think* magazine (October, 1940), Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Box 12, Folder 61. "What is needed in the hemisphere today is a new flow of venture capital from this country southward. [...] North American business has spent millions of dollars studying the psychology of this country—its needs, its wants, its habits, its thinking. But the same approach has not been used in the other American republics. We can no longer afford to take those markets for granted. We must come to know and understand the people of all the republics."

[497] See Gisella Cramer and Ursula Prutsch, "Nelson A. Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs (1940-1946) and Record Group 229," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86:4 (2006), 785-806.

[498] "Report on the Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana," 1941, Record Group 229, Box 366, Folder "Latin American Art Survey" NDCar-14,70,96, National Archives II. The committee also included Juliana R. Force, Laurance P. Rockefeller, Francis Henry Taylor, George C. Vaillant, and "Traveling Art Consultants Representing the Committee in the other American Republics" Stanton Catlin, René d'Harnoncourt, Caroline Durieux, Dr. Grace McCann Morley, and Mr. and Mrs. Lewis A. Riley III.

McCann Morley traveled to "most" of the South American Republics' capitals in early 1941, funded by the OIAA to lay the groundwork for the ambitious tour.[499]

A central ambition of the *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana* was to counter the common stereotype of the U.S. as a cultureless "colossus of the North."[500] As the Institute of International Education's director Stephen Duggan, amongst others, opined, the U.S. was perceived in Latin American countries as a "virile, competent, and efficient people, but without culture."[501] U.S. cultural diplomats and strategists took to heart José Enrique Rodó's famous formulation of the U.S. as brutish, tyrannical Caliban contrasted to Latin America's cultured, spiritual Ariel.[502] However, the OIAA's desire to combat this stereotype was directly proportional to the geopolitical and geo-economic motivations for such cultural exchanges.

At a total estimated cost of $54,100 and producing 30,000 catalogues in Spanish and Portuguese, the exhibition was funded by the OIAA and circulated by MoMA, using works of art by painters such as Edward Hopper and Charles Sheeler. These paintings were loaned by MoMA, the Whitney, the Brooklyn Museum, the Museum of Natural History, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.[503] So as to "reach as many countries as possible," the exhibition was split into three groupings and "circulated simultaneously" in

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[499] Ibid., 2.
[500] Catha Paquette, "Soft Power: The Art of Diplomacy in US-Mexican Relations, 1940-1946," in Cramer and Prutsch, *op. cit.*, 150.
[501] As cited in Uwe Lübken, "Playing the Culture Game: The United States and the Nazi Threat to Latin America," in Cramer and Prutsch, *op. cit.*, 59.
[502] José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel* (Montevideo: Impresora de Dornaleche y Reyes, 1900).
[503] "Latin American Exhibitions of Contemporary Painting: File Summary," Record Group 229, Box 1209, Folder "ART 1941 Latin American Exhibitions of Contemporary Painting" NDCar-14, National Archives II.

three routes along the East, West, and North coasts of Latin America.[504] New Orleans-based artist Caroline Durieux coordinated the exhibition's showings in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, and Rio de Janeiro; Stanton Catlin, a recent Fogg Museum Fellow in Modern Art at Harvard University, arranged its Mexico City, Santiago, Lima, and Quito itinerary, and Lewis Riley, brought it to Bogotá, Caracas, and Havana.[505]

These exhibition routes were not the only new circulation systems for the continent. The exhibition toured contemporaneous to the construction of the Pan-American Highway, the expansion of inter-American aviation patterns, and the wiring of pervasive radio networks. All could be grouped under the rubric of communication (or *comunicación*) networks. Following these routes, films and publications generated in the United States specifically for Latin American consumption (based on the presumption this was a consumer group that could be generalized into a category) targeted a broad swath of the continent's public. Amongst other notable celebrities, the OIAA enlisted Orson Welles, Walt Disney, and John Ford to produce films in Latin America, with varying degrees of success.[506]

For instance, the Disney film *Saludos Amigos* (1942) would feature Donald Duck, a U.S. citizen, befriending the Brazilian parrot Joe Carioca, as analyzed in Chapter 1. In one vignette, an insecure Chilean airplane named Pedro, scared to make his first flight over the Andes, fights against all odds to make his mail shipment. **(Figure 4.8)** The recurrent tropes of flight—be it the U.S. and Brazil allegorized as birds or an

[504] "Report on the Exposición," *op. cit.*, p. 3.
[505] See "Itinerary of August 1, 1941," Record Group 229, Box 1209, Folder ART 1941, National Archives II.
[506] See Catherine Benamou, *It's All True: Orson Welles's Pan-American Odyssey* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

anthropomorphized airplane—conveyed a subliminal message. The Americas were connected by networks of transportation, media, and commodities. Flight in particular offered a model of mobility as gravity-defying and friction-free, epitomized for millennia by wing-footed Hermes, god of trade.[507] Film was a medium whose *motion* pictures conveyed this dynamic compression of space and time, capable of juxtaposing people and geographies in a densely constructed narrative sequence.

As Pedro feared, in practice, travel could be hazardous. While the *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana*'s ambitious itineraries both relied upon and performatively demonstrated the potentials of inter-American shipping (think subliminally oil, coffee, rubber, etc), delays were routine. As Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Riley reported of the passage from Bogotá to Caracas:

> The exhibition was closed and packed on August 10th. It was then sent to Caracas, Venezuela, by truck over the Andean Highway [...] This trip took six days [of] constant driving over a dangerous, narrow, winding road. [...] All arrangements for passing the Colombian-Venezuelan must be made ahead from Bogotá and Caracas. Border officials have no authority to allow paintings out of Colombia or into Venezuela without authorization from their respective capitals. This is the fruit of experience, since we were delayed four days on the border because of the lack of a necessary pass from the Ministerio de Hacienda of Colombia.[508]

Beyond customs delays, image-objects—the 'material' transported in three routes across the hemisphere—were subjected to occasional damage. For instance, a ceiling lamp in the Bogotá venue came crashing down into a recently opened crate and pierced through

[507] This analysis takes inspiration from the interpretation of Audubon's bird illustrations as allegories of mobile goods in Jennifer Roberts, *Transporting Visions: the Movement of Images in Early America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).
[508] R. and L. Riley, "Exhibition of Contemporary Painting from the U.S.A. Section III North Coast of South America and Cuba," in Record Group 229, Box 365, Folder "Lewis Riley Trip to South America," National Archives II.

From the Garden of the Chateau (1921), a painting by Charles Demuth, and *The Old Bars, Dogtown* (1936) by Marsden Hartley, both loaned by the Whitney Museum.[509]

Each site brought with it specific institutional conditions, cultural politics, and viewing publics, disparities that remained outside of the conception of these exhibitions. While 43,000 visitors were reported in Quito, only 7,000 were reported in Lima.[510] In São Paulo, where the exhibition lacked state support, a "'counter-exhibition' of conservative painting" was organized by the hosting museum's director Oswaldo Teixeira (who "roped off" the main entrance to the OIAA exhibition, according to Caroline Durieux).[511] In Montevideo, a series of lectures by local intellectuals accompanied the exhibition, including one delivered by Joaquín Torres-García, as analyzed in Chapter 3. In Havana, the exhibition was scheduled to coincide with the Conference on Intellectual Cooperation, ensuring "the presence of cultural leaders from all parts of the Americas."[512] Meanwhile, the Cuban Commission of the Congress of Intellectual Cooperation and the Cuban Ministry of Education sponsored an exhibition of Cuban contemporary art to coincide with the U.S exhibition.[513]

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[509] See Vernon Flaherty, Secretary of Embassy, Letter to Juliana Force, August 5, 1941, Record Group 229, Box 1213, National Archives II.
[510] Boaz Long, Letter to Secretary of State, "Exhibition of American Contemporary Painting in Quito," December 12, 1941, Record Group 229, Box 1209, National Archives II. Long was a U.S. diplomat then stationed in Ecuador.
[511] Caroline Durieux, Letter to Olive Lyford, December 4, 1941, Record Group 229, Box 1209, National Archives II. At that time, Durieux directed the Louisiana Federal Arts Project of the Works Progress Administration and taught in the Art department of Newcomb College. Lyford was then a Secretary at the Museum of Modern Art.
[512] "Extract from Weekly Report of November 21-28, 1941," Record Group 229, Box 1209, National Archives II.
[513] R. and L. Riley, "Exhibition of Contemporary Painting from the U.S.A. Section III North Coast of South America and Cuba," *op. cit.*

The assessment of the U.S. painting exhibition's success by its organizers was made on a largely quantitative basis—based on attendance numbers and the amount of laudatory press coverage in each locale. With the exception of criticisms and uneven support in Lima, Rio, and Mexico, they concluded that "the exhibition proved through its success that the arts are an effective means of promoting better understanding and good will between the United States and its neighbor republics."[514] Like Frances Flynn Paine a decade earlier, these cultural diplomats understood art as a potent means of "lessening the feeling of antipathy" not just of Mexicans but of citizens across the hemisphere, as the "continental frontier" expanded its territory by leaps and bounds.[515]

The coordination of the exhibition enabled "firsthand accumulation by the representatives of important data on the state of the arts and letters in each country; this furnishes invaluable information for the planning of future activities." Proposed "future activities" included "reciprocal exhibitions" of Argentine, Brazilian, Chilean, Peruvian, Ecuadorian, Colombian, and Venezuelan art that would be shipped and shown in the United States.[516] Indeed, exchange was fundamental both to the logic of those exhibitions as well as to the cooperation the OIAA sought in the realms of economics and politics, as modeled by the relatively innocuous realm of culture. "Exchange" promised that the hemispheric cultural project would not be perceived as a unidirectional, hegemonic instantiation of cultural imperialism.

While few reciprocal exhibitions came to pass, the exhibition circuits would hold the next year, when exhibitions prepared by SF MoMA and circulated by New York's

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[514] "Report on the Exposición," *op. cit.*, 1.
[515] Pike, *FDR's Good Neighbor Diplomacy*, *op. cit.*, 174.
[516] "Report on the Exposición," *op. cit.*, 17.

MoMA followed the East, West, and North routes established by the *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana*. This time the exhibitions were dedicated to "Contemporary Latin American art" and drawn from museum and private collections. These exhibitions included works by Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros of Mexico; Cândido Portinari of Brazil; Wifredo Lam and Amelia Peláez of Cuba, along with several others.[517] Diverse publics were shown their "own" art packaged as *Latin American* rather than according to national rubrics, encapsulating both an imagined aesthetic field (*Latin American art*) and an imagined community (*Latin America*).

After having spearheaded the organization of the *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana* and contemporaneous with the circulation of the three exhibitions of Latin American art organized by her museum, SF MoMA director McCann Morley wrote a substantial volume on the contemporary production and exchange of Latin American art. When delivered in March of 1942, it was marked "Confidential" and its intended readership was a special council organized by Nelson Rockefeller for the Office of Inter-American Affairs.[518]

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[517] "Exhibitions of Latin American Art Circulated, April 20, 1942," Record Group 229, Box No. 1215, National Archives II.

[518] G.L. McCann Morley, "Art in Latin American Countries with Special Emphasis on Contemporary Art and Artists, on museums and exhibition conditions in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Peru, Salvador, Uruguay, Venezuela, submitted to the Committee on Art, Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, March, 1942," Kirstein Correspondence, Folder II.3, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. In the report, McCann Morley categorized art from Latin America into two subsets, largely based on the populations of the nations whose art she was characterizing. The first was "European of heritage, importing their ideas, forms, styles, expressions from Europe the source also of their population" while the "Negro population" in the cases of Brazil and Cuba influenced modern art production but in a mode that was "difficult to measure." A second set of nations were impacted by "a strong

McCann Morley asserted that "the request [for exhibitions] should come from Latin America," though "such requests could be stimulated easily."[519] However, "exhibitions are costly" and "much of the problem of building relations between countries seems to require more important and more intimate connections than formal exhibitions of any kind supply."[520] Likely in reaction to the uniformity of the contemporary North American painting exhibition, she claimed that

> the thing most to be avoided [...] is to impose what we think [are] good ideas without a full knowledge of the conditions in the countries themselves. Wholesale exhibitions in general should be distrusted [...] the idea of a cultural export should be carefully avoided.[521]

Using the language of goods to denigrate the prevailing tendencies in traveling exhibitions, McCann Morley called both for "collaboration" with Latin Americans on the one hand and for the cultivation of "specialists in Latin American art and in specific national traditions" in the U.S. Both were prerequisites for a "long-range program for art understanding between the Americas."[522]

McCann Morley's questioning of the capability of a "wholesale" exhibition to perform the work of hemispheric solidarity was matched by her articulate interrogation of "Latin American art" itself as a problematic category:

> The diversity—the profound and fundamental differences of every sort—between country and country of what is often and popularly lumped in the term 'Latin-

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tradition of aboriginal art and culture which colors powerfully and fruitfully contemporary work there," a category in which she included Mexico, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador. It is important to qualify that she does not understand this as a direct product of racial essence, but rather often consciously integrated on the part of the artist (not suggesting the artist him or herself belongs to the ethnic group whose influence is registered).

[519] Ibid., 311.

[520] Ibid., unpaginated.

[521] Ibid., 341.

[522] Ibid.

> America,' makes any general discussion of art, as of any other conceivable subject that concerns them all, difficult and dangerous. Generalizations are always distorted and unjust. [...] they become glaringly inaccurate and inadequate.[523]

Her deconstruction of *Latin American art* is thus here linked to a questioning of *Latin America* itself as a term whose object always exceeds representation. However, McCann Morley is quick to qualify that, when "handled with caution, keeping in mind, their limitation," such terms as *Latin American art* "have a certain use."[524] Within the context of this confidential report, it was for the OIAA to determine said "use."

"The greatest collection of Latin-American art in the world"

Contemporaneous to the circulating exhibitions from which McCann Morley drew her conclusions, Nelson Rockefeller provided funds for a Latin American art collection for MoMA at the end of 1941. What would become known as the Inter-American Fund was produced, like much of MoMA's endowment at the time, by selling off oil stocks—in this case, from the Socony-Vacuum Oil Company.[525] On December 21, 1941, Nelson wrote to Philip Keebler, requesting that he "transfer stock with a total value of 25,000.00 to the Museum of Modern Art as a gift for the establishment of [...] a [...] purchasing fund to buy works of art from the other American republics."[526] While

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[523] Ibid., 13.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Reich, *op. cit.*, 122-124. It is important to contextualize this more fully, considering the role oil money and its dividends played in the survival of the MoMA through the Great Depression, namely the money Nelson inherited and then anonymously donated in 1934 to insure the museum's survival when other patrons balked.
[526] Nelson A. Rockefeller, Letter to Philip Keebler, December 22, 1941, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 142, Folder 1401. The question of what to publicly term Rockefeller's anonymously bestowed fund became a source of awkward humor. As MoMA director Alfred Barr wrote in a memorandum to his museum colleagues: "The suggestion which came from Nelson's

MoMA already owned numerous works by Mexican artists, and a few by Brazilian artists (namely Portinari), the Inter-American Fund radically expanded and diversified the museum's Latin American holdings.

In the previous decade, in the midst of the Great Depression, the U.S. had sold much more than it had bought from Latin America.[527] It had thus been one of Rockefeller's first tasks to encourage the buying up—even stockpiling—of Latin American exports. The project of collecting art from Latin America analogized this logic of stockpiling, with MoMA anointed as the base of operations.

Rockefeller selected Kirstein to purchase the collection of *Latin American art* for the museum over a six-month period spanning from the spring to the fall of 1942. Rockefeller had previously funded Kirstein in his touring of the American Ballet Caravan around Latin America in 1941. In particular, one wonders how audiences reacted to *Filling Station*, a ballet that took a gas station in the United States as its setting. **(Figure 4.9)** During the American Ballet Caravan tour, Kirstein had made contact with cultural elites and commissioned Portinari to design a set for George Balanchine's *Serenade*, performed in Rio that year, as mentioned in Chapter 1.[528]

Chairman of MoMA's Board of Trustees Stephen C. Clark would write to Rockefeller in November that with Kirstein's impressive acquisitions "we shall have the

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office [the Office of Inter-American Affairs] that we call his fund the American Republic Purchase Fund seemed pretty unsatisfactory [...] because it seemed that a wisecrack might easily be developed out of the suggestion that the fund might be used for purchasing American republics." Alfred Barr, Memorandum to Mr. Abbott, Miss Dudley, Miss Hawkins, Mr. Wheeler, "Re: Latin America Fund," February 23, 1943, CUR collection, Folder 224, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[527] Joseph Love, "Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1980), 58.

[528] See Martin Duberman, *The Worlds of Lincoln Kirstein* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 358-366.

greatest collection of Latin-American art in the world."[529] Clark's enthusiastic claim evinces a number of important developments. Firstly, *Latin American art* (or Latin-American) was becoming a category not just to exhibit and write about, but also to collect. What's more, MoMA staff took pride in the idea that the museum's collection would be "the greatest [...] in the world." This collection was compiled with an eye for geographical well-roundedness but based on Kirstein's personal taste.

The motivation for Kirstein's trip was Janus-faced—OIAA/MoMA. An official letter from MoMA's John Hay Whitney informed the reader that Kirstein's trip was intended to produce "a survey of art, architecture, libraries, museum and educational institutions" in Latin America.[530] Meanwhile, the Coordinator's Office told a different story: "The purpose of Mr. Kirstein's trip is a confidential mission to certain Latin American countries on behalf of the Government," a tour "essential to the war effort."[531] As Rockefeller wrote to MoMA's John Abbott, Kirstein's trip

> will have a propaganda importance and will be of assistance in our psychological war effort [...] he will serve his Government in the form of a talking campaign for which he is fully qualified.[532]

The funding of the mission would be paid through the museum but using funds donated by Rockefeller. Kirstein would be named "special consultant for the Office without compensation."[533]

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[529] Stephen C. Clark, Letter to Nelson A. Rockefeller, November 10, 1942, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 142, Folder 1401.

[530] John Hay Whitney, May 11, 1942, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.E, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[531] John Lockwood, Letter to unknown recipient, February 20, 1942, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.F, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Lockwood was Nelson Rockefeller's attorney.

[532] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to John Abbott, April 29, 1942, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.F, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

Kirstein's journals from the 1942 Latin America trip were by turns good natured, paranoid, and condescending, characterized by a taxonomic bluntness. In one notepad, he made a list entitled "Bad Painters" which includes derogatory appraisals of artists such as "competent pastiche." Another artist is described as "Complete Anthology of French painting. Horrid handling. Dufy. Matisse. Even Balthus." A third artist is "Decorative (Plaza Hotel). Tempera. All styles. Female."[534] In a letter from Rio updating MoMA director Alfred Barr on his acquisitions, Kirstein noted buying paintings by "a gifted and well-educated mulato[sic] half-wrecked by Portinari" and another by "a negro youth who plays in a samba band."[535]

Writing of his visit to Luis Alberto Acuña in Colombia, Kirstein claimed that the artist was "for a considerable time the outstanding Colombian exportable artist." Kirstein purchased a painting by Acuña for $100.[536] He paid significantly less, 100 sucres, for three paintings by Julio Montenegro, encountered by chance:

> Julio Montenegro seems to have been a Colombian living in Peru. He died about ten years ago. I stopped in at the house of a poor farmer because I was struck by the paintings on the outside of his porch. He asked us in the house and I saw these pictures on the wall and bought them. One of them has been defaced by a child.[537]

Kirstein paid the same amount (the equivalent of $7.45 in 1941 dollars) for one painting commissioned from Luis Herredia in the small town of Pomasqui outside Quito. Kirstein described the town as

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[533] Nelson Rockefeller, Letter to John Abbott, April 4, 1942, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.F, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[534] Lincoln Kirstein, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder II.2, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[535] Kirstein, extract of letter to Alfred Barr, June 19, 1942, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.F, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[536] Kirstein, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.G, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[537] Ibid.

> a very typical poor, small place but the church has in it four very impressive ex voto paintings. We searched out the author of these pictures, who is a poor carpenter. We commissioned a picture from him similar in style to the paintings in the church.[538]

By the end of his journey, he had visited David Alfaro Siqueiros in Chillán, Chile and Joaquín Torres-García in Montevideo, as discussed more extensively in Chapters 2 and 3.

The MoMA's collection of *Latin American art* was further expanded by exchanges and barters. For instance, as Alfred Barr detailed in one letter: "[T]he Castellanos painting was obtained by exchange for a painting by Siqueiros which the Museum owned, two photographs by Alvarez Bravo, which, as I explained to you, we are paying for by Museum catalogues."[539] 1 Castellanos = 1 Siqueiros + 2 Alvarez Bravos. 2 Alvarez Bravos = x MoMA catalogues. Another painting by Siqueiros proved exchangeable for "credit." Writing to collector Samuel Lewisohn, Barr reported:

> We have turned in the Siqueiros head [...] which you gave us for exchange last year, and got a credit of 1000 pesos—something over $200.00. But 1000 pesos go a long way in Mexico so that we were able to get with it a very beautiful painting by Guillermo Meza [...], the best of the younger generation, for 360 pesos; a small but intense portrait by Tebo [...] at 300; and a magnificent Orozco [...] drawing of a seated nude holding a mirror for 200 pesos (a bargain) and another very distinguished drawing by Rodríguez Lozano [...] at 200 pesos. I am sending you halftones of the two paintings and the Orozco drawing, all of which are to be reproduced in the catalog of our Latin American collection. Won't you let me know as soon as you can if you are satisfied with this exchange, and whether we may credit each of the four as your gift?[540]

In this case, 1 Siqueiros = 1 Meza + 1 Tebo +1 Orozco + 1 Lozano.

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[538] Ibid.
[539] Alfred Barr, Letter to Miss Ulrich, cc Miss Miller, Miss Dudley, August 19, 1942, "Re: Mexican Purchases," Exhibition file 224: Latin American Art in the Museum Collection, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[540] Barr, Letter to Mr. Samuel A. Lewisohn, cc Miss Ulrich, cc Miss Dudley, February 24, 1943, Exhibition file 224: Latin American Art in the Museum Collection, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

The sheer diversity of purchases reveals that neither Kirstein nor the museum possessed a fixed view of what *Latin American art* should or would look like. Whereas MoMA's formal mandate is now frequently identified with abstraction, in the era of our analysis figuration was predominant in its exhibitions. Thus, Latin American art in a figural mode was consistent with more general aesthetic conventions. Indeed, in this period, Kirstein wrote a piece championing figural representation over abstraction, which he characterized as "a mild case of cerebrosis."[541] The figural was not yet fully contaminated by Cold War antinomies equating realism with Communism. The increasing dogmatism of Clement Greenberg in the following decades and the rise of Jackson Pollock's skein paintings would cement this transition.[542]

That same year, Kirstein wrote a "Preliminary Draft of a Plan for the Formation of a Department of Latin American Art in the Museum of Modern Art." In the draft, he characterized the recent surge in Latin American art as both an "expression of individual national traditions and of recent intensive stimulation from activities undertaken by the State Department of the United States of America and of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs [Rockefeller]."[543] Kirstein blurred production and reception so as to suggest they were products of the same factors. According to Kirstein, "[i]n Latin-American nations the plastic arts and music are almost the only basis for exportable

[541] Lincoln Kirstein, "Life or Death for Abstract Art? Con: A Mild Case of Cerebrosis," *Magazine of Art*, vol. 36, no. 3 (March, 1943), 110-111; 117-119.
[542] See Caroline Jones, *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) and Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
[543] Lincoln Kirstein, "Preliminary Draft of a Plan for the Formation of a Department of Latin American Art in the Museum of Modern Art," 1, undated, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.C, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

prestige."[544] *Exportable prestige*—transnationally functional cultural capital *avant la lettre*—represented the benefit for those governments, intellectuals, and artists who collaborated.

Kirstein understood the MoMA to be the natural headquarters for this transnational project. Firstly, the museum was "universally known and respected, even in remote sections of Latin America." Kirstein attributed this renown largely to the dissemination of published materials across the Americas as well as to the circulating *Exposición de Pintura Contemporánea Norteamericana* of 1941.[545] Furthermore, MoMA's slippery relationship to the state equipped it for the delicate work of cultural diplomacy:

> While the Museum of Modern Art is not in any way an official agency of our government it has frequently enjoyed the confidence of the State Department and of the Coordinator's office. If any official government agency existed it would be less apparently innocent, elastic and powerful than a private agency such as the Museum. [...] Hence the Museum of Modern Art is in a unique and irreplaceable position of political and professional purity to effect a broad cultural program."[546]

Kirstein's characterization of the museum as "apparently innocent" rested upon a paradox; MoMA's public mask of political "purity" qualified it for impure (i.e., State Department) projects. Indeed, this Latin American Art program "would be at all times under the supervision of the Division of Cultural Relations of the State Department" while also bridging with "local official agencies in Latin America, to expedite a tactful interchange."[547]

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[544] Ibid, 2.
[545] Ibid, 3.
[546] Ibid.
[547] Ibid.

Notably, amongst Kirstein's proposals for future activities was the "stimulation of local individual artists of great talent." For instance, Brazilian artists "recently (1937-1942) obscured by the unique renown and official influence of Candido[sic] Portinari" could be cultivated by providing them with painting materials (paints, brushes, oil, varnish, panels) and by small direct commission."[548] While Siqueiros urged artists to use nitrocellulose lacquers and Torres-García experimented with local stones and animal skins, Kirstein urged Rockefeller to buy Brazilian artists whatever materials they wished.

Despite Rockefeller's encouragement, there was ultimately no budget designated for a Department of Latin American Art at MoMA. Rather, Kirstein's project culminated with an exhibition of the Latin American art collection in the spring of 1943.[549] **(Figures 4.10 and 4.11)** Kirstein's ambivalence about the aesthetic value of this collection is revealed in private correspondence. In one letter from January, 1943 to Dudley Easby, a friend who then worked in the legal division of the OIAA:

> I certainly hope you will be up by March when we are unveiling our Latin American trophies here at the museum. [...] Our collection looks very splendiferous, although I don't know whether it justifies all the outlay or not.[550]

Kirstein's "honorary position" as "Consultant on Latin-American art" [551] soon dissolved as he departed for Europe and entered the armed forces, in the service of preservation and restitution of cultural heritage that had been seized by Hitler.[552]

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[548] Kirstein, "Projects for 1943-1944," undated, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.B., The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[549] *The Latin-American Collection of the Museum of Modern Art* was on view from March 31 until June 6, 1943.
[550] Lincoln Kirstein, Letter to Dudley Easby, January 4, 1943, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.C, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[551] Stephen C. Clark, Letter to Lincoln Kirstein, October 26, 1942, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder I.A, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[552] See Duberman, *op. cit.*, 387-406.

The project of *Latin American art* persisted at the museum on a smaller scale through initiatives overseen by Luiz Zulueta, a Spanish-born staffer. In April of 1943, Zulueta initiated the "Latin-American Artists File" project. He also emphasized the need for publicity promoting the MoMA's activities, for distribution in Latin America. As Zulueta wrote to Barr that month:

> Now, when it is difficult to exchange exhibitions, publications, etc., between us and the other institutions in Latin-America, I believe it is necessary to secure good publicity for the Museum, at least in the most important Latin-American cities. This publicity has to be continuous.[553]

By September, the artists file contained "information on over 1,000 artists from all the Latin American countries and is indexed by countries and then alphabetically by artists." At that point, the museum sought support from the Rockefeller Foundation so as to expand this project, requesting funds for research and for the distribution of "around fifteen or twenty thousand copies of a questionnaire blank [which] will be sent to the artists in Latin America and also to the Latin-American museums, art centers, Government art officials, etc. for distribution in each country." The proposal also detailed a proposed "Directory of Latin-American Modern Art" for publication.[554] However, as with a number of the museum's Latin American initiatives, this project soon stalled.

Case-study: *Sugar Cane Cutters* (1943)

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[553] Luis Zulueta, Letter to Alfred Barr, April 12, 1943, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 1.93, mf2169:762, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[554] Luis Zulueta, "Draft of the Memo to be Sent to Mr. Berrien of the Rockefeller Foundation About the Latin American Artists File," September 16, 1943, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 1.98, mf2169: 1107, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

"Today, with the world shrunk by war, airplane and radio, an interpenetration of creative influences is effected without the time-lag of a hundred years ago. The last five years has made the difference." –Lincoln Kirstein, 1943[555]

Thus far, we have established the OIAA/MoMA model of importing and exporting exhibitions and works of art as it developed in the first years of the 1940s. This project expanded the cultural dimension of the Rockefeller empire's engagements with Latin America over the preceding decades. In McCann Morley and Kirstein's hands, and under Rockefeller's variably visible orchestration, works of art were treated as exchangeable goods. By contrast, how may works of art be seen to open up onto the circuits within which they were mobile and, in even more charged cases, for which they were often made? How might such analysis permit us to see *Latin American art* not solely as a curatorial, institutional discourse developed in the United States but also as a discourse in which artists from Latin America actively participated, shaping the way pictures looked? More specifically, how can the "interpenetration of creative influences," within this "shrunken" world described by Kirstein, be rendered visible in the work of art? We will focus on one painting made by a well-connected Cuban artist preparing for an exhibition at MoMA and how the work was informed by a complex and multi-layered brief.

Made in Havana, Mario Carreño's *Sugar Cane Cutters* (1943) is a picture that reverberates with exuberant color, in particular the green hues of the Duco paint the artist used. **(Figure 4.12)** Sinuous forms interweave the bodies and diaphanous drapery of the titular laborers with the vertebrae-like stalks of sugar cane. Indeed, ribs, muscles, flowing

[555] Lincoln Kirstein, "Latin American Painting: A Comparative Sketch" (1943), 2, Kirstein Correspondence, Folder II.1, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

fabric, and leafy stalks are distinguishable from one another only by color, but not so easily by shape. Closer analysis reveals an approximation of photographic double-exposure—echo-forms of hands and machetes balletically reaching for, cutting, and bundling cane.

With *Sugar Cane Cutters*, Carreño engaged in a trope that recurs in art from Latin America of the era—namely the depiction of raw materials and the laborers extracting and cultivating them. Such characteristics were shared by the work of one of the most prominent artists on the hemispheric scene, the Brazilian painter Cândido Portinari, whose painting of coffee plantation labor, *Café* (1935), was analyzed in Chapter 1. **(Figure 4.13)** Portinari himself was aware of the precedent of Mexican murals, such as those for the Secretariat of Public Education, in which Rivera and Orozco glorified the agricultural labor of some of Mexico's chief exports. Oil—with its different relationship to land, labor, and with the contested status of its ownership—primarily remained on the sidelines of such representations.[556]

These paintings of landscapes, of agricultural abundance, and of idealized, compliant labor were artifacts of numerous agendas. In part, the representation of Latin American natural abundance was consistent with images dating back to Humboldt's voyages, depicting a fecund wilderness. This vision of the region could be interpreted in two ways—as a utopian sanctuary far from the modernized, urbanized, industrialized North—and simultaneously as a speculative site for growth, development, and profit.[557]

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[556] Covarrubias's and Arenal's images illustrating this chapter are quasi-exceptions; I wish to emphasize that they do not in fact visualize labor or raw materials but pipeline and petroleum towers.
[557] See Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992). Indeed, as Marx, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and later the

These landscapes were generally populated by laboring figures—working, picking, threshing. The sugar cane cutter or coffee plantation worker was a cipher put to work in diverging and sometimes ambiguous ways. Was he an active proletarian ushering in the revolution or a passive serf of global capitalism? Could these workers simultaneously serve as symbols of proud national identity when exhibited at home and/or pliant, productive laborers for the export market when exhibited in the United States? Did the shipment of paintings such as Portinari's *Café* (1935) to the U.S. already suggest a cooperative, subservient position within the international division of labor? While Portinari had grown up on a coffee plantation in Brodowski, Brazil, Carreño's relationship to sugar was by marriage, to sugar heiress María Luisa Gómez Mena. He was not *of* sugar, but at that time (before the marriage dissolved), he lived off its dividends.

By the time Carreño began painting *Sugar Cane Cutters*, he had traveled extensively. The artist had spent time in Mexico in the mid-1930s and then in Europe just prior to his arrival in New York in 1940.[558] New York that year had been saturated with Pan-American sentiment and, more specifically, the *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* and *Portinari of Brazil* exhibitions were on view at MoMA. In this milieu, Carreño had painted *The Birth of the American Nations* (1940), an allegory of *mestizaje* and Pan-Americanism that married New York skyscrapers with Spanish colonial churches, Pre-Columbian artifacts with tennis-playing, Anglo-Saxon youths, bearing a strong influence

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dependency theorists of the postwar period would all argue, the expansion of capitalism relies upon the uneven division of international labor and the existence of new "frontiers" of growth awaiting expansion and development. As Fredrick Pike has analyzed, Latin America in the Good Neighbor era represented the U.S.'s "continental frontier," imbuing the "South" with many of the characteristics most frequently identified with the "American West." Pike, *op. cit.*, 174.

[558] Mario Carreño, *Mario Carreño: cronología del recuerdo* (Santiago: Antártica, 1991), 24-46.

from both Italian Renaissance compositions and Diego Rivera murals. **(Figure 4.14)** Carreño had returned to Havana in 1941 and had married Gómez Mena soon after.

While Kirstein traversed South America, MoMA director Alfred Barr traveled to Mexico City and Havana to purchase paintings for the museum's collection of Latin American art. Like Kirstein's trip, Barr's was made possible thanks to Rockefeller's Inter-American Fund. However, only $500 was allotted for the purchase of works of art in Cuba.[559] Nevertheless, as Barr recalled the following year: "I felt before leaving I had really aroused a good deal of interest and was very pleased to hear during the succeeding months that Señora Gomez [sic] Mena had financed a [...] gallery for the promotion and sale of modern Cuban paintings."[560] Barr's stimulating visit would have informed Carreño's aspirations for visibility on the international stage.

More concretely, what had converted Carreño to the use of Duco paint? The year after Barr's visit, Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros, then in exile from Mexico, arrived in Havana, as analyzed in Chapter 2. Gómez Mena commissioned Siqueiros to produce a mural in her home, *Alegoría de la igualdad y confraternidad de las razas blanca y negra en Cuba*, on which Carreño collaborated as a member of the muralist's team.[561] **(Figure 4.15)** Here, Siqueiros introduced Carreño to the use of Duco, an automobile lacquer which Carreño would use to hallucinogenic effect in *Sugar Cane*

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559 Alfred Barr, Letter to A. Conger Goodyear, September 30, 1943, Exhibition file 255, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
560 Ibid.
561 Siqueiros's mural has been discussed in, amongst others, Fox, *op. cit.*, 70-84; Alejandro Anreus, "Siqueiros' Travels and 'Alternative Muralisms' in Argentina and Cuba," in Anreus, Robin Greeley, and Leonard Folgarait (editors), *Mexican Muralism: A Critical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 184-190; Philip Stein, *Siqueiros: His Life and Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1994), 140-145. The mural was destroyed soon after by Gómez Mena, who detested it.

Cutters. Siqueiros's influence may be seen to extend to the corporeal distortions and "double exposure" present in *Sugar Cane Cutters*' vibrant swirls of Duco, a technique likewise found in Siqueiros's murals in Chile (1942) and in Cuba (1943). Further, perhaps Carreño had heard from Siqueiros of the early plans, soon to be rejected, for the Mexican artist's solo exhibition at MoMA, arguably bestowing upon Siqueiros's techniques an additional sheen of what Kirstein termed "exportable prestige."

With *Sugar Cane Cutters*, I contend, Carreño harnessed his fortune to a hybrid position between two artists recognized across the Americas—Portinari and Siqueiros. While the painting certainly also cuts machete-like through Futurism and Cubism, my interpretation posits that Carreño wedded his Portinari-esque scene of export commodity labor to the technical innovation of Siqueiros—the use of Duco and the effect of "double exposure." One might go further to say that Carreño was internalizing elements from artists from Brazil and from Mexico (as we have seen, the two countries that had been singled out by MoMA's exhibition program) so as to better embody *the Latin American artist*. What's more, José Gómez Sicre, Carreño's close friend, was in the early stages of planning an exhibition of contemporary Cuban painting with Barr. *Modern Cuban Painters* would open at MoMA in the spring of 1944. This exhibition, funded by Gómez Mena, would introduce an international audience to Cuban art, elevating the international stature of Cuban artists to equal that of the Mexican and Brazilian artists already recognized by the museum.

While the MoMA purchased a preparatory sketch for *Sugar Cane Cutters*, the painting itself returned to Havana. However, the MoMA did buy another sugar-themed

painting that year—Wifredo Lam's *The Jungle* (1943).[562] **(Figure 4.16)** Citing personal reservations about Gómez Sicre, Lam had declined to participate in *Modern Cuban Painters*.[563] Rather, an exhibition of his art was shown contemporaneously at New York's Pierre Matisse Gallery.[564] In this exhibition, Lam's most famous painting—*The Jungle* (1943)—was exhibited and swiftly purchased from the gallery by MoMA thanks to the Inter-American Fund. MoMA purchased the painting for $1,800, a substantial sum for a painting from any region, and a significant chunk of the Inter-American Fund's total.[565]

The Jungle presents a dense thicket of forms, both human and vegetal. Likewise engaged in what I am terming an *art of raw materials*, Lam's painting depicts hybrid anthropomorphs incorporating features of both sugar and tobacco plants. The painting is often compared to Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), notably acquired by MoMA in 1939. **(Figure 4.17)** Lam had befriended Picasso in Paris between 1938 and 1941, prior to the Cuban artist's return to Havana. This comparison often serves

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[562] For more discussion of *The Jungle*, see amongst others Lowery Stokes Sims, *Wifredo Lam and the International Avant-Garde, 1923-1982* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002); John Yau, "Please Wait by the Coatroom," *Arts* 63 (December 1988), 56-59; Juan A. Martínez, "The Vanguardia Generation in its Social Context," in Martínez, *Cuban Art and National Identity: The Vanguardia Painters, 1927-1950* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994), 32-49; Julia Herzberg, "Rereading Lam," in Arturo Lindsay (ed.), *Santeria Aesthetics in Contemporary Latin American Art* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 149-169; Robert Linsley, "Wifredo Lam: Painter of Negritude," *Art History* vol. 11, Issue 4 (December 1988), 526-544.
[563] Wifredo Lam, Copy of a Letter to Alfred Barr, February 21, 1944, Box 14, Folder 4: Lam, Wifredo Correspondence 1944, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archive, Morgan Library.
[564] The Pierre Matisse Gallery was a principal site for the sale of work by artists from Latin America. The gallery hosted exhibitions of work by Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros (further discussed in Chapter 2), and Roberto Matta in the first half of the 1940s.
[565] "Stockbook Sales 1932-1946," Box 172, Folder 5, Pierre Matisse Gallery Archives, Morgan Library.

implicitly to reduce Lam to a disciple of the European master. However, a comparison of Lam's painting and Picasso's *Demoiselles* should analyze what it meant to substitute sugar and tobacco plants for prostitutes or, perhaps more accurately, *as* prostitutes.

At this time, Cuba's economy relied upon the success of its primary exports (sugar, tobacco) on the world stage, with the United States representing its principal market.[566] If in the Parisian avant-garde tradition the figure of the prostitute often functioned as an allegory for both the city and sometimes for the artist, Lam's prostitutes were rendered as Cuban raw materials in search of a market. What's more, Lam produced this painting expressly for the New York art market. Like Carreño's painting, *The Jungle* sells its *Cubanidad* and thus hybridizes not just vegetable and human but also culture and commerce in the puzzle-logic of its image. While Carreño idealized the labor of sugar cane in sensualized tendrils and exuberant Duco paint, Lam's *The Jungle* more ambivalently produced a Cuban export picture by transculturating the tropes of Cuban exports (sugar and tobacco) both with Afro-Cuban deities and with Picasso's famous prostitutes.

This case-study has sought to locate the making of Carreño's *Sugar Cane Cutters* at the intersection of a number of actors, from Barr to Siqueiros to Lam, and discourses that converged in Havana in 1942 and 1943 concerning the commodification of Cuban art for the New York market—a market from which both Carreño and Lam hoped to profit.

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[566] See Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1947). As ethnologist Fernando Ortiz had posited in *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (originally published in 1940), these two crops could be seen as anthropomorphized protagonists of the national narrative. Ortiz's theory of "transculturation" was a dynamic, multi-directional process (complicating Malinowski's unidirectional "acculturation").

Twilights and afterlives

The planning of Barr's and Gómez Sicre's *Modern Cuban Painters* exhibition had presented MoMA's staff with an opportunity to address the museum's relationship to *Latin American art* more broadly. As Barr had written to Board of Trustees chairman A. Conger Goodyear:

> The Cuban proposal brings up the question of our future policy toward Latin American art. It is possible that during the past three years we have done too much about Latin America. In the case of recent acquisitions, although we turned down a good many, I think we were perhaps too generous in accepting several mediocre works. I would agree that this year perhaps we should not have a major Latin American show, but I do most urgently recommend that we continue our interest in Latin American art, both through exhibitions and acquisitions.[567]

The exhibition was approved with the caveat that it be privately funded by Gómez Mena, rather than from the museum's budget, by the OIAA, or by the Cuban government.[568] This conformed to Goodyear's condition that the exhibition be initiated "on the basis of quality rather than of politics."[569]

With limited resources, Gómez Sicre resorted to transporting several gouaches, watercolors, and drawings "personally, as baggage."[570] The haphazard nature of the exhibition's planning marked a stark contrast to the expansive, exhaustive government-museum partnership of an exhibition such as *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* four years earlier, which filled three box car loads of a freight train, or the ambitious *Brazil Builds* of 1943.

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[567] Barr, Letter to Goodyear, *op cit.*

[568] Barr, Memo to Monroe Wheeler, August 12, 1943, Exhibition file 225, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[569] Barr, Letter to Stephen C. Clark, October 6, 1943, Exhibition file 225, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

[570] José Gómez Sicre, Letter to Monroe Wheeler, January 1, 1944, Exhibition file 225, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

The exhibition was on view from March 17 until May 7, 1944. **(Figure 4.18)** In a review of the MoMA exhibition in the Havana newspaper *Gaceta del Caribe*, the journalist declared that "Estamos invadiendo a los yanquis!" [We are invading the Yankees!][571] The humor here is directly proportional to its inversion of historical power relationships of colonization and intervention.[572]

However, the exhibition in fact marked the twilight of the museum's *Latin American art* boom. Barr had already noted in the autumn of 1943:

> [W]ith the successful progress of the War there is now an obvious official tendency to restrict or abandon our efforts to bring about cultural interchange with Latin America. I am convinced that such a retreat will more than counterbalance whatever good has been achieved by the activities of the past three years. The Latin Americans are no fools and have looked forward cynically to the gradual collapse of the Good Neighbor Policy, at least on the cultural level.[573]

The museum's engagements with *Latin American art* as such were capped by a Conference on Studies in Latin-American Art, sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies, and held at the museum from May 28 to May 31, 1945. The conference, which covered a range of topics from Pre-Columbian to modern art, included the participation of muralist Jean Charlot, art historian George Kubler, *Brazil Builds*

[571] "Colores Cubanos en Nueva York," *Gaceta del Caribe*, La Habana, May, 1944 (Año 1: No. 3), 32, Exhibition file 225, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[572] Discussion of U.S. annexation of Cuba had percolated in the middle of the nineteenth century; U.S. participation in the Spanish-American War for Cuban independence had largely been to protect U.S. interests in Cuban exports; the Platt Amendment of 1903 (abrogated in 1934) permitted the U.S. to intervene when Cuban policies were detrimental to U.S. business interests. While the Constitution of 1940 broadened the rights of citizenship, Batista's government (1940-1944) also renewed ties of dependency that had characterized U.S.-Cuban relations prior to the antagonistic decade of the 1930s. See Louis A. Pérez, Jr, *Cuba and the United States: Ties of Singular Intimacy* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990).
[573] Barr, Letter to Goodyear, *op. cit.*

curator Philip Goodwin, and Grace McCann Morley, among others.[574] In a document circulated at MoMA on May 17, an agenda for the conference was detailed. In advance of his lecture on "Problems of Research and Documentation" of Latin American art, Barr outlined the following topics:

> The question of politics: its effect on intellectual and artistic relations.
> The question of economics: our role in the support of Latin-American artists. Great diversity among different countries; contrasting resentment and welcome of North American activity.
> The question of artistic standards: what is 'exportable' (or importable)? Distinction between quality and other important values.
> The question of critical and scholarly standards of research and publication in the modern field.
> Conclusion: the political value of non-political values.[575]

What Kirstein had termed MoMA's "apparently innocent" appearance of "political and professional purity," Barr framed as "the political value of non-political values." Art's apparent autonomy was deceptive; indeed, its guise of autonomy permitted it to do the work of politics by other means.

The museum would abandon the project of *Latin American art* it had briefly institutionalized, in what Eva Cockcroft would describe as the "ghettoization" of art from Latin America in the United States after World War II.[576] Nelson Rockefeller would

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[574] See Elizabeth Wilder (editor), *Studies in Latin American Art: Proceedings; Conference on Studies in Latin American Art (1945: Museum of Modern Art)* (Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1949).
[575] Alfred Barr, Draft for Latin American Art Conference, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. Papers, 1.177, mf2174: 1087, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.
[576] Eva Cockcroft, "The United States and Socially Concerned Latin American Art, 1920-1970," in Luis R. Cancel, et al., *The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920-1970* (New York: Bronx Museum of the Arts & Harry N. Abrams, 1988), 194.

continue to replenish the Inter-American Fund in small spurts over the next two decades but exhibitions would avoid specifically Latin American themes.[577]

On the heels of the rhetoric of equal partnership emphasized by the OIAA's commercial, political, and cultural activities, Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch first used the terms "center" and "periphery" in a series of 1944 lectures. For Prebisch, the unequal terms of trade between "center" and "periphery" became a primary argument for "inward-directed growth" or import substitution industrialization. While Prebisch developed this line of thinking in relation to Argentina, he began to expand the purview of this model to Latin America more generally. In one 1946 text, Prebisch effectively discredited the relevance of "equilibrium theories in international trade" from the perspective of Latin America, because "governments of peripheral countries [...] could not affect world prices for their goods as the center could for its goods."[578] The U.N. named Prebisch the inaugural director of the Economic Commission for Latin America in

[577] Works collected in the 1960s diverged greatly from those purchased by Kirstein two decades earlier, now by artists such as Paris-based Julio LeParc and Carlos Cruz-Diez whose works emphasized opticality and kinetics. In one document reporting on purchases made using the Inter-American Fund, written on September 27, 1966, LeParc's *Instability through Movement of Spectator* and Cruz-Diez's *Physiochrome 114* are mentioned. Alfred Barr, "Re: Purchases made from the Inter-American Fund," Memorandum to Nelson Rockefeller, September 27, 1966, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 142, Folder 1400. The exception was the exhibition *Latin American Architecture since 1945* (1955). While in the past decades, there have been occasional exhibitions of artists from Latin America, notably, 2014-2015 have witnessed the exhibitions *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988*, *Latin America in Construction: Architecture 1955-1980*, *From Bauhaus to Buenos Aires: Grete Stern and Horacio Coppola*, along with the upcoming *Transmissions: Art in Eastern Europe and Latin America, 1960-1980* and *Joaquín Torres-García: The Arcadian Modern*.

[578] Joseph Love, "Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 15, no. 3 (1980), 55. While Prebisch's model initially described Britain's role vis-à-vis Latin America in the nineteenth century as holder of the gold standard, Prebisch observed that by 1930, this "center" had shifted to the United States.

1948.[579] While the ECLA promoted the idea of industrialization for all of Latin America as a means to produce greater autonomy and equity for the region vis-à-vis the global economic system, Prebisch nevertheless admitted that "the benefits of technological progress were absorbed by the center."[580]

Nelson Rockefeller agreed. He likewise promoted Latin American industrialization, understanding it as beneficial to the U.S. economy, supplying these countries with technical expertise, industrial machinery, and products. The industrialization of these countries, Rockefeller reasoned, would raise the standard of living and prime them to consume U.S. goods.[581] While many Latin American proponents of industrialization projected that people in each country would soon be consuming their own national goods produced by import substitution, Rockefeller and his corporate colleagues understood these economies and consumers more as subsidiaries of U.S. industry, following the model of "General Motors of Brazil."

Rockefeller's engagements with art and artists from Latin America adopted a new and quieter strategy after the war. Alongside his private, for-profit initiative, the International Basic Economy Corporation (IBEC), he consulted in and encouraged the founding of museums of modern art in cities such São Paulo (1948) and Rio (1952), as

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[579] Ibid., 56. Prebisch's development of these ideas within the institutional framework of a UN commission raises further questions about the degree to which he imagined inward-directed development participating or not participating in global capitalism more fully.
[580] Ibid, 57. This period likewise witnessed the birthing of terms that like "center" and "periphery" continue to shape the "world picture." The concept of "underdevelopment" would be established in 1947-1948 by the United Nations, on the heels of the 1946 branding of "First World" and "Third World" distinctions.
[581] Amongst others, see Nelson Rockefeller, "Will We Remain Good Neighbors after the War?" *Saturday Evening Post* 216 (November 6, 1943), 16-17.

mentioned in Chapter 1.[582] Much as import substitution industrialization in these countries sought to redraw the commodity chain maps so as to diminish dependency upon the United States and Europe for imports and exports, the reverse-engineering of museums of modern art claimed to render Latin American capitals as the sites of a legitimating modernism, independent of New York and Europe. However, both culture and import substitution maintained a relationship with the figure of U.S. "expertise." In the process, very little art from Latin America traveled north.

René d'Harnoncourt, returning to MoMA from a mission to the South much like Kirstein's 1942 trip, had written to Rockefeller in May of 1945 that future exhibitions prepared in New York for circulation in Latin America should place "stress on the United States as a cultural center of the world."[583] Indeed, as is well known, this concept was emphasized by traveling exhibitions initiated by MoMA in the following decades. However, these exhibitions would travel not just to Latin America but all over the world under the auspices of the International Council, the museum's cultural diplomatic arm during the Cold War.[584] Abstract Expressionism proved eminently exportable. This was not Siqueiros's "art of democracy" but that of former Experimental Workshop participant Jackson Pollock. **(Figure 4.19)** It was non-objective art emblematizing what Barr had termed "the political value of non-political values." The U.S., awash in postwar

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[582] See Aleca Le Blanc, *Tropical Modernisms: Art and Architecture in Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s* (PhD dissertation: University of Southern California, 2011) and Caroline Jones, "Anthropophagy in São Paulo's Cold War," *ArtMargins*, vol. 2, no. 1 (February 2013), 3-36.
[583] René d'Harnoncourt, Report to Nelson Rockefeller, May 21, 1945, Rockefeller Archive Center, Nelson Rockefeller Collection, Record Group 4, Series L, Box 135, Folder 1325.
[584] *The Museum of Modern Art at Mid-Century: At Home and Abroad* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1994); Guilbaut, *op. cit.*

prosperity, largely turned away from cultural exchange with Latin America, focusing upon European reconstruction under the Marshall Plan. What's more, the Middle East was the site of the next oil boom.[585]

It would be in the 1960s that a conjuncture of events and discourses—the Cuban Revolution, modernization theory, and dependency theory chief among them—would produce a comparable surge in *Latin American art*. However, I have argued that the 1933-1945 period installed the network, producing a template for positions of both cooperation and resistance that remain operative to the present.

[585] Mitchell, *op. cit.*

Conclusion

This dissertation has looked at the construction of the field of *Latin American art* in the 1930s and early 1940s through the lens of import/export, understanding the making of art in relationship to trade, raw materials, import substitution industrialization, and materiality. Amidst the Great Depression, the Good Neighbor Policy, and World War II, works of art variously digested, participated in, and resisted the commercial and geopolitical reconfigurations of the era. Portinari embodied the "Good Neighbor emissary" whose export paintings were poised between the idea of Brazil as an export economy based in coffee and as an industrialized nation. While Siqueiros traveled across the hemisphere to promote and produce an industrialized muralism, Torres-García modeled a "Constructive Tradition of America" that proved influential far beyond Uruguay. Nelson Rockefeller and his emissaries, through both the MoMA and the OIAA, helped consolidate the category *Latin American art* through curatorial and collecting practices.

In the immediate postwar era, many Latin Americans hoped for a "Marshall Plan for Latin America," while others were more skeptical. For instance, Brazilian ambassador to the United States Carlos Martins—who had been peripherally engaged with the cultural exchanges involving Portinari during the Good Neighbor era, and whose wife, Maria Martins, had sold many of her sculptures to Rockefeller—had grown increasingly critical. Writing in 1947, Martins described the Marshall Plan as a means by which the U.S. could transform Europeans back into "paying customers" while also managing the

threat of inflation due to the U.S.'s overproduction.[586] Martins saw U.S. political ideology as in part the inheritance of the Protestant Ethic: "According to Max Weber and Sombart, one of the characteristics of Protestant cultures is the militant passion for moral universalisms, and the ethical idealism of this country [the U.S.] is, without a doubt, that of liberal capitalism."[587] In essence, Martins saw the Marshall Plan as a Good Neighbor Policy for Europe.[588] He doubted the likelihood of a "Marshall Plan for Latin America" because of a number of binaries in the U.S. postwar ideological program: "regional preferences versus the worldwide expansion of multilateral trade; national industries versus international commerce; economic nationalism versus the needs of foreign capital; controlled economies versus free-trade."[589]

Indeed, the U.S.'s engagement with Latin America in the 1930s and 1940s had been a transitional stage between a period of isolationism and the emergence of the U.S. as a superpower in the wake of World War II. While certain interactions—between capitalists and Communists, for instance—had been possible in the 1930s, they were foreclosed soon thereafter. Certain categories—modern art, *Latin American art*, American art, freedom and liberty—and a new relationship between aesthetics and

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586 Carlos Martins, Letter to Raúl Fernandes, September 29, 1947, 2, Itamaraty, *Missões Diplomáticas Brasilerias, Washington, Oficios, Setembro-Outubro, 1947*. As quoted in Elizabeth Cobbs, *The Rich Neighbor Policy: Rockefeller and Kaiser in Brazil* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992), 65.

587 Carlos Martins, Letter to Raúl Fernandes, March 28, 1948, 13-14, Itamaraty, *Missões Diplomáticas Brasilerias, Washington, Oficios, Março, 1948*. As quoted in Cobbs, *op. cit.*, 66.

588 For related arguments, see Frank Ninkovich, *The Diplomacy of Ideas: U.S. Foreign Policy and Cultural Relations, 1938-1950* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981) and J. Manuel Espinosa, *Inter-American Beginnings of U.S. Cultural Diplomacy, 1936-1948* (Washington: Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State, 1976).

589 Martins, Letter to Raúl Fernandes, March 28, 1948, 8-9, *op. cit.* As quoted in Cobbs, *op. cit.*, 67.

politics quickly ossified. Already in 1945, the category *Latin American art* was tainted by its association with the U.S.'s own political and economic strategy.

The project of exhibiting art from the region was transferred to institutions such as the Visual Arts Section of the Organization of American States (formerly the Pan-American Union) of which José Gómez Sicre, co-curator of the 1944 Cuban painting exhibition at MoMA, would assume directorship in 1946. As Claire Fox has recently analyzed, Gómez Sicre would play a pivotal role in brokering Cold War cultural politics between the United States and Latin America.[590] Whereas Grace McCann Morley and Lincoln Kirstein had approached art and artists from Latin America as outsiders, Gómez Sicre could ostensibly negotiate *from* his identity as *Latin American*. Nevertheless, this did not stop Siqueiros (among others) from accusing him of being a CIA agent in the 1960s.[591]

The dissertation has argued that this period produced the field of *Latin American art*. Less centrally, the dissertation has likewise argued that *American art* (in the sense denotative of U.S. art), as we know it today, was also produced by this era. While the U.S. was central to the institutionalization of *Latin American art*, this art, from

[590] Claire Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
[591] See Alejandro Anreus, "Ultimas conversaciones con José Gómez Sicre," *ArteFacto: Revista de arte y cultura en blanco y negro* no. 18 (Summer 2000), n.p., José Gómez Sicre papers, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin. In his important book *La jaula invisible* (*The Invisible Cage*), published in Cuba in the 1980s, Orlando Suárez Suárez described Gómez Sicre as "superagent of imperialism and manipulating *manager* of contemporary Latin American and Carribean art." "[S]uperagente del imperialismo y *manager* manipulador del arte latinoamericana." Orlando Suárez Suárez, *La jaula invisible: neocolonialismo y plástica latinoamericana* (La Habana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1986), 77, as cited and translated in Fox, *op. cit.*, 14. While *La Jaula invisible* is an important book, it is necessary to note that there are factual inaccuracies—for instance, attributing Lincoln Kirstein's acquisitions of Latin American art to Alfred Barr.

Siqueiros's Duco spills to Torres-García's modern man primitivism, was no less central to the *aesthetics* of what would become *American art* in the postwar period. From Jackson Pollock's apprenticeship with Siqueiros to Barnett Newman's inspiration from Pre-Columbian sources, these two histories were densely intertwined. While "imported culture" was the inferiority complex of many Latin American artists and intellectuals, it was in fact likewise the condition for U.S. artists, whose work had "imported" Latin American artists' experiments into their own *modes of making*. This U.S. art was then exported internationally during the Cold War. While the space occupied by the United States in this dissertation may appear to some readers to re-subordinate Latin America to the "colossus to the North," it is only in completing this dissertation that I can see how the art and culture of the U.S. have been equally shaped by these networks and exchanges. As Fernand Braudel observed in his study of the Mediterranean, despite geographical distance, the transnational network produced by trade routes sews the territory together. Indeed, Braudel's own time spent in Brazil during World War II proved influential; he in fact quotes Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre in this famous passage, saying that the Mediterranean Sea "unites more than it divides, making a single world of North and South, a 'bi-continent,' as Gilberto Freyre has called it."[592]

In Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela, geometric abstraction began to dominate artistic production in the 1940s and 1950s, concomitant with an embrace of consumer capitalism accompanying postwar modernization programs. Scholars such as Pedro Erber and Megan Sullivan have recently compared the Cold War role of geometric abstraction in Latin American art to the Cold War role of Abstract Expressionism in the United

[592] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Volume 1* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 117.

States during the same period.[593] Figures such as Siqueiros came to make realism a rallying cry against the growing dominance of abstraction—be it in the Venice Biennale or the São Paulo Bienal or in exhibitions circulated internationally by MoMA's International Council.

The modernization of what was now known as the "Third World" was divergently theorized in this period. Modernization theorist Walt Whitman Rostow at MIT claimed that all societies follow identical "Stages of Growth" in a teleological model of postwar developmentalism.[594] The developmentalist dream paradoxically promised the leveling out of uneven world trade towards a horizon of capitalist equivalence, yet Latin American nations would figure as "junior partners" in Rostow's formulation. The Carnegie, Rockefeller, and Ford Foundations were the principal funders of developmentalist studies in the postwar period.[595]

Amidst the Cuban Revolution, developmentalist policies, and the U.S.'s Cold War program the Alliance for Progress, another set of exhibitions was organized to tour Latin America in the mid-1960s. These would be jointly sponsored by the oil company Esso (a phonetic spelling of Standard Oil's initials) and the Organization of American States. While the State Department famously funded exhibitions of Abstract Expressionism by U.S. artists as a "weapon of the Cold War," the octopus-like Esso Salons of 1965

[593] Pedro Erber, *Breaching the Frame: the Rise of Contemporary Art in Brazil and Japan* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 32-34 and 47-48; Megan Sullivan, *Locating Abstraction: The South American Coordinates of the Avant-Garde, 1945-1959* (PhD dissertation: Harvard University, 2013), 38.
[594] Walt Whitman Rostow, *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960).
[595] Edward Berman, *The Ideology of Philanthropy: the Influence of the Carnegie, Ford, and Rockefeller Foundations on American Foreign Policy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983), 99; Nils Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization Theory in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

cultivated abstract art from Latin America.[596] Participating artists in each city would be evaluated by local and international judges; the favorite works would be exhibited in the OAS galleries in Washington, D.C.

The Esso Salons were immortalized in two caricatures for a Mexico City newspaper. In one image, an Aztec chieftain, bearing a scepter inscribed with the word "Nacionalismo," is confronted by a grinning man wearing an OEA (Organización de Estados Americanos) badge on his arm and hoisting up an abstract painting for the Aztec's contemplation, as a form of offering. **(Figure 5.1)** He is accompanied by a placid Uncle Sam and an oafish figure toting a case of Coca Cola. The national confronts the international (or, perhaps better, the transnational, in its original corporate sense). The Aztec empire has been replaced by a new imperialism. A gift economy (or, more historically accurate, a loan economy) is suggested by this image, with steep interest implied.

In the second image, entitled "Abstract motives?," a group of museum goers (elite, intellectual, and on the older side) admire an "abstract" painting. **(Figure 5.2)** The image barely camouflages a dollar sign. The dollar sign in turn becomes an S that in turn combines with the letters E, S, and O to spell "Esso," while one E joins an O and an A to spell "OEA" (Organización de Estados Americanos). The paintings are not very abstract, but the motives are (abstract in the sense of finance capital, material in the realities of oil extraction, refining, and distribution).

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[596] See the catalogue *Esso Salon of Young Artists* (Pan American Union and Esso, 1965). For the famous polemical argument about Abstract Expressionism, see Eva Cockcroft, "Abstract Expressionism, Weapon of the Cold War," *Artforum*, vol. 15, no. 10 (June, 1974), 39-41.

As these caricature suggest, the 1960s marked a re-emergence of debates that had last flared between 1933-1945. The competing models of the Cuban Revolution and the U.S. modernization theorists re-particularized a field of artists and institutions that had been focused upon "catching up" with Paris and New York, homologous with industries which sought to catch up largely through collaboration with transnational corporations. As Andrea Giunta has analyzed in the case of Argentina, the role of transnational capital in modernization produced a constant if mutating brief for artists in the 1960s.[597]

Concomitantly, the dependency theorists of the 1960s developed more critical analyses, now set within the context of developmentalist dictatorships across the continent and with the example of the Cuban Revolution with which to think. Cardoso and Faletto's *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (1967) merged the ECLA's structuralist approach, developed by Prebisch, to Marxist critique.[598] While modernization theory claimed the isomorphic nature of all development, dependency theory treated such universalism with caution, emphasizing the asymmetry borne out through the historically entrenched power dynamics and inequalities of imperialism. What's more, while building upon Prebisch's center-periphery model, these studies of the 1960s also scrutinized the internal class dynamics of Latin American societies.[599]

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[597] Andrea Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).
[598] Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
[599] Fernando Henrique Cardoso, "The Consumption of Dependency Theory in the United States," *Latin American Research Review*, vol. 12, no. 3 (1977), 12.

Alongside Leftist filmmakers,[600] artists and critics began exploring how uneven development uniquely positioned cultural producers from Latin America to critique global capitalism. For instance, Argentinian art critic Marta Traba, who had participated in the juries of the ESSO Salon while living in Colombia, later spoke out against the neo-imperial dependency that characterized recent art from Latin America.[601] As Uruguayan artist Luis Camnitzer wrote in 1969: "In the colonial areas, in a role which is not very defined—somewhere between a buffoon and a spokesman—[the artist] is one of the leaks through which the informative pressure of the Empire keeps filtering through."[602] Camnitzer continued:

> As with Commerce, Art is above stingy political games: 'it helps the communication and understanding of the people,' 'it is a common denominator for understanding.' 'The world is smaller every day,' and under the rug of this phrase one sweeps the moment-by-moment growing difference between the cultural needs of economically developed countries and those underdeveloped or developing.[603]

Camnitzer's polemical statements help us to connect the Good Neighbor Policy cultural exchanges with both the 1960s and with the contemporary discourses permeating the "global art world."

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[600] I am thinking of Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha's "cinema of hunger," directors such as Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Santiago Alvarez in Cuba, and "Third Cinema" pioneers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino in Argentina.
[601] Marta Traba, *Dos décadas vulnerables en las artes plásticas latinoamericanas, 1950-1970* (Buenos Aires: Siglo veintiuno editors, 2005). This book was originally published in 1973. The repressive violence of developmentalist dictatorships would fuel these critical approaches, while also censoring them.
[602] Luis Camnitzer, "Contemporary Colonial Art," in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson (editors), *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press, 1999), 225. The text was first presented at the Latin American Studies Association conference in Washington, D.C. in 1969, then translated into Spanish and published in Uruguay in *Marcha* in 1970.
[603] Ibid.

In the rhetorically global world produced in the aftermath of the Cold War, artists from Latin America and beyond frequently foreground the localization they perform to "universal" trends, both when producing work "at home" and when producing work for the mushrooming cloud of biennials and art fairs."[604] In 1969, Camnitzer had satirized one prevailing tendency in the art produced outside the art world centers for those metropoles:

> The artist [...] holds the same attitude which Chinese restaurants have in western countries: a Chinese restaurant submits willingly to the image the metropolitan culture has of it. It announces its name with Chinesely-styled letters, advertises 'exotic food,' and has, just in case, a page of metropolitan food listed in the menu.[605]

In the early twenty-first century, by contrast, artists participate in what Gerardo Mosquera has termed a "global metaculture" in which a shared language of contemporary art "acts as an 'English' that allows communication and this is forced, knocked about, reinvented by a diversity of new subjects that gain access to international networks undergoing outright expansion."[606] As such, this field feeds upon difference while requiring standardization.

Within this context, the import/export paradigm has proven a fundamental rubric of contemporary art, with artists connecting their own mobile artworks to larger geo-economic circuits. Cildo Meireles, Hans Haacke, and Alfredo Jaar have been tracing commodity chains for decades. Allan Sekula's major works focused on global shipping

[604] Caroline Jones, "Globalism/Globalization" in James Elkins, Zhivka Valiavicharska, and Alice Kim (editors), *Art and Globalization* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 129-137; Pamela Lee, *Forgetting the Art World* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012).
[605] Camnitzer, *op. cit.*, 226.
[606] Gerardo Mosquera, "Walking with the Devil: Art, Culture, and Internationalization," in Helmut Anjeier and Yudhishthir Raj Isar (editors), *Cultural Expression, Creativity and Innovation* (Woburn: SAGE, 2010), 53.

as a "forgotten space" of capitalism. Romuald Hazoumè recycles gasoline containers to make "African masks." Simon Starling produces installations that make the outsourcing of labor (for instance, to China) and the sourcing of materials into components of the work's display and reception. Ai Weiwei and Santiago Sierra also participate in this paradigm. Kara Walker's monumental sculpture made of sugar in Brooklyn's abandoned Domino Sugar Factory in 2014 tied the confection to histories of slavery, connecting site and material to global chains not just of sugar but also of commoditized people. Based in Brazil, the United States, the Republic of Bénin, Germany, China, and Mexico, these artists could be joined by a long list of artists from many other countries.

A central question underlying this dissertation remains operative in 2015: Does the work of art function as one more (symbolic) good in global trade and, if that is the case, how might its very working trouble seamless narratives of the free market?[607] Rather than arguing for art as a site of resistance, I conclude here by emphasizing visibility. At the risk of reviving the realism-abstraction debates, in the wake of a century of representation critique (from Duchamp's urinal to Malevich's square to Pollock's skeins to Clark's *bichos* to Judd's box to Kosuth's word to Tiravanija's curry), art's modest, apparently outmoded capacity to *represent* might be of use again, not least in painting global capitalism's portrait.

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[607] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods," in *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 112-141.

Illustrations

Introduction

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 0.1. Wifredo Lam, *The Jungle* (1943), Inter-American Fund, Museum of Modern Art.

Chapter 1

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.1 Cândido Portinari and his wife Maria in his studio, 1932.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.2. Cândido Portinari, *Lavrador de Café* (1934), Museu de Arte de São Paulo Assis Chateaubriand, São Paulo.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.3. Portinari, *Morro* (1933), Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Fund, Museum of Modern Art.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.4. Le Corbusier, drawing of urban plan for Rio (1929), Fondation Le Corbusier, Paris.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.5. Tarsila do Amaral, *Operários* (1933), Palácio Boa Vista, São Paulo.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.6. Portinari, *Café* (1935), Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.7. Butter-Nut Coffee ad, 1922.

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Figure 1.8. Edward Hopper, *Nighthawks* (1942), Art Institute of Chicago.

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Figure 1.9. Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, Ministry of Education and Health (1938).

IMAGE REDACTED

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IMAGE REDACTED

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IMAGE REDACTED

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IMAGE REDACTED

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IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.16. Portinari, *Abby Aldrich Rockefeller* (1942/1949), Private Collection.

IMAGE REDACTED

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IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.18. Carmen Miranda in a film still from *The Gang's All Here* (1943).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.19. Donald Duck and Joe Carioca in Disney's *Saludos Amigos* (1942) dancing on a version of Roberto Burle Marx's designs for the Rio streets.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 1.20. Cover of catalogue for *Brazil Builds* (1943).

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Chapter 2

IMAGE REDACTED

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IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.3. Siqueiros et al, *Street Meeting* (1932), Los Angeles. [destroyed]

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.4. Siqueiros et al, *Plastic Exercise* (1933), Museo Bicentario, Buenos Aires.

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Figure 2.5. Siqueiros, *Birth of Fascism* (1936), original version. The Hydra-headed baby was later painted over. The altered version is in the collection of the Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, Mexico City.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.6 Detail of Siqueiros, *Collective Suicide* (1936), Museum of Modern Art. Photo by the author.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.7. Detail of *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie* (1939-1940), Mexican Electricians' Syndicate, Mexico City.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.8. Siqueiros, *Echo of a Scream* (1937), Museum of Modern Art.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.9. Siqueiros, *Ethnography* (1939), Museum of Modern Art.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.10. Siqueiros, *Oil Well on Fire* (1939), whereabouts unknown.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.11. Siqueiros, *The Tempest* (1939), whereabouts unknown.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.12. Detail of *Portrait of the Bourgeoisie.*

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.13. Siqueiros et al, detail of *Death to the Invader* (1941-1942), Escuela México, Chillán.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.14. Photograph of *Death to the Invader* in process.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.15. Siqueiros, *Allegory of Racial Equality in Cuba* (1943), Havana. [destroyed]

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.16. Siqueiros, *New Day for Democracy* (1943), Sevilla Biltmore Hotel, Havana. [destroyed]

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.17. Photograph of Siqueiros with his painting *Two Mountains of America: Lincoln and Martí* (1943), Havana. [destroyed]

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.18. Siqueiros, *New Democracy* (1945), Palacio de Bellas Artes, Mexico City.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.19. Detail of Siqueiros, *For the Total Safety of all Mexicans at Work* (1952-1954), Hospital de la Raza, Mexico City.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.20. Siqueiros, Fabricas Automex mural (1951).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.21. Alejandro Otero, *Coloritmo 12* (1956), Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 2.22. Morris Louis, *Para III* (1959), High Museum of Art.

Chapter 3

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.1. Joaquín Torres-García, Generalitat de Catalunya mural, Barcelona, 1910s.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.2. Torres-García, *Construcción I* (1930), Collection of José Mugrabi, New York.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.3. Torres-García, *Gare II* (1931), Private Collection, Fort Lauderdale.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.4. Torres-García, *Hombre con planos de color* (1929), Museo Torres García.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.5. Torres-García, *Untitled (Figures)* (1927), Museum of Modern Art.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.6. Statue from the Coast of Peru, from the *Arts anciens de l'Amérique* catalogue.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.7. Rafael, Barradas, *Calle de Barcelona* (1918), Collection of Patio Herreriano Museo de Arte Español, Valladolid, Spain.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.8. Torres-García, *Calle de Nueva York* (1920), MALBA, Buenos Aires.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.9. Torres-García, *Inverted Map* (1943 version).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.10. Amalia Nieto, *Estructura* (1936), reproduced in *Circulo y Cuadrado*.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.11. Torres-García, *Construction in White and Black* (1938), Museum of Modern Art. Gift of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros in honor of David Rockefeller.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.12. Torres-García, *Monumento Cósmico* (1938), Parque Rodó, Montevideo. It has since been moved across the street to the sculpture garden of the Museo Nacional de Artes Visuales.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.13. Cover of *Circulo y Cuadrado*, September 1938, now subtitled "Tradición Constructiva de América" and featuring an image of a "Bolivian Idol."

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.14. Installation view, The Fifth Exhibition of the Asociación de Arte Constructivo, Amigos del Arte, Montevideo, reproduced in *Circulo y Cuadrado*, 1938.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.15. Rosa Acle, *Norte* (1938), Davis Museum, Wellesley College.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.16. Works by Augusto Torres and Carmelo de Arzadun, reproduced in *Circulo y Cuadrado*, 1938.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.17. Torres-García, *Idea* (c. 1942) and *Padre Inti* (c. 1944).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.18. Torres-García, *Indoamérica* (1941), Cecilia Torres collection, New York.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.19. Torres-García, *The Port* (1942), Inter-American Fund, Museum of Modern Art.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.20. Rosa Acle, credited as *Arte Constructivo* (1944), reproduced in *Removedor*.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.21. TTG member Josefina Canel's work at St. Bois (1944).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.22. Tomás Maldonado, *Untitled* (1946), Private Collection.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.23. Carmelo Arden Quin, *Montevideo* (1943).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 3.24. Adolph Gottlieb, *The Seer* (1950), Phillips Collection.

Chapter 4

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.1. Caricature of Standard Oil (1904), artist and publication unknown.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.2. Diego Rivera at work on the mural for Rockefeller Center (1933).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.3. Monroe Wheeler and registrar Dorothy Dudley unpacking Mexican art at MoMA for the *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art* exhibition (1940).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.4. Miguel Covarrubias, *Twenty Centuries of Mexican Art at the Museum of Modern Art* for *Vogue* (1940), Yale University Art Gallery.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.5. Coatlicue being installed in MoMA garden (1940).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.6. Miguel Covarrubias, *Fortune* magazine cover (October, 1938).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.7. Luis Arenal, cover for *Futuro* magazine (1938).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.8. Pedro nervously preparing to soar above the Andes in a film still from Disney's *Saludos Amigos* (1942).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.9. ***Filling Station*** **ballet (first performed 1938), produced by Kirstein's American Ballet Caravan.**

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.10. Artist Oswaldo Guayasamín at the opening (1943).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.11. Lincoln Kirstein and Betsey Cushing Whitney at MoMA exhibition (1943).

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.12. Mario Carreño, *Sugar Cane Cutters* (1943), Carmita and Isaac Lif and family collection, Dominican Republic.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.13. Cândido Portinari, *Café* (1935), Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.14. Mario Carreño, *The Birth of the American Nations* (1940), Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.15. Siqueiros et al, *Allegory of Racial Equality in Cuba* mural (1943), Cuba. [destroyed]

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.16. Wifredo Lam, *The Jungle* (1943), Inter-American Fund, Museum of Modern Art.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.17. Pablo Picasso, *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907), Museum of Modern Art.

IMAGE REDACTED

Figure 4.18. Installation view, *Modern Cuban Painters* (1944).

IMAGE REDACTED

4.19. The unpacking of the exhibition *12 American Painters and Sculptors* after its six-city European tour (1954).

IMAGE REDACTED

5.1. Carcicature by unknown artist, published in *Política* (February 15, 1965).

IMAGE REDACTED

5.2. Vadillo, "Abstract Movies?" originally published in *El Día*, reproduced in *Política* (February 15, 1965).

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New York World's Fair Archive, New York Public Library, New York, New York

Pierre Matisse Gallery Archive, Morgan Library, New York, New York

Portinari Archive, Projeto Portinari, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York

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