

The Idea of Latinx, as Seen from Latin America (Bogotá, 11–12 Sep 25)

Bogotá, Colombia, Sep 11–12, 2025

Registration deadline: Feb 15, 2025

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Contested Identities in American Art: The Idea of Latinx, as Seen from Latin America.

In Pedro Lasch's *LATINO/A AMÉRICA* mural series (2003–), the image of the American continent is labeled with the term *LATINO/A* in the northern hemisphere, while the term *AMÉRICA* appears in the southern portion. This depiction challenges conventional categories typically used to describe both the continent and its cultural divisions. By subverting expectations about the terms *Latino/a* and *América* as places associated with fixed identities (e.g., North vs. South), the artist highlights that "America" does not refer exclusively to the United States and that *Latino/a* culture is a conceptual category, not necessarily tied to Latin America as a geographic entity. Meanwhile, for Latin Americans, the term *América* is generally used to refer to the entire continent. Similarly, the concept of *Latino/a/x* identities emerges from within the United States rather than from Latin America.

A historiographic review reveals that many of the terminologies currently used in art history originated within the United States, partly due to its rich history of immigration. For instance, under the relatively new category of *Latinx*, Pedro Lasch, a Mexican-born artist living in the United States since 1994, would fall under this classification—a term rooted primarily in the art market.

Likewise, the concept of Latin America is a 19th-century construct. The term was first used by Frenchman Michel Chevalier in 1836 to counterbalance terms such as *Hispanic America*—widely used since colonial times—and *Pan America*, which was promoted by the Monroe Doctrine and the ideology of Manifest Destiny. Three main objectives drove the adoption of the term *Latin America*: first, the expansionism of the United States, seeking influence over the newly independent southern republics; second, the possibility of a reconquest by Spain; and third, Napoleon III's vision of establishing a French empire in the Americas. The notion of *latinity*, as explained by Arturo Ardao, began to take shape and spread across the Western world, drawing from the legacy of Ancient Rome, Mediterranean civilizations, and the French Enlightenment. The idea of "Latin" facilitated the continuation of a long line of imperial constructs, accepted by elite thinkers from South America who immigrated to Europe and adopted the term as a strategy for validation. A notable example is the Colombian writer and diplomat José María Torres Caicedo, often called "the father of Latin Americanism."

In her recent writings, Arlene Dávila questions whether Latin American art and *Latinx* art are one and the same. Similarly, scholars such as Tatiana Flores have examined the contested status of

terms like Latinx, Hispanic, and Latin American. How do Afro-descendants born in Latin America, or those with Latin American heritage, engage with or diverge from these categories? Furthermore, where and how does Caribbean art fit within these frameworks? Other terms, such as Iberian America (Iberoamérica), also merit exploration. Additionally, the term Latinx invites a reflection on gender inclusion, as Adriana Zavala notes: “The X also insists on queering structures of knowledge in order to make this presence visible.” In other words, debates over terminology remain central to contemporary discourse.

This symposium invites critical reflections on these categories as they are applied within art history. It also seeks to explore concepts like Latinx from the perspective of Latin America—an approach that has rarely been considered. What does Latinx mean to scholars, artists, and curators based in Latin America and the Caribbean? Conversely, how do scholars in the Global North respond to the use of the term América as a continental designation?

Submissions may also address related topics and works of art that challenge these categories, such as Alfredo Jaar’s *A Logo for America* (1987). For instance, papers could examine the pluralistic use of the term the Americas to describe the continent, or the retroactive application of Latin America to historical periods predating the term’s invention, such as in colonial or pre-Hispanic art. Even the terms pre-Hispanic and colonial Latin America invite scrutiny. Ultimately, this symposium aims to open dialogue and create new opportunities for discussion between Latinx and Latin American art.

Additional questions that could be addressed in the papers:

Who defines and applies such terminology?

How should Latinx itself be defined?

Why do Latin Americans often overlook Latinx and Chicano artists?

Is the term Latinx useful for thinking about the artistic past before the 20th century?

How does comparing Latinx with other terms—such as the Americas, Hispanic America, or Pan America—enhance understanding?

The proposal must include:

Title and abstract of the presentation (max. 300 words)

Short biography and institutional affiliation (max. 300 words)

The subject line must read: “Symposium Proposal Symposium Art History 2025”

Deadline for submitting proposals: February 15, 2025

Submit proposals: davelan86@uniandes.edu.co

Presentations will last 15 minutes.

Proposals will be accepted in Spanish, Portuguese and English.

Authors of selected proposals will be notified no later than April 1, 2025.

13th Symposium on Art History

Contested Identities in American Art: The Idea of Latinx, as Seen from Latin America.

Department of Art History, Universidad de Los Andes

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Keynote speaker: Carmen Ramos, chief curatorial and conservation officer of the National Gallery of Art

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