

Decolonizing Contemporary Latin American Art, Special Issue

MDPI Arts, Jan 31–Jul 26, 2019

Deadline: Jul 26, 2019

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This Special Issue of Arts welcome articles on Latin American, Latinx, Caribbean, and diasporic contemporary art and historiography that is delinked to or critical of Western epistemic locations and/or to inverted paradigms of power. We invite contributors to submit their research for consideration in English. Submissions will be blind reviewed.

For instruction for submission go to:
https://www.mdpi.com/journal/arts/special_issues/decolonizing_contemporary_latin_american_art

In 2013, writing for TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World, Puerto Rican sociologist Ramon Grosfoguel noted that in the late 1990s, Latin Americanist scholars recurrently adopted an Area Studies' approach. "With a few exceptions," Grosfoguel writes, "they produced studies about the subaltern rather than studies with and from a subaltern perspective." This means that until the turn of this century, prominence was given to either a Western epistemic location through the adoption of Marxism and deconstruction as methodologies, or to postcolonial theory, where power relations are inverted yet the Cartesian dualism remains intact. While this has not disappeared, in the last decades, Grosfoguel and other scholars advocating decoloniality have significantly contributed to Latin American debates through scholarship that critiques Euro-American centric epistemologies and Third World fundamentalism. In the words of Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "the decolonial turn involves the de-investment from modern forms of validation and a commitment to forging values, practices, and forms of relation with others that can bring about a different order." Delving into the complexities of Latin America through the region's own histories of colonialization and cultural frameworks, decoloniality acknowledges that South-to-South artistic practices and thinking have existed in the Americas since the Conquest. It further claims that a significant shift regarding its current understanding as an unfinished, ongoing project occurred in the mid 20th century, with the work of Caribbean intellectuals and activists such as Aimé Césaire, Édouard Glissant, and Frantz Fanon.

As the field of contemporary Latin American art has expanded in academia, museum collections, curatorial practice, and the art market since the 1990s, what is still under- or misrepresented are precisely South-to-South forms of thinking. Urgent attention is needed in historicizing, analyzing, and disseminating hemispheric Latin American art. "Latin" America here is recognized as a cultural construct that includes the Caribbean, diasporic communities around the world, and the Latinx cultures of the United States. Geopolitically, scholarship on contemporary art has focused on

work by artists from elite backgrounds, especially Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina. Less consideration has been paid to issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Art from Central America; the Andes; the Anglophone, Dutch, Francophone, and Hispanophone Caribbean (apart from Cuba); and Latinx diasporas worldwide is still overlooked or approached from Eurocentric frameworks that do not favor it. In turn, aesthetic discourse has privileged postwar Euro-American ideas on modernism and postmodernism and sought to integrate certain kinds of Latin American cultural production into a universalist modern or postmodern canon. These discourses have failed to challenge the conceptual origins of these canons, reproducing and expanding them across cultures and geographies and thereby reinforcing modernism's claim to universality. Paradoxically, in the last five years, the word "decoloniality" has also grown in the field and in the discipline of art history at large, occupying titles in publications, academic panels, and exhibitions. And yet, as Grosfoguel reminds us: "The fact that one is socially located in the oppressed side of power relations does not automatically mean that he/she is epistemically thinking from a subaltern epistemic location."

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Guest Editors

Reference:

CFP: Decolonizing Contemporary Latin American Art, Special Issue. In: ArtHist.net, Feb 3, 2019 (accessed Jul 6, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/20086>>.