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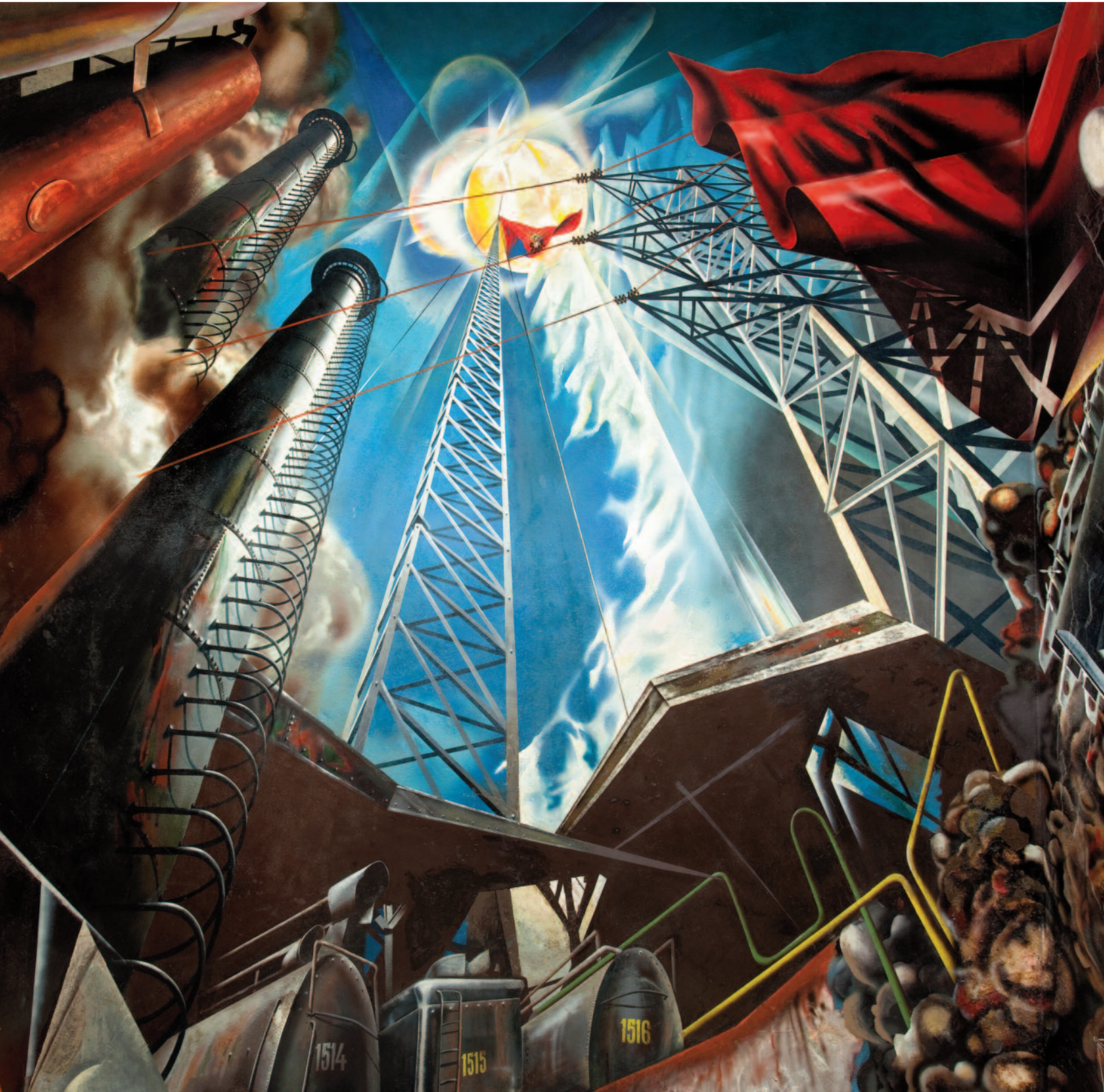
International Center for the Arts of the Americas at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston



ICAA Documents Project Working Papers

The Publication Series for *Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art*

Number 4 | November 2016



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The *ICAA Documents Project Working Papers* series brings together papers inspired by the Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art Project at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. It also serves as the official vehicle for assembling and distributing related research by the Center's team of researchers, staff, and affiliates.

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For more information, please contact:

The International Center for the Arts of the Americas (ICAA)

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
P.O. Box 6826, Houston, TX 77265-6826

Telephone: 1 (713) 639-1528

Fax: 1 (713) 800-5385

icaa@mfaah.org

ICAA Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art Project

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INTRODUCTION

Beatriz R. Olivetti

This fourth edition of the *ICAA Documents Project Working Papers* highlights two winning essays of the Peter C. Marzio Award for Outstanding Research in 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art: “*Contrabienal: Redefining Latin American Art and Identity in 1970s New York*,” by Aimé Iglesias Lukin, and “*Retrato de la burguesía o el impulso gráfico dinámico en la plástica monumental*,” by Paola Uribe. In honoring the late Peter C. Marzio, the director of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1982–2010), who supported the founding of the International Center for the Arts of the Americas in 2001, the award aims to promote, enable, recognize, and reward new scholarship in the field. Chosen by a jury of distinguished scholars, these essays draw from the primary and critical resources available through the Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art [digital archive](#).

The politics of regionalism is at play as a factor of group identification in Aimé Iglesias Lukin’s work on the controversial catalogue *Contrabienal* (1971), produced by a group of Latin American artists active in New York during the early 1970s. In her essay, Lukin traces and analyzes the activities of the two main groups—the Museo Latinoamericano and Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latino América (MICLA) and the Center for Inter-American Relations (CIAR, today the Americas Society)—which coalesced around the publication, framing their activities within a moment of intersection between Latin American artists who embraced conceptualist artistic practices and those who were starting to adopt identity politics into their work. Lukin’s essay also includes transcripts of interviews she conducted with César Paternosto (Argentinean, b. 1931) and Luis Camnitzer (Uruguayan, b. 1937), two significant artists involved in *Contrabienal*.

The historical role of artistic collaboration is also the focus of the essay by Paola Uribe. Her work focuses on the creation of the mural *Retrato de la burguesía* (1939–40) at the Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME) building, in Ciudad de México, by Mexican muralist David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974), Valencian Josep Renau [Berenguer] (1907–1982), and a group of international artists living in Mexico in the late 1930s. Uribe aptly documents their use of mass media, synthetic materials, and mechanic tools in achieving the impressive visual effects of *Retrato de la burguesía*, and she also reflects on the experimentation and technical innovation that sprung from Siqueiros and Renau’s joint effort.

The ICAA is delighted to feature both essays as part of the *Documents Project Working Papers* series and is proud to provide researchers around the world with a key and continually expanding platform for accessing the growing body of knowledge on the field of Latin American and Latino art.

CONTRABIENAL: REDEFINING LATIN AMERICAN ART AND IDENTITY IN 1970S NEW YORK

Aimé Iglesias Lukin

In 1971, a group of Latin American artists living in New York published *Contrabienal* to promote an international boycott of the XI São Paulo Biennial, which was to be held between September 4 and November 15, 1971, in protest of the spiraling censorship and torture in dictatorial Brazil (figures 1–2). One outcome of this collective endeavor was the profound influence that the project had on the participating artists, particularly in terms of their political ideologies and their self-identification as part of a

regional group. *Contrabienal* was aesthetically heterogeneous, including artists from across a number of generations and movements. Its organizers—Luis Camnitzer, Eduardo Costa, Leandro Katz, Rubens Gerchman, César Paternosto, Carla Stellweg, Liliana Porter, and Teodoro Maus, among others—nonetheless were surrounded by a strong shift toward Conceptualism then taking place. Irrespective of national or aesthetic origin, for those gathering around this emerging movement, *Contrabienal* represented a key moment of intersection between conceptualist artistic practices and nascent identity politics among New York's young Latin American expatriate community.¹

The two main groups behind the publication of *Contrabienal*, Museo Latinoamericano and Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latino América (MICLA), were originally created to protest the cultural politics of the Center for Inter-American Relations (CIAR, today the Americas Society), which was one of the main agencies promoting Latin American art in New York at the time.² These groups gathered together and set up a space to discuss a variety of artistic and political issues related to the United States and Latin America. Their conversations centered on the ethics of the CIAR's board and the need to protest the Brazilian dictatorship and the support it received from U.S. politicians, and they called for a broader condemnation of North American interventionism in the region. It was through these associations that a large number of Latin American artists coalesced around a regional identity oriented toward common action—one which stemmed not from shared aesthetic principles but from kindred political ideals and goals.³

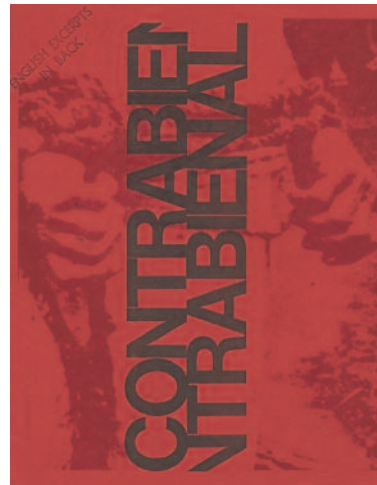


Figure 1 Luis Wells, Museo Latinoamericano, and Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamérica (MICLA), cover design for *Contrabienal* (New York), 1971, private archives of Luis Camnitzer, New York.

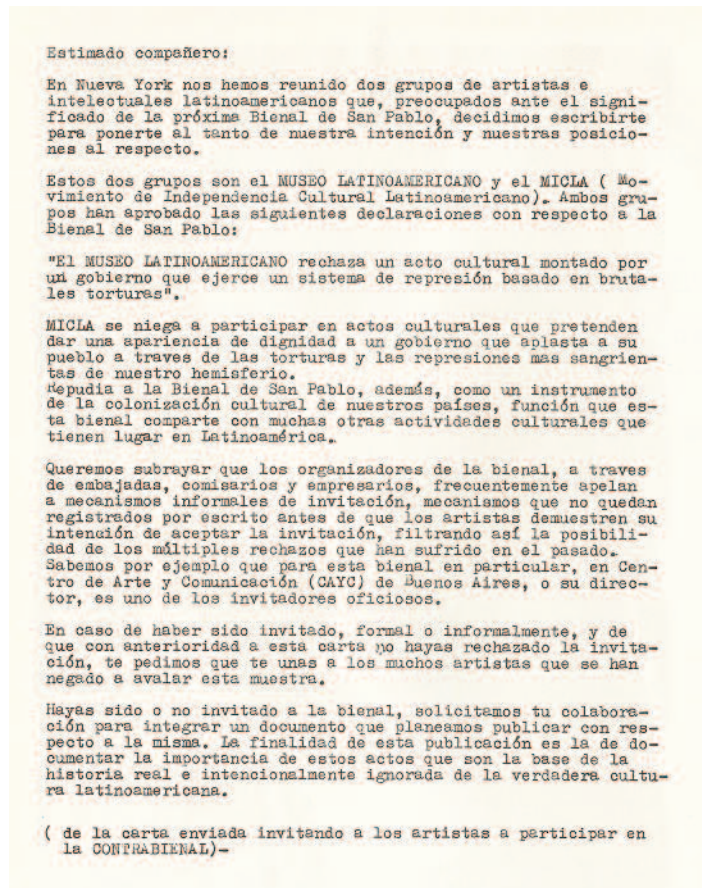


Figure 2 Museo Latinoamericano and Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamérica (MICLA), invitation letter printed in *Contrabienal* (New York), 1971, private archives of Luis Camnitzer, New York. ICAA Record ID 766014.

Contrabienal, also known as the “printed biennial,” is a 114-page, limited edition book (only 500 copies were made) that participants distributed among their artistic circles.⁴ After two manifesto-style introductions written by each organizing group, the book proceeds to a series of written and photographic testimonies denouncing governmental torture and murder in Brazil (figure 3). The remainder of the book includes contributions from 61 artists as well as collective letters of support signed by another 112 sympathizers from throughout the Americas and Europe. While some participants verbalized specific demands and principles, others chose to use irony and humor in graphic form, and a few included explicitly violent images to raise awareness of the repression on their continent.

Contrabienal was not meant to function as a stylistic manifesto. It included instead submissions by artists who practiced different aesthetics, ranging from Neo-Figuración to Op art and minimalism.



Figure 3 Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamérica (MICLA), “Manifiesto por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamérica. MICLA” in *Contrabienal* (New York), 1971, private archives of Luis Camnitzer, New York. ICAA Record ID 766001.

Nonetheless, the book crystallized an ideologically and regionally-defined group consciousness. At the same time, *Contrabienal*'s publication coincided with a moment in Latin American art when many of the participating artists and organizers in particular were shifting their focus to increasingly more conceptual practices. For these reasons, *Contrabienal* is an ideal model through which to examine and critique the narrowing gap between politics and concept-based proposals that were becoming evident in Latin American art during the late 1960s and early 1970s, especially among artists living and working in New York.⁵ This essay thus maps the circles of participation and influence through which a number of these artists coalesced under the label “Latin American” in a new, ideologically charged artistic *campus*.⁶ It specifically considers the *Contrabienal* and the associations that organized it—Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA—as unifying political forces for New York-based Latin American artists, and it reflects on how their lives and work were affected by being collectively slotted into such a category. But the essay also draws on recent scholarship in questioning how three fundamental terms—the political, “Latin American,” and the conceptual—engaged and operated with respect to the *Contrabienal* and more broadly with budding Latin American Conceptualism.⁷

Nueva York/New York

By the mid-1960s New York had displaced Paris as the new world art center and the place to insert oneself within the emerging languages of art.⁸ As part of this process and to strengthen links with Latin America, a series of policies were enacted by the United States government and supported by private sponsors to create a network of cultural exchanges through institutional connections, exhibitions, and grants to allow artists and curators to travel in both directions. The Guggenheim Fellowship was the main vehicle through which Latin American artists could spend time working and studying in New York City, supporting, among others, Camnitzer, Nicolás García Uriburu, Katz, Jorge de la Vega, David Lamelas, Marta Minujín and Luis Felipe Noé.⁹

These Latin American artists arrived in a New York art scene that was undergoing important changes.¹⁰ A younger generation was experimenting with new media and was using happenings and performances to question the disciplinary boundaries around traditional painting and sculpture. They quickly began diving into Manhattan's existing art and intellectual scene, which was, in itself, undergoing significant transformations as it incorporated a growing number of international cultural émigrés. Minujín, for example, became deeply involved with Wolf Vostell's and Andy Warhol's social circles. Jaime Davidovich was in contact with the artists of Leo Castelli's gallery and later worked with George Maciunas, even living in the Fluxus housing project for years.¹¹ César Paternosto and Alejandro Puente became friends and neighbors of Lucy Lippard, introduced to her by Sol Lewitt.¹² Indeed, 1960s New York was a space of rapidly increasing network density and expansion, much of which was facilitated and sometimes orchestrated by cultural agents and institutions pressing for these connections to take place.¹³

Center for Inter-American Relations

The representational spaces that opened up to the Latin American artists settling in the city were centralized in one institution in particular that would have a key role in these artists' political associations: the Center for Inter-American Relations. Established in 1966 as a private organization for the promotion of society and culture of the Americas, its mission was twofold: policy-related and cultural. In the area of policy, the CIAR sought “more effective communications among those concerned with the process of political, economic and social development in the Hemisphere.” With regard to its cultural strategy, the organization attempted to promote “greater awareness in the United States of the artistic traditions and cultural accomplishments” of Latin America.¹⁴ In many ways, the Center inherited the role of the Inter-American Foundation for the Arts, an institution that since the early 1960s had organized various symposia and supported the iconic exhibition *Magnet: New York*, held at the Bonino Gallery in New York and in Mexico City in 1964.¹⁵

In the words of its founder, David Rockefeller, CIAR's cultural mission was to challenge the “false images of indolence, poverty and inferiority as characteristic of the entire region [which] had become firmly embedded in the consciousness of almost every U.S. citizen.” Rockefeller cited President John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress initiative as an important precedent, but later clarified that “many businessmen and bankers, including myself, were concerned that the Alliance . . . placed too much reliance on government-to-government relationships and left too little room for cooperation with the private sector.”¹⁶ An article announcing the creation of the Center described the political aims of the institution in more overt terms: “its organizers hope, [that the CIAR] will help speed the development and modernization of Latin America (and, at least by implication, reduce the appeal of Mr. Castro's Cuban experiment in Latin American communism).”¹⁷ As shown by these statements, we can situate CIAR's mission as part of a broader effort of cultural diplomacy to enhance Western internationalism in the 1960s.¹⁸ Stanton Catlin, an art historian specializing in Latin American art, was appointed curator of the Center's art gallery,

which, as publicized in the *New York Times* article announcing the program, would be “New York’s first real exhibition center for the art of the Americas.” Catlin also promised that the Center would look to “right the balance” for the lack of attention to hemispheric contributions in the city.¹⁹

Very quickly after its foundation, the Center for Inter-American Relations became for Latin American artists in New York both a promise of a new space for visibility as well as the focus for their redefinition of what Latin American art should be. In September 1967, a group of artists mobilized to protest *Artists of the Western Hemisphere: Precursors of Modernism, 1870–1930*, the exhibition that inaugurated the Center’s visual art’s space.²⁰ The show had been heavily criticized by *New York Times* art critic John Canaday, who stated that its ambitious scope “would tax the ingenuity of any scholar,” and that, “nothing but the sacrifice of quality to tact can explain the inclusions of some of the paintings.” Canaday also considered the omission of the Mexican muralist school unforgivable.²¹ The artists’ protest was novel in two ways: first, it involved a group of artists uniting together under the Latin American label, and second, it was one of the first public demonstrations against the presentation of Latin American art in exhibitions. Eighteen artists, including Julio Alpuy, Camnitzer, Minujín, Armando Morales, Noé, and Porter, sent a letter to the editor which was published in the “Art Mailbag” section of the *New York Times* on October 8, 1967; they stated that “as a group of Latin American artists residing in New York, [we] regret that this necessary institution should open with a show that exhibits an aspect of colonial culture.”²² They continued by criticizing the way the exhibition related northern and southern ends of the hemisphere, arguing that the “United States and Latin America cannot be wrapped together into one cultural heritage,” and that the show presented a chronology in which Latin American art emerged first from European and later from North American models. As an alternative, they demanded a fair and independent representation for “the creative adventure of Latin America, which, through lack of economic and political power, does not have the vehicles of affirming itself, to be known.”²³

The complaint did not lead to further action, and some of those same artists later participated in CIAR’s activities. That was the case with Minujín, who the next year exhibited there her iconic work *Minucode*. However, her presentation was far from innocuous. Under the surface of its participative Pop masquerade, Minujín’s happening included a strong institutional critique. Four cocktail parties were announced, each focused on a particular audience: businessmen, politicians, fashion industry workers, and art scene habitués. The events were recorded and edited by Minujín, who for the final presentation showed an installation film designed to fill the gallery space completely.²⁴ As analyzed by Alexander Alberro, “at one level, then, *Minucode* functioned as a ‘social-scientific environment.’ . . . [On] another, the content of *Minucode* was the medium. Information was brushed against information.”²⁵ By problematizing the medium itself, Minujín challenged the role of the institution and the social interactions it entailed.

As the principal center for the promotion of Latin American art in the city, it was only logical that the CIAR would become the primary target of the developing activism and political protests of these artists. In 1971, the artists led a pivotal demonstration that resulted in a formally organized artists’ association. At the time, Catlin was curating an event called Latin American Art Week, set to take place from April 29 to June 30, 1971, in which the CIAR and a series of galleries would display the work of Latin American artists residing in New York. This prompted a quick and vocal reaction among many artists who were worried about the way the event would be promoted and about how the participants would be selected and they were particularly offended by the short duration of the exhibitions, seeing this as proof that they would only be included as a token. Catlin soon resigned, and his successor, Hans van Weeren-Griek, called for a meeting to address the artists’ concerns about the event and CIAR’s mission more broadly. The meeting took place in January 1971, and the new director promised to elevate the complaints to the board and to reformulate the event in a way that would be more representative of these artists. However, Van Weeren-Griek’s assurances would not quell the artists’ enthusiasm for activism, and meetings continued at the artists’ studios and homes. The group presented a document signed by thirty-four artists that extended the demands, calling for to removal of certain board members as well as an extensive left-wing reformulation of the CIAR’s mission and activities.²⁶ Van Weeren-Griek, in agreement with the artists, took the requests to the board and, after their predictable refusal to accede, decided to resign his position. An article published by Grace Glueck in the *New York Times* on March 20, 1970, registered these events under the headline “Show is Suspended as Artists Dissent.” Glueck quoted a series of conditions submitted by twenty-five artists for any future participation in CIAR activities. Among them, she cited “‘a drastic revision’ of the center’s board of directors, with removal of those ‘who symbolize United States imperialist activity in the Hemisphere.’”²⁷ The article listed the board members’ named in the letter, explained the reasons that the artists considered them problematic, and also included statements by members of the board as well as the outgoing Van Weeren-Griek.²⁸ Glueck finished her account by presenting the artists’ proposal for the creation of El Museo Latinoamericano, which they envisioned as: “an information center and gathering place for the Latin American creative community, it would develop a program of cultural activities, help to set up courses in Latin-American art at universities, and disseminate ‘moral information’ about censorship and suppression of cultural activities.”²⁹

Museo Latinoamericano

The protest against CIAR’s failed Latin American Art Week would serve as the cornerstone for the formalization of these artists’ concerns and the formation of El Museo Latinoamericano, a virtual alternative space for the discussion and representation of their art. In the words of Camnitzer, the document “showed an unprecedented level of consciousness in the Latin American art community.”³⁰ Against this panorama of concern and dissent, the *Contrabienal* would later become an important testimony of the identity construction

of these émigré artists living in New York. The foundational document of the Museo Latinoamericano was signed in February 1971. Belkin, Katz, Gerchman, Leonel Góngora, Luis Molinari Flores, Puente, and Rolando Peña formed the original group. Soon thereafter their meetings were joined by artists Camnitzer, Porter, Maus, Costa, Luis Wells, and curator and writer Stellweg, among others. The group would quickly take on more adherents, and the gatherings—held in members’ studios and homes—ultimately included dozens of participants.

The group published a newsletter, *Frente*, that it distributed both locally and internationally. Its first editorial titled “Letter to Latin America” reiterated the demands made to CIAR and explained the group’s platform, encouraging the creation of alternative spaces to “operate outside the control of foundations, corporations and other organizations which arbitrarily codify cultural hierarchies.”³¹ As a first measure, the artists forming the Museo Latinoamericano decided to organize an alternative exhibition to be held during Latin American Art Week. Titled *Contrainf*, this counter-exhibition would include twenty silk screens with quotes and historical information detailing the interventionism of the United States in Latin America.³² Even though the Paula Cooper Gallery was the only institution to show interest in the project, the opposition and boycott was successful enough that the Latin American Art Week was completely canceled. Another “success” of the group involved the CIAR’s offer to open its programming to the artists, on February 21, 1971, along with granting access to its archives and organizing events that would address the group’s concerns. But the collective refused to negotiate and stood by the demand that the board members be replaced.

However, the Museo Latinoamericano’s unity would soon be challenged by the divergent position of its members regarding the methods by which to negotiate with CIAR. Some would disagree with the group pushing a progressive political agenda, instead arguing that it should focus on demanding space for the artists to promote their work. Around March 1971, the most radical members of the group seceded under the name Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latino América (MICLA). They continued with their anti-CIAR board demands and plans for a wider field of political action. According to Camnitzer, the secessionists included himself, Costa, Antonia Galbraith, Maus, Porter, Stellweg, and Wells. Paternosto’s testimony explains the differences as stemming from the fact that he and other members of Museo Latinoamericano were more highly dependent on exhibition possibilities, having had a more difficult time gaining traction in the local art scene; he also explained that while they might have agreed with the ideological positioning of what would become the MICLA group, they had to prioritize their struggle for survival in New York.³³ This division would not prevent the two groups from working together, and they continued joint activities through lectures and private exhibitions for members. The groups had also agreed, before separating, on a course of action that would become their most famous stand: a protest against the XI São Paulo Biennial.³⁴

The Anti-Bienal

In 1969, a Parisian call for a boycott of the São Paulo Biennial brought international attention and an unprecedented awakening of the global artistic circuit.³⁵ Responding to the 1964 coup d’état in Brazil and the 1968 issuance of the infamous Ato Institucional Número Cinco [Institutional Act No. 5], also known as AI-5—a broad measure giving the government power to supervise and censor all public statements and other publications in the press, including all art forms—a group of artists met in Paris to debate France’s official participation in the event. “Non à la Biennale” [No to the Biennial] was the title of their 1969 manifesto, which called for an international boycott of the X São Paulo Biennial. Successfully promoted by Hélio Oiticica, Mário Pedrosa, and Pierre Restany, the initiative quickly collected international support, leading to the cancellation of participation by the United States, Holland, Sweden, Greece, Belgium, Italy, Mexico, Venezuela, Argentina, and Spain, among others.³⁶

Emboldened by the success of the 1969 boycott, in New York the artists affiliated with Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA decided to call for a movement against participation in the 1971 edition of the Biennial and to prepare a publication under the title *Contrabienal*. As a result of a trip by Camnitzer and Porter to Europe, the proposal received the support of a contemporary Parisian group, the Provisional Committee for a General Assembly of Latin American Artists, which would become key in the international promotion of the boycott. Back in New York, the artists organized an auction of works to gather funds for an offset printer and materials necessary for the publication of the planned *Contrabienal*. The call for participation was made to the artists’ network of contacts in their home countries, and submissions were sent by mail.³⁷ Once the funds had been raised, the machine was installed in a house shared by Maus and Stellweg, and the almost five hundred copies were printed and distributed for free among participants and members’ networks. In this way, *Contrabienal* could also be understood partially as related to Mail art, both because participating artists submitted their work by mail, and also due to the fundamental role that its distribution had on *Contrabienal*’s functioning as an art object and as a political pamphlet.³⁸ The cover (see figure 1) of *Contrabienal*—conceived by Wells, who at the time worked as a graphic designer—was a typographical design imprinted on a photograph focusing on two tied hands set against a red background achieved by a toning-process red. This chromatic choice suggested the political violence the book would expose and condemn, but might have also related to the preferred color of the left-wing revolutionary ideology expressed by many of the artists.

Images of Violence

A letter inviting artists to join the boycott and to submit works to *Contrabienal*, which was later published as an introduction to the book, listed a series of declarations “rejecting a cultural event organized by a government that employs a system of repression based on brutal torture” and the São Paulo Biennial as an “instrument of cultural colonization in our countries, a function that this biennial shares with many other cultural activities that take place

in Latin America.”³⁹ In this way, the declaration was justified not only a protest against political repression but also as a broader institutional critique. The rejection of the biennial system of prizes and national presentations, as well as its association with colonialist practices, was present in many of the artists’ statements and submissions, particularly those of Lorenzo Homar and Gordon Matta-Clark. This was also the primary content of the manifesto published by Museo Latinoamericano, whose remaining members wanted to focus on artistic and institutional demands, differentiating them from MICLA’s anti-imperialist critique.

MICLA’s introduction, on the other hand, was significantly longer and started by clarifying that its goal was broader: “[T]his CONTRABIENAL does not have the intention of substituting one exhibition for another, nor to change form by substituting an exhibition for a publication. It has to do simply with exploring a possibility for action against cultural imperialism.” Such a utopian drive could be achieved by “demystifying the values supporting cultural imperialism” and open pathways to create a new culture which would allow the artist and the intellectual to identify with the revolutionary struggle of the region.⁴⁰ This continental identification also meant an ideological positioning against North American imperialism. The manifesto highlighted this by declaring that even though national realities were different, the group action of Latin Americans was key to creating a common consciousness, and that as distant as Brazil’s violent dictatorship might seem, it was only on the “avant-garde” of what could happen to other countries. History would prove them right: in the next few years dictatorial regimes would spread throughout South America, and censorship, torture, and killing would become widespread and commonplace.

The call for participation explicitly excluded Brazilian artists to prevent the possibility that they would become the object of reprisals in their home country. However, Rubens Gerchman was involved in the group meetings and the book’s production. In their place, the publication dedicated twenty-four pages to descriptions and testimonies of censorship and violence in Brazil. The opening pages of this section featured a “ficha técnica”—a sort of fact sheet—explaining Pau de Arara, a torture method in which a person is tied upside down to a pole that “generally . . . positions the victim so that it is easier to do other tortures” (figure 4).⁴¹ The book then continued with the deposition of Gilse María Cozenza Avelar, a young activist from Minas Gerais, who had denounced being detained illegally, tortured, and raped by police forces; also included was a quote describing the torture and suffering experienced by María Inmaculada da Conceição, a secretary from Belo Horizonte of Carlos Lima Aveline from Porto Alegre, and by other prisoners in Minas Gerais. Photographs showing mutilated individuals and dead bodies illustrated these pages. These accounts and images had reached the hands of the organizers of *Contrabiennial* through a contact of Maus.⁴² The literal relation between text and image in these pages, an illustrative strategy meant to emphasize the violence described in the testimonies, contrasted with the more metaphoric approach of most of the other participants in the project.

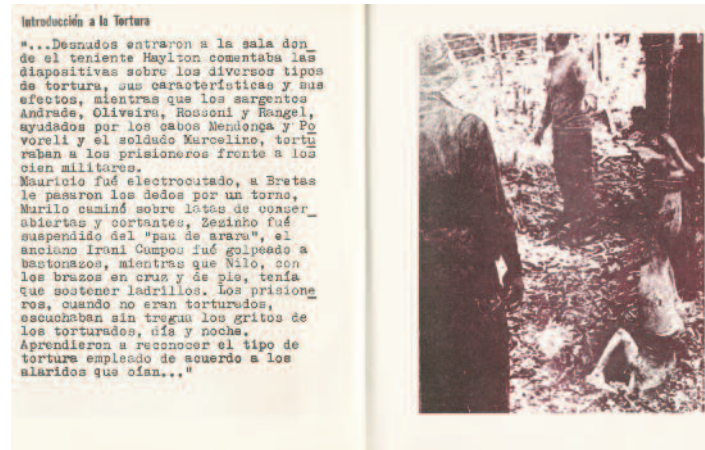


Figure 4 Museo Latinoamericano and Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamérica (MICLA). “Introducción a la tortura,” in *Contrabiennial* (New York), 1971, private archives of Luis Camnitzer, New York.

Contrabiennial had no stylistic goals; the invited artists differed in their creative processes and in their view of art, but they remained united for political and identity-related reasons. The sixty-two individual submissions can be divided into two large groups according to graphic versus written participation. Among the first group, most artists created images that did not relate stylistically to the art that they regularly made or had been making. Two factors seem to have affected this decision: the restrictions of the two-dimensional, black-and-white format of the print, and the (perceived) limitations of abstract art as a denunciatory message in and of itself. Such was the case for Uruguayan painter and sculptor Leopoldo Nóvoa, who instead of his usual informalist painting sent a comic-style drawing in which a military figure is about to sodomize an artist under the text “award ceremony.” A parallel sexualized metaphor was used by Wells, who made use of the similarity between the words “Pablo” (the Spanish translation of São Paulo) and “palo” (stick) to create an advertisement-style graphic for a suppository he dubbed “san palo via anal,” with “imported scents, in fragrances minimal, conceptual, systems and more!!” Wells’s submission accounts for the concern these artists had regarding the imposition of mainstream styles and categories to their art and culture, perceived as part of the cultural imperialism they were denouncing.

Other artists used resources from journalism to underscore the denunciatory tone of their submissions. Camnitzer’s page presented, under the headline “Content: Body of Carlos Marighella,”⁴³ a photographic record of the cadaver of the Brazilian politician and leader of the dictatorship’s opposition movement who was killed by the government in 1969 (figure 5). The work was based on a series from the same year of “fallen heroes



Figure 5 Luis Camnitzer, *Contenido: Body of Carlos Marighella*, entry for *Contrabiennial* (New York), 1971, private archives of Luis Camnitzer, New York.

of Latin American independence,” composed of eight engravings, including one of Maringhella.⁴⁴ Juan Carlos Romero presented a collage of newspaper clippings referring to torture and people’s disappearances in Argentina, a phenomenon that was becoming discussed in the media and was emerging as a regularized strategy of the military government after 1976, leading to an estimated thirty thousand deaths (figure 6). Next to his signature, Romero stated, “In Argentina there are also cultural acts taking place,” a statement that explicitly drew a parallel between the political situations of both countries and condemned exhibitions like the biennial as being extensions of the oppressive political processes.⁴⁵



Figure 6 Juan Carlos Romero, *En la Argentina también se realizan actos culturales*, entry for *Contrabiennial* (New York), 1971, private archives of Luis Camnitzer, New York.

The delicate balance and search for communion between art and life, typical of the avant-gardes of the 1960s, would be tested by the political situations in these countries. Many artists abandoned their work and refocused their attention on direct political action, in some cases going so far as to join guerrilla movements.⁴⁶ This was anticipated by Edgardo Vigo’s submission to *Contrabiennial*, where under the acronym “T.N.T.” a message stated, “this cannot be solved any more with ideas but with DIRECT ACTIONS, like the use of the above mentioned.” In the case of Antonia Galbraith’s drawing entitled “Latinoamérica,” the Mexican artist addressed North American interventionism in the region by depicting a scissor tagged “Made in USA” next to silhouettes with simulated cut-out lines, reminding the viewer of paper dolls. Her entry was the most explicit account of the group’s initial concern: the way in which North American institutions conceived of Latin American art.

Those artists who participated with written submissions in the form of letters and manifestos had the opportunity to develop their ideological positions in more detailed form. Many focused on institutional critiques of biennials and their system of prizes and national representations. Lorenzo Homar’s handwritten letter addressed the difficulties of colonies like his native Puerto Rico, which was forced to participate under the representation of its colonizer and its imposed cultural standards. The contradictory role of artists in society was another prevalent topic in the book. Julio Le Parc’s two-page manifesto was

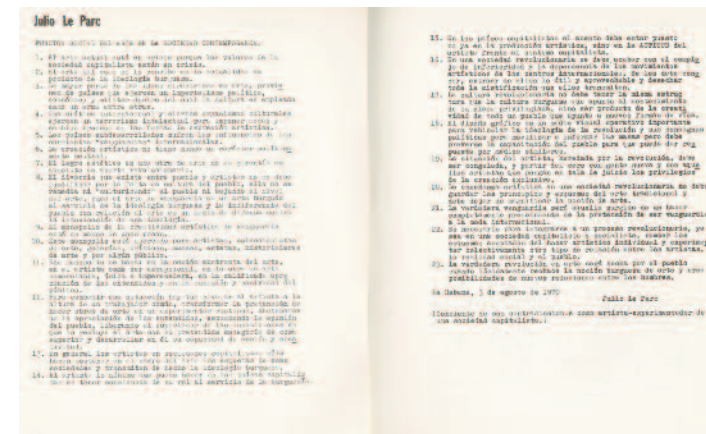


Figure 7 Julio Le Parc, *Función social del arte en la sociedad contemporánea*, entry for *Contrabiennial* (New York), 1971, private archives of Julio Le Parc, Cachan, France. ICAA Record ID 766029.

formatted as a numbered list with the title “Social Function of Art in Contemporary Society” (figure 7). Point twelve argued that to fight the totalitarian view of art promoted by power, the artist’s status needs to be leveled with that of a common blue-collar worker and that art must be conceived as a continuous exploration. León Ferrari’s letter also addressed the role of artists in bourgeois society:

Almost all artists work with their back turned to the people, creating pleasures for the cultural elite that promotes them, and for the money that buys them, and the avant-garde, with their back turned to their country, seek prestige in international art centers by collaborating in the creation of a Western art that will later be used as a justification of all the excesses committed by the West.⁴⁷

Other artists presented more lyrical and even cryptic texts, notably Mathias Goeritz described a nightmare in which “a guerrilla of militant artists—among them some friends of mine—kidnapped me and took me to a gigantic hole full of contemporary art.” the hole, with its awful stench, was the biennial.⁴⁸

For many, participation in *Contrabiennial* was not only an opportunity to air a specific complaint but also a chance to help create a new space for discussion that would permit them to identify as a group (Latin Americans) and even allow for an altered consciousness that could facilitate new stylistic expressions beyond the stereotype pressed upon them. Such utopian views are reflected in Porter’s handwritten letter, where she claims that the participation is also “a communication device with colleagues around this new consciousness,” and closes by saying that “[m]aybe, this shared focus can create a new language” (figure 8).⁴⁹ In addition to such individual expressions, *Contrabiennial* also included a section with collective statements against participation in the São Paulo Biennial. The Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de la Universidad de Chile joined the boycott in a letter signed by the institution’s director and seventy-four artists. Two large groups also sent letters from Mexico and Argentina.

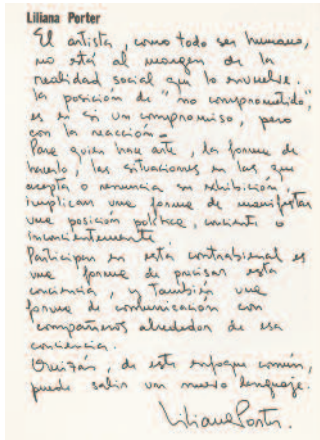


Figure 8 Liliana Porter, *Sin título* [Untitled], entry for *Contrabienal* [New York], 1971, private archives of Luis Camnitzer, New York.

This brief survey of the book reveals it to function as a multi-dimensional and varied platform, presenting diverse visual and rhetorical strategies to address equally diverse ideological concerns. From serving as an anti-imperialist institutional critique to offering avant-garde reevaluations of the role of art and artists in society, the submissions in *Contrabienal* give a textured account of the complexities of Latin American art and culture, positioned in contrast to the stereotype version of “Latin American” offered by CIAR and other international institutions. Ironically, in these varied expressions, the artists, ultimately grouped themselves under the same contested label, “Latin American,” and as Camnitzer remarked, the actions offered them an unparalleled sense of community, thereby in some senses claiming for themselves and then repurposing a collective identity that was initially externally derived. *Contrabienal* would thus become a symbolic battle over the regionalist denominator “Latin American.”

Art Systems: Matta-Clark vs. Glusberg

The section of group submissions of *Contrabienal* was followed by the publication of the letters of artist Gordon Matta-Clark, son of the Chilean painter Roberto Matta, and Argentinean curator Jorge Glusberg, who had engaged in a polemic over the exhibition *Art Systems*, which the latter was preparing for the São Paulo Biennial.⁵⁰ The exhibition, which opened in Buenos Aires with plans to send the show next to Brazil, set out to bring together some of the most famous international artists of the time in dialogue with their Latin American contemporaries.⁵¹ Among those on the extensive list of artists whose participation Glusberg initially claimed to have confirmed were Vito Acconci, John Baldesarri, Robert Barry, Christo, On Kawara, Joseph Kosuth, and Matta-Clark.⁵²

Stimulated by the boycott organized by Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA, Matta-Clark wrote a letter on May 19 canceling his participation in *Art Systems*. He sent it to Glusberg but also made it public by publishing it in *Contrabienal*.⁵³ His text recognized the important role the São Paulo Biennial had played since its inception in “establishing Brazil as a center for free cultural life in South America and the world.” However, he also warned that due to censorship Brazilian artists had suffered since the 1964 coup d’état, writing that “the

works exhibited in São Paulo would shamefully give importance to this totalitarian government and its allies.” Therefore, as Matta-Clark explained, he would have to withdraw his work from the Glusberg exhibition and support the boycott from artists including Carl Andre, Robert Morris, Walter De María, Michael Heizer, Hans Haacke, Mel Bochner, Dan Graham, Richard Serra, Keith Sonnier, Vito Acconci, Lee Jaffe, Christo, Terry Fox, and Les Levine. The letter went further still, questioning Glusberg’s ethical stance and asking artists not to send the pieces to the Buenos Aires exhibition. He warned that “[m]y sense is that Glusberg fully intends to send the works he receives [for the Buenos Aires exhibition] to São Paulo, and that it probably is not easier making political statements in Argentina than in Brazil.”⁵⁴

Glusberg swiftly responded, and his rebuttal was included in *Contrabienal*. Titled “Why I decided to participate with ‘Art Systems’ in the São Paulo Biennial and now I desist,” the text aimed to explain the reasoning behind his proposal. Initially hesitant about participating because of the precedent of the 1969 boycott, Glusberg decided that it would “constitute a positive event to allow Brazilian artists to inform themselves, dialogue and communicate with works and artists representing the whole world, allowing them to in a way break with the isolationism to which they are subjected by the police state.” The curator continued the missive by listing the participating artists, dividing the list according to whether they had agreed to take part in writing or simply verbally; Matta-Clark was mentioned in the first group. Glusberg continued by stating that due to a series of letters he had received after withdrawing from participation—even though he disagreed with the boycott as a useful strategy—he had decided to cancel the whole exhibition to show his ideological agreement with the larger cause. He closed the letter by defending himself against Matta-Clark’s accusations of sending the works against the artists’ wishes, calling this claim a “gratuitous attack on an intellectual worker.”⁵⁵

The exchange between Matta-Clark and Glusberg is ultimately about more than *Art Systems* and its relationship with the boycotted biennial in that it actually also expresses many of the issues central to the *Contrabienal*, including a general exhaustion with models of inclusion and the representation of peripheral artists in the biennials.⁵⁶ Glusberg’s proposal stated that it would be beneficial for Brazilian artists to be surrounded by international avant-garde artists and that through artistic dialogue they could break the boundaries established by their authoritarian government. Such a position was not simply representative of his intellectual naïveté, but rather a common stance among many Latin American cultural agents under the influence of the increasingly influential internationalist trend toward developmentalism (*desarrollismo*), which postulated that a strong bond with centers of art could improve the quality of artistic production in the periphery.⁵⁷ Even though Glusberg did not explicitly say so, the problem with his proposal was the paternalistic implication that mainstream fame would help peripheral artists simply through simply by exhibiting together. In Camnitzer’s words, these “arguments with regards to piggybacking on hegemonic fame . . . seemed . . . like a ‘colonized’ attitude.”⁵⁸

The Contrabienal as Test Case: Conceptualist, Latin American, Political

A renewed attention to the Latin American region was taking place in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, both in political and cultural terms. The Center for Inter-American Relations was part of this process, as was the association of artists that created the *Contrabienal*. At the same time, a group of artists and the majority of those organizing the publication were creating works that would come to be categorized as conceptualist. The art historical analysis of their production would later highlight the “political content” of their pieces as a differential, which facilitated their independence from mainstream conceptual currents in North America. Political Latin American conceptualism would thus become the canonical label used to refer to Latin American conceptual art. An analysis, as well as a historicization of the central terms of this thesis—political, Latin American, conceptualist—helps to shed greater light on this triad and on how they have been woven together to create this canonical account. As such, *Contrabienal* becomes not only a testimony of regionalist identification and of the important international networks of contact in between Latin American artists, but also a key object of study of the early associations in between Latin American emerging conceptual art and politics.

Conceptualist. Simón Marchán Fiz had briefly referred to the political character of Latin American conceptualism in the 1970s, but it was not until the 1990s, under the impulse of multiculturalism, that a characterization of “other conceptualisms” became necessary.⁵⁹ In fact, it was in the United States, for the catalogue of MoMA’s 1992 exhibition *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century*, that Mari Carmen Ramírez wrote her groundbreaking essay “Blue Print Circuits: Conceptual Art and Politics in Latin America,” which sparked renewed interest in the period.⁶⁰ At this point, the argument was introduced that political content gave the region its distinctive character. Building on Marchán Fiz’s line of argument, Ramírez stated that the political logic of Latin American conceptualism rests on a different social and institutional model in which formalism and dematerialization of the artwork were not principal concerns, and as such the artwork could carry a “message” without betraying avant-garde intentions. She continued, arguing that for these artists “the act of replacing tautology with meaning is grounded in the larger project of exiting exhausted political and ideological circuits through the revitalization of contexts.” Thus, the revisionist version of Conceptual art offered by Latin America involved the “recovery of an emancipatory project . . . when most forms of contemporary art have run up the blind alley of self-referentiality.”⁶¹

Global Conceptualisms, a 1999 exhibition organized by Camnitzer, Jane Farver, and Rachel Weiss at the Queens Museum, had an even more ambitious goal: to take conceptualism to the international level by exploring its peripheral manifestations and positing that the movement had had multiple points of origin.⁶² To do so, the exhibition made a distinction between the notions of “Conceptual Art” and “Conceptualism,” with the former referring to a mainstream self-ref-

erential art movement and the latter conceived as an open-ended strategy and reaction to social phenomena. Throughout the exhibition catalogue essays, the characteristics of Latin American conceptualism were established vis-à-vis Conceptual art, thus strengthening this essentialist reductionism. The legacy of this association between politics and Latin American conceptualism can be observed in most of the literature on the subject.⁶³

However, in the past few years this notion of Latin American conceptualism has been questioned and expanded by different authors, principally addressing the fact that it was a referential definition constructed from a dialectical opposition to mainstream conceptualism and noting that it relied on the same center-periphery dynamics it was trying to contest. Also, critics highlight that much of the 1960s and 1970s practices were not necessarily directed against political oppression or institutional critique and that other styles and works that focused not in the social message but on formalist concerns were also an option.⁶⁴ The most interesting re-evaluation of Latin American conceptualism as conceived by Ramírez and by *Global Conceptualisms* can be found in a 2010 article by Miguel A. López and Josephine Watson where the authors highlight the historiographical importance of these texts in the previously depoliticized representation of Latin American art, culture, and history that reigned at the time, arriving at the conclusion that the show’s virtue was not only to broaden the cartographies of Conceptual art, but also to challenge the identity of North American Conceptual art itself by bringing into question the formalist post-minimalist aspects traditionally associated with it. However, at the same time they also brought attention to the danger of “the narrow and dichotomous path of analysis indebted to essentialist nuances that fail to establish a genuine antagonism.”⁶⁵ Similarly, in his 2008 interview with Fernando Davis, Camnitzer assumes that *Global Conceptualism* was an “impulsive . . . presumptuous and utopian” project, and that even though he is aware of the “dissident alterity” that the exhibition’s argument involved, it aimed to articulate new parameters with which to understand peripheral cultures.⁶⁶ Still, being Latin American also involved being classified under a cartographic system prone to stereotype and misrepresentation.

“Latin American.” “Latin American” was and still remains a complicated but necessary category. *Contrabienal* offered a group of artists the possibility to at least partially contest the negative construction of Latin America offered by CIAR. Distance from their home countries gave these artists a greater need for regional identification. As Camnitzer states: “one could say that the idea of one unified Latin America (as opposed to a conglomeration of countries) was closer to reality in exile than in the continent itself.”⁶⁷ Almost four decades after *Contrabienal*, Camnitzer reviewed the project and some of its limitations. In his estimation, the initiative “could only bring politics into the art scene and stir up, but not change, the artistic parameters. The group’s publication revealed the simultaneous expansion and dilution of Latin America.” The diaspora of Latin American artists had “a two-sided effect . . . the artists had lost their sense of place, but they

maintained their allegiance to their culture.”⁶⁸ The use of categories such as “Latin American” and “Latin American conceptualism” thus becomes a double-edge sword, offering methodological tools for understanding a series of artistic manifestations but also packaging identity for scholarly and commercial purposes.⁶⁹

As we have seen, what *Contrabienal* shows us goes well beyond the particular case of the CIAR or the São Paulo Biennial. It works also as a case study to reveal the complexity underscoring the use of cultural categories and the role they play as labels or identity markers. Active in the 1970s, these artists operated within a modern framework based on the belief in the power of ideologies and the possibility that reshaping categories could lead to material changes in society. In retrospect, Camnitzer concedes that “it might sound like a form of sixties utopia, but what can I do about it, in the end, I am and will continue to be a 1950s left-winger.”⁷⁰ To be grouped as Latin American meant for these artists a chance for recognition, evidenced by the importance they gave to the CIAR and how it presented Latin American culture in the United States.

These artists were also aware of the political implications of this collective task. As Paternosto explained, “New York was consolidating the geopolitical power of its art, and Latin America was, particularly with regard to visual arts, more than ever ‘the backyard.’ And a Latin American artist, especially if he or she aspired to make avant-garde art in New York, was perceived as an annoyance or as an intruder.”⁷¹ The battleground of categories was, in the first place, a dispute over exhibition spaces and visibility in the city. The rupture between the two groups was provoked by the desire of MICLA members to expand that battle into a broader political contestation. *Contrabienal* reunited both concerns, that of cultural representation and of political agitation, and internationalized the concern by including artists residing all over the world. As such, it offered a virtual space of representation where “the intruders” could express themselves—a space of their own where they were no longer intruders and where they could assert their own identity.

Forty years later, for some it may be hard to understand the importance of regionalism to these artists. Contemporary artists, backed by the supposed virtues of a globalized art scene, prefer to consider themselves beyond labels. In this respect, it is important to remember that the artists who gathered around *Contrabienal* in 1971 did not typically identify as Latin American when they first arrived in the United States. As César Paternosto states, “It was in New York that I discovered that I was ‘Latin American.’ Coming from Buenos Aires, we all aimed to be ‘universal’ artists . . . but the category of ‘Latin American’ was very much present. It was a label that they would stick on you as soon as you arrived.”⁷² Porter, who has lived in New York for the past five decades, echoes this sentiment: “I was not so conscious of being Latin American . . . You had an accent and you were aware that you were from another place. But I think that the stronger differentiation appeared later with the category ‘Hispanic.’”⁷³ For that generation, the meaning of being Latin American was something worth fighting for, and with the emerging dictatorships of the 1970s and the subsequent shift of many artists

to direct political action, it would also become something worth dying for.

The symbolic battle would continue over the next decades and, ironically, in the grand scheme of things the CIAR and later the Americas Society would end up being important allies for the creation of a space for Latin American art in New York. The advent of identity politics and of multiculturalism would continue to have their place in negotiations of the representation of Latin American art, replacing the linguistic focus of class and anti-imperialism with a vocabulary based around ethnic identity, post-colonialism, and gender. The category “Latin American”—historically changing, subjective, and symbolic—has proved to be more exigent than ever. In this sense, the generation of *Contrabienal* can be considered ahead of its time.⁷⁴

This *Contrabienal*, then, was the one result of the rise of a new, politicized *campus* for Latin American art in New York in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The group of artists in question was innovative not only in terms of regional association and cultural activism, but also through the introduction of conceptualist practices in their personal art and on the pages of *Contrabienal*. Yet, one could argue that this *campus* also extended well beyond New York: although El Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA had originally been established with the specific goal of challenging the folklorist representation of Latin American art offered by the city’s Center for Inter-American Relations, the boycott against the XI São Paulo Biennial and the publication of *Contrabienal* involved the establishment of an *international* network of political and stylistic exchange. In the process, these artists redefined their personal art practices and identities, as well as the character of Latin American art across the world.

Appendix A

Interview with César Paternosto, November 1, 2013⁷⁵

AIMÉ IGLESIAS LUKIN: How did your insertion in the North American art scene develop? Which contacts did you have at your arrival to New York, and how were you received by the local circles?

CÉSAR PATERNOSTO: The truth is that a *real* insertion never took place. You would always feel, or rather, they would make you feel, like a “fish out of water.” Maybe if I had arrived when I was younger and studied there, a better form of insertion would have been possible. But I arrived when I was already grown-up, immediately after winning the first prize of the 3rd Córdoba Biennial.

As for contacts, at the Biennial I had met Alfred Barr (later I realized his importance. . . [He] now less well-thought of by intellectuals who question his “formalism,” but without his eye this formidable MoMA collection could not have been formed). When I arrived, he called me to his office, and he granted me my first entry pass into the museum as an artist of the collection (he bought one of my Biennial prize-winning pieces for the museum’s collection). I had also established a good relationship with Sam Hunter, who unfortunately had shortly before that been fired as director of the Jewish Museum, an institu-

tion that was very “trendy” at the time. Also, around that time, a pretty influential collector, William Weintraub, who had donated works to MoMA was taking me under his wing.

In the year after my arrival, in 1968, I got in contact with Abe Sachs, owner of the AM Sachs Gallery, who was excited about my work, and he gave me an exhibition in September of that year (something that many Latin American artists had been waiting for many years). His gallery was on 57th Street, which years before SoHo or Chelsea was the “cosmic center” of the art world. His gallery—even if it wasn’t “top notch” like Castelli’s or Emmerich’s, which formed the two poles of the establishment back then—was under the influential orbit of Greenberg (whom we had met in Buenos Aires). And that’s how my artistic life in New York began, full of highs and lows.

ALL: Did you identify as Latin American upon your arrival to New York? Was that “category” very present at the time, or not so much? Did association with the Museo Latinoamericano and the protests against the politics of the Center for Inter-American Relations affect that identification?

CP: It was in New York that I discovered that I was “Latin American.” Coming from Buenos Aires, we all aimed to be “universal” artists. And I don’t think that was any different in other Latin American countries. Moreover, I was chasing after a fantasy: I was convinced that New York would be for Latin American artists what Paris was for the rest of Europe (*L’École de Paris* comprised a great number of other Europeans). But it wouldn’t turn out that way. It would turn out to be quite different. In the 60s, New York was consolidating the geopolitical power of its art, and Latin America was, particularly with regards to visual arts, more than ever “the backyard.” And a Latin American artist, especially if he or she aspired to make avant-garde art in New York, was perceived as an annoyance or as an intruder. No matter how many photographs Marta Minujín would make with Andy Warhol, she would never be considered his equal.⁷⁶

There was a barrier, as transparent as it was unbreakable. In literature, García Márquez and Borges were already very influential, and in music Ginastera was widely recognized. It was always in the visual arts that there was a certain chauvinism, which in the end is not more than provincialism. Maybe it was an unresolved and intimate sense of inferiority to Europe? I do not know. It is clear today, almost half a century later, when everybody tries to emulate or work among the canon that was formulated in the United States during those years—conceptual art (topmost), installation, video—that what I say sounds like a fable. Or, let me rephrase, it does not contradict it, because if you follow such rules you have more chances to have a career, to be invited to biennials, to Documenta, etc. But those of us who lived during those years in New York, we have another experience.

The category of ‘Latin American’ was very much present. It was a label that they would stick on you as soon as you arrived. A label of discrimination. And it was the discrimination of galleries, curators, and the establishment in general, the decisive factor that led to the formation of the so-called Museo Latinoamericano. In other words, discrimination meant lack of access to galleries, meaning the [an obstacle to the] development of a career. And one would feel the discrimination because most Latin American artists already had earned a name in their home countries, and they rightfully aspired to continue their professional life in New York.

The Museo Latinoamericano came up spontaneously from conversations with colleagues and friends. By 1971, when the group was created, I was an exception because I had already had two solo shows in important spaces such as the AM Sachs Gallery. However, I had also received strong discriminatory messages from the establishment, so I acted in solidarity with my friends. Before my arrival in 1967, Camnitzer had already participated in political actions against the CIAR, protesting its role as an extension of the Rockefeller power.

In my view, a great animator of the actions was Arnold Belkin, who was born Canadian but had lived and worked many years in Mexico, where he studied with Siqueiros and from whom he assimilated the sociopolitical ideology of muralism. Leonel Góngora, Colombian painter and teacher in Ahmerst. I also remember the early participation of Maus. Finally Alejandro Puente, along with many others that I do not remember right now.

From those initial meetings was born the idea to “do something” politically. These were years of political revolt: the opposition to Vietnam, the Black Panthers, May ’68 in Paris. Somebody had the idea to name the group “Museo Latinoamericano,” to refer to an ideal museum, whose location would be our own studios.

ALL: Who do you remember as participating in Museo Latinoamericano?

CP: The founders of Museo were Arnold Belkin, Leonel Góngora, Leandro Katz, Luis Molinari Flores, Alejandro Puente, Rolando Peña and myself. The word spread and soon our meetings had large groups of people.

ALL: Who do you remember as part of Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamerica (MICLA)?

CP: The undeniable leader of the group was Luis Camnitzer. He was surrounded by Liliana Porter—his wife at the time—Teodoro Maus and his wife Carla Stellweg, and Luis Wells. They joined the meetings of Museo Latinoamericano a little bit later, and then gradually differentiated from the group.

ALL: How did the division of the group come about?

CP: This is for me a very delicate story to narrate, mainly because it involves colleagues and friends. And also because over the years I have heard very selective memories of it, built in very self-indulgent perceptions. I will try to be as objective as possible.

As the meetings became more and more numerous, two wings of the movement started to take shape. The first, the majority, wanted to open a professional path, put pressure on galleries and institutions (like CIAR) to hold exhibitions, and naturally, to sell works (Is there any other way to make a living as an artist in this bourgeois society?). This did not mean the abandonment of left-wing ideologies. We wanted to battle the discrimination of the establishment toward Latin American art. This wing could be referred to as the “unionized” tendency.

On the other hand, there was the group that would end up seceding as MICLE, which was proposing harder political stances, and accusing the others of “only being interested in making exhibitions,” among other allegations. The irony was that many of these members had other means of subsistence, thanks to teaching positions or because of family money.

In contrast, the “unionized” wing was composed of artists who could barely make a living in New York. The American market is so huge that, in other circles—we were not precisely Jasper Johns or Frank Stella—it allowed some artists a modest but decent life. Some had teaching positions. A few toured exhibitions through Latin America, particularly to Venezuela, where there was a welcoming international market. In my personal case, after leaving Sachs Gallery, if I did not sell artworks through private dealers, I had to survive as a house painter.

ALL: How do you see, in retrospect, the role of these two groups?

CP: As you know, the most notable result was the book *Contrabienal*. Before this, I had rejected an invitation to participate in the São Paulo Biennial, first of all because it came from governmental agencies of the military dictatorship at the time (presided by General Onganía). I later refused, mainly because the military government from Argentina organized the proposal. Later, in the group meetings, we came up with the idea of an artists’ protest against dictatorship in Brazil. We invited artists and cultural agents based all over the world to submit works or letters. It was a complete success and still has historical interest.

To afford it, we auctioned a series of our works. The final catalogue was finally published with the two groups already divided. Almost immediately after the publication, I presented my resignation to Museo Latinoamericano because—as I publicly stated—I believed that the groups needed to function together and that the ideological divides were part of a unique cause.

The truth is that, in the end, I was a little tired. I felt that the whole thing was too frustrating and profoundly contradictory. If we were truly so anti-imperialist and left wing, what were we doing in New York, in the United States? Was it not true that we had gone to New York to succeed professionally because we lacked such a chance in our home countries? Did that imply that we had to accept certain rules of the game, as harsh and refutable as they were?

I also wondered about what would happen in an opposite situation: How would the Argentine establishment react towards a Bolivian or Paraguayan artist? Would they give him equal opportunities?

Considering this, I do not want to answer retroactively more than I already did, from which you can conclude many things.



Figure 9 Luis Felipe Noé, *Sin título* [Untitled], entry for *Contrabienal* [New York], 1971, private archives of Luis Felipe Noé, Buenos Aires. ICAA Record ID 766043.

Appendix B

Interview with Luis Camnitzer, November 6, 2013

AIMÉ IGLESIAS LUKIN: How did your insertion in the North American art scene develop? Which contacts did you have at your arrival to New York, and how were you received by the local circles?

LUIS CAMNITZER: I first arrived on a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1962, when I worked in engraving at the Pratt Graphic Arts Center, where there was a large group of Latin American artists (Abularach, Morales, Opazo, Da Silva, Girona, etc.). Also working at Pratt was Antonio Frascioni, an Uruguayan artist based in New York who helped me during my stay. Six months later, I interrupted my trip and returned to Montevideo.

In 1964 I was back to New York, where I shared an apartment with Luis Felipe Noé (figure 9) and later with Liliana Porter. We got married in 1965, until 1978, and together with José Guillermo Castillo we founded the New York Graphic Workshop. In conclusion, for me “the local circles” were fundamentally Latin American.

ALL: Did you identify as Latin American upon your arrival to New York? Was that “category” very present at the time, or not so much?

LC: Yes. And my first exhibition took place in the Galería Sudamericana.

ALL: Did the association with the Museo Latinoamericano and the protests against the politics of the Center for Inter-American Relations affect that identification?

LC: No, actually it was the opposite. The resistance and boycott to the Center took place due to an exhibition organized by the Center’s first curator, Stanton Catlin, that we considered insulting for Latin America. The Museo Latinoamericano was born after a second protest, in 1970.

ALL: Who do you remember participating in Museo Latinoamericano?

LC: Many people, and I do not have a complete list, but it included Liliana Porter, César Paternosto, Eduardo Costa, Teodoro Maus, Carla Stellweg, Leonel Góngora, Leandro Katz, Rolando Peña, Vita Giorgi, Arnold Belkin, Antonia Galbraith, Luis Wells, me, etc. I would say we were twenty-five in total.

ALL: Who do you remember being part of Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamerica (MICLE)?

LC: Teodoro Maus, Liliana Porter, Carla Stellweg, Eduardo Costa, Antonia Galbraith, Luis Wells, and me.

ALL: What were the divisions among and between the groups?

LC: A part of Museo Latinoamericano—I would say the majority—demanded that the Center offer more services to help artists through their personal careers. In the group from MICLE, we wanted to politicize it in a more radical way in defense of Latin American interests. The majority of the group did not want to take an open political position that would sacrifice their careers. The CIAR wanted to organize exhibitions of the groups’ participants in prestigious galleries under their auspices, and we in MICLE saw that as an “installment payment,” an insufficient compromise.

ALL: How was the call for participation in *Contrabienal* promoted? Was participation open to anyone interested or by invitation?

LC: I do not remember exactly. I think it was mainly through personal contacts, first promoting the boycott for the Biennial and then calling for submission for the publication. During the summer of 1971, Liliana Porter and I traveled to Europe, and we made contact with groups in different countries, particularly with artists in Paris.

The call for participation was open but not truly public. We wanted to make the publication a more attractive forum for discussion than the Biennial, which at the time represented a heinous power structure.

ALL: Where did you obtain the testimonies and description regarding violence in Brazil that opens the publication?

LC: I think Teodoro Maus had contacts, and that the information came through him, but I am not sure.

Another interesting fact is that to gather funds for a small offset printer, the two groups held a joint auction of artworks. We installed the printer in Maus and Stellweg’s loft, where we produced *Contrabienal*. Luis Wells executed the design.

ALL: Could you please describe the work that you submitted?

LC: Before the publication, around 1968 or 1969, I had created a series of eight silkscreens about Latin American heroes. Among them was Carlos Marínghela. The image [I made for] *Contrabienal* was based on the corresponding engraving.

ALL: How many copies were printed? How was it distributed?

LC: We probably printed 500 copies, but I do not remember. It was distributed free of charge among our contacts and participants, by hand and by mail.

All translations are by the author unless otherwise noted.

- This essay is based on my a master’s thesis, advised by Professor Edward Sullivan at The Institute of Fine Arts at NYU; versions of this essay were subsequently published at *Art@s Bulletin*’s late 2014 special issue “Highways of the South,” edited by Daniel Quiles and the following year in the framework of Pablo León de la Barra’s curatorial project *Under the Same Sun* in the Guggenheim UBS Map program’s online blog, *Perspectives*. See Aimé Iglesias Lukin, “Contrabienal: Art, Politics and Identity Conformation among Latin American Artists in New York in the Late 1960s and Early 1970s,” in Daniel Quiles, ed., *Art@s Bulletin* 3, no. 2 (Fall 2014); and Aimé Iglesias Lukin, “Contrabienal: Art, Politics, and Latin American Identity in 1970s New York,” <https://www.guggenheim.org/blogs/map/contrabienal-art-politics-and-latin-american-identity-in-1970s-new-york>, accessed June 1, 2016.
- For more on the CIAR, see Beverly A. Adams, “Latin American Art at the Americas Society: A Principality of Its Own,” in Falconi, Jose Luis and Gabriela Rangel, eds., *A Principality of Its Own: 40 years of Visual Arts at the Americas Society* (New York: Americas Society, 2006). Fabiana Serviddio offers the richest approach to the polarizing role of CIAR among the community of Latin American artists residing in New York as part of a larger research project on the history of regional representation in North American institutions. Her analysis is brief and does not mention *Contrabienal*, but it nonetheless firmly establishes the important role that CIAR, Museo Latinoamericano, and MICLE played in identity construction during the period. See Fabiana Serviddio, “Exhibiting identity: Latin America Between the Imaginary and the Real,” *Journal of Social History* 44, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 481–98.
- The best account of the events that led to the publication of *Contrabienal* is Luis Camnitzer’s essay, “The Museo Latinoamericano and MICLE,” included in *A Principality of its Own*, a book celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Americas Society. The Uruguayan artist was one of the main organizers of Museo Latinoamericano, and his text gives a detailed description of the main events leading up to its publication. Luis Camnitzer, “The Museo Latinoamericano and MICLE” in Falconi and Rangel), 216–29.
- Luis Camnitzer, interview with the author, November 6, 2013 (see Appendix B of the current article).
- During the 1980s and 1990s, critics argued for an understanding of Latin American conceptualism as fundamentally political, largely constructing a canon in the process. The first reference is Simón Marchán Fiz, *Del arte objetual al arte de concepto: Las artes plásticas desde 1960* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 1988), 268–71. Other early references include Juan Acha’s study of “arte no-objetual” in Acha, Adolfo Colombes, and Ticio Escobar, *Hacia una teoría americana del arte* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Sol, 1991). See also Néstor García Canclini, “Vanguardias artísticas y cultura popular,” *Transformaciones* 90 (1973): 273–75.
- My use of *campus* here follows Pierre Bourdieu’s notion, which describes social fields in which agents interact according to social positions and functions that are conditioned not only by capital and by their *habitus* of conduct, but also by rules specific to the field. See *Les règles de l’art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1998 [1968]).
- For these new historiographical studies on Latin American conceptualisms see, in particular, Miguel A. López and Josephine Watson, “How Do We Know What Latin American Conceptualism Looks Like?,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 23 (Spring 2010): 5–21. See also Zanna Gilbert, “Ideological Conceptualism and Latin America: Politics, Neoprimativism and Consumption,” *Rebus* 4 (Autumn/Winter 2009), http://www.essex.ac.uk/arhistory/research/pdfs/rebus_issue_4/Gilbert.pdf, accessed November 13, 2015; and Fernando Davis, “Entrevista a Luis Camnitzer. Global Conceptualism fue algo intestinal e incontrolable, al mismo tiempo que presuntuoso y utópico,” *Ramona* (Buenos Aires) (November 2008): 32. Also see the conference paper “Three Self-Destructive Strategies of Venezuelan Neo-Avant-Garde from 1962 to 1973,” presented by Gabriela Rangel at Hunter College March 20, 2013 (unpublished).
- For more on this fundamental shift, see Serge Guibault, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom and the Cold War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
- The Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship is offered to distinguished professionals in their fields. There is a specific category for artists coming from Latin America and the Caribbean.

- ¹⁰ It must be remembered that the entire social sphere was shaken by the 1968 revolts and widespread opposition to the Vietnam War, and in particular the South and Central American artists involved in *Contrabienal* were at the time radicalized by the assassination of Ernesto “Che” Guevara in 1967 and the repression of Mexican students in 1968. The New York art scene was in the midst of a very radicalized moment which resulted in, for example, the foundation in 1969 of the Art Workers’ Coalition, a collective including Lucy Lippard, critic John Perrault, and artist Carl André; the Coalition used assembly and union’s tactics to press museums and institutions for antiwar, feminist, and left wing reforms. See Julia Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers: Radical Practice in the Vietnam War Era* (Berkeley, University of California, 2009).
- ¹¹ As part of his multidisciplinary project, Maciunas led an effort supported by the J.M. Kaplan Foundation and the National Foundation for the Arts to recuperate dilapidated loft buildings in the SoHo area for artists, calling them Fluxhouse Cooperatives. Davidovich lived in the Fluxus Apartment Number 2. Jaime Davidovich, interview with the author, November 15, 2013.
- ¹² In 1966 Sol Lewitt traveled to Buenos Aires to install a work of his that contested for the Instituto Di Tella International Prize and showed interest in the work exhibited by Punte at the *Vision Elemental* group show presented at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes as part of the *Semana de Arte Avanzado*. Rodrigo Alonso, *Iman, Nueva York: arte argentino de los años 60* (Buenos Aires: Fundacion Proa, 2010), 226.
- ¹³ For a detailed description of such networks see *ibid*.
- ¹⁴ Anthony Lukas, “Ex-Soviet Mission on Park Ave. Will Reopen as a Latin Center: The House with the Famous Balcony Rescued from Wreckers by a Marquesa, Is Ready to Receive Visitors,” *New York Times*, September 9, 1967, 33–48.
- ¹⁵ The show was the first to categorically approach the contemporary production of Latin American artists living in New York and included paintings from twenty-eight artists presenting a wide panorama of stylistic tendencies. Alfredo Bonino was probably the most important dealer of the time and had gallery spaces in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. His New York space was located on 57th Street. For a brief account of its history, see “The Galería Bonino, in its ten years in New York...,” 1970, typed manuscript, Galería Bonino Archive, Fundación Espigas, Buenos Aires. With regard to *Magnet New York*, see Jacqueline Barnitz, “Packaging Latin America in New York in the 1960s and 1970s,” *Transnational Latin American Art from 1950 to the Present Day*, 1st International Research Forum for Graduate Student and Emerging Scholars (The University of Texas at Austin, November 6–8, 2009), 27–44, http://utexasclavis.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2009_FORUM_PAPERS.pdf, accessed December 7, 2013. Also see Galería Bonino, Palacio de Bellas Artes and Inter-American Foundation for the Arts, *Magnet-New York: A Selection of Paintings by Latin American Artists Living in New York* (New York: Inter-American Foundation for the Arts, 1964).
- ¹⁶ David Rockefeller, “Creating a Space,” in John A. Farmer, and Ilona Katzew, *A Hemispheric Venture: Thirty-five Years of Culture at the Americas Society, 1965–2000* (New York: Americas Society, 2000), 22.
- ¹⁷ However, the reporter specified that the board members clarified that “the center is a private, independent organization that will not be an instrument of United States foreign policy.” Cited in Lukas, “Ex-Soviet Mission on Park Ave,” 48. It is worth to note two significant pieces of information in the article’s title: the Upper East Side neo-Georgian Mansion where CIAR was opening had functioned as the Soviet Union’s Mission for the United Nation, and it was on its balcony that in 1960 Nikita Khrushchev, former Soviet Premier, embraced Fidel Castro in solidarity with his political stance. The Marquesa de Cuevas (Margaret Rockefeller Strong De Larraín), who in 1966 purchased and donated the house to the Center’s initiative, was a granddaughter of John D. Rockefeller.
- ¹⁸ On these internationalist efforts, see Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política: arte argentino en los años sesenta*, (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2004 [2001]). Also see Rodrigo Alonso, *Iman, Nueva York*.
- ¹⁹ Grace Glueck, “Latins for Manhattan,” *New York Times*, July 30, 1967, 93.
- ²⁰ Center for Inter-American Relations, *Artists of the Western Hemisphere; Precursors of Modernism: 1860–1930, Inaugural Loan Exhibition, Sept. 19–Nov. 12, 1967* (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1967).
- ²¹ John Canaday, “Art: From the Americas. ‘Precursors of Modernism’ Opens Series at Inter-American Relations Center,” *The New York Times*, September 14, 1967.
- ²² “Art Mailbag: Dressing the Wounds for Derain, Reinhardt, and Latin America,” *New York Times*, October 8, 1967, 25.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 25.
- ²⁴ For a detailed account of this work please see Alexander Alberro, “Media, Sculpture, Myth,” in Falconi and Rangel, 160–77. See also Gabriela Rangel, *Marta Minujin: Minucode(s)* (New York: Americas Society, 2015).
- ²⁵ Alberro, “165.
- ²⁶ They were also to abstain from relations with any organization involved in repressing activities not conducive to the liberation of Latin American countries, and they were also implored to include Chicano and Puerto Rican activities in programming. See Camnitzer, “The Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA,” 218.
- ²⁷ Grace Glueck, “Show is Suspended as Artists Dissent,” *New York Times*, March 20, 1971, 13.
- ²⁸ Dean Rusk was accused as being responsible for the expulsion of Cuba from the Organization of American States; the statements also criticized Lincoln Gordon for his role as the U.S. ambassador to Brazil at time of the coup d’état and for his recommendation to send weapons to support the military initiative; they also called out Thomas Mann’s role as Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs and Presidential Advisor on Latin America during President Lyndon B. Johnson’s intervention in the 1965 Dominican strike. See Camnitzer, “The Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA,” 220, ft 4.
- ²⁹ Glueck, “Show is Suspended as Artists Dissent,” 13.
- ³⁰ Camnitzer, “The Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA,” 218.
- ³¹ *Ibid*.
- ³² All of these references denounced American interventionism in Latin America and included a broad range of quotations from the Monroe Doctrine to more contemporary citations. For examples see *Ibid.*, 220.
- ³³ César Paternosto, interview with the author, November 1, 2013 (see Appendix A in this article).
- ³⁴ The São Paulo Biennial was the most important international art event in the hemisphere, and it had been founded in 1951 by industrialist Cicillo Matarazzo, conceived in the mold of the Venice Biennale, and envisioned as part of an attempt to turn the city into a cosmopolitan art center. Over its first two decades, the Biennial became a symbol of democracy and cultural advancement, gaining international attention and becoming the most important event in the Latin American art scene. See, among many other sources, Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, org., *Bienal 50 Anos 1951–2001* (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal de São Paulo, 2001).
- ³⁵ For the most detailed study of this event see Claudia Calirman, *Brazilian Art Under Dictatorship: Antonio Manuel, Artur Barrio, and Cildo Meireles* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012).
- ³⁶ See Takis [Panagiotis Vassilakis], Letter to Pierre Restany, January 17, 1969, New York, Julio Le Parc Archive, Paris. ICAA Record ID [774652](#); Hélio Oiticíca, “Helio Oiticíca: letre ouverte aux sélectionné,” [1969], artist’s open letter against the 1969 São Paulo Biennial, Julio Le Parc Archive, Paris, ICAA Record ID [774506](#); and “To Bienal or not to Bienal: San Pablo: protesta y abstención,” *Análisis* (Buenos Aires), July 29, 1969, ICAA Record ID [774207](#).
- ³⁷ Luis Camnitzer, interview with the author, November 6, 2013. For a copy of the invitation sent by the organizing committee, see Luis Wells, Luis Camnitzer, Carla Stellweg, Liliana Porter, and Teodoro Maus, “Estimado compañero,” in *Contrabienal* [1971], ICAA Record ID [766014](#) (see figure 2).
- ³⁸ This is only a partial, but fruitful parallel. The New York Graphic Workshop, a collective formed by MICLA members Camnitzer, Porter, and Castillo engaged in Mail art pieces as early as 1969. *Contrabienal’s* focus on democratic circulation, challenging the art object, and collective representation would advance the interest of 1970s Mail art. Yet, these networks would focus more on interpersonal creation of the artwork and participatory projects. I thank Zanna Gilbert and Vanessa Davidson for their valuable insights on this issue.
- ³⁹ Museo Latinoamericano and Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latino America, *Contrabienal* (New York: Museo Latinoamericano, 1971), n.p.
- ⁴⁰ Luis Wells, Luis Camnitzer, Carla Stellweg, Liliana Porter, and Teodoro Maus, “El Micla, movimiento de independencia cultural latinoamericana, al abocarse a la realización de esta Contrabienal...,” in *Contrabienal* [1971] ICAA Record ID [766001](#).
- ⁴¹ Museo Latinoamericano, *Contrabienal*, n.p.
- ⁴² Luis Camnitzer, interview with the author, November 6, 2013. It is possible that Maus obtained the material from the 1971 work of Bernardo Kucinki and Italo Tronca, “‘Pau de Arara’ La Violence Militaire au Brésil” (Paris: Cahiers Libres, 1971), 215–16.
- ⁴³ “Contenido: Body of Carlos Marighella,” *Contrabienal*, n.p.
- ⁴⁴ Luis Camnitzer, interview with the author, November 6, 2013.
- ⁴⁵ Juan Carlos Romero, “J. C. Romero,” in *Contrabienal*. ICAA Record ID [766181](#).⁴⁶ For this process in the Argentinean case, refer to the book by Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a ‘Tucuman Arde’ Vanguardia artística y política en el ‘68 argentino* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2008/El Cielo por Asalto, 2000).
- ⁴⁷ Julio Le Parc, “Julio Le Parc: función social del arte en la sociedad contemporánea,” in *Contrabienal*. , ICAA Record ID [766029](#).
- ⁴⁸ *Contrabienal*, n.p.

- ⁴⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁰ Jorge Glusberg (1932–2012) was an Argentinean writer, curator, and professor. In 1968, he founded Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC) with artists Víctor Grippo, Jacques Bedel, Luis Fernando Benedit, Alfredo Portillos, Clorindo Testa, and Jorge González. Directed by Glusberg, the group had an exhibition space and organized touring shows. Taking on the leading role previously held by Instituto Di Tella, which closed in 1969, CAYC would become the main promoter of Latin American conceptualism internationally. See, among many references in the ICAA’s digital archive, Centro de Arte y Comunicación, “Qué es el CAYC = What is the CAYC,” in *Argentina Inter-medios: Organizada por el Centro de Arte y Comunicación de la Fundación de Investigación Interdisciplinaria*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1969). ICAA Record ID [748013](#).
- ⁵¹ *Arte de Sistemas en el Museo de Arte Moderno*, opened at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires on July 19th 1971. See Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC). “CAYC: Arte de Sistemas en el Museo de Arte Moderno (GT54),” June 28, 1971. Typed exhibition announcement. Biblioteca del Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires. ICAA Record ID [747665](#).
- ⁵² As published in previous versions of this essay.
- ⁵³ On the effects this letter had on situating Matta-Clark as an “exceptionally adept operator within that newly expanded [transnational] sphere,” see Thomas Crow, “3. More Songs about Buildings and Food,” in Corinne Diserens, Thomas Crow, Judith Russi Kirshner, and Christian Kravagna, *Gordon Matta-Clark* (London: Phaidon, 2003), 40, 44 and 84.
- ⁵⁴ Gordon Matta-Clark, “Gordon Matta,” in *Contrabienal*, n.p., ICAA Record ID [766244](#).
- ⁵⁵ Jorge Glusberg “Jorge Glusberg: Por qué resolví participar en ‘Art Systems’ en la Bienal de San Pablo y ahora desisto,” *Contrabienal*, n.p. ICAA Record ID [766259](#).
- ⁵⁶ Nicolás Guagnini, “No, no, no,” *Ramona* (Buenos Aires) 15 (August 2001): 10–12.
- ⁵⁷ See Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*.
- ⁵⁸ Camnitzer, “The Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA,” 227.
- ⁵⁹ Marchán Fiz, *Del arte objetual al arte de concepto*, 268–71.
- ⁶⁰ Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Blue Print Circuits: Conceptual Art and Politics in Latin America,” in Waldo Ramussen, Fatima Bertch, and Elizabeth Ferrer, eds., *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century*, exh. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1993), 156–67.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid*, 165.
- ⁶² Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, Rachel Weiss, *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s–1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999).
- ⁶³ See for example: Alexander Alberro, “Reconsidering Conceptual Art, 1966–1977,” in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge, MA, and London: The MIT Press, 1999), xxv–xxvi. See also the chapter “Social Sadism Made Explicit”—dedicated to Argentinean Conceptualism from the late 1960s—in Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (London: Verso Books, 2012). Also see Peter Osborne, *Conceptual Art* (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 2002), 37.
- ⁶⁴ Zanna Gilbert and Gabriela Rangel offer interesting arguments in this respect. See note 8 above.
- ⁶⁵ López and Watson, “How Do We Know What Latin American Conceptualism Looks Like?” 10–11. Also see, Ana Longoni and Jaime Vindel, “Fuera de categoría: la política del arte en los márgenes de su historia,” *El río sin orillas* (Buenos Aires) 4 (October 2010).
- ⁶⁶ Davis, “Entrevista a Luis Camnitzer,” 32.
- ⁶⁷ Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 225.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.
- ⁶⁹ In this respect, it is useful to refer to Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*. A study of nationalism, the text explores the notion of community in modernity and how it merges with political and ideological constellations in a historically dynamic process. Anderson uses a series of methodological tools that also may prove valuable for art history, in particular regarding art’s role in regional identification. The text is particularly relevant to this study, as the association of artists under the groups Museo Latinoamericano and Movimiento por la Independencia Cultural de Latinoamérica depended on a regional identification that can be understood as an imagined community. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2010).
- ⁷⁰ Davis, “Entrevista a Luis Camnitzer,” 29.
- ⁷¹ César Paternosto, interview with the author, November 1, 2013.

RETRATO DE LA BURGUESÍA O EL IMPULSO GRÁFICO DINÁMICO EN LA PLÁSTICA MONUMENTAL

Paola Uribe



Imagen 1 David Alfaro Siqueiros/Equipo Internacional, *Retrato de la burguesía*, 1939–40, piroxilina sobre cemento y cetolex, Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, Ciudad de México. Foto: Archivo Carlos Renau

A lo largo de la década de los treinta, David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974) emprendió lo que él mismo denominó una Revolución Técnica en el muralismo. En 1937 participó en la guerra civil española y a su regreso, a tierra mexicana, produjo su siguiente trabajo mural *Retrato de la burguesía* (1939–40) en el Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas (SME). Para llevar a cabo la ejecución del mural, Siqueiros convocó en junio de 1939 al Equipo Internacional de Artistas Plásticos conformado por artistas mexicanos —Antonio Pujol (1913–95) y Luis Arenal (1908–85)— además de un grupo de exiliados de la guerra civil española entre los que figuraban Antonio Rodríguez Luna (1910–95), Miguel Prieto (1907–56) y el valenciano Josep Renau (1907–82).¹ En el presente ensayo resalto la colaboración de Siqueiros con este último basada en el uso de tecnologías y técnicas vanguardistas. Con el estudio del mural es posible conocer cuáles fueron los métodos y procedimientos que obedecían a las innovaciones tecnológicas que practicaban ambos artistas. En la experimentación plástica, tanto Renau como Siqueiros utilizaron herramientas mecánicas, materiales sintéticos y medios masivos de comunicación audiovisual. Para el Equipo Internacional este proyecto significaba la posibilidad de participar e integrarse al muralismo. Dentro del grupo, Renau fue el que tuvo la mayor participación en la producción del mural y el que compartía con Siqueiros la experimentación plástica con medios tecnológicos de comunicación visual. Por lo tanto también expongo cuáles eran las técnicas que compartían estos dos artistas relacionadas con la fotografía, el cine y el montaje y cómo fue la colaboración en el mural.

Renau es considerado un artista de vanguardia por ser precursor del fotomontaje en España, este método lo llevo a la gráfica, al cartel y a montajes de gran formato. Desde muy temprano el valenciano se dedicó a organizar “bancos de imágenes” extraídas de revistas y tomadas por él mismo.² Siqueiros también utilizó imágenes de guerra de revistas ilustradas para los montajes en sus pinturas, tal es el caso de las obras pintadas en Nueva York *Ecós de un grito* (1936), *No más* (1936) y *Nacimiento del fascismo* (1936). Sin embargo, dentro del muralismo el *Retrato de la Burguesía* representa un paradigma en donde se despliega de manera absoluta el montaje —en este caso fotográfico y cinematográfico— como estrategia de disposición del espacio pictórico. Renau y Siqueiros con el uso de las fotografías de guerra apropiadas de las revistas ilustradas del momento, estaban desplazando los medios de comunicación masiva hacia una función estética con intenciones políticas y sociales.

El compromiso sociopolítico

La mayor parte de la iconografía de *Retrato de la burguesía* está basada en los archivos de imágenes de la guerra civil española que Renau trajo a México. En este sentido el mural se convirtió en el espacio en donde se representaron las imágenes actuales de guerra. Por lo tanto *Retrato de la burguesía* es un testimonio de la guerra civil española y representa las consecuencias catastróficas de la emergente guerra total (imagen 1). Pero, al mismo tiempo, *Retrato de la burguesía* fue producto del pensamiento científico en el arte, es un ejemplo de lo artístico conforme a la tradición moderna de la pintura pero con métodos y técnicas que incorporaban nuevas tecnologías, materiales y

medios masivos de comunicación, así como una construcción innovadora para la percepción óptica.³ Además de representar el contexto internacional y nacional sobre la lucha entre el fascismo y el comunismo, en dicho mural, podemos hacer la lectura de las técnicas plásticas que utilizaron Siqueiros y Renau en relación con las tecnologías audiovisuales.⁴ Entre estas, se sitúan el uso de la cámara fotográfica y la cinematográfica, así como las herramientas y materiales industriales.

En 1937, Siqueiros viajó a España como miembro de las Brigadas Internacionales, uniéndose a la lucha de la guerra civil española, experiencia bélica que determinó su siguiente trabajo mural en el SME, *Retrato de la burguesía*. Un grupo de dirigentes del sindicato defendía incondicionalmente la lucha antifascista sostenida por la II República Española e invitaron a Siqueiros a elaborar un mural para su nueva sede de la calle Artes número 45 (actualmente Antonio Caso) en la colonia Tabacalera de la Ciudad de México construida por el arquitecto Enrique Yáñez en colaboración con Ricardo Rivas.⁵ Dentro de este grupo había interesados en aspiraciones culturales como David Roldán y Luis Espinosa Casanova, quienes impulsaron la realización del mural. El proyecto fue presentado tanto a Siqueiros como a José Clemente Orozco, pero este último propuso como tema pintar mujeres desnudas. Con esta respuesta el sindicato dio el mural a Siqueiros.⁶

El 18 de agosto de 1939 el pintor se compromete a realizar el trabajo de manera colectiva bajo su dirección.⁷ Siqueiros formó un Equipo Internacional conformado por artistas españoles exiliados (Rodríguez Luna, Prieto y Renau) y mexicanos (Arenal y Pujol) con la intención de renovar el muralismo en crisis.⁸ Siqueiros siguió el método de trabajo de producción colectiva que había iniciado en Los Ángeles mientras trabajaba en el mural de la calle Olvera, *América Tropical* (1932): se discutía el tema y la técnica como grupo previo a la puesta en práctica de lo decidido. La historiadora Jennifer Jolly explica que la postura del muralista sobre el trabajo colectivo tiene que ver con la visión moderna de producción industrial en donde se reprimen los impulsos de estilo individual y se hace uso de métodos tecnológicos y materiales sintéticos.⁹ Por otra parte, Alicia Azuela adjudica la creación de equipos de trabajo como la respuesta de Siqueiros al acuerdo del VI Congreso del Komintern (1928) de conformar células de trabajo con el fin de atacar al capitalismo, la burguesía y el fascismo.¹⁰

Los tres artistas exiliados españoles admiraban el trabajo de Siqueiros y su postura sobre la función política y social del arte antes de su llegada a México.¹¹ El muralista mexicano menciona que al integrar el Equipo Internacional: “dos fueron mis propósitos el proceder en tal forma: alentar una vez más el trabajo colectivo en la pintura mural y ligar a los compañeros españoles, de manera objetiva, al movimiento muralista mexicano”.¹² Aunque ésta fue la intención inicial de Siqueiros el equipo no permaneció mucho tiempo unido, pronto Rodríguez Luna y Prieto lo abandonaron aunque no se tiene una razón exacta de por qué. Según Fernando Bellón Pérez, Luna y Prieto “no se encontraban a gusto en el colectivo porque estaban habituados al aislamiento y tranquilidad del estudio”.¹³ Sobre la salida de los dos pintores Renau recuerda vagamente cuál fue el desacuerdo, parece que Siqueiros corrigió la manera de pintar de Luna con la piroxilina cuando estaba haciendo el águila imperial

de la pared central, Prieto se solidarizó con él y también se fue del colectivo: “Creo que el fondo real de la cuestión residía en que ninguno de mis dos colegas españoles sentía gran vocación por la pintura mural”.¹⁴ El historiador Miguel Cabañas menciona sobre el colectivo: “Las consecuencias de la experiencia, por tanto, no fueron todo lo fructífera que se esperaba; y los españoles, como señalamos, se mantuvieron más aferrados a sus propias polémicas, al caballete y, sobre todo, a las posibilidades de la ilustración y del mundo editorial”.¹⁵ De cualquier modo, la adaptación de los pintores exiliados españoles en el contexto mexicano del arte dominado por el muralismo no fue fácil porque se enfrentaron a un ambiente nacionalista y de mexicanidad, “con sus componentes revolucionarios y de mestizaje”.¹⁶ Lo que compartían los artistas españoles a su llegada a México era el compromiso político de su obra, aunque unos compartieron la corriente social del arte mexicano, otros mantuvieron apego a la pintura de caballete, a la ilustración y al diseño gráfico. Finalmente el único artista exiliado que permaneció en el colectivo fue Josep Renau, quien compartía con el muralista mexicano la ideología de un arte de masas, en contra del individualismo abstracto y del arte por el arte.¹⁷ Él junto con su esposa Manuela Ballester terminaron el mural; ella también ejecutó algunos bocetos y administró el salario del colectivo.¹⁸

Tras el asalto de Siqueiros, Pujol y Arenal a la casa de León Trotsky, el 4 de mayo de 1940, el resto del colectivo se desalentó. Renau afirma que ésta pudo haber sido otra causa por la que tanto Prieto como Luna dejaron el proyecto: “Una experiencia que pudo haber sido el punto de arranque de una verdadera colaboración profesional entre pintores mexicanos y españoles, se transformó en un verdadero desastre, en un abismo de desaliento y desunión”.¹⁹ Cuando Siqueiros fue encarcelado se le encargó a Renau finalizar y modificar el mural. El trabajo tenía que comenzar el primero de julio de 1940 para concluirlo ese mismo mes, encomienda que llevó a cabo junto con su esposa. El Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas le pedía lo siguiente:

Confirmando la conversación que tuvimos sobre nuestra solicitud para que terminara usted la pintura mural del edificio social del Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas, decimos a usted que estamos conformes en que se proceda a la ejecución de dicho trabajo, bajo la base de que en la citada pintura no se harán sino las ligeras modificaciones verbalmente convenidas y se concluirán las partes que han quedado inconclusas por haber abandonado el trabajo las personas que antes estaban encargadas de ejecutarlo.²⁰

En esa misma carta el sindicato pide que el mural sea modificado. Renau elimina algunas escenas violentas como los rostros de los niños muertos por la guerra civil colocados en la máquina del muro central.

No obstante a la abrupta salida de Siqueiros, su colaboración con Renau fue muy intensa como lo relató el valenciano algunas décadas después.²¹ Este reconocía la gran escuela que fue la colaboración con el muralista mexicano. Los dos desarrollaron en *Retrato de la burguesía* las técnicas y usaron los medios con los que habían experimentado a lo largo de la década de los treinta, como el uso de la fotografía, de las teorías cinematográficas y de montaje. Más adelante expondré la relación entre ambos artistas con los medios audiovisuales y su práctica artística (imagen 2).

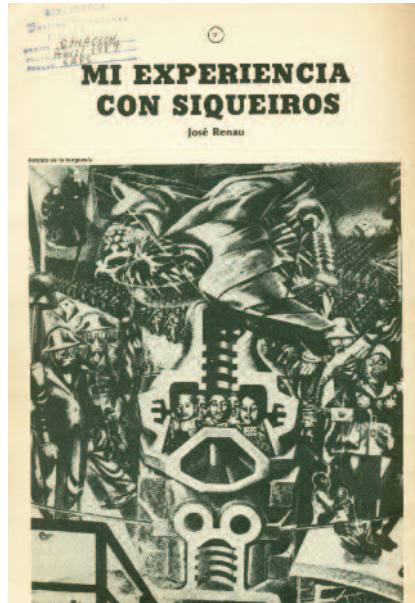


Imagen 2 Josep Renau, "Mi experiencia con Siqueiros," *Revista de Bellas Artes* no.5, enero febrero 1976. Derechos: Fundación Josep Renau - Valencia

La puesta en escena de la plástica filmica

Retrato de la Burguesía fue la oportunidad para que Siqueiros pusiera en práctica todos los métodos novedosos y técnicas vanguardistas que había experimentado y teorizado en la década de los treinta. Con este trabajo tenía la intención llevar la intención llevar a un renacimiento.²² Argumentaba que éste había perdido su función política para las masas. Siqueiros pensaba que el carácter político estaba relacionado con "el carácter comercial, la fotografía propia, la fotografía documental, la cinematografía, el fotomontaje, etc., y que ayudado por estos elementos deberíamos sacrificar todo impulso estético tradicional".²³ En cuanto al tema, Siqueiros mencionó, que desde el SME se le pidió que pintara el imperialismo, el fascismo, la guerra junto con el tema de la electricidad en México.

Con la ayuda del Equipo Internacional de Artistas Plásticos, y en una serie de reuniones, se decidió cómo se iba a desarrollar el tema y el método de trabajo. El espacio que se les asignó para hacer el mural fue el cubo de la escalera que comunica el segundo piso con el tercero de la sede del sindicato. La decisión que tomó Siqueiros fue generar en este espacio arquitectónico una unidad temática y pictórica continua, después de haber analizado la posibilidad de trabajar el mural de manera fragmentada. Las técnicas que se iban a utilizar estarían basadas en la fotografía y el montaje con la intención de lograr un realismo dinámico en función del desplazamiento del espectador a través del espacio.

El muralista inició su teorización sobre la fotografía en relación con la pintura en Los Ángeles siguiendo las ideas de la Revolución Técnica sobre la integración de las tecnologías audiovisuales, una de las premisas era usar la cámara fotográfica como parte del proceso de producción de murales:

Después de hacer nuestros primeros bocetos, usamos la cámara y película para ayudarnos en la elaboración de nuestros primeros dibujos, particularmente de los modelos [...] la proyección con una cámara fue el método para ampliar nuestro dibujo y de este modo proyectar nuestro diseño directamente en el muro.²⁴

Para Siqueiros la fotografía debía ser usada como modelo o documento gráfico de la pintura, puesto que la fotografía es el soporte que da cuenta de la realidad social y científica. En este sentido, Siqueiros, pensaba en el realismo pictórico en estrecha relación con la fotografía: "sin el boceto fotográfico el pintor seguirá siendo un auténtico místico, es decir un parásito de la belleza. Su obra no tendría un valor social alguno".²⁵ La fotografía es la materia prima en imagen de la realidad histórica.

No es innovación de Siqueiros el uso de la fotografía en el bocetaje de la pintura, desde el siglo XVI se usaba la cámara oscura para lograr ilusiones ópticas. El muralista siguió una tradición renacentista pero con tecnología avanzada. Lo que sí hizo, fue "la desocultación de la fotografía en una tradición pictórica que mantenía secretos (o implícito) sus 'trucos' o procedimientos técnicos" (imagen 2).²⁶ Sin duda, el "traer a la luz" al registro del proceso como auxiliar en la composición de los puntos de vista, fue otro descubrimiento sobre la función de la fotografía. Un joven fotógrafo acompañó a Siqueiros mientras organizaba la ejecución de los murales angelinos: "pero un día nos puso de golpe delante de los ojos más de 300 documentos fotográficos que constituían la obra gráfica de nuestra obra en todo su proceso. Habíamos comprendido y palpado la utilidad de la Máquina [fotográfica]".²⁷

Siqueiros identificó el lente de la cámara con el ojo humano, esto quedó claro en la experimentación técnica que realizó en *Ejercicio plástico* en Argentina (1933).²⁸ La cámara en este mural fue un recurso óptico para dinamizar la perspectiva visual. Proyectaba la imagen en las paredes y las movía según el movimiento del espectador, "en vez de colocar el objetivo de la cámara simétricamente frente a las partes generales y parciales de ésta, lo hemos movilizado siguiendo la trayectoria lógica, progresiva del espectador".²⁹ Esto permitía crear un espacio virtual en el que las figuras se movían y distorsionaban según la realidad óptica del espectador al realizar el trayecto por el espacio.



Imagen 3 Angélica Arenal, "Siqueiros pintor," *Hoy* (Ciudad de México), no. 161, marzo 1940. Registro ICAA: 786671

Otro aspecto que en esta ocasión vuelve a resaltar es la posibilidad de la pintura de ser fotografiada. La pintura como "matriz fotogénica" podía ser reproducida con el fin de servir como instrumento de educación y agitación política entre las masas.³⁰ Al ser reproducible puede ser publicitada y difundida. La publicidad de la pintura, su reproductibilidad y las posibilidades de proyección le entusiasmaron a Siqueiros hasta pensar en este aspecto como base principal de su teoría *plástico-filmica* o *plástico-cinefotogénica*: "se trata nada menos que de darle mayor publicidad a la plástica monumental descubierta o interior en un impulso plástico-gráfico-dinámico de una potencialidad sin equivalente." (imagen 4).³¹



Imagen 4 David Alfaro Siqueiros/Equipo Poligráfico Ejecutor, "Ejercicio Plástico," Buenos Aires, diciembre 1933, Biblioteca Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires. Registro ICAA: 733109

Siqueiros también experimentó con el montaje, tenía como referencia los montajes cubistas y dadaístas. La práctica del *collage* la comparaba con su práctica poligráfica "es decir, el montaje de todas las expresiones plásticas en busca de una plástica integral".³² Fue en el Experimental Workshop en donde profundizó con el montaje en la gráfica, este taller neoyorquino —fundado por Siqueiros en 1936— tenía como principal objetivo hacer arte de propaganda.³³ Pero dentro del Equipo Internacional no era Siqueiros sino Josep Renau quien más amplia experiencia tenía con el uso de la fotografía y el montaje. El valenciano había sido diseñador de diversas revistas como *Estudios* (1929–37), *Orto* (1932–34) y *Nueva Cultura* (1935–37), en esta última fue editor. También se dedicó al cartelismo de propaganda política antes y durante la guerra civil española. De hecho, después de colaborar en *Retrato de la burguesía*, escribió en sus memorias que su trabajo ideológico coincidía en la técnica y metodología del muralista.³⁴

Renau en 1933 publicó en la revista *Nuestro cinema* el artículo "El cinema y el arte futuro"; un texto en donde disertó sobre el desarrollo tecnológico-científico que representaba el cine frente a las artes plásticas tradicionales, creando una nueva dimensión objetiva gracias al movimiento. Finalmente reconoció el alcance masivo del cine, por lo que este medio tenía que servir a la lucha de clases.³⁵ En el periodo en que editaba *Nueva Cultura* organizaba en comunidades de Valencia espectáculos audiovisuales con fines de comunicación ideológica antifascista en los muros: "con un epidiascopio se proyec-

taban las ilustraciones más interesantes que debían aparecer en la revista, muy particularmente en la de mis Testigos Negros de Nuestros Tiempos, leyéndose simultáneamente los textos correspondientes".³⁶ *Testigos negros de nuestros tiempos* era una sección de la revista basada en montajes de textos en diálogo con dibujos y fotografías con voluntad de agitación y propaganda política.

Como Director General de Bellas Artes (1936–38) en la Segunda República Española, Renau produjo para la Exposición Internacional de Artes y Técnicas de París en 1937 una serie de carteles móviles de gran formato que se intercambiaban en la parte exterior del pabellón español siguiendo una especie de guion fílmico, para tener una secuencia temática ordenada.³⁷ Los fotomontajes del valenciano estaban dispuestos en una secuencia visual para conseguir una narrativa del tema expuesto, a través del sistema "lecto-visual" contaba una historia yuxtaponiendo distintos planos y marcando elipsis de tiempo.³⁸

Renau llegó a la Ciudad de México en junio de 1939, unos meses después inició su colaboración en las revistas políticas *Futuro* (1933–46) y *Lux* (1928) haciendo ilustraciones y fotomontajes.³⁹ Tenía un gran archivo de recortes gráficos con los que construía sus montajes. Sobre esta práctica archivística Armando Bartra menciona: "las colecciones constituyen entidades metafísicas —como la biblioteca borgiana— pero son ante todo la materia prima de una labor específica: el trabajo del *bricoleur* icónico del siglo de las magazines".⁴⁰ Las técnicas que utilizó el valenciano en el diseño de portadas se basaron en el montaje de recortes de imágenes de revistas y el uso de la pistola de aire, procedimientos que ya venía utilizando desde el diseño de revistas ilustradas y de carteles de propaganda para la guerra civil. Sobre los fotomontajes de Renau, Alfonso Morales detalla que "hablan de un ojo educado, de una portentosa memoria visual y de una enorme capacidad de tender puentes entre imágenes separadas por el tiempo, el espacio y la intención, por todo ello son brillantes testimonios de la praxis específica del artista plástico como *bricoleur* de imágenes." (imagen 5)⁴¹



Imagen 5 Josep Renau, portada de la revista *Futuro*, junio 1940. Derechos: Fundación Josep Renau - Valencia

La aproximación de Renau y Siqueiros a la fotografía coincidía porque ambos reconocían el valor objetivo de la realidad social y política. Utilizaron el montaje como estrategia estética y política. Su relación con la fotografía se sitúa dentro de una de las vías posibles de la fotografía moderna mexicana en la década de los treinta y cuarenta “ligada al concepto discursivo del muralismo, el cine, la publicidad y por lo tanto a los medios masivos de comunicación”.⁴² Estos planteamientos quedaban claramente expuestos en los fotomontajes mexicanos de Renau además de en los escritos de Siqueiros de ésta época.⁴³

Renau siguiendo la idea establecida por Siqueiros en la configuración del mural de unidad continua con un estilo foto-cinematográfico, realizó un estudio de los posibles golpes de vista que haría el espectador al subir las escaleras y transitar por el cubo. El propósito de este estudio fue crear que el espectador, al recorrer el mural a través de la escalinata, tuviera una continuidad visual determinada como si se tratara de una película gracias a la ordenación iconográfica ascendente del recorrido, con el fin de simular el artificio cinematográfico para generar emociones artificiales.⁴⁴ Sobre la composición Renau menciona: “La elección de una superficie pictórica continua y curva ascendente, implicaba un determinado lapso de tiempo para que un espectador en trance de subir las escaleras pudiera aprender el contenido total de una obra”.⁴⁵ Con este estudio el valenciano sistematizó geométricamente la perspectiva poliangular que Siqueiros había comenzado a concebir desde la producción de *Ejercicio plástico* (imagen 6).



Imagen 6 Josep Renau, “Mi experiencia con Siqueiros,” *Revista de Bellas Artes* no.5, enero-febrero 1976. Derechos: Fundación Josep Renau - Valencia

La composición a modo de montaje que se implementó en *Retrato de la burguesía* simula el recorrido visual del espectador. “Dado que en la ordenación y montaje de las imágenes (en los proyectos y documentales originales) nos atuvimos muy estrictamente a las líneas trazadas sobre los muros según la descrita oposición muro-espectador”.⁴⁶ Y podríamos argumentar algo más: tiene un acercamiento al montaje cinematográfico por el movimiento visual secuencial del espectador, por el espacio en el que fue pintado, un espacio de transición. Esto tiene relación con la teoría fílmica de Pudovkin sobre el testigo invisible o imaginario, la narrativa de los acontecimientos es percibida a través de su visión: “una concepción del cine que nos presentaba a un observador ideal móvil en el tiempo y el espacio”.⁴⁷

Siqueiros decía que hacía *plástica fílmica* (cinematográfica) la cual comparte ideas de la teoría fílmica desarrollada por Sergei Eisenstein.⁴⁸ Seymour Stern, editor de la revista *Experimental cinema*, denominaba a Siqueiros como el “Eisenstein de la pintura”.⁴⁹ El intercambio de ideas con el cineasta lo llevaron a concebir que la obra de arte revolucionaria tenía que subvertir el orden establecido a favor de la lucha obrera a través del arte dialéctico subversivo. Eisenstein menciona el objetivo y la esencia del montaje como “ese papel que toda obra de arte señala así misma, la necesidad de la exposición coordinada y orgánica del tema, contenido, trama, acción, el movimiento dentro de la serie fílmica y su acción dramática como un todo”.⁵⁰ Así fue pensada la composición del *Retrato de la burguesía*, como una unidad secuencial. Esta técnica “consiste en la sobreposición (en una misma secuencia) de imágenes dispares cuya combinación produce otra imagen autónoma cargada de puro valor referencial y de nuevas significaciones”.⁵¹ El cineasta descubrió que las imágenes yuxtapuestas provocan sentimientos, emociones que después se convierten en ideas.⁵²

Mari Carmen Ramírez señala que Siqueiros trataba de seguir el dinamismo emocional inicialmente propuesto por Eisenstein en el montaje de atracciones, el cineasta ruso definió la atracción como:

La atracción (en nuestro diagnóstico del teatro) es todo momento agresivo en él, es decir todo elemento que despierta en el espectador aquellos sentidos o aquella psicología que influyen sus sensaciones, todo elemento que puede ser comprobado y matemáticamente comprobado para producir ciertos choques emotivos en un orden adecuado dentro del conjunto; único medio mediante el cual se puede hacer perceptible la conclusión ideológica final. El método de conocimiento mediante el juego vivo de las pasiones se aplica especialmente al teatro (en el sentido de percepción).⁵³

El estilo que proponía el muralista fue el realismo dinámico: “implica el uso simultáneo de elementos objetivos y subjetivos (en ciertos momentos surrealistas), expresado mediante un estilo moderno”.⁵⁴ Los fotomontajes y el trabajo fototécnico que realizó Renau estaban compuestos por imágenes documentales de recortes de revistas y negativos fotográficos de él.⁵⁵ Los recortes o las fotografías eran proyectados en el muro para después trazar encima de ellas sobre la pared, proyectando la imagen según el punto de vista del espectador para visualizar las distorsiones naturales de la vista.

Otro aspecto de la teoría del montaje de Eisenstein está relacionado con el excentricismo que es “la lucha contra la rutina, el rechazo de la percepción y de la reproducción tradicional de la vida”.⁵⁶ El método estaba pensado para causar efectos emocionales con imágenes violentas y agresivas con el fin de provocar una conciencia política entre los sindicalizados. En el mural se utilizaron recursos narrativos propios de la cinematografía, por la yuxtaposición de distintos planos, la representación del movimiento por las líneas-fuerza (efecto de simultaneidad). El espectador al realizar el recorrido por el espacio provoca que las imágenes aparezcan en secuencia (en el tiempo).⁵⁷ Desde la perspectiva narratológica de Gaudreault, cada plano funciona como una micronarrativa, como un primer nivel de narración y

el montaje de los diversos planos funciona como un segundo nivel de narración.⁵⁸

Retrato de la burguesía dialoga con el fotomontaje político como vía y estrategia de la crítica visual que practicaron muchos fotógrafos de la década de los treinta en México.⁵⁹ En esta línea estaban los montajes de Tina Modotti en el periódico *El Machete*, de Luis Audirac y Heinrich Gutmann en la revista *Futuro* y los de Lola Álvarez Bravo, entre otros.⁶⁰ Esta última junto con María Izquierdo, en 1935, organizó una muestra de carteles revolucionarios realizados por las maestras de Artes Plásticas del departamento de Bellas Artes. El historiador Olivier Debrouse relaciona el fotomontaje de Lola, *El sueño de los pobres*, con el mural del SME: en el montaje vemos a un niño pobre muerto y encima una máquina de dinero a punto de desaparecerlo. La fotografía incursionó de forma breve en el montaje ideológico del cardenismo a favor del arte para el pueblo y la educación socialista.⁶¹

Tanto Renau como Siqueiros buscaron la manera de desplazar los medios de comunicación masiva hacia una función política-social: “la eficacia de los nuevos medios y métodos, como el fotomontaje o como la producción mecánica y su demanda y más cercanía al pueblo y las circunstancias del momento”.⁶² Los medios de comunicación de masas: los periódicos, las revistas ilustradas, la radio, la fotografía y el cine, crearon un paisaje mediático bélico y fueron utilizados como medios para agitar a las masas.

El hombre frente a la tecnología bélica

Josep Renau cuenta que uno de los temas fundamentales a desarrollar en el *Retrato de la burguesía* era reflexionar sobre el choque del hombre con la máquina y presentar el estado de terror y violencia con medios bélicos terriblemente poderosos y eficaces. Renau, al referirse a la guerra civil española, describe: “la carne de nuestro pueblo está sirviendo de blanco experimental a los más refinados mecanismos de precisión, hasta hoy desconocidos para el aniquilamiento masivo de las poblaciones civiles: acero contra carne humana”.⁶³ El *leitmotiv* “Acero contra carne humana”, les parecía tanto a Siqueiros como a Renau un acercamiento “terriblemente siniestro y extraordinariamente plástico”.⁶⁴

Así los dos artistas buscaron este efecto al representar de manera cruda y fuerte el tema de la guerra: el terror y la violencia. José Luis Barrios menciona que el terror en el arte está vinculado a la relación del hombre con la técnica: “se trata pues, de vincular lo estético con la tecnológico para de ahí explicar el sentido del horror y el terror en la cultura del siglo xx, un sentido que tiene que ver con la violencia de la guerra, el terrorismo y con la estética del terror”.⁶⁵ En este sentido la técnica del *montaje de atracciones* es un estímulo que provoca la reacción emotiva del espectador sobre el terror y violencia de la guerra.

La yuxtaposición de imágenes en un movimiento continuo del transeúnte lo sumerge en las imágenes de tecnología y guerra. El mural está dividido en tres espacios: el submundo en la parte inferior, el mundo o la tierra en la parte media y el cielo en la parte superior. El recorrido visual del espectador comienza en el inicio de las escaleras. En el submundo vemos una caja máquina y de ésta emerge el orador

pájaro, es un híbrido mitad máquina, mitad pájaro. También hay una serie de obreros fundiendo metales. Le sigue la imagen de un hombre sin un brazo atrapado por los tentáculos de una máquina-pulpo, imagen híbrida que muestra el aniquilamiento de la vida humana por la máquina. En el centro de la máquina vemos fuego y entre el fuego aparecen los rostros de algunos muertos que fueron devorados. En el submundo de la pared derecha se ve un centro de control y ahí un hombre monitoreándolo; le sigue, desde una perspectiva en picada, una zona de la fábrica, más abajo donde una lámpara ilumina dos personas platicando.

En el mundo o la tierra, la parte media del mural, iniciando el recorrido desde la pared izquierda vemos el cuerpo del orador pájaro. Está en un púlpito hablando frente a un micrófono. La mano izquierda toma una flor diminuta y con el efecto de simultaneidad vemos la misma mano en movimiento pero tomando una antorcha. En el horizonte ríos de civiles (las masas) salen de un túnel. En el brazo del orador se funde la imagen de ejércitos nazis marchando hacia el templo incendiándose y abrazado por una humareda de color rojo. En el tímpano se lee “*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*”. El templo está escoltado por algunos militares (imagen 7).



Imagen 7 David Alfaro Siqueiros/Equipo Internacional, *Retrato de la burguesía* (fragmento), 1939-40, Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas. Ciudad de México. Foto: Archivo Carlos Renau

En la pared central, el piso está cuarteado y vemos a tres personajes, de traje, corbata, guantes blancos, zapatos con polainas, los tres portando máscaras antigases, representan a Francia, Gran Bretaña y Estados Unidos. Por detrás de ellos emerge una bayoneta traspasada por un gorro frigio. A los pies de los burgueses cae dinero acuñado en Estados Unidos que sale de una gran máquina. Sigue la imagen de un hombre de raza negra ahorcada, colgado de un águila imperial metálica, que sobrevuela la escena y encima de ésta una madre y una niña llorando ven marchar a las tropas. En la parte central vemos la gran máquina que atraviesa la tierra hasta llegar al submundo con sus tentáculos, en ella se producen muchas monedas que salen de sus hornos. La máquina produce el dinero alimentándose de vidas humanas. Alemania, Italia y Japón representan al fascismo, ubicados del otro lado; uno de ellos porta dos insignias manchadas de sangre y los otros dos tienen trajes militares. Los tres personajes también usan máscaras antigases. Por debajo de ellos deviene la imagen de un templo clásico de columnas jónicas en ruinas, encima aparece un tanque militar y más arriba, en un plano en contrapicado, un barco portaaviones monumental que se quema. Más lejos, un edificio destruido por las llamas que sobrevuela un helicóptero. Al lado está un gran tanque al cual se yuxtapone, en primer plano, la imagen de un hombre armado con una gran bandera roja detrás; y debajo de él, un grupo de cadáveres soldados (imagen 8).



Imagen 8 David Alfaro Siqueiros/Equipo Internacional, *Retrato de la burguesía* (fragmento), 1939-40, Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas. Ciudad de México. Foto: Archivo Carlos Renau

En todas estas escenas se mezclan diversos puntos de vista, encuadres o planos: picada o contrapicado, primeros, generales, medios; “cada plano, al mismo tiempo que determina el campo de atención, orienta un campo de significación”.⁶⁶ En este sentido la cámara cinematográfica fue una aportación, gracias a su movilidad, al proporcionar diversos puntos de vista, “es la variación de la distancia desde el punto de mira al objeto mirado”, muchas veces con perspectivas que el ojo humano no puede tener.⁶⁷ Así en el mural vemos planos en contrapicado como la perspectiva del gran barco hundiéndose, que hace que la figura adquiera monumentalidad. También vemos primeros planos, la cara del hombre con el rifle y una bandera roja ondeando detrás de él el cual le asigna un papel protagónico y dramático en la narrativa del mural.

Finalmente, en el cielo, comenzando del extremo izquierdo vemos pintada la continuación de la ventana que se encuentra en la arquitectura del edificio. Gracias a la ventana las nubes de humo reciben luminosidad, el humo sube hasta llegar a tres chimeneas que se juntan con antenas de electricidad, en la parte central del cielo se ve una estación de trenes y encima una gran torre eléctrica en punto de fuga tocando el sol y ondeando en su punta la bandera del sindicato de Electricistas. La estación ferroviaria está envuelta por las nubes que salen del portaaviones. El centro del cielo es iluminado por el sol. Todo el cielo está atravesado por cables (imagen 9).



Imagen 9 David Alfaro Siqueiros/Equipo Internacional, *Retrato de la burguesía* (fragmento), 1939-40, Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas. Ciudad de México. Foto: Archivo Carlos Renau

La narrativa de *Retrato de la burguesía* anuncia el lado negativo de la tecnología y la relación con el hombre. La tecnología bélica está representada como un medio de aniquilamiento humano. Las imágenes trazan las implicaciones tecnológicas devastadoras de la relación hombre-tecnología y el poder de esta última en la vida, advirtiendo “la deshumanización y alienación de los agentes humanos en el mundo tecnológico”.⁶⁸ Pero, ¿cómo enlaza a Siqueiros y Renau en los problemas axiológicos que plantearon algunos filósofos de la tecnociencia con los que se relacionaron?⁶⁹

Después del *Retrato de la burguesía*

En junio de 1974 el historiador del arte norteamericano Laurence Hurlburt inicia una conversación con Renau sobre cuál y cómo fue su participación en *Retrato de la burguesía*.⁷⁰ La correspondencia entre el artista y el historiador describen muy bien cómo fue la colaboración de Renau y los otros miembros del equipo. En este tiempo Renau vivía en Berlín y apenas estaba escribiendo el artículo en donde cuenta cómo fue su experiencia con el “coronelazo”. Este artículo, como ya mencioné, fue publicado en 1976 en la revista de Bellas Artes con el título “Mi experiencia con Siqueiros”.

En la primera carta Hurlburt pregunta cómo fue formada la composición, por qué fueron cambiados los elementos del mural y cuál fue el papel de Renau sobre el uso del fotomontaje.⁷¹ En esta misma carta el historiador menciona una entrevista con Pujol, quien le comentó sobre la construcción de una maqueta, la cual fue destruida, así como muchos de los documentos del proceso, por causa del atentado de Siqueiros a Trotsky: “Es posible que tiene Ud. Documentos, fotos, etc. De este proyecto?, [sic] como probablemente Ud. Sabe, muchos documentos de Siqueiros fueron destruidos cuando salió para Chile en 1940 (así, hay poco en su archivo)”.⁷²

En otra carta fechada el 17 de agosto del mismo año Hurlburt le pregunta a Renau específicamente sobre las fuentes fotográficas que utilizó en el mural: “I ask this because I know Siqueiros used the famous Photo of child sitting amidst the ruins of the bombed Shanghai railroad station as the source for his excellent easel painting of 1936, *Ecos del llanto*”.⁷³

Josep Renau le responde, el 30 de agosto, argumentando que *Retrato de la burguesía* es la obra más importante que da cuenta de la guerra y que cuestiona la técnica pictórica. A pesar de que él estuvo cerca del proceso del *Guernica*, obra que encargó en 1936 a Picasso: “Si bien la aventura picassiana fue cronológicamente la primera, categóricamente fue la segunda, porque la más importante de nuestro siglo es virtualmente (pues de momento permanece aún casi desconocida, como la cara oculta de la luna) la del ‘Retrato de la Burguesía’, donde participo como ‘discípulo y coautor’”.⁷⁴

Fue en 1967 cuando Renau comprendió la importancia del mural mexicano al estar realizando grandes murales exteriores en la ciudad de Berlín: “la visita de Siqueiros a Berlín,⁷⁵ me convenció de que el propio Siqueiros no se había dado cuenta todavía del alcance universal de ‘Retrato de la burguesía’ que es, no solo el paso más revolucionario de la pintura mural desde el Renacimiento, sino mucho más aún: el primer atisbo histórico de un espacio pictórico no-euclidiano, específicamente einsteiniano, es decir, un salto cualitativamente nuevo del arte pictórico”.⁷⁶ Renau a partir de la reflexión sobre la experimentación técnica en el mural realizó una serie de 20 gráficas sobre el proceso metodológico de construcción basado en la perspectiva poliangular de Siqueiros, delineó geométricamente el espacio pensando en la perspectiva visual del espectador. El acomodo iconográfico lo pensaron con base en el montaje ideográfico el cual consistía en la yuxtaposición de imágenes concretas pensando en el movimiento y recorrido del espectador con el objetivo de transmitir una postura política frente al momento internacional.

Renau le manda el material a Hurlburt en septiembre de 1974, la carta se titula “Documentación gráfica sobre la pintura mural *Retrato de la burguesía*, en el Sindicato de Electricistas, México, D.F., 1939”. En forma de lista Renau va señalando la referencia fotográfica y la fuente, por ejemplo los soldados muertos de la pared derecha del mural, son de la división Idttorio destruida por el Ejército Republicano en la batalla de Guadalajara en España en 1938.⁷⁷ Ahí menciona las fotografías del bombardeo Nazi a Madrid como modelo del edificio incendiado. La máquina central está basada en la fotografía de una turbina de avión de la revista *Look*. Estos recortes pertenecen a revistas ilustradas como *Life* y *Look*. La temática del mural fue concretada gracias a las fuentes iconográficas de Renau, el cual menciona: “Por fortuna, lo único que pude salvar del desastre de España fue mi archivo de negativos de 35 mm, muy rico y bien organizado”.⁷⁸

El segundo punto que relata Renau en la carta es sobre el método y proceso de trabajo especificando qué partes pintaron los otros colaboradores. Luis Arenal, Antonio Pujol pintaron la parte inferior izquierda del muro no.1. La figura principal del mismo muro y el perico demagogo, fue pintado por Arenal y finalizado por Siqueiros. En el muro no. 3 las figuras centrales fueron esbozadas por Siqueiros. Renau señala que Rodríguez Luna: “Había comenzado a pintar un águila imperial que coronaba la máquina central, mientras que Prieto y Arenal trabajaban en la figura de Mussolini en la marcha militar de fondo”.⁷⁹

Siqueiros le asignó a Renau pintar todos los elementos mecánicos por su experiencia en el fotomontaje y el cartel.⁸⁰ Para algunas zonas del mural, Renau, realizó algunos fotomontajes previos. El tipo de fotomontaje que utilizó en el mural, de carácter político a la manera del artista político alemán John Heartfield, dialoga con los montajes que ilustraban algunas revistas donde el valenciano colaboró. También se le encargó a Renau el subsuelo, el tema relacionado con la industria eléctrica de Nonoalco y Necaxa. Renau conservó algunas fotos de Nonoalco pero las de Necaxa desaparecieron: “En un registro efectuado por la policía en nuestro taller del SME a raíz del atentado contra Trotzki [sic], desaparecieron los originales de los fotomontajes, así como muchos documentos gráficos y los negativos que yo hice de la Central Hidroeléctrica de Necaxa y de la figura de Antonio Pujol, como modelo para la gran figura del obrero revolucionario del muro no.3”.⁸¹ De las pocas fotos que conservó de Nonoalco le envía a Hurlburt una donde aparece el Ingeniero Casanova (izquierda) y menciona no recordar quiénes eran los otros dos personajes (imagen 10).

En la visita que hace Siqueiros al estudio de Renau en Berlín en febrero de 1970, inician una conversación justo discutiendo la autoría del mural. Siqueiros mencionó que era tanto suyo como de Renau, el valenciano le responde que eso es mucho decir y que su carrera como artista tiene dos épocas “antes de Siqueiros y después”. Para ambos *Retrato de la burguesía* fue una obra profética de la Segunda Guerra Mundial en donde se muestra las consecuencias y los efectos devastadores de la guerra. El mural fue el espacio en donde ambos pusieron en marcha todas las técnicas pictóricas vanguardistas ligadas a las tecnologías audiovisuales: gráfica, fotografía y cine.

Parte de la Revolución Técnica, emprendida por Siqueiros, fue la utilización de la fotografía de revistas ilustradas, las cuales fueron llevadas al muro mediante el montaje, convirtiendo el mural en un paradigma del muralismo por el uso del procedimiento de recortar y pegar trasplantado a la pintura, pero además también se implementó un montaje cinematográfico por el movimiento del espectador, por el espacio que ocupa en el edificio de tránsito y por la yuxtaposición de distintos puntos de vista, logrando con esto una narrativa secuencial. Además, Siqueiros utilizó la piroxilina como material principal para la producción del mural, esto fue un reto para los integrantes del equipo, utilizó estenciles y la proyección de las imágenes en el mural para trazar las formas. Tanto Renau como Siqueiros consumieron las imágenes fotográficas en los carteles, murales, portadas y postales. Principalmente Renau hizo “del banco de imágenes una preciada herramienta de trabajo y cultivaron con fortuna el arte del reciclaje”.⁸² El mural parece un pastiche ilustrado que a su vez revela una narrativa gráfica. Ambos artistas compartían muchas ideas sobre la técnica y la función del arte, Albert Forment señala que los dos artistas empleaban imágenes simbólicas, el tema comunista, el uso del aerógrafo y las técnicas de proyección fotográfica.⁸³ La implementación en mural del fotomontaje y la composición poliangular se conjugaron con el uso de materiales industriales, en específico la piroxilina (laca automotriz) aplicada con brocha de aire, además de utilizar proyectores y estenciles para trazar las figuras de manera realista. Esto hace del mural una obra vanguardista de su época.

El mural representa imágenes de guerra. Denuncia los efectos devastadores de ella y la intervención de la tecnología. Muestra la paradoja del progreso técnico además de las imágenes de guerra como parte de la cultura visual. La temática antifascista y anticapitalista con los iconos clásicos utilizados por el arte comunista de la época: escuadrones marchando, máquinas, ahorcados y niños víctimas de la guerra. El mural forma parte de una serie de obras que dejaron huella sobre el acontecer histórico en tiempos de guerra, mantiene relación con cuadros como el *Guernica* de Picasso, *Dive Bomber and Tank* de Orozco o *The Inquisition* de Philip Guston.

Renau y Siqueiros hasta el final de sus carreras continuaron pensando en un arte en relación con la tecnología y los medios de comunicación masivos. Renau hizo la serie de fotomontajes *The American Way of Life* en donde hace una crítica a los medios de comunicación y a la cultura norteamericana. En *AWL* continuó bajo la línea de *agit-prop* que venía practicando con los carteles y portadas de propaganda ideológica que venía desarrollando desde sus días de lucha por la republicana española. La experiencia en *Retrato de la burguesía* marcó su quehacer artístico en relación con la experimentación tecnológica. Tanto así, que años después, en los murales de Berlín de 1967 retomó los estudios de perspectiva a gran distancia que había aprendido en la colaboración con Siqueiros.

Por su parte, Siqueiros no abandonó las teorías sobre la plástica-filmica-fotográfica. En 1945, publicó el artículo “La función de la fotografía” en la revista *Hoy*.⁸⁴ En este texto concentró la teoría sobre la fotografía en relación con la pintura y como medio autónomo, que había desarrollado en la década de los treinta. Expresó su posición frente a la fotografía principalmente como un medio documental. Si bien nunca intentó ser fotógrafo, sí incorporó las tecnologías visuales en la técnica y metodología en su plástica, el cine lo utilizó como registro del proceso mural y para darle movimiento a sus obras.⁸⁵ La fotografía y el cine significaron la posibilidad de experimentar con la percepción del espectador y hacer del mural un espacio para la información actual sobre aspectos políticos y sociales.

NOTES

- No todos los estudios sobre el mural reconocen el trabajo de los miembros del Equipo Internacional, en este sentido son importantes los ensayos de Jennifer Jolly, Laurence Hurlburt y Leonar Folgarait. Ver Jennifer Jolly, “Art of the collective: David Alfaro Siqueiros, Josep Renau and the collaboration at The Mexican Electricians’ Syndicate,” *Oxford Journal* 31(agosto 2008): 121–51. Laurence Hurlburt, “David Alfaro Siqueiros, Portrait of Bourgeoisie,” *Art Forum*, no.6 (febrero 1977): 39–45. Leonard Folgarait, “A Mural for the Electrical Worker,” en *Mural Paiting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920–1940. Art of New Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998), 138–190.
- Armando Bartra, “Traficantes de imágenes,” en *Iconofagia. Imaginería fotográfica mexicana del siglo XX* (Madrid: CONACULTA/Comunidad de Madrid/Turner, 2005), 31.
- Laura González Flores señala que dentro de la tradición pictórica moderna la perspectiva es un método relacionado con una sistema científico, “Lo que para nosotros es una oposición (Arte vs Ciencia) en aquella época no lo era tanto: La pintura cuanto más científica (más legítima) y menos artesanal y manual se vuelva, más “artística” (racional, lógica, perfecta) se considera,” en Laura González Flores, *Fotografía y pintura, ¿dos medios diferentes?* (Barcelona:Gustavo Gilli, 2008), 55.
- En el contexto mexicano las políticas cardenistas comulgaban con el comunismo: antifascismo, antiimperialismo y apoyo a la lucha obrera. Había sectores que manifestaban su posición comunista como el representante de la Confederación de Trabajadores de México, Vicente Lombardo Toledano. Durante el gobierno del presidente Lázaro Cárdenas convivieron varias posturas en relación con el conflicto internacional entre el comunismo, bajo las políticas de la URSS, y el capitalismo. Por ejemplo el Estado prohibió las reuniones públicas del Partido Comunista y al mismo tiempo nunca reconoció el gobierno de Franco, el cual sí fue reconocido por Estados Unidos.
- La nueva sede del SME fue inaugurada el 15 de julio de 1941 por el Secretario General del Sindicato Francisco Sánchez Garnica y el presidente de la república Manuel Ávila Camacho.
- Cesar Sánchez, “Retrato de la Burguesía un mural colectivo,” en *Josep Renau (1907-1982): compromiso y cultura, zum sobre el periodo mexicano*, ed. Jaime Brihuega (España: Sociedad Estatal para la acción Cultural Exterior de España, 2009), 50–52.
- Juan María Perujo menciona dos cartas invitación dirigidas por el Sindicato a Miguel Prieto para colaborar en el mural fechadas el 5 y 13 de junio de 1939, ver Juan María Perujo, “Miguel Prieto: Identidad vivida,” en *Miguel Prieto 1907-1956: La armonía y la furia* (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de Conmemoraciones, 2007), 47.
- David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Criterio del suscrito sobre la pintura mural del edificio nuevo del Sindicato Mexicano de electricistas*, agosto 18, 1939. Archivo Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros.
- Jolly, “Art of the collective,” 129–51.
- Alicia Azuela, “Militancia política labor artística de David Alfaro Siqueiros: De Olvera Street a Río de la Plata,” en *Estudios de historia modernas y contemporáneas de México*, no.35 (enero-junio 2008): 124.
- De hecho habían estado presentes en la conferencia que dictó Siqueiros sobre el arte como arma de lucha revolucionaria en la Universidad de Valencia en agosto de 1937. Ver Miguel Cabañas Bravo, *Rodríguez Luna, el pintor del exilio republicano español* (Madrid: CSIC, 2005), 100.
- David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Tesis autocrítica sobre la obra ejecutada por el equipo internacional de artes plásticas en el edificio social del Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas*, 1939. Archivo Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros.
- Fernando Bellón Pérez, *Josep Renau, la abrumadora responsabilidad del arte* (Valencia: Institució Alfons el Magnànim-Diputació de Valencia, 2008), 293.
- Josep Renau, “Mi experiencia con Siqueiros,” *La revista de Bellas Artes*, no.5 (enero-febrero 1976): 17.
- Miguel Cabañas Bravo, “De la Alambrada a la mexicanidad. Andanza y cerco del arte español del exilio 1939 en tierras Aztecas,” en *Después de la Alambrada, el arte español en el exilio 1939-1960*, ed. Jaime Brihuega (Madrid: Sociedad Estatal de conmemoraciones Culturales, 2009), 69.
- Ibid., 55.
- José Renau, “Reflexiones sobre la crisis ideológica del arte,” *España peregrina*, no.2, (marzo 1940): 70. ICAA Record ID: [756506](#).
- V.A, *Homenaje: Manuela Ballester* (Valencia: Instituto Valencia de la Dona/Manuel García, 1995), 128.

- Josep Renau, “Los pintores y escritores españoles republicanos no somos quintacolumnistas,” Cuernavaca, 1949. Archivo Fundación Josep Renau. Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno.
- Carta del Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas dirigida a Josep Renau. “Asunto: Terminación de la pintura mural,” México, 22 junio 1940. Correspondencia con Angélica A. De Siqueiros. Archivo Fundación Josep Renau. Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno.
- Renau, “Mi experiencia con Siqueiros,” 2–25.
- Angélica Arenal, “Siqueiros pintor,” *Hoy* 161 (Marzo 1940): 58. ICAA Record ID: [786671](#).
- David Alfaro Siqueiros, *Tesis autocrítica sobre la obra ejecutada por el equipo internacional de artes plásticas en el edificio social del Sindicato de Electricistas*. Archivo Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros.
- David A. Siqueiros, “La nueva pintura mural del fresco,” citado por Shifra Goldman “Las creaturas de la América Tropical: Siqueiros y los murales chicanos en los Angeles,” *Revista de Bellas Artes*, no. 5 (1976): 43.
- David Alfaro Siqueiros, “Los Vehículos de la pintura dialéctica subversiva,” en *Palabras de Siqueiros*, comp. Raquel Tibol (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1996), 73.
- Laura González, “Siqueiros y la fotografía. De la fuente al dispositivo óptico,” en *Siqueiros paisajista*, ed. Itala Schmelz (México: RM, 2010), 67.
- Irene Herner, *Siqueiros, del paraíso a la utopía* (México: CONACULTA, 2004), 307.
- De la experiencia en la concepción del mural y su ejecución surgió el manifiesto *Ejercicio plástico* en donde el Equipo Poligráfico, compuesto por Siqueiros, Spillinbergo, Lazaro, Castanino y Berni, explican algunos conceptos sobre la plástica mural filmica y la experimentación con materiales industriales y herramientas mecánicas. Ver David Alfaro Siqueiros, et. al., *Ejercicio plástico*, Buenos Aires Argentina, diciembre 1933. ICAA Record ID: [733109](#).
- David Alfaro Siqueiros, “¿Qué es ejercicio plástico y cómo fue realizado?,” en *Palabras de Siqueiros*, comp. Tibol, 106.
- Ana María Quijano hace un análisis de *Ejercicio plástico* en relación con el uso por parte del colectivo de tecnologías visuales en relación con la experimentación plástica en el mural. Ver Ana Martínez Quijano, *Siqueiros. Muralismo, cine y revolución* (Buenos Aires: Larivière, 2010).
- David Alfaro Siqueiros, “Carta a Laborde,” Buenos Aires, 20 de noviembre 1933, en *Palabras de Siqueiros*, comp. Tibol, 101.
- Irene Herner, “Siqueiros: El artista sujeto por la experimentación,” en *Otras rutas hacia Siqueiros* (México: INBA/Curare, 1996), 185.
- Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Las masas son la matriz, teoría y práctica de la plástica del movimiento en Siqueiros,” en *Retrato de una Retrato de una década 1930-1940, David Alfaro Siqueiros*, ed. Olivier Debroise (México: MUNAL-INBA, 1996), 88.
- Renau, “Mi experiencia,” 3.
- Josep Renau, “El cine y el arte futuro,” *Nuestro cine* no.8 (1933): 29–30. Renau escribió otros textos sobre crítica cinematográfica en la revista anarquista *Orto*: “Cinema: América y Europa,” *Orto* 2 (1932): 31–35; “Cinema: El camino de la vida,” *Orto* 5 (1932): 32–33.
- Josep Renau, “Notas al margen de nueva cultura,” en *Nueva Cultura* (Alemania: Topos Verlag, 1977).
- Josep Renau fue Director General de Bellas Artes para la Segunda República Española en plena guerra civil, de septiembre de 1936 a abril de 1938, bajo este cargo se ocupó de tres tareas: proteger el patrimonio artístico, impulsar la propaganda y el activismo artístico, y finalmente, se ocupó de captar el interés de la lucha republicana de diversos artistas españoles y extranjeros para impulsar la proyección en el exterior del arte realizado para la Segunda República, como sucedió en el Pabellón de París en 1937.

- 38 Josep Renau, *Arte en peligro 1936-1939* (Valencia: Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 1980), 26.
- 39 *Futuro* revista mensual publicada por la Universidad Obrera de México, bajo la dirección de Vicente Lombardo Toledano. La revista *Lux*, órgano oficial del Sindicato de Electricistas de México.
- 40 Sobre el siglo de las *magazines* añade “desde finales del siglo XIX y hasta los setenta del siglo pasado el mundo visible era principalmente el mundo de la tinta y papel de las *magazines* ilustrados [...] publicaciones cuyo código se incorporaron al imaginario colectivo de una familia humana como nunca iconofágica.” Bartra, “Traficante de imágenes,” en *Iconofagia. Imagenaría fotográfica mexicana del siglo XX*, ed. Alfonso Morales (Madrid: CONACULTA/Comunidad de Madrid/Turner, 2005), 29.
- 41 Alfonso Morales, “Iconofagia o los demonios de la imagen,” en *Ibid.*, 115.
- 42 Otro camino que siguió la fotografía moderna de las décadas de los treinta y cuarenta fue hacia la pura expresión artística-estética. Ver Laura González Flores, “Tránsitos y mudanzas de la fotografía moderna en México,” en *Territorios de diálogo 1930-1945: entre los realismos y los surrealismos*, ed. Liliana Piñero, (Buenos Aires: Fundación Mundo Nuevo, 2006), 25.
- 43 Ver, por ejemplo: David Alfaro Siqueiros, “La función de la fotografía,” en *Textos de David Alfaro Siqueiros*, comp. Raquel Tibol (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1974), 74-76. Para consultar en versión original, véase: David Alfaro Siqueiros, “Función de la fotografía,” *Hoy* (México, D. F.) 441 (4 de agosto de 1945): [62]-63. ICAA Record ID: 760429.
- 44 Sobre la relación simbiótica entre el muralismo y la imagen en movimiento, específicamente en lo que respecta a las teorías del “espectador dinámico” de Siqueiros y la relación con el montaje cinematográfico de Eisenstein véase el texto “The Vertical Screen” de Olivier Debroise. En Mari Carmen Ramírez y Héctor Olea, eds., *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, 2004), 239-45.
- 45 Renau, “Mi experiencia con Siqueiros,” 11.
- 46 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 47 David Bordwell, *La narración en el cine de ficción* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1996), 9.
- 48 Siqueiros conoció a Eisenstein mientras se encontraba confinado en Taxco. El cineasta ruso fue uno de los organizadores de la primer exposición individual del muralista en el Casino Español en 1932.
- 49 Seymour Sterns, “Siqueiros,” *Contra* 3 (julio 1933): 6. ICAA Record ID: 733230.
- 50 Sergei Eisenstein, *El sentido del cine* (Argentina: Siglo XXI, 1974), 15. Cineastas como Griffith o Meliès son considerados los padres del montaje cinematográfico.
- 51 Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Las masas son la matriz,” 89.
- 52 Edgar Morín, *El cine o el hombre imaginario* (España: Paidós, 2001), 164. El autor también menciona: “Eisenstein define el cine como el único capaz de restituir a la inteligencia sus fuentes vitales concretas y emocionales. Demuestra experimentalmente que el sentimiento no es fantasía irracional, si no momento de conocimiento”.
- 53 Sergio M. Eisenstein, “Montajes y atracciones,” en *El sentido del cine* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 1974), 169.
- 54 Siqueiros, *Monumento al capitalismo* (1939). Archivo Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros.
- 55 Fernando Bellón en la biografía que hace de Josep Renau menciona que “en México inició su tercer archivo fotográfico el más completo y el que le permitiría realizar la serie *The American way of life*”. Ver Fernando Bellón, *Josep Renau, la abrumadora responsabilidad del arte* (Valencia: Institutió Alfons el Magnànim, Diputació de València, 2008), 287.
- 56 Vicente Sánchez-Biosca, *El montaje cinematográfico, teoría y análisis* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2008), 105.
- 57 Jennifer Jolly en su artículo “Two Narratives in Siqueiros’s Mural for the Mexican Electrician’s Syndicate”, describe dos narrativas que se presentan en la secuencia de imágenes, por un lado el relato basado en la retórica comunista, los acontecimientos internacionales y las imágenes del Frente Popular Español; por otro lado, un relato sobre el desarrollo tecnológico especializado de la electrificación, bajo la idea Leninista de que la electricidad se mantuviera fuera de las manos de los capitalistas. Jennifer Jolly, “Two narratives in Siqueiros’s Mural for the Mexican Electrician’s Syndicate,” *Crónicas* 8-9 (2001-2002): 99-117.
- 58 André Gaudreault, “Film, Narrative, Narration, The cinema of the Lumière Brothers,” en *Early Cinema, Space, Frame, Narrative*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (London: British Film Institute, 1990), 70.
- 59 *Retrato de la burguesía* se revela y se opone a la retórica muralista hasta entonces conocida, es un montaje pintado, contrario a lo que menciona Renato González Mello: “La pintura mural, desarrollada en México en el siglo xx, sería difícil de conciliar con la teoría del montaje [...] El montaje recicla fragmentos fuera de contexto para constituir un lenguaje. La pintura mural actualiza un lenguaje cifrado de antemano, y no busca destruir su coherencia previa. El montaje instituye un lenguaje discontinuo, la pintura mural se apoya en un sistema simbólico que se pretende continuo.” Ver Renato González Mello, “Los pinceles del siglo xx. Arqueología del régimen,” en *Los pinceles de la historia. La Arqueología del Régimen 1910-1955*, ed. Renato González Mello (México: El Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2003), 20.
- 60 José Antonio Rodríguez, “El fotomontaje en México: una actitud sociopolítica,” en *Los pinceles de la historia*, ed. Renato González Mello, 44.
- 61 Olivier Debroise, *Fuga mexicana un recorrido por la fotografía en México* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili), 337.
- 62 Cabañas, “De la alambrada a la mexicanidad,” 114.
- 63 Renau, “Mi experiencia con Siqueiros,” (1976): 5.
- 64 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 65 José Luis Barrios, *El cuerpo disuelto. Lo colosal y lo monstruoso* (México: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2010), 19.
- 66 Morin, *El cine o el hombre imaginario* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2011), 157.
- 67 Jacques Aumont, *El ojo interminable, cine y pintura* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1997), 49.
- 68 La filosofía de la tecnología tiene dos tradiciones la analítica y la fenomenológica humanista, esta última “tradición intenta explicar la técnica desde una perspectiva *no-técnica* y ha considerado que su desarrollo acelerado debe entenderse como un problema histórico que hunde sus raíces en los orígenes de la civilización moderna”. Ver Jorge Enrique Linares, *Ética y mundo tecnológico* (México: UNAM/FCE, 2008), 22.
- 69 *Ibid.*, 22.
- 70 Ver Laurence Hurlburt, “David Alfaro Siqueiros’s Portrait of the Bourgeoisie,” en *Art Forum* 15, no.6, febrero, 1977; Laurence Hurlburt, *The Mexican muralists in United States* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).
- 71 Correspondencia Laurence Hurlburt y Josep Renau, 7 junio 1974.
- 72 Correspondencia con Angélica A. De Siqueiros. Archivo Fundación Josep Renau, Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno.
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 Carta de Laurence Hurlburt a Josep Renau, 17 agosto 1974. Correspondencia con Angélica A. De Siqueiros. Archivo Fundación Josep Renau. IVAM.
- 75 Carta de Josep Renau a Laurence Hurlburt, 30 agosto 1974. Correspondencia con Angélica A. De Siqueiros. Archivo Josep Renau. IVAM.
- 76 En febrero de 1970 David Alfaro Siqueiros junto con Angélica Arenal visitan a Josep Renau en su estudio de Berlín. En las conversaciones también participa Walter Schwarze. México 1939-Berlín 1970: Siqueiros in Atelier von Josep Renau, Archivo Josep Renau, IVAM.
- 77 Carta de Josep Renau a Laurence Hurlburt, septiembre 1974, Correspondencia con Angélica A. De Siqueiros, Archivo Josep Renau, IVAM. Los subrayados son del autor.
- 78 *Ibid.*
- 79 *Ibid.*
- 80 Renau, “Mi experiencia con Siqueiros,” 15.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 82 Josep Renau carta a Larry, septiembre 1974.
- 83 Alfonso Morales, “Iconofagia o los demonios de las imágenes”, 23.
- 84 Albert Forment, *Josep Renau catálogo razonado* (Valencia: Institut Valencià d’Art Modern, 2003), 82-83.
- 85 Siqueiros, “La función de la fotografía,” 74-76.
- 86 En la Sala de Arte Público se encuentran una serie de filmaciones realizadas por Guillermo Zamora a los murales de Siqueiros.



CONTRIBUTORS

Aimé Iglesias Lukin is a PhD candidate at Rutgers University, where she studies modern and contemporary Latin American art. Her dissertation focuses on Latin American artists living and working in New York during the late 1960s and early 1970s. She received her MA from The Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, and completed her undergraduate studies in art history at Universidad de Buenos Aires. She has presented her work at various symposia, including the College Art Association 2016 Annual Conference in New York, and has been published in Guggenheim USB MAP's blog *Perspectivas*, *Artl@s Bulletin* and *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, among others. She was a curatorial intern for the Modern and Contemporary Department of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Sackler Center for Feminist art at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. She has also served as gallery director for Henrique Faria Fine Art, New York, and as curatorial assistant at Fundación Proa, Buenos Aires.

Paola Uribe is a PhD candidate in art history at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras (FFyL) of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). Her dissertation focuses on Spanish artist Josep Renau's work in Mexico (1939–58). She also completed both her MA and undergraduate studies at UNAM. Her undergraduate thesis "Siqueiros y el cine" [Siqueiros and the Cinema] was published by UNAM in 2011. She is a frequent collaborator of the research project *Filosofía 2.0 Redes Sociales* and the online publication *Reflexiones Marginales*, both organized by FFyL. Her essays have been published recently in *Del mural al caballete: el México de Rufino Tamayo y David Alfaro Siqueiros* (AEditores, 2013) and *Arte en las redes sociales* (Ediciones Paraíso/UNAM, 2013). In 2014, she presented "Josep Renau y David Alfaro Siqueiros la colaboración en *Retrato de la burguesía*." at the Congreso Internacional *Posguerras. 75 aniversario del final de la Guerra Civil Española*, organized by the Seminario Complutense Historia, Cultura y Memoria and the Fundación Pablo Iglesias in Madrid.

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