De-/centering World's Fairs (Berlin/hybrid, 12 Sep and Paris, 20-21 Sep 23)

UdK Berlin/hybrid, September 12, 2023 / Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris, Sep 20–21, 2023

Miriam Oesterreich

De-/centering World's Fairs: Representing Latin American 'Peripheries' in Arts and Fashion

1. GUEST LECTURE, 12 September 2023, 6 pm c.t.:
Prof. Dr. Alejandra Uslenghi (Northwestern University): "The World Pictures: Universal Exhibitions & Photography"

Venue: Medienhaus of Universität der Künste, Grunewaldstr. 2-5, 10823 Berlin, Room 306/
digital via webex (please find link below)

World Fairs were highly constructed events that sought to represent the entire world in a single fairground, resourcing to all kinds of visual technologies and media in creating an exhibitionary complex and massive spectacle informed by industrial-era theories of progress and the rhetoric of imperialism. The theatrical display of art objects, images, and material culture reinforced the representations of cultural otherness as well as hierarchical classifications that sought to make the modern capitalist world intelligible to a modern mass audience. Photography, since the first London 1851 Exhibition, accompanied the expansion of this visual culture phenomenon as it itself developed in multiple forms and practices; photography was at the core of the exhibitions' forms of visualization, an object of display itself, and it served to document and perpetuate the legacy of the fairs. This presentation will examine the diverse roles photography played within the exhibitions putting in perspective the crafting of images for documentary registers of alterity and racialized subjects; the use of photographs in the production of frameworks of intelligibility in territorial surveys and extractivist practices; as well as the deployment of photography in the creation of counter-archives that allowed for epistemic resistances to these regimes of visibility. In an arch that covers historically several key exhibitions both in Europe and the Americas — Centennial Philadelphia Exhibition in 1876; the Paris exhibitions of 1889 and 1900 when the first international congress of photography took place—we interrogate the photographic archive of World's Fairs and its contested cultural meanings.

The lecture will be held in English and presented by Elena Nustrini and Miriam Oesterreich.
The lecture will be responded by Dr. Friedhelm Schmidt-Welle (Ibero-American Institute Berlin)

The lecture is part of the DFG-funded research project "A Critical Art History of International and World Exposition – De/Centering Fashion and Modernities" (UdK Berlin/TU Darmstadt)

Dr. Alejandra Uslenghi is Associate Professor in Latin American literature and culture and Compar-

ative Literary studies at Northwestern University. She specializes in modernist literature and visual culture, with an emphasis on the history of photography, and critical theory and philosophy of the image. She has also researched the visual phenomenon of world fairs both in Europe and the Americas. She is the author of Latin America at fin-de-siècle Universal Exhibitions: Modern Cultures of Visuality (Palgrave, London and New York, 2016); the editor of Walter Benjamin: Culturas de la imagen (Eterna Cadencia, Argentina, 2010) and co-editor of La cámara como método. La fotografía moderna de Grete Stern y Horacio Coppola (Eterna Cadencia, Argentina, 2021). Her essays on 19th-century visual culture have appeared in Revista Estudios Hispánicos; Revista Hispánica Moderna and more recently in the volume Latin American Literature in Transition, 1870-1930 (Cambridge University Press, 2022). Her essays on modern photography have been published in Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies and newly in The Routledge Companion to Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Latin American Literary and Cultural Forms (Routledge, London, 2022). Professor Uslenghi also regularly contributes essays to contemporary Latin American artists and photographers' projects, such as Oscar Muñoz. Invisibilia (Phoenix Art Museum and Hirmer Publishers, 2021); Gonzalo Elvira. Leer el sueño (Centro de Arte de Burgos, 2022) and has written for art catalogs, such as Art – Latin America. Against the Survey (edited and curated by James Oles, Davis Museum and University of Texas Press, 2019) and Who says, Who shows, What counts: Thinking about History with the Block's Collection (Northwestern University, 2021).

The guest lecture will take place on site at Medienhaus of Universität der Künste, Grunewaldstr. 2-5, 10823 Berlin, Room 306
and digital via Webex:

https://udk-berlin.webex.com/udk-berlin/j.php?MTID=m5aa15216224cc83ed0b1f701336f65a2

2. STUDY DAY, September 20-21, 2023:
"De-/centering World’s Fairs: Representing Latin American ‘Peripheries’ in Arts and Fashion"

Venue: Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte, Paris

The world’s fairs of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries gave rise to significant impulses in the histories of art and fashion. From the very beginning – and this is particularly true for the five expositions universelles held in Paris between 1855 and 1900 – both were fixed components of nations’ self presentations at the world’s fairs. Diverse artistic genres and artistic conceptions, as well as fashion, clothing, and textiles played a leading role in the construction of national, cultural, or ethnic identities. However, both art and fashion experienced a form of globalization at the world’s fairs. Knowledge about the world arose there synthetically by means of an encyclopedic-didactic accumulation of artworks, things and objects, precisely because it was seen and experienced by way of arts and artifacts from the whole world. Objects and nations were turned into the signifiers of a narrative – imagined and presented as coherent – of technological progress, colonial expansion, artistic and fashion innovations.
It was especially the city of Paris that was acknowledged as the 19th-century capital of art and fashion world-wide. The city also attracted many artists and designers from all over the world who searched for being trained and work in Paris and served an intense transcultural artistic and conceptual exchange. Paris thus became a hub for such globalized discourses on art and fashions and joined perspectives from ‚centers’ and ‘peripheries’ alike. The ‘peripheric’ (colonial) states were meant to stand in contrast to the (colonizing) countries of the Global North that

organized the fairs thus defining the exhibition style, with ethnographica and handicrafts presented as traditional and 'authentic' and contrasting with the 'fine art' departments, including oil painting and sculpture. The conjunction of colonizing and colonized nations at nineteenth and early twentieth-century world's fairs presents a dichotomy, and it is precisely here that Latin America in particular had an ambivalent role. On the one hand, the majority of Latin American states had themselves been independent since around 1821 and pursued representation as modern nations exhibiting 'modern' painting and sculpture. On the other hand, they often embodied the role of the 'exotic other' and displayed folklore, handicrafts and ethnographica, not least as a tourism strategy. Styles and genres such as costumbrismo, historical Indigenism, or historicism were to be debated in this context. A critical art history of world's fairs should therefore engage with these inherent post-/colonial interdependencies. There has not yet been any systematic examination of the role of the staging of arts and fashions of 'peripheral' Latin American re/presentations at the international and world's fairs, in order to establish a comprehensive analysis of the art, exhibition practices, and media. The study day aims to reflect through new and critical research perspectives the role of art and fashion in the context of the world's fairs and seeks to open up a discussion in art history and Fashion Studies by approaching the "entangled histories" (Conrad/Randeria) of the world's fairs against the backdrop of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization. The participants are invited to analyze any of the following themes from a variety of art historical perspectives, and themes might – though not exclusively – engage with aspects, case studies or theoretical discussion of the topics proposed:

• The ambivalent role of Latin American states in the context of the (Paris) world's fairs between their representation as modern nations and their permanent coloniality (colonialidad) as well as self-exoticization.
• The artistic and curatorial strategies used by the representatives of (post)colonial or ‚peripheral' states in Latin America when representing themselves or being represented by European artists and curators.
• The role assumed by the arts, visual media, handicrafts, artifacts, textiles and fashion in the framework of national representations at world's fair and their global and colonial entanglements.
• The implicit and explicit concepts of temporality inherent to the constructions of modernity and tradition within the framework of world's fairs.

The study day will be organized by the DFG-funded research project "A Critical Art History of International and World Expositions – Decentering Fashion and Modernities," namely Alexandra Karentzos, Elena Nustrini, Miriam Oesterreich, and Lizzy Rys.

SCHEDULE

20 September 2023

6.00 p.m. Welcome

6.30 p.m. Keynote lecture
À la mode: The Paris 1900 exhibition and modern fashion discourses
Prof. Dr. Alejandra Uslenghi (Northwestern University)

Moderation: Prof. Dr. Miriam Oesterreich

8.00 p.m. - 9.00 p.m. Cocktail

21 September 2023

9.30 a.m. Introduction
Prof. Dr. Alexandra Karentzos (Technische Universität Darmstadt)
Prof. Dr. Miriam Oesterreich (Universität der Künste Berlin)
Elena Nustrini (Universität der Künste Berlin)
Lizzy Rys (Technische Universität Darmstadt)

10.00 a.m. Opening lecture
Bilateral strategies Latin America/Europe: How the "exotic" otherness becomes a European artistic repertoire?
Dr. Elodie Vaudry (Deutsches Forum für Kunstgeschichte Paris)

10.45 a.m.
A “Peruvian Air” between Paris and New York: Elena Izcue, Reynaldo Luza and National Pavilions at World’s Fairs, 1937-1940
Alida R. Jekabson (University of California Santa Barbara)

Moderation: Alexandra Karentzos

11:30 a.m. Coffee Break

11.45 a.m.
Paris 1867: Staging gauchos from the River Plate
Prof. Dr. Laura Malosetti Costa (CONICET/Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Buenos Aires)

12.30 p.m. Lunch break

2.00 p.m.
On the Verge of War: Latin American Pavilions at the 1937 Exposition Internationale
Prof. Dr. Michele Greet (George Mason University, Fairfax)

Moderation: Elena Nustrini

2.45 p.m.
Sympathy or strategy? A close look at the Belgian exhibitions of modern and contemporary art organized in Argentina in 1946 and 1948
Dr. Laurens Dhaenens (KU Leuven)

3.30 p.m. Coffee break

4.00 p.m.
Painting the trans/national landscape: National exhibitions in Argentina (1871-1882)
Elena Nustrini (Universität der Künste Berlin)

Moderation: Lizzy Rys

4.45 p.m. - 5.30 p.m. Final discussion

Moderation: Prof. Dr. Alexandra Karentzos, Prof. Dr. Miriam Oesterreich, Elena Nustrini, Lizzy Rys

For on-site participation in the study day, please register writing a short email to: sekretariat@mode.tu-darmstadt.de

Reference:
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