



View of the exhibition *Arte moderno en Brasil* (Modern art in Brazil), with works by Firmino Saldanha and Tarsila do Amaral, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, 1957. Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes archive.

Toward a Reappraisal of Comparative Studies: The Case of South American Modernism

MARÍA AMALIA GARCÍA

Differentiating among works imported to the Río de la Plata and those produced in the region has been one of the primary—and most worthy—tasks . . . performed by the authors of this monograph [Adolfo Ribera and Héctor Schenone]. An image's degree of perfection is not proof of its origin: more perfect images are not necessarily from the Peninsula, and lesser ones fruit of our labor.

—Guillermo Furlong (1948)¹

While in Europe the battle of the -isms in art, with its fascinating experiences and adventures, was being waged by one bold tendency after another, we remained tied to outdated approaches, to a stiff academic naturalism, to a withered impressionism, to a post-impressionism that has been outshined by the expressions of the new schools.

—Cayetano Córdova Iturburu (1958)²

Comparison is a basic way of perceiving and understanding the world. We learn how to compare at a young age, as comparing helps us distinguish and flesh out phenomena. Comparison is central for our ability to perceive likeness and difference, which is what makes it an instrument essential to scholarship as comparison hones an object of study. The application of comparative methods in the human sciences has a long epistemological tradition. Academic disciplines from linguistics (a pioneer in the development of comparative approaches) to literature, by way of anthropology, sociology, and history, have found in comparison a rich methodology. In art history, comparison forms a basic tool of formal or iconographic analysis—whether or not this approach is made explicit in the text. So why raise the question of comparative methodology again?

The analytic value of comparative approaches has often been disputed, and this has led to its relatively marginalized status in contemporary scholarship.³ Major objections to the comparative method involve the homogenization of differences in pursuit of comparison, creating phantasmagoric objects of study often

unified under the notion of isms (Latinoamericanism, for example)—constructs that national histories (in contrast) have sought to specify and clarify. Comparative dilution of precision thus implies a lack of analytic depth. In addition—as the epigraph by Cayetano Córdova Iturburu shows—the model of comparative legitimacy established by the European canon of modernist art constrains alternative modernities in Latin America and causes them to be erroneously understood.

Despite such objections, the comparative approach—like a persistent hope—always returns, bringing with it new expectations and rereadings. The comparative method is currently making a comeback in the literature on Latin American art: as a way to avoid a singular focus on local histories and as a response to the urgency of thinking globally in the field of contemporary art history. In addition, many curatorial practices use comparative strategies as a conceptual means of organizing exhibitions, even though the basic pattern of interrelation among artworks might not always be fully clear. A substantive reflection on what constitutes the core of a comparative method is needed to give this method a solid foundation and continuing effectiveness. Only a comparative analysis that considers its own shortcomings and its criticisms can function as the basis for a “thick description” of regional stories, as well as for a plural and open reading of their possible entanglement or interdependence. This article therefore reevaluates the appropriateness of a comparative methodology for the study of modernist art on the South American continent.

I begin with a series of historiographic reflections on key debates about art history in South America. These suggest possible points of departure for the development of a comparative method suitable to our present needs. My aim is twofold: to reestablish comparative history as a method of analysis (as it is well suited for grappling with modern art and its development in metropolitan South America) and at the same time to reflect on the assumptions of comparative methodologies and reconsider their critical value for the present. To this end, I introduce the notion of “connective concepts” (*términos relacionales*) and test its applicability through two case studies.

Connective concepts, in brief, are conceptual cores that (on the one hand) point to specific artistic or cultural problems within a concrete historical setting and (on the other hand) allow us to consider how local, national, and regional processes may be joined without necessarily being conflated with one another. I shall, for example, suggest that the cultural-political device of the “diplomatic exchange exhibition” and the notion of the “monochrome painting” are productive examples of connective concepts within the postwar history of South American art.

Connective concepts do not prescribe a rigid line of analysis,

and this could be considered one of the weaknesses of the comparative approach. Rather than being determinate (and determining), connective concepts aspire to be heterogeneous enough in their construction to support a variety of complex readings. At the same time, the analytical value of connective concepts is restricted by certain “application conditions” (*condiciones de aplicación*): the specific junctures of historical and regional factors that allow a translocal comparison of contemporaneous artistic practice to be viable and coherent in the first place.

Comparative Histories in Retrospect

In the case of South America, comparative readings that look to Europe—whether to trace genealogies, pinpoint ideas, or create assessments (positive or negative)—are a constant in critical analyses of the visual arts and literature. The study of the colonial period, for instance, has been mostly based on formal and iconographic modes of comparison. For example, the Argentinean architects Ángel Guido and Martín Noel proposed methods in the 1920s to study colonial art from the perspective of formalist theory. They drew on the works of Alois Riegl and Heinrich Wölfflin, who crucially did not conceive of the main figures or major styles of art history as products of historical determinism. Riegl’s and Wölfflin’s approach—as it was understood by Guido and Noel—enabled them to study colonial art from a broader American perspective. Both Guido and Noel understood comparison as an essential tool to enable the study of colonial art from the Americas and to construct a definition of the “mestizo style” with its mixed ancestry.⁴ A champion of Wölfflin’s method, Guido developed the notion of “mestizo style” as a synthesis or fusion during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the Hispanic legacy and the indigenous tradition. Guido’s contribution was to provide a platform that went beyond the mere positivist study of objects, making it possible to understand the art of the Americas outside the universally accepted European framework of art-historical progress.⁵ Noel was also a pioneer in colonial studies: his active institutional role in Argentina’s Academy of Fine Arts was key to legitimizing colonial art as worthy of study. In a panoramic 1914 essay on the evolution of Spanish architecture, Noel compared Iberian forms with American parallels and pointed out the presence of indigenous elements “unknown in Europe,” an “Incaic art [*arte Incásico*], whose ornamentation and archaic lines strongly influenced the products left by Spain in the lands of the *Inti*.”⁶

Though Noel’s and Guido’s thinking was considered groundbreaking when introduced during the first decades of the twentieth century, later scholars of the colonial era accused them of theoretical laxity and of lacking in conceptual rigor.⁷ Wölfflin’s

theories (which Guido understood as “the dignification of the work of art itself—of the form—as an autonomous element”) were seen as too reductive in light of newly emergent academic approaches to the field of colonial research.⁸ Starting in the 1940s, this subsequent generation of scholars undertook a study of colonial art’s materiality and iconography based on what they understood to be a sounder scientific basis and examined how images circulated within colonial society. Drawing on a thorough review of historical documents and a systematic mode of observation aimed at identifying, connecting, and/or differentiating the themes, motifs, and procedures of different colonial cultures, Argentinean researchers Héctor Schenone, Adolfo Luis Ribera, and Mario Buschiazzo changed the course of colonial art scholarship.⁹ They attempted to replace the “impressionist” vision of Noel, Guido, and other pioneers in Americanist studies with a more systematic approach.¹⁰ As Guillermo Furlong points out in the second epigraph that opens this text, the rigorous analysis of these scholars helped to dispel previous stereotypes about the inferior quality of American versus European baroque art. Equally central was the application of Erwin Panofsky’s comparative iconographic and iconologic method to Schenone’s preferred topics of research: the production of colonial workshops, the difference between European and American artifacts, and the circulation of prints.¹¹

Conventional art-historical readings of modern art in Latin America also tended to revolve around the construction of parallels with European counterparts. For example, the passage by Córdova Iturburu cited at the beginning of this article attests to the importance in the 1950s of establishing a synchronicity with Europe—and reveals the extent to which any local misalignment was disdained. The list of art historians from the 1940s to the 1990s who saw Argentine modernism as “tardy” is no shorter than the list of those who celebrated the “catching up” of local movements that seemed to develop apace of international trends. This highly cherished synchronicity with European metropolises usually “coincided” with the major advances of the twentieth-century avant-gardes in the 1920s, 1940s, and 1960s. Thus in the 1940s, influential art critic Jorge Romero Brest stated that Argentine artists from the turn of the nineteenth century “incorporated what was happening in Europe only when it was waning, completely oblivious to that other Europe that was dawning.”¹² In a book he wrote in the 1960s, Argentine poet Aldo Pellegrini spoke of “artists with nothing at all to contribute, which is why they are outside their time.”¹³ And in the 1980s, art historian Nelly Perazzo celebrated the Buenos Aires avant-garde of the 1940s for “updating Argentine art so that it operated on a par with the European avant-gardes.”¹⁴ Local art history valorized

Argentine art only insofar as, on formal and stylistic levels, it conformed to trends well entrenched in Europe. This thirst for transatlantic modes of comparison necessarily diminished a focus on local specificities.¹⁵ Anything that departed from a comparison-driven frame of analysis was seen as deviation; productions that did not adapt to the established European model were written off as “odd” or “rebellious.”

Nevertheless, from the 1970s to the 1990s a more critical revision of Latin American art history was debated at a series of conferences and symposia, where the dependence on hegemonic models became a hotly contested point of discussion. The 1970s were a particularly fertile decade in this regard, producing many arguments over the identity of Latin American art.¹⁶ The possibility of understanding the cultural development of Latin America as a whole, at the crossroads of the different national junctures, was undoubtedly the main objective of these projects. As a result, traditional methodologies for the analysis of the region’s art were questioned, and possible connections between artistic practice and political conditions were privileged. Because of its focus on methodology, the Symposium on Latin American Art and Literature held in Austin, Texas, in 1975 was particularly influential, as were discussions in the Mexican journal *Plural* from 1971 to 1976. The crux of these debates was how criticism in Latin America should approach the art of the region as a whole.¹⁷

The year 1975 also saw the launching of the annual *Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte* by the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas (IIE). Founded in 1935 at the Universidad Autónoma de México (UNAM), the IIE’s deep roots lie in the Academia de Bellas Artes de San Carlos, which was established in 1783. Overseen from 1939 to 1955 by director Manuel Toussaint (himself a pioneering scholar of Mexico’s colonial art history), the IIE has long been a key point of reference for other Latin American institutions, including the Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas at the Universidad de Buenos Aires (founded by Buschiazzo in 1946).¹⁸ The 1975 launching of IIE colloquia was meant to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the institute’s founding and provide a forum for the academic debates that had been taking place in the IIE journal *Anales* since 1937. Thanks to Rita Eder (a researcher in modern and contemporary Mexican art and director of the IIE from 1990 to 1998), questions of regional art histories being explored in the mid-1970s were reinvigorated in the 1990s with a series of seminars exploring the need for methodological reflection on the construction of a new Latin American art history. These seminars began with the IIE’s XVII *Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte* (“Arte, historia e identidad en América: Visiones comparativas” [Art, history, and identity in America: Comparative visions]), held in Zacatecas in

1993.¹⁹ That meeting sparked a series of special seminars on “Los estudios del arte desde América Latina” (Art studies in Latin America) from 1996 to 2003.²⁰

Those seminars can be read as a continuation of the debates that took place in Austin in 1975.²¹ Attended by critics and art historians of various generations, the questions and research agendas that have determined much current knowledge on Latin American art took shape at those seminars.²² The series (re)formulated the need for conceiving a new history of Latin American art which would reexamine the generalisms that had previously structured its historical narrative by conducting specific case studies and in-depth archival work. The participants in these seminars leveled a critique at the traditional methodology of art history and pointed out several absences and oversights in the existing bibliography and museography. Furthermore, they expressed dissatisfaction with the very idea of a specifically “Latin American art.”

The comparative perspective was a cornerstone of the seminars’ agenda.²³ Indeed, questions of methodology were among their most hotly debated topics. How might one transfer hypotheses constructed on the basis of one case study to other contexts? How might one construct relatively stable variables for the purpose of historical comparison? How might one use patterns of representation and artistic practice?²⁴

The comparison of local scenes demonstrates the scope of comparative analysis in general. A transnational perspective enables the comparison of local and regional episodes. Argentina and Brazil have been privileged sites for considering the suitability and advantages of transnational comparison in the Southern Cone. The modern histories of these two countries overlap to a large degree, due to their reliance on an agro-export economy starting in the nineteenth century, their demographic status as major regional recipients of European emigrants, and their post-war economic boom due to the development of a domestic industry. Nevertheless, they were colonized by different powers in the sixteenth century, and as the main economic and culture forces in the region their relationship has been fraught with tension and competition.²⁵

The cultural ties between the two countries are intense. Whether focused on the relationship between modern Argentine and Brazilian literature (a topic that concerned Raúl Antelo and Jorge Schwartz, two Argentines who lived in Brazil for decades) or on elective affinities in the visual arts, music, dance, soccer, and surfing, the ties between the two nations have been a constant topic of study and reflection.²⁶ Numerous researchers have explored the cultural links between Argentina and Brazil and their common projects of nation building.²⁷

Essential to this comparative tradition is Boris Fausto and Fernando Devoto's *Brasil e Argentina: Um ensaio de história comparada 1850–2002* (Brazil and Argentina: An essay in comparative history 1850–2002), which covers the period of the mid-nineteenth century to the twenty-first century. It addresses not only commonalities but differences in the two nations' development—looking, for example, at the phenomenon of populist politics, represented by the Brazilian Getúlio Vargas and the Argentine Juan Domingo Perón, and pointing out the transformations in bilateral relationships as well as the international positioning of the two countries.²⁸ Their work is interesting not only because of its authoritative historical analysis of the two main players in the Southern Cone but because of the methodological framework they develop. Devoto and Fausto find a template for their own approach in Marc Bloch's definition of comparative analysis, which is grounded in a certain *similarity* in observed events and a certain *difference* between the social contexts in which those events took place.²⁹ For Bloch, the instrument of comparison is tightly bound to the historian's practice; it is not an absolute theoretical method or procedure, which means that ambiguity is not a weakness but a strength.³⁰ Bloch was critical of a method based only on similarities: "the method thus practiced is nothing more than a bad caricature of itself."³¹

Because a rigid application of comparativism can produce oversimplification, certain guidelines are useful in making a comparison. Academic and museographic uses of comparison must lay out their assumptions; that is, show the methodology or the conceptual parameter being applied. The failure to fully explain one's assumptions—or a too simplistic procedure of comparison with no reference to the debates underlying it—has beset comparative studies since they first began to gain ground. For these reasons I propose two operational terms for the development of a comparative approach: *connective concepts* and *application conditions*. Both notions can add nuance to formal and thematic modes of comparison; that is, they hold the potential to deepen comparative analysis of cultural processes.

By *connective concepts*, I mean conceptual cores that both capture specific artistic-cultural problems and are able to link local, national, and regional processes. Insofar as they sum up topics that are key to a historical juncture, such connective concepts allow for comparison of phenomena that emerge in different artistic contexts by considering both their likeness and difference. Connective concepts do not prescribe a privileged or predetermined line of analysis based on a strictly formal, material, or institutional approach but instead aspire to be heterogeneous enough in their construction to support a variety of complex readings.³² The definition of these operational concepts

is conditioned by the researcher's needs and how the object can be interrogated in an effective manner. Hence, their formation is *immanent* to the phenomenon to be studied.

Application conditions are the specific spaces and times in which a comparison is made; that is, the specific historical and regional juncture that makes a comparison of contemporaneous artistic practices viable and coherent. A supranational perspective, not limited by nation-state boundaries, is basic to the application conditions of a comparative methodology. Application conditions thus operate as an instrument to regulate the local, regional, and global instances considered in the comparison.³³ Here Bloch's reflections again act as an illuminating guide: If one chooses societies far apart in time and space, it becomes impossible to explain the analogies observed between two phenomena through the proposition of mutual influences or through the supposition of a common origin.³⁴ That is why Bloch suggested another mode of application of the comparative method; namely, "the parallel study of neighboring and contemporary societies, which constantly influence each other and are subjected (precisely because of their proximity and their synchronism) to the action of the same causes in their evolution."³⁵

A brief examination of the situation of modern art in Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Colombia can help unpack these two key concepts. Each of the four countries has its respective cultural field, and these have been studied separately, but two connective concepts shed light on the possible interrelations between different fields of artistic production and dissemination. First, the "diplomatic exchange exhibition device" provides a typology for the comparison of the institutional conditions in which certain landmark exhibitions were produced during the 1950s (e.g., public- and private-sector actors, cultural attachés, and embassies), as well as how these canon-shaping exhibitions circulated in different contexts, undergoing various modes of reception.³⁶ Second—and at almost the same time—during the late 1950s and early 1960s the modernist genre of the monochrome painting operated as an exemplary kind of connective category due to its seemingly homogenous, morphological nature. Studying the monochrome as a connective category forces us to be mindful of the similarities and consider the different contexts in which such works were produced. That two paintings are monochrome does not mean they hold the same significance in relation to their historical setting.³⁷ Similar to what has been demonstrated for Euro-American modernism, in South America the monochrome proves to be a versatile parameter for analysis when comparing artistic-cultural contexts across the continent.³⁸

Case Study 1:

The Diplomatic Exchange Exhibition Device

Art exhibitions—and the political maneuverings behind cultural exchanges—are an interesting means to tackle disputes over legitimacy and hegemony in South America. Here I address two exhibitions of Brazilian modern art: one held in Buenos Aires (Argentina) in 1957; the other in Asunción (Paraguay) in 1959.³⁹ Organized by modern art museums in Rio de Janeiro (MAM-RJ) and São Paulo (MAM-SP) respectively, each with the support of the Brazilian Foreign Office (Itamaraty), the two shows formed part of a broader strategy by the museums (private institutions tied to the business sector) and Itamaraty to promote Brazilian culture in the region after World War II.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding the similarity in how they were conceived and the responses they elicited, the two shows were strikingly different in their selection of artworks, press coverage, and other key decisions. A comparison of the two sheds light on the strategies and interests of Brazilian diplomacy at the time, as well as on the models it chose in its pursuit of those interests in the cultural sphere. Each exhibition was part of a cultural exchange policy. That they were both sponsored by Itamaraty indicates that cultural exchange was a facet of Brazil's political-diplomatic attempts to ensure the country's supremacy in the Southern Cone. Buenos Aires's cultural dominance in the region was severely compromised after World War II for an array of mostly political reasons. Significantly, while Argentina was neutral during the war, Brazil had sent troops to support the Allies.⁴¹ The political-economic wartime alliance forged between Brazil and the United States was favorable to the creation of modern and internationalist cultural projects in the war's aftermath. For instance, starting in the late 1940s, Brazilian cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro deployed a powerful institutional machinery to promote modern art: new museums were opened, and the São Paulo Biennial was launched in 1951.⁴²

The aim of the late-1950s exhibitions in Buenos Aires and Asunción was to advocate for Brazilian modern art and its cultural institutions as a model of development for the region. Desire for cultural hegemony by the Brazilian artistic administration was, in part, what drove the exhibitions' conceptions, layouts, and outreach efforts. Notwithstanding the similar set of cultural politics behind these exhibitions, the production of each show and the responses each generated differed greatly, which is precisely what makes them intriguing from the standpoint of a comparative method. Although Itamaraty supported both endeavors, they were curated by different individuals. The show in Buenos Aires was organized by the MAM-RJ, under its director Niomar Moniz Sodré, in collaboration with Romero Brest,

head of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes (MNBA) in Buenos Aires. The show in Asunción was organized by the MAM-SP under the guidance of printmaker Lívio Abramo, who was an adviser to both the São Paulo museum and the Brazilian cultural mission in Asunción.

The difference between the two projects can be broken down into four aspects. First, we should consider the breadth and coherence of the “curatorial” concept of each exhibition—to use a term that was not common in the 1950s. The exhibition in Buenos Aires featured 270 pieces encompassing thirty-five years of Brazilian art, with works by leading players in the *Semana de Arte Moderna* (Modern Art Week, 1922), as well as more recent strains of abstraction. The show in Asunción was much smaller—just sixty-nine works—and less homogeneous in character; its selection of twentieth-century foreign and Brazilian artists from the MAM-SP collection attempted to trace, in sweeping terms, the evolution of modern art. While both shows argued that avant-garde Brazilian art provided a model for the region, each did so in its own manner. In the case of Asunción, the selection of works seemed to look for parallels between international masters and Brazilian artists to confirm Brazil’s standing as a regional point of reference in modern art. The fragmentary quality of the show’s conception resulted in an exhibition of scarce argumentative coherence, however. The Buenos Aires show was more coherent and precise, as it was dedicated solely to Brazilian art, and this also accounts for its greater success with viewers.

Second, the quality of the works exhibited in Argentina, unlike those exhibited in Paraguay, was remarkable, representing the best of Brazilian modernism, including canonical works such as *A Boba* by Anita Malfatti, *A Negra* by Tarsila do Amaral, major pieces by Maria Martins, Lasar Segall, and Candido Portinari, as well as a selection of contemporary works by Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Clark, Ivan Serpa, Alfredo Volpi, and others. The Buenos Aires press remarked on the excellence and originality of the Brazilian works that were sent thanks to the efforts of the museum in Rio.⁴³

The quality of the works exhibited in Asunción, on the other hand, was more inconsistent, and the vision of modern art it advocated was cause for debate in the Paraguayan capital. Spanish-Paraguayan artist Josefina Plá wrote two long articles on the show for *La Tribuna* newspaper.⁴⁴ In them, she asserted that, though the show was important for the local milieu, its selection of European art was spotty. She bemoaned the absence of masters of the *École de Paris* and criticized the choice of French contemporary artists. Furthermore, she complained that the works of those major artists who were included in the show were often minor, specifically mentioning Gino Severini and Giorgio

de Chirico. While those artists were crucial to the renovation of art in the twentieth century, their significance did not come through in the works featured in the show, leading Plá to conclude that the selection privileged names over works.⁴⁵

By 1959, the MAM-SP collection included figures and works of far-greater stature than the ones sent to Asunción. The collection encompassed not only the holdings of its founder, Ciccillo Matarazzo, and other Brazilian collectors but also a donation from Nelson Rockefeller and prize-winning works from the first four editions of the São Paulo Biennial.⁴⁶ Plá lamented the absence of works by Wassily Kandinsky, Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, and Joan Miró—all of whom formed part of the MAM-SP's holdings. Their presence, Plá argued, would have helped explain the narrative of modern art that the show aspired to tell. In her two long articles, the Paraguayan artist attempted to show that the Asunción milieu was aware of modern tendencies and fully capable of discerning not only the exhibition's strengths but its oversights. Evidently, Abramo and the MAM-SP had underestimated their Paraguayan audience.

Third, the Brazilian press covered the show in Argentina much more closely than the one in Paraguay. Starting in March 1957, headlines ran continually in the Rio de Janeiro-based newspaper *Correio da manhã* on the preparations for *Arte moderno en Brasil*, on the event's importance for the Buenos Aires milieu, and on the centrality of Brazilian art to new artistic trends. That paper was directed by Paulo Bittencourt, husband of MAM-RJ director Moniz Sodr . Its art critic, Jayme Mauricio, reported the opinions of distinguished experts in Buenos Aires.⁴⁷ In the only article I found in the Brazilian press on the show in Paraguay, Abramo explained the aims of the project in no uncertain terms: "The MAM show will have a decisive impact on the future works [of Paraguayan artists], encouraging them to undertake bolder projects."⁴⁸ Abramo clearly saw the MAM collection and Brazilian artists as being up to the task of acting as guides for Paraguayan modernism.



Arte moderno en Brasil
(Modern art in Brazil),
Museo Nacional de Bellas
Artes, Buenos Aires, 1957.
Catalogue cover by Ivan
Serpa.



"Exposição do acervo do Museu de Arte Moderna no Paraguai," *O Estado de São Paulo*, São Paulo, July 12, 1959. Centro de Estudos Brasileiros Archives, Assunção.

Fourth, the political significance of the two shows varied with each context. *Arte moderno en Brasil* marked the reopening of the MNBA and was attended by de facto President General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu (who followed General Eduardo Lonardi into office two years after the military coup of 1955), as well as cabinet members, representatives of the Catholic Church and the army, and several ambassadors.⁴⁹ The "Revolución Libertadora"—as the military intervention that ousted Perón in September 1955 called itself—brought about a profound political and social transformation.

While the benefits the working class had gained were stripped away and labor unions were banned, other sectors of society celebrated the change of government as a return to democracy. All these changes shaped a social space dominated by a liberal, free-market set of forces.⁵⁰ For the Argentine context, the fact that the MNBA reopened with an exhibition of Brazilian art was telling. *Arte moderno en Brasil* captured some of the political and artistic-intellectual ties between the two countries. It encapsulated a process that had been underway since World War II, when anti-Peronist Argentine intellectuals who were in favor of taking a stand on the global conflict were in close contact with Brazil, while the Argentine government (which was Peronist at the time) remained neutral, maintaining with its neighbor a relationship marked by tension and rivalry.⁵¹ In 1955, however, the political balance of power had shifted: political forces opposed to Peronism had won the day, and they could now pursue their own projects and goals and deepen their international ties.⁵²

After the *Revolución Libertadora*, Romero Brest was appointed director of the MNBA, and in this historical context it is all the more remarkable that in his exhibition-opening speech he stated, "the Brazilians have come . . . to help us in the crusade to restore the Museum, to restore not art but creativity—which is all that matters."⁵³ With the triumph of a certain sector of Argentine society thanks to the military (and that sector's liberal project), Brazil was seen by certain Argentine artists and critics as a model of modernization and development—a vision epitomized by *Arte moderno en Brasil*.

The MAM-SP exhibition in Paraguay was part of a process of

the Brazilianization of cultural life after Alfredo Stroessner became president in 1954. The ties between Stroessner's administration and Juscelino Kubitschek's in Brazil were close.⁵⁴ In 1958, a treaty was signed for the construction of the Friendship Bridge over the Paraguay River, connecting Foz do Iguaçu in Brazil and Ciudad del Este in Paraguay.⁵⁵ In the 1960s, the two countries held intense negotiations over the construction of the Itaipú Dam, designed to take full advantage of the River's hydraulic resources. Furthermore, the growing number of Brazilian settlers to the region near the border with Paraguay led to the formation of major agrarian estates that were responsible, in part, for establishing an unequal distribution of land ownership and the birth of a struggle for agrarian reform that continues into the present.

If, in the cultural sphere, Paraguay had been influenced by a relatively modern Buenos Aires in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Brazil was to become, starting in the 1950s, the main source of cultural modernization.⁵⁶ On the one hand, the tie between the Asunción milieu and Brazilian artists João Rossi and Abramo was key to the modernization of artistic languages and to the founding, in the 1950s, of the Grupo de Arte Nuevo. On the other hand, the Brazilian embassy in Paraguay did what it could to reorganize the cultural scene in Asunción. In 1943, the Misión Cultural Brasileña was created there; its mission, among other things, was to teach Portuguese, disseminate Brazilian culture, and, particularly, to strengthen cultural ties and encourage professional and educational exchanges between the two countries.⁵⁷ The Misión's moment of greatest power was in the 1950s and early 1960s, when it was directed by Albino Peixoto and José Estelita Lins, with the artistic counsel of Abramo.⁵⁸ During this period, Brazil was a considerable force on the Paraguayan cultural and academic scene thanks to the presence of Brazilian professors teaching at the Universidad Nacional de Asunción and the availability of fellowships enabling Paraguayan students and professors to study at Brazilian universities.⁵⁹ During this period—and thanks, in large measure, to Abramo—Brazilian models were adopted for the production and exhibition of Paraguayan art. Abramo, who had ties to the MAM-SP, was invited to Asunción by the Misión in 1956 to hold a show of his work. From then on, he was a frequent presence in Paraguay thanks both to the Misión and to the Brazilian embassy there; he even moved to Paraguay in 1962.

The Misión also played a role in the construction of the Colegio Experimental Paraguay Brasil, a high school with an avant-garde educational curriculum that opened in 1964. The building, designed by Affonso Reidy, resembled the MAM-RJ in its open plan and V-shape supports. Other Misión projects included



View of the exhibition *Barroco Missioneiro*, VI Bienal de São Paulo, 1961. Fundação Bienal de São Paulo/Arquivo Histórico Wanda Svevo. © Athayde de Barros.

the creation, in 1959, of the *Escolinha de arte*, a studio space for children also modeled on the MAM-RJ. No less important was Paraguay's participation in the São Paulo Biennial starting with its second edition in 1953. For the 1959 edition, in addition to the contemporary Paraguayan artists being featured, Abramo organized a small show of *ñandutis*, a form of embroidered lace typical of Paraguay. At the sixth biennial, in 1961, a major exhibition of religious art from the Jesuit missions in Paraguay was held. This event required unprecedented research and the gathering of works from *reducciones* throughout the country.⁶⁰ These displays of Paraguay's art and crafts at the biennial were a counterpoint to the MAM-SP show in Asunción.

Comparative analysis thus demonstrates that, while the aim of the exhibitions of Brazilian art in Buenos Aires and in Asunción was ostensibly the same—namely, to promote Brazilian art and to instill that country's artistic model on neighboring countries—they were different both in magnitude and in the level of commitment shown by their organizers. What was at stake in the two relationships was different: relations between Brazilian cities and Buenos Aires were rife with tension and competition, whereas Asunción was seen as a lesser force. Paraguay was treated as a captive recipient of Brazilian cultural goods. As an example of

connective concepts, these two exhibitions, so similar yet so different, render visible the complex ties that were forged between three cultural scenes and the political forces at play in the cultural exchanges that emerged in the broader framework of the postwar geopolitical order of South America.

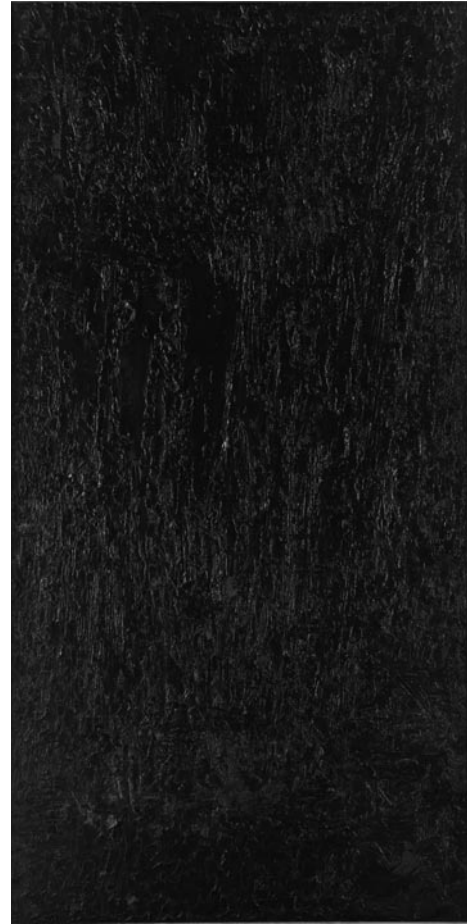
Case Study 2:

The Monochrome in Plural

Within the history of modernism, the monochrome painting has served as a recurrent limit case of aesthetic judgment. Single-color surfaces seem to push painting to an extreme of muteness, challenging its potential to elicit a meaningful, discursive response. For this reason, monochromes have a good deal to say, as it were, about the status of painting in the specific discursive field of enunciation in which they are situated. The genre of the monochrome, then, is a rich object for comparative analysis. Because of their ostensive morphological likeness, monochromes act as a formal invariant that appears across multiple historical sites, and their comparative analysis sheds light on how they might mean “differently” in different contexts. To explore these issues, I discuss three examples of monochrome painting in South American art: *Untitled* (1960) from Alberto Greco’s *Pinturas negras* (Black paintings) series; Lygia Clark’s *Espaço modulado no. 2* (Modulated space no. 2; 1958); and Carlos Rojas’s *Homenaje a Malevich* (Homage to Malevich; ca. 1960). In so doing, I explore the divergent ways each artist reworked the modern art tradition in Buenos Aires, Rio Janeiro, and Bogotá respectively.⁶¹

These three black monochromes are a sort of correlate to the process of homogenization in South America around the theory and practice of concrete art.⁶² The early 1950s witnessed the institutionalization of abstraction in a process directly linked to the establishment of a regional imaginary of modernization. Using these three monochromes by Greco, Clark, and Rojas, we can map out South American abstraction, its moments of consolidation and crisis. In the cases of Greco and Clark, for instance, black monochromes entailed a rupture with the paradigm of concrete art to which, in keeping with Theo van Doesburg’s ideas, the color white had been key.⁶³ In a starkly different context, Rojas’s version of the monochrome served to consolidate the concept of concrete art and affirm the universal validity of this tradition.

What is known as Greco’s *Pinturas negras* series was first exhibited at the Galería Pizarro in Buenos Aires in 1960. The



Alberto Greco. *Untitled*, 1960.
Tar and oil on canvas,
78.7 × 39.4 in. (200 × 100 cm).
Museo Nacional de Bellas
Artes, Buenos Aires.



Photograph of Alberto Greco working on a painting, 1960.

works—tar and oil on canvas—are mostly around two-by-one meters in size. They are textured surfaces in dim colors. The lack of composition and the chromatic homogeneity are offset by the pronounced texture and a tactile quality of the variable surface.⁶⁴ The series forms part of a wider tendency of painting in the 1950s in which the conventional criteria of compositional order and technical procedure in painting were thrown overboard. Such noncompositional practices were a deliberate attempt to break with the established procedures of concrete art; namely, geometrical arrangement, mental organization of the image before realization, mathematical approach, and so on.

Key components of the new practice of *art informel* that emerged on the international scene during the 1950s were the artist's relative freedom in deciding how to make the work of art and the employment of nontraditional art materials in doing so. In Argentina, *art informel* went hand in hand with a revitalization

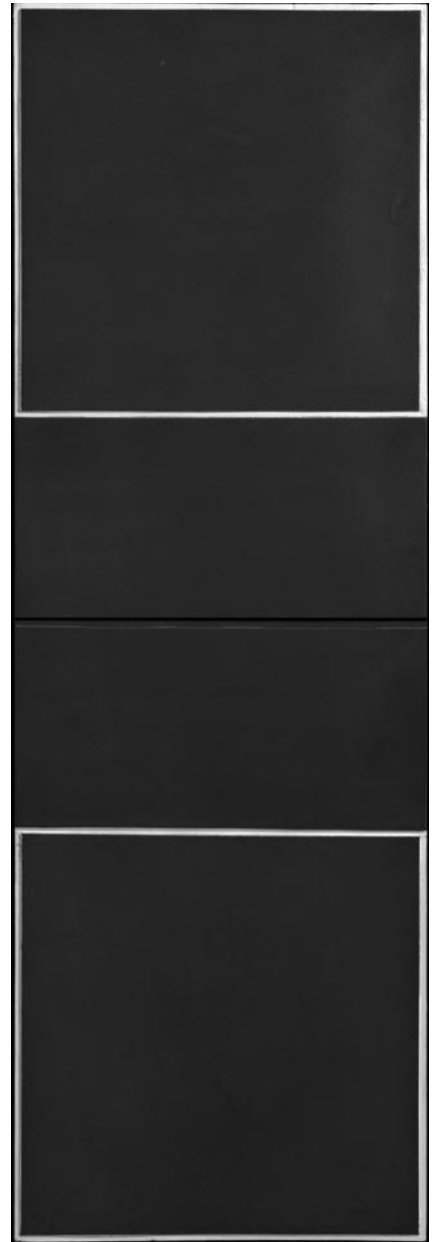
of surrealism, which had already influenced local poets in the early 1950s but did not have an impact on the visual arts until the end of that decade. Pellegrini (the poet who introduced surrealism to Latin America in 1928 with the launch of the magazine *Qué*) and Julio Llinás (editor of the magazine *Boa*) were crucial to this process.⁶⁵ The primary strategies of surrealist painting—chance and automatism—became central to the practice of Greco, including his monochromes. How Greco made his black series is part of the folklore of Argentine art. Jorge López Anaya recalls that Greco

would take the painting out onto his balcony; the night, the wind, the city's soot and rain would come crashing down on it. Sometimes, he would urinate on the paintings as well, and invite friends to do the same, claiming that it yielded organic reactions that enriched the work with surprising effects.⁶⁶

When Greco described the technique he used in his black paintings for the exhibition *150 años de arte argentino*, he cryptically stated, “oil paint with twigs, sand, and another strange procedure.”⁶⁷

His work acts, then, as trace of a creative praxis in which the artist embraces chance and aleatory events. Greco's method eschewed not only the figurative conventions of painting, choosing an informal aesthetic instead, but also rejected the rationality of geometric abstraction. Looking to chance, the crux of surrealist poetics, Greco effected an unpredictable crossing of art and life. His desire to incorporate what is external to art, the organic “truth” traces of urban and human existence (soot, leaves, urine), attests to an environmental interest, one that started with painting but would be extended in Greco's later work, including actions in which the human body became the locus of his artistic inquiry.

Whereas Greco's monochromes embrace contingency to challenge the logic of the modern painting, Clark's research re-elaborated the concrete art tradition, giving primacy to the vicissitudes of perceptual experience. Clark's rectangular *Espaço modulado no. 2* (1958) is made from three squares measuring thirty by thirty centimeters each. The first and the third squares have a white line along their four sides; the square in the middle is made from two rectangles, so that the juxtaposition of wooden sheets generates a horizontal line.⁶⁸ With this work and others of the series, Clark broke with the formalist logic of modernist painting. If in her previous *Planos em superfície modulada* (Planes in



Lygia Clark. *Espaço modulado no. 2* (Modulated space no. 2), 1958. Industrial paint on wood, 35.4 x 11.7 in. (89.9 x 29.8 cm). The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston/The Adolpho Leirner Collection of Brazilian Constructive Art, museum purchase funded by the Caroline Wiess Law Accessions Endowment Fund. Courtesy “The World of Lygia Clark” Cultural Association.

modulated surface) series, Clark explored the slender gap that appeared before her eyes when she juxtaposed two surfaces, in *Espaço modulado* she operated on the real space between planes using white lines—the line/space—between the outer edges of the pictorial surfaces and the white wall where the work was exhibited. She furthered this research in the *Unidades* series (1959). Here, a white and shifting border blurs the boundary between the painting's inner and outer spaces. Questioning the literal limits of the modernist painting by allowing real space to enter the work would become the cornerstone of her subsequent research into the perceptual field.

The discursive framework for Clark's exploration was specific: the debate on concrete art that artists in Rio de Janeiro had been engaged in since the mid-1950s. The *1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta*—the first show to take stock of constructivist experiences in Brazil—opened at the MAM-SP in December 1956 and traveled to the MAM-RJ in February 1957. The show led to a clash between artists from São Paulo (such as Waldemar Cordeiro and Geraldo de Barros) and Rio de Janeiro (such as Clark, Lygia Pape, and Amilcar de Castro).⁶⁹ Two years later (on March 19, 1959), the *1ª Exposição Neoconcreta* opened at the MAM-RJ and the “Manifesto Neoconcreto”—written by the poet Ferreira Gullar and signed by the artists participating in the show—was released. Many facets of the concrete tradition that became evident in the *1ª Exposição Nacional de Arte Concreta* in 1956 took on a new direction at this juncture. The geometric abstract vocabulary of concrete art assumed a new meaning. Artists from Rio de Janeiro believed it was indispensable to deconstruct this formal armature of concrete art. Neoconcretism was a reaction against what was seen as the increasingly rationalist and mechanical bent of concrete art from São Paulo. While the constructive tradition remained evident in the neoconcrete art from Rio de Janeiro, at its core was a new element: the relation of the artwork to the human body. The “Manifesto Neoconcreto” could not have put in starker terms the contrast between the two camps. On the one hand, the concretist *olho-máquina* was accused of being exclusively focused on the perceptual organization of the internal, formal relations within the image. Gullar refers in the manifesto, for example, to the use of the laws of Gestalt psychology by some concrete artists.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the neoconcretist *olho-corpo* was committed to tying the human organ of vision to the field of human perception as a whole.⁷¹ That second position becomes more and more evident in Clark's work over the course of the 1950s. If her two-dimensional pieces, such as *Espaço modulado*, focus on the tension of the interstice—the slender line of space that separates the pictorial space from the frame—her later work—starting with her *bichos* (critters) and continuing with

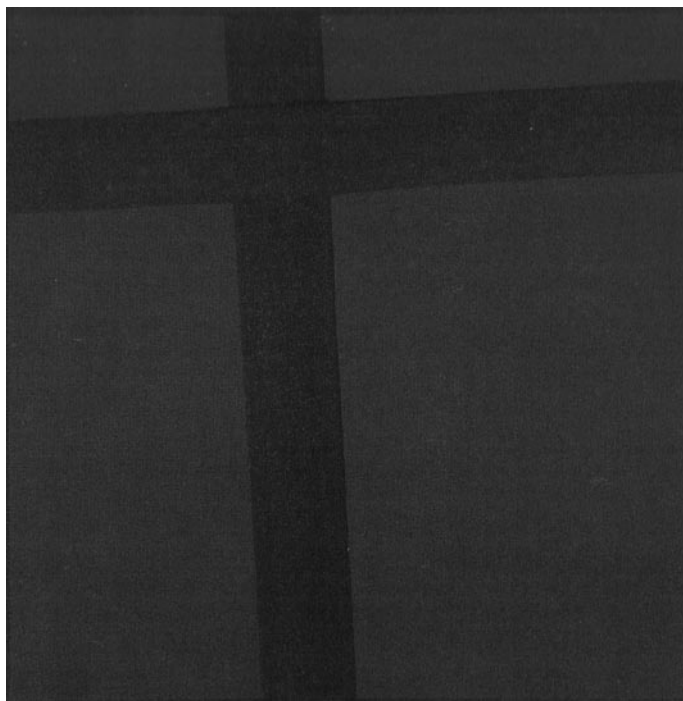


her *objetos relacionales* (relational objects)—broke the limits of the modernist painting and, in so doing, expanded the limits of art itself.⁷²

In the case of Greco's and Clark's monochromes, the painting acts as surface-object. How it operates on the wall raises questions that go beyond the formal limits of the painting per se. When a painting's internal relations are uncovered, the relations to its external conditions come to light. In the words of Benjamin Buchloh, "the painting/relief/object becomes 'figure' in its entirety on the architectural 'ground' of its support surface (the actual perceptual space of the recipient)."⁷³ With both Greco and Clark, the monochrome implies moving beyond the pictorial surface of the painting into real space of the beholder's body.

Whereas Greco's and Clark's monochromes inscribe real space on the surface of painting and, as such, are tied to informal and neoconcrete art's ruptures with concretism, Rojas's work helped to consolidate further the universe of concrete art. The art milieu in Bogotá in the 1950s was different from the one in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro. While in those two cities in the Southern Cone the hegemony of concrete art discourse was in crisis by the mid-1950s, in Bogotá an exhibition with a high percentage of abstract artists opened at the Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango in 1957. The critic Marta Traba declared that these new

Lygia Clark with *Unidades (Units)* nos. 1–7, 1958. Courtesy "The World of Lygia Clark" Cultural Association.



Carlos Rojas. *Homenaje a Malevich* (Homage to Malevich), ca. 1960. Oil on canvas, 23.6 × 23.6 in. (60 x 60 cm). Courtesy Rosse Mary Rojas.

works, with their reflection on language, constituted the only feasible horizon for art.⁷⁴

In this context, Rojas created his *Homenaje a Malevich* (ca. 1960), which is part of the *Ingeniería de la visión* (Engineering of vision) series he started in the 1960s. The series includes square paintings in shades of black and grey that are marked by linear elements suggestive of architectural drawings.⁷⁵ The origin of the series lies in the artist's research into the historical European avant-garde. That research led Rojas to produce, first, collages based on cubist paintings, fol-

lowed by monochrome paintings inspired by the work of Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich. The reduction in Russian constructivist art of the formal and visual elements of painting to the bare minimum was the guide for Rojas's monochrome research. Inspired by Malevich, Rojas situated his work at an enigmatic juncture in the history of modern painting, his research both furthering and paying tribute to that line of work. Though nominally acting as an homage to the Russian artist, Rojas's return to the past of Soviet constructivism is neither solemn nor reverential in character. Instead, humor seems to be the key to his reading of the geometric vocabulary of the "engineering." The titles Rojas gives to his monochrome surfaces, with their self-referential qualities, contradict the muteness and antinarrative bias of the archetypal grid of modernist abstraction.⁷⁶ *O de espacio* (O for space) and *Otra E de espacio* (Another E for space), as well as *Homenaje a mí mismo* (Homage to myself), suggest Rojas's light-hearted and ironic view of abstraction.⁷⁷ If Rojas's questioning of abstraction is not as radical as that of *art informel* or neo-concretism, his understanding of concrete art is not as orthodox as that of concrete artists from Buenos Aires and São Paulo. A third bank of the river opens up when Bogotá meets abstraction.

Also relevant to the figure of Rojas and to the Bogotá art scene of the 1950s and 1960s is the lack of manifestos and the relative unimportance of the notions of progress, originality, autonomy, rupture, and novelty that are typical of modernist aesthetics and most avant-garde movements.⁷⁸ Modern art and its tenets were, in Bogotá, flexible and inclusive; they made room, for example, for references to pre-Columbian and local rural culture. This was the case both for Rojas and his generational cohort of abstract

artists, including Eduardo Ramírez Villamizar, Édgar Negret, Judith Márquez, and Lucy Tejada.⁷⁹ While their interest in a rupture with figurative references was not total and orthodox, these artists did effect major breaks with their conservative cultural context in the affective structure of their daily life. These Columbian abstract artists of the 1950s, together with Enrique Grau, Hernán Díaz, Alejandro Obregón, and Cecilia Porras, challenged Bogotá's provincial milieu with the creation of new forms of sociability; they questioned patriarchal norms and pursued sexual choices outside established conventions.⁸⁰ In short, they performed a kind of cultural, rather than a strictly artistic, revolution. In this, they differed from the Argentine abstract-concrete groups that might have proposed major artistic-cultural change but did not question heteronormativity in the way they lived.⁸¹

Although these three kinds of monochromes may have addressed the same problem on a purely formal level, they operated quite differently on the level of production and reception. A monochrome work foregrounds the specific historical context in which it is produced while also referring to a conventional narrative of modern art. At the cusp of the modern and the contemporary, the monochrome resuscitates the question of the new and how it appears both within the art world and beyond.

Conclusion

Through a historiographic review of methodology and two case studies, this article shows how the use of relatively constant variables in the comparative analysis of different art scenes expands our readings and horizons of inquiry. Connective concepts are understood as plural, rather than constrictive, tools of inquiry. This research looks to connective concepts and application conditions to enable another approach to established readings of national art histories. Historiographic narratives, exhibition devices, institutional policies, publication platforms, and technological processes can all be envisioned as potential cores of practices and discourses that are key to a comparative analysis of art-historical developments in Latin America.

While working on a comparative approach to magazines, I realized that the journals *Dyn* (Mexico City, 1942–1944; edited by Wolfgang Paalen) and *Arturo* (Buenos Aires, 1944; editorial board: Carmelo Arden Quin, Gyula Kosice, Edgar Bayley, and Rhod Rothfuss) were the matrices for the initial inscription of postwar abstract painting, since these magazines had a key role in the emergence of abstract expressionism in the North American panorama and of concrete art in the Rioplatense scene. Other interesting examples for comparative analysis are the magazines *Ver y estimar* (Buenos Aires, 1948–1955) and *Prisma* (Bogotá, 1957) because of the master-disciple link between Romero Brest

and Traba, their respective editors. These publications were addressed to a general public interested in visual arts, and they shared (besides the topics of their subsections and their design) a defense of abstract art. Another path for comparative magazine research would be the proximities among three South American magazines of the 1950s: *Habitat* (São Paulo, 1950–1954; edited by Lina Bo Bardi), *Nueva visión* (Buenos Aires, 1951–1957; edited by Tomás Maldonado), and *A. Hombre y expression* (Caracas, 1954–1957; edited by Carlos Raúl Villanueva). Although these magazines had a large degree of proximity in their aesthetic parameters (the modernist movement in architecture, abstraction, and concrete art), they developed their approach to vernacular roots (indigenous, colonial, and popular culture) in different ways. Therefore, a comparative approach to these publications would open up an unusual panorama of postwar phenomena while showing the power of comparative reading.

In closing, I would like to make two final points. The first relates to the rise of global art history in the last ten years. Informed by the rapid development of contemporary art and its institutional exhibition, global art history also reflects postcolonial studies.⁸² Writing a global art history that uses methods, concepts, and interpretations formulated for the canon of Western art to address objects and processes located elsewhere demands a thorough reexamination of its assumptions. Postcolonial criticism is not, however, the only perspective that must be considered when grappling with global art studies. As the analysis presented in this article makes clear, the notion of the national is too restrictive when it comes to cultural analysis. At the same time, the breadth of the concept of the global renders it clumsy. I have worked with the notion of regionality because it is more precise and focused, allowing for a dynamic conception of territorial reconfiguration.⁸³ When understood regionally, application conditions allow for a coherent and viable procedure of comparison.

Second, while this text clarifies the advantages of comparativism for cultural analysis, studies of cultural contacts are no less important. The historicization of those contacts is an ideal tool with which to remedy the drawbacks of comparativism. At stake is the study of specific incidents (journeys, periods of exile, translations, etc.) in which different (Latin American) cultures have come into contact with one another, constituting region- or continent-wide cultural networks.⁸⁴ This has been a privileged area of academic reflection in recent decades, especially in the study of cultural periodicals. Taken together, comparative analysis and the historicization of cultural contacts will shape a methodologically sound and sufficiently broad framework for cultural studies.

My proposition is that inquiries that go beyond national

frontiers can draw other kinds of maps of the continent, connecting (but not merging) different cultural scenes that have formulated comparable processes of artistic practice and circulation. At present, a return to a comparative study of art is important because it casts a different light on works and events that have been previously examined in exclusively national terms, while also enabling readings of cultural developments that have been largely foreclosed by a focus on local art histories. The cultural history of South America must not be written from the perspective of the artificial, geopolitical boundaries between nations but on the basis of the vital connections between artistic scenes and practices that are always, in the end, transnational.

Notes

A preliminary version of this paper was published in Spanish as “Hacia una historia del arte regional: Reflexiones en torno al comparativismo para el estudio de procesos culturales en Sudamérica,” *Anales del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas* 38, no. 109 (October 2016): 11–42, <http://www.anale.siie.unam.mx/index.php/analeiie/article/view/2576>.

1. Prologue to *El arte de la imagería en el Río de la Plata* by Adolfo Ribera and Héctor Schenone (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas, 1948), 8.

2. *La pintura argentina del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Atlántida, 1958), 64.

3. María Teresa Gramuglio, “Tres problemas para el comparatismo,” *Orbis Tertius* 11, no. 12 (2006), https://www.orbistertius.unlp.edu.ar/article/view/OTv11n12a02/pdf_73; Adrián Gorelik, ed., “El comparativismo como problema: Una introducción,” *Prismas: Revista de historia intelectual* 8 (2004): 121–28; Florencia Garramuño, “¿Para qué comparar? Tango y samba y el fin de los estudios comparatistas y de área,” *Prismas: Revista de historia intelectual* 8 (2004): 151–62; Philipp Ther, “Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe,” *Central European History* 36, no. 1 (2003): 45–73; and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia,” *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62.

4. Ángel Guido, “La filosofía del arte en la actualidad: Wölfflin, Worringer, Dvorak, Pinder: Aplicación de sus teorías a temas americanos,” in *Redescubrimiento de América en el Arte* (Rosario, Argentina: Universidad Nacional del Litoral, 1941), 37–80; and Martín Noel, *Fundamentos para una estética nacional: Contribución a la historia de la arquitectura hispano-americana* (Buenos Aires: Tall. Rodríguez Giles, 1926).

5. Pablo Montini, “Ángel Guido,” in *Entre la academia y la crítica: La construcción discursiva y disciplinar de la historia del arte: Argentina-siglo XX*, ed. Sandra Szir and María Amalia García (Buenos Aires: EDUNTREF, 2017), 171–77.

6. “La arquitectura colonial,” *La Nación*, 22 September 1914, 7. See also Carla Guillermina García, “La consolidación disciplinar de la historiografía artística en la Argentina: Mario J. Buschiazzo y el Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas de la Universidad de Buenos Aires (1946–1970)” (Ph.D. diss., Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2019).

7. See Mario Buschiazzo, “El problema del arte mestizo,” *Anales del Instituto de Arte Americano de Investigaciones Estéticas*, no. 22 (Buenos Aires: Universidad de Buenos Aires, School of Architecture and Urbanism, 1969), 84–102.

8. “La moderna filosofía de la Historia del Arte ha revelado un hecho fundamental: la dignificación de la Obra de arte en sí—de la forma—como elemento autónomo. Y la ineludible necesidad de usar aquella forma misma, como punto de partida, para descubrir el contenido.” Guido, “La filosofía del arte en la actualidad,” 61.

9. Adolfo Ribera and Héctor Schenone, *El arte de la imagería en el Río de la Plata* (Buenos Aires: Instituto de Arte Americano e Investigaciones Estéticas, 1948); and Mario J. Buschiazzo, *Estudios de arquitectura colonial Hispano Americana* (Buenos Aires: Kraft, 1944).

10. Marta Penhos and Agustina Rodríguez Romero, “Héctor Schenone, el maestro de la pregunta,” in *Una historia para el arte en la Universidad de Buenos Aires*, ed. Marta Penhos and Sandra Szir (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, forthcoming).

11. Gabriela Siracusano, "Héctor Schenone," in *Entre la academia y la crítica*, 202–7.
12. Jorge Romero Brest, "El arte argentino y el arte universal," *Ver y estimar* 1 (1948): 10.
13. Aldo Pellegrini, *Panorama de la pintura argentina contemporánea* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1967), 9.
14. Nelly Perazzo, *Arte concreto en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Gaglianone, 1983), 53.
15. Marcelo Pacheco, "La Argentina y una mirada travestida: Emilio Pettoruti entre los espejos," in Juana Gutiérrez Haces, ed. Renato González Mello, *Arte, historia e identidad en América: Visiones comparativas* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas–Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1994), 789–802; and Laura Malosetti Costa, *Los primeros modernos: Arte y sociedad en Buenos a fines de siglo XIX* (Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica), 19–20.
16. Fabiana Serviddio, *Arte y crítica en Latinoamérica durante los años 70* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2012), 243–68.
17. Serviddio, 254–61.
18. Carla Guillermina García, "Contextos locales y vínculos transnacionales en la institucionalización de los estudios sobre arte colonial: Los proyectos de Manuel Toussaint y de Mario Buschiazzo desde México y Buenos Aires" (paper presented at the XL Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte del Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, "Mundo, imperios y naciones: La redefinición del 'arte colonial,'" Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City, 10–12 October 2016). While the first director of the IIE was Rafael López, the institution's distinct identity took shape under Toussaint's nearly twenty-year tenure. Hugo Arciniega Pascual and Arturo Pascual Soto, eds., *El Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México: Una memoria de 75 años: 1935–2010* (Mexico City: UNAM-IIE, 2010).
19. González Mello and Gutiérrez Haces.
20. Sandra M. Szir, "México y Latinoamérica: Arte y teoría: Entrevista de caiana a Rita Eder," *Caiana: Revista de historia del arte y cultura visual del centro argentino de investigadores de arte*, no. 6 (2015): 226–29.
21. Szir, 226–29.
22. Seventy-seven individuals participated in the Zacatecas colloquium in 1993. Twelve were European and North American academics, and the others were from Mexico and South America. The other seven seminars funded by the Getty Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation were held in Oaxaca (1996), Bellagio (1996), Querétaro (1997), Buenos Aires (1999), Veracruz (2000 and 2001), and Salvador, Bahía (2003). Of the twenty participants, only two were North Americans (Tom Cummins and Serge Guilbaut).
23. The digital publication "Los estudios de arte desde América Latina: Temas y problemas" compiles the papers delivered at the seven symposia held from 1996 to 2003. See Rita Eder, ed., *Los estudios de arte desde América Latina: Temas y problemas* (Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas-Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2009), <http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/edartedal>.
24. Andrea Giunta, "Comentarios sobre la reunión realizada en Oaxaca y propuestas para Bellagio" (paper presented at Una nueva historia del arte en América Latina, Bellagio, Italy, 1996), <http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/edartedal/bellagio.html>; Katherine E. Manthorne, "A Transamerican Reading of 'The Machine in the Garden': Nature vs. Technology in 19th Century Landscape Art," in *Arte, historia e identidad en América*, 243–51; and Roberto Amigo, "Consideraciones sobre el índice general 'Otras modernidades'" (paper presenten-

ted at *Una nueva historia del arte en América Latina*, Bellagio, Italy, 1996), <http://www.esteticas.unam.mx/edartedal/bellagio.html>.

25. See María Amalia García, *Abstract Crossings: Cultural Exchange between Argentina and Brazil* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), chs. 3, 6.

26. Raul Antelo, *Confluencia: Literatura argentina por brasileños: Literatura brasileña por argentinos* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Estudos Brasileiros, 1982); and Jorge Schwartz, *Vanguardia y cosmopolitismo en la década del veinte: Oliverio Girondo y Oswald de Andrade* (Rosario, Argentina: Beatriz Viterbo, 1993).

27. My own work ventures a comparative reading of concrete art in the two countries. See García, *Abstract Crossings*.

28. Boris Fausto and Fernando Devoto, *Brasil e Argentina: Um ensaio de história comparada 1850–2002* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2004).

29. Marc Bloch, “A favor de una historia comparada de las civilizaciones europeas” (1928), in *Historia e historiadores* (Madrid: Akal, 1999), 115; originally published as “Pour une histoire comparée des sociétés européennes,” *Revue de synthèse historique* 46 (1928): 15–50.

30. Fernando Devoto, “La Historia Comparada entre el método y la práctica: Un itinerario historiográfico,” *Prismas: Revista de historia intelectual* 8 (2004): 229–43. See also Alette Olin Hill and Boyd H. Hill Jr., “Marc Bloch and Comparative History,” *American Historical Review* 85, no. 4 (1980): 828–46.

31. Bloch, “A favor,” 128.

32. The study of the material procedures of artists is a highly promising area of comparative research. See, for instance, the project on concrete art developed by Getty Conservation and Research Institutes, Tarea-Instituto de Investigaciones sobre el Patrimonio Cultural de la Universidad de San Martín, and LACICOR, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.

33. Gorelik; and María Teresa Gramuglio, “Tres problemas para el comparatismo,” *Orbis Tertius* 11, no. 12 (2006), n.p.

34. Bloch, “A favor,” 115.

35. Bloch, “A favor,” 117.

36. Carol Duncan, “Art Museums and the Ritual of Citizenship,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1991); Paulo Herkenhoff, “A Bienal de São Paulo e seus compromissos culturais e políticos,” *Revista USP* 52 (2001–2002): 118–21; and Ana Garduño, *El curador de la Guerra Fría, Fernando Gamboa* (Mexico City: Conaculta-Museo Mural Diego Rivera-INBA, 2009).

37. Questions of pseudomorphology and the problem of historical telescoping have been explored by Yve-Alain Bois, “Conferência inaugural: A questão do pseudomorfismo: Um desafio para a abordagem formalista” (paper presented at Anais do XXIV Colóquio do CBHA, São Paulo, 2006), http://www.cbha.art.br/coloquios/2006/pdf/02_XXVICBHA_Yes_alain.pdf. This presentation was later published as Yve-Alain Bois, “On the Uses and Abuses of Look-Alikes,” *October* 154 (Fall 2015): 127–49.

38. Benjamin Buchloh, “The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde,” *October* 37 (Summer 1986): 41–52; Thierry de Duve, “The Monochrome and the Blank Canvas,” in *Kant after Duchamp* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996); Paulo Herkenhoff, “Monocromos,” in *XXIV Bienal de São Paulo*, ed. Paulo Herkenhoff (São Paulo: Fundação Bienal São Paulo, 1988); and Irene Small, “Ready-Constructible Color,” in *Hélio Oiticica: Folding the Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 131–80.

39. *Arte moderno en Brasil*, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires,

1957; and *Museo de Arte Moderno de San Pablo, Brasil*, Misión Cultural Brasileña (Salón Carlos Antonio López), Asunción, 1959. *Arte moderno en Brasil* was a touring show that visited Rosario, Argentina; Santiago, Chile; and Lima.

40. María Amalia García, “Hegemonies and Models of Cultural Modernization in South America: The Paraguay-Brazil Case,” *Art Margins* 3, no. 1 (2014): 28–54; and García, *Abstract Crossings*.

41. José Paradiso, “Vicisitudes de una política exterior independiente,” in *Los años peronistas (1943–1955)*, ed. Juan Carlos Torre (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2002), 525–72.

42. Aracy Amaral, *Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, perfil de um acervo* (São Paulo: TECHINT-USP, 1982); and Herkenhoff, “A Bienal de São Paulo e seus compromissos culturais e políticos.”

43. Damián Carlos Bayón, “La exposición de arte brasileiro,” *Ars* 77 (1957): n.p.; Germaine Derbecq, “En el Museo de Bellas Artes,” *Arte nuevo* 4 (1957): 8–13; and J.A. García Martínez, “Museo imaginario de la pintura brasileña,” *Histonium* 218 (1957): 48–49.

44. Josefina Plá, “El museo de arte moderno de San Pablo en Asunción: Primer artículo,” *La Tribuna* (Asunción), 19 June 1959; and Josefina Plá, “El museo de arte moderno de San Pablo en Asunción: Segundo artículo,” *La Tribuna* (Asunción), 26 June 1959, in Centro de Estudos Brasileiros (CEB) Archive, Asunción.

45. The work by Gino Severini included *Mujer y arlequín* (Woman and harlequin; 1946), a painting that, despite its modern neoclassical language, was hardly bold. The De Chirico painting was *Gladiadores* (Gladiators), a figurative and conventionally modern work with little sense of experimentation. These works bear out Plá’s objections.

46. Amaral; Regina Teixeira de Barros, “Revisão de uma história: A criação do Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo 1946–1949” (MA thesis, Universidade de São Paulo, 2002), mimeograph; and Maria Cecília França Lourenço, *Museus acolhem moderno* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 1999).

47. See “Exposición 1957: Carpeta de prensa no. 2” (1957), in Archivo MAM-RJ.

48. “Exposição do acervo do Museu de Arte Moderna no Paraguai,” *O Estado de São Paulo*, 12 July 1959, in CEB Archive.

49. César Tcach, “Golpes, proscripciones y partidos políticos,” in *Nueva historia Argentina: Violencia, proscripción y autoritarismo 1955–1976*, ed. Daniel James (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2003), 20–24.

50. Daniel James, *Resistencia e integración: El peronismo y la clase trabajadora argentina 1946–1976* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1990), ch. 2.

51. García, *Abstract Crossings*.

52. Tcach, “Golpes, proscripciones y partidos políticos”; and Carlos Escudé and Andrés Cisneros, eds., *Historia general de las relaciones exteriores de la República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales, 1999), vol. 13.

53. “Reabrióse el Museo con la Exposición de Brasil,” *La Nación* (Buenos Aires), 26 June 1957, 6.

54. Ceres Moraes, *Paraguai: A consolidação da ditadura Stroessner—1954–1963* (Porto Alegre: Edipucrs, 2000), 99.

55. “Entrevista de Stroessner y Kubitschek,” *Patria* (Asunción), 2 October 1958; and “Fraternidad Americana: Los jefes de Estado de Brasil y Paraguay se abrazan hoy y con ellos, los dos pueblos,” *El País* (Asunción), 4 October 1958, in CEB Archive.

56. Ticio Escobar, *Una interpretación de las artes plásticas en el Paraguay* (1984; Asunción: Servilibro, 2007). Other authors agree on the passage from one foreign cultural hegemony to another in Paraguay. See Roberto Amigo, *Guerra, anarquía y goce: Tres episodios de la relación entre la cultura y el arte moderno en el Paraguay* (Asunción: CAV-Museo del Barro, 2002), 73.

57. “Instituto Cultural Paraguay-Brasil,” unidentified graphic media, May 1960, in CEB Archive. See also “Atos entre o Brasil e o Paraguai: Firmados no Rio de Janeiro a 14 de Junho de 1941 por ocasião da visita do Doutor Luiz A. Argaña,” Ministro das Relações Exteriores do Paraguai, Rio de Janeiro, Imprensa Nacional, 1941, in CEB Archive.

58. Abramo (São Paulo, 1903–Asunción, 1992) was a well-known Brazilian engraver, illustrator, and designer.

59. “Acordo entre os Estados Unidos do Brasil e o Paraguai destinado a sistematizar as funções da Missão Cultural Brasileira em Assunção,” Rio de Janeiro, 31 March 1952, in Ministério de Relaciones Exteriores, Brazil, Centro de Estudos Brasileiros, Asunción.

60. García, “Hegemonies and Models of Cultural Modernization in South America.”

61. María Amalia García, “El monocromo en tanto término de análisis para la comparación de imágenes: Lygia Clark y Alberto Greco en el cruce de la pintura y el espacio,” in *V Congreso Internacional de Teoría e Historia de las Artes* (Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino de Investigadores de Arte CAIA, 2009), 53–65.

62. García, *Abstract Crossings*.

63. Theo van Doesburg, “Éléментарisme (Les éléments de la nouvelle peinture),” *Abstraction-crétation: Art non figuratif 1* (1932): 39.

64. Francisco Rivas, “Alberto Greco: La novela de su vida y el sentido de su muerte,” in *Alberto Greco* (Valencia: IVAM, 1992).

65. María Amalia García, “Informalism between Surrealism and Concrete Art: Aldo Pellegrini and the Promotion of Modern Art in Buenos Aires during the 1950s,” in *New Geographies of Abstract Art in Postwar Latin America*, ed. Mariola V. Alvarez and Ana M. Franco (New York: Routledge, 2018), 11–24.

66. Jorge López Anaya, *El arte en un tiempo sin dioses* (Buenos Aires: Almagedo, 1989), 151.

67. Reference card, “150 años de arte argentino” (1960), in Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes Archive.

68. *Lygia Clark* (Barcelona: Fundación Antoni Tàpies, 1997).

69. Lorenzo Mammi, ed., *Concreta '56: A raiz da forma* (São Paulo: MAM, 2006).

70. Ana Maria Belluzzo, “Ruptura e arte concreta,” in *Arte construtiva no Brasil: Coleção Adolpho Leirner* (São Paulo: Companhia Melhoramentos-DBA, 1998), 95–141; and Ronaldo Brito, *Neoconcretismo: Vértice e ruptura do projeto construtivo brasileiro* (1975; São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 1999).

71. Amílcar de Castro et al., “Manifesto Neoconcreto,” *Jornal do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro), 22 March 1959, 4–5.

72. Paulo Herkenhoff, “A aventura planar de Lygia Clark: De caracóis, escadas e Caminhando,” in *Lygia Clark* (São Paulo: Museu de Arte Moderna, 1999), 7–61.

73. Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, “Pintura, índice, monocromo: Manzoni, Ryman, Toroni,” in *Formalismo e historicidad: Modelos y métodos en el arte del siglo XX* (Madrid: Akal, 2004), 223–45.

74. Carmen María Jaramillo, *Fisuras del arte moderno en Colombia* (Bogotá: Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, 2012); and Sylvia Juliana Suárez, *Salón de arte moderno 1957* (Bogotá: Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, 2008).

75. Carmen María Jaramillo, *Carlos Rojas* (Bogotá: Ediciones El Museo,

1995); and Nicolás Gómez, Felipe González, and Julián Serna, *Carlos Rojas: Una visita a sus mundos* (Bogotá: Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2008).

76. Rosalind Krauss, "Grillas," in *La originalidad de la vanguardia y otros mitos modernos* (Madrid: Alianza, 1996), 23–38; originally published as "Grids," *October* 9 (1979): 51–64.

77. Both titles refer to the spelling of *espacio*, the Spanish word for *space*. —*Trans.*

78. Jaramillo, *Fisuras del arte moderno en Colombia*, 56–59.

79. Jaramillo, *Fisuras del arte moderno en Colombia*, 145–46.

80. While Colombian art history has not discussed this transformation in patterns of social relations specifically, some scholars have referred to it. See, for instance, David Ayala Alfonso, "Espacio interior," in *Cecilia Porras: Cartagena y yo 1950–1970* (Bogotá: Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño, 2009) 25–29; and Lorenzo Morales, "La deshonra de la colina," *Arcadia* (Bogotá), 23 June 2011, <http://www.revistaarcadia.com/periodismo-cultural-revista-arcadia/articulo/la-deshonra-la-colina/25443>.

81. Juan Jacobo Bajarlía, *Literatura de vanguardia: Del "Ulises" de Joyce a las escuelas poéticas* (Buenos Aires: Araujo, 1946), 175; and María Amalia García, "Lidy Prati y la instancia diferencial en la unidad del arte concreto," in *Yente-Prati* (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, 2009).

82. James Elkins, ed., *Is Art History Global?* (New York: Routledge, 2007); and Robert S. Nelson, "The Map of Art History," *Art Bulletin* 79, no. 1 (March 1997): 28–40.

83. Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 93–94.

84. See, among others, José Luis Romero, "Los contactos de cultura: Bases para una morfología," in *La vida histórica* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1988), 145–82; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 3 (1997): 735–62; Philipp Ther, "Beyond the Nation: The Relational Basis of a Comparative History of Germany and Europe," *Central European History* 36, no. 1 (2003): 45–73; and Gorelik.