

Worldviews: Latin American Art and the Decolonial Turn (online, 4–25 Nov 21)

Online, Nov 4–25, 2021

Sofia Gotti and Michael Asbury

Worldviews: Latin American Art and the Decolonial Turn

The Centre for Visual Culture, University of Cambridge / The Research Centre for Transnational Art, Identity, Nation, UAL

This online conference brings together 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 marginalization and racism. What can we learn from the discipline's own historiography? How are we to negotiate agency and inclusivity when these are often still seen to be attained through 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 long-standing canonical paradigms?

Seeking to answer these amongst many other questions, the conference is structured around six thematic sessions. To promote multiple perspectives, each will be chaired by a specialist who contributed their vision to the development of the programme. Worldviews is convened by Dr Michael Asbury (UAL) and Dr Sofia Gotti (The University of Cambridge).

Calendar:

All contributions will be pre-recorded and made available on the conference website one week in advance of the live keynote addresses and roundtable discussions. These will take place on Thursdays throughout November 2021. For full session details, please visit the website www.worldviews.online

Programme (all times are London Time)

November 4th

5.30-7pm

Introduction to the conference

Meeting Margins Roundtable

Chair: Isobel Whitelegg

Speakers: Michael Asbury; Andrea Giunta; Maria Iñigo Clavo; Daniel Quiles

Worldviews begins with an introductory roundtable discussion that re-visits the Meeting Margins: Transnational Art in Latin America and Europe 1950-1978 (Essex and UAL 2009-2011) research project. Meeting Margins had engaged with the concept of transnationalism within art historical debates as a means to counteract the understanding of Latin American Art as peripheral. This session will discuss how the field of Latin American Art, its study as much as its institutional standing, has changed over the last decade in order to analyse what may be the challenges it still faces.

November 11th

5.30-7pm

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

Chair: Pablo José Ramírez

Keynote: Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Speakers: Cristian Vargas; Venuca Evanan; Lena Geuer; Bernardo Oyarzun; Brenda Vega

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 challenges 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.

November 18th

2-3.30pm

Margins and Institutions: New Curatorial Strategies

Chair: Catherine de Zegher

Keynote: Catherine David

Speakers: Carolina Castro; Pamela Desjardins; Clara Masnatta; Eloisa Rodrigues

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.

5.30-7pm

Political Bodies, Gender and Race

Chair: Cecilia Fajardo-Hill

Keynote: Lilia Moritz Schwarcz

Speakers:

Sebastián Eduardo Dávila; Gabriela Germana; Miguel A. López; Guillermo Marcondes; Dora Longo Bahia; Guadalupe Marvilla; Cecilia Vicuña

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 set in conjunction with the project of decolonisation. This section proposes to deconstruct the kinds of political engagement engendered by the use of the body.

November 25th

2-3.30pm

Decolonising the Canon

Chair: Ana Magalhães

Keynote: Rafael Cardoso

Speakers: Jens Baumgarten; Alessandra Caputo Jaffe; Catalina Imizcoz; Fernanda Pitta

When we speak of the inclusion of Latin American art into the wider sphere of 'global art' what are we saying? If such global narratives are truly 'global' then we should not speak of inclusion but merely of being. The act of being included, has traditionally been associated with national traits that are then framed by degrees of difference to, and similarity with, the so-called Western canon, the common, uncircumscribed, point of reference. It has been argued that with the so-called decolonial turn, access to the global stage only accelerated, opening the possibility for artists, writers and cultural activists to question, deconstruct or side-step the very premises of such 'national traits'. However, if geopolitics maintains some worldvisions more global than others, can the canon be dismissed altogether, or does it persist, reconfigured? This session brings presentations that approach such a question from distinct perspectives and locations, whether the canon referred to is constituted by national colonial legacies or by the still prevailing transnational power relations.

5.30-7pm

Activism and Collective Practice

Chair: Keyna Eleison

Keynote: Ventura Profana

Speakers: Anneli Marisa Arriga; Liliana Clavijo/Felipe Hernandez; Kira Xonorika; Danitza Luna; Tabita Rezaire

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 intellec-

tualised 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.

Reference:

CONF: Worldviews: Latin American Art and the Decolonial Turn (online, 4-25 Nov 21). In: Arthist.net, Oct 18, 2021 (accessed Aug 5, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/35104>>.