

Worldviews. Latin American Art and the Decolonial Turn (online, 4 Nov–2 Dec 21)

CVC, University of Cambridge / TrAIN, University of the Arts London / Online, Nov 4–Dec 2, 2021

Deadline: Aug 10, 2021

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This online conference invites contributions from scholars, curators and artists to discuss how decoloniality acts as a frame of reference in the study of Latin American Art. Worldviews will examine how such a frame has developed over the past decade, notably through a progressive interest in indigenous and/or Afro-descendent practices. It aims to question how critical discourse is constructed, while an ostensible divorce still prevails between scholarly debate and those insurgent social forces that struggle against marginalisation and racism. Questions raised include: What can we learn from the discipline's own historiography? How are we to negotiate agency and inclusivity when these are still seen to be attained through the hegemonic centres? What have been the roles of institutions in perpetuating centre/periphery dichotomies? Can inclusion and diversity mean more than a simple supplement to canonical paradigms?

Worldviews will begin with an introductory roundtable discussion assessing the legacies of the Meeting Margins: Transnational Art in Latin America and Europe 1950-1978 (Essex and UAL 2009-2011) research project. Meeting Margins consolidated the concept of transnationalism within historical debates that opposed an understanding of Latin American Art as peripheral. This session will discuss how the field of Latin American Art, its study, its institutional standing, has advanced over the last decade and analyse what may be the challenges it still faces. Confirmed speakers for this introductory session include: Isobel Whitelegg (Chair), Maria Inigo Clavo, Andrea Giunta, Michael Asbury.

The conference will then be structured around five themes. To promote multiple perspectives, each will be chaired by a specialist who contributed their vision to the development of the programme. We welcome papers on the following themes:

1) The Poetics of Abya Yala: Towards a Non-Colonial History of Contemporary Art

Chair: Pablo Jose Ramirez

Keynote: Bonaventura de Sousa Santos

For the Kuna people Abya Yala refers to a land of great vitality, a blooming land. The term has been widely used since the "2nd Continental Summit of Indigenous People and Nationalities from the Abya Yala" as a political leitmotif which refers to the continental land commonly known as America. In putting together scholarly research, artistic knowledge and community experiences, The Poetics of Abya Yala looks at the intricacies of a temporalisation of indigenous art that chal-

lenges the teleology of western art history. The panel will explore indigenous creation rooted in material culture; from the complexities of textile traditions to the depths of cosmological abstraction and spirituality, defending Indigenous Contemporary Art as an interruption of Neoliberal multiculturalist desire.

Themes approached may include:

- The dichotomy between modernity and indigeneity
- The way indigeneity has characterised modern art production in Latin America
- The conditions under which indigenous art is circulating within the art system
- The relationship between indigenous aesthetic production and its links to insurgent political movements.

2) Political Bodies, Gender and Race

Chair: Cecilia Fajardo-Hill

Keynote: Lilia Moritz Schwarcz

The Political Body is a broad notion that has come to characterise the artistic production of many artists in Latin America since the 1960s. Often linked to performance, public actions and photography, but also to conceptual art and other more traditional media, the political use of the body, or its centrality, has emerged in response to conditions of oppression - for reasons linked to state violence, race, gender or class. Over the past ten years, exhibitions branded as agitprop, feminist or queer, have engaged with the political body as a trope of radical art that is, in turn, endemic to the project of decolonisation. This section proposes to deconstruct the kinds of political engagement engendered by the use of the body. Themes approached may include:

- Embodied knowledge production (and consumption) that dismantle the Cartesian separation of mind and body
- The body as a receptacle or catalyst of violence
- The body in nature
- The ritual use of the body and possession
- The silencing of bodies
- Bodily inscriptions and cartographies
- The body as embodiment of community
- The body of pleasure
- The gendered body
- The body as the site of political and life imagination.

3) Activism and Collective Practice

Chair: Keyna Eleison

Keynote: Ventura Profana

Political activism in Latin American Art has been canonised as a distinctive feature of the region's artistic production since the 1960s. However, recent thinkers have criticised the divorce of intellectualised institutional practices from the insurgent social forces that motivate and propel such forms of resistance.

This panel will examine how grassroots movements have deployed artistic practice as a form of activism. Women's rights collectives and activist groups have succeeded in raising awareness of social struggles and have carved spaces of representation for groups that are marginalised or

cast as subaltern. Inviting contributions addressing activism in art from the 1960s to the present day, the session's themes may include:

- Community based practice as art
- Trans-gender activism
- Ritual and collective consciousness practices
- Political denunciation and protest.

4) Margins and Institutions: New Curatorial Strategies

Chair: Catherine de Zegher

Keynote: Catherine David

Since the 1980s, museums and institutional galleries across Western Europe and North America have increasingly held exhibitions and collected work by artists from Latin America. Whilst this must be recognised as a welcome opening towards cultures previously considered, by those same institutions, as derivative or, worst, unworthy of art historical consideration, certain consequences to such openness must also be taken into account. The attention received by so-called 'global museums' often sets in play discrepancies between national and international art historical narratives. With cognisance of the conference's location within one of the epicentres of Western art historical articulation, this panel is interested in contributions exploring the interstices between the 'global art' discourse and curatorial initiatives specific to regional contexts. Questions may relate to:

- What are the consequences of such a heritage drain at a local level?
- How do local or national museums within Latin America negotiate their own narratives within these emerging discourses from the so-called centres?
- What are the conditions with which such collections are integrated?
- How are exhibitions and collections articulated in relation with the other 'hegemonic' holdings within the museum?

5) Decolonising the Canon

Chair: Ana Maria Magalhaes

Keynote: Rafael Cardoso

When we speak of the inclusion of Latin American art into 'global art narratives' what are we saying? If those global narratives are truly 'global' then we should not speak of inclusion but of being. Of course, such a consideration remains at the level of the ideal. We often understand the notion of inclusion as an individual artist or movement that is brought forward into the global discourse. However, rarely is this act of carrying over based upon aesthetic and/or conceptual associations as defined by the canon. When we speak of global therefore, we implicitly enunciate the acceptance of certain set geopolitical power relations. The actual relation between the local and the global relies on complex transnational articulations of art historical discourses, some more powerful and persuasive than others.

This panel seeks contributions that discuss the canon, its evolution from modernist to contemporary and later global contexts and how this affects discourses at a national, regional or local level. This session invites speakers to propose new historical perspectives through which to understand and re-position contemporary art in relation to its transnational genealogies.

- Can the act of inclusion be one of disruption also, one that invites the reconsideration of the

entire premises of that canon which excluded it in the first place?

- How is contemporary art understood in relation to the canon, both locally and 'globally'?
- How do these discrepant discourses relate to each other?

Conference Format and Submission Guidelines:

Proposals are invited for 20-minute contributions to a specific theme of the conference. We will ask participants to pre-record their presentations, to be uploaded onto a bespoke digital venue where they will be available to view in advance of the live events. The keynote presentations and roundtable discussions with the contributors for each session will be held live on zoom.

Submissions should include a title, abstract (300 words maximum), short author's bio (150 words maximum), a CV or website link, institutional affiliation (if applicable) and contact details. Please state the theme of interest in the subject of the email.

Deadline for abstract submissions: 10 August 2021

Selection announced: August 2021

Successful applicants send recorded presentations to the organisers of the conference to be uploaded on the conference's digital venue by 15 October 2021.

Please email submissions to Dr Michael Asbury and Dr Sofia Gotti at: conferenceworldviews@gmail.com

Reference:

CFP: Worldviews. Latin American Art and the Decolonial Turn (online, 4 Nov-2 Dec 21). In: ArtHist.net, Jun 29, 2021 (accessed Apr 2, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/34480>>.