

Introduction

City/Art: Setting the Scene

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La ciudad entonces tiene y vive el color del símbolo. Y el símbolo de cada ciudad no se produce solo, sino en estrecha convivencia y por tejido hecho por los ciudadanos que la habitan, la recorren y la representan. La ciudad de ese modo es creación estética permanente. Y también tejido simbólico.

—Armando Silva, *Imaginarios urbanos, Bogotá y São Paulo*

Rio de Janeiro. Miami. Buenos Aires. Mexico City. São Paulo. Santiago de Chile. Caracas. Lima. Havana. Bogotá. Montevideo. Brasília. La Paz. Tijuana. These cities are nodal points in Latin America's cultural tapestry. They provide that tapestry with strength and structure, but they also pose knotty problems for those who wish to identify and appreciate all the threads they bring together. Students of today's Latin American urban scene face the challenge of untangling the historical, economic, and political threads that combine to produce these cities. At the same time, they must avoid reducing each lived, creative city to any one of those threads; such limitation would render the cultural tapestry illegible. The cities one can live in, visit, or analyze emerge as the material results of violence and social conflict, ideological agendas, economic practices, architectural vision, and survival strategies. Some of these elements are formal, legally sanctioned, and organized; they have names. Others are informal, illegal, or spontaneous; they may be anonymous or collective. All of these creative forces intertwine with one another to produce cities that are inextricably tied to place and time even as they also participate in a global network of meanings.

This collection provides students and scholars of urban cultural studies

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with a range of models for approaching Latin American cities as sites of creativity. Certainly, artistic representations of a city reflect the creative energy in that city. But what happens when one takes seriously Armando Silva's claim that the city itself is a permanent aesthetic creation? Cities can be considered works of art, where art is understood in its broadest sense as the material and performative expression of both ideas and sensibilities. Such an approach confronts the ways in which different urban imaginaries account for the spatial and temporal particularity of the Latin American urban scene.

Urban Imaginaries

Centers of world communication, economic exchange, and cultural expression, Latin America's cities bustle with the urgency of a perpetual present. At the same time, their physical grounding grants them special status as monuments and museums of history. The majority of today's urban centers were founded in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries by Spanish and Portuguese colonizers. Therefore, they have a long history as administrative enclaves loosely tied together to weave into existence an entity called Latin America. Condensing the New World's immensity into specific places,

they embody the region's history. They display the evolution of the colonial ideal of ordered city planning into the frenetic movement of twenty-first-century megacities, mass migrations, and globalization. As with cities anywhere, seen from the air, they give the impression of carefully sculpted space; they reveal intricate patterns and designs. From the ground, however, they seem spontaneous. They provide a place to live or to work. They offer spaces that protect us, but they also confront us with spaces that frighten and threaten us.

Latin America's cities present the beauty of extreme contrast: design and dysfunction, control and chaos, the vast and the very small, the distant past and the distant future. These cities traditionally concentrate political and economic power in their respective countries, but they also intensify the conflicts generated by that power. Thus, since the European conquest, urban centers have served as rich indicators of the region's history and future. Not surprisingly, then, Latin America's largest cities figure among the forms of cultural expression that are the most difficult to study. In these urban centers, crowding increases cultural vibrancy along with social chaos. Violence often subtends the greatest levels of economic productivity. Approaching cities as sources of cultural information requires us to recognize their simultaneous status as elaborate physical spaces, economic systems, collective as well as individual experiences, communities, sites of alienation, zones of social conflict, and dreams (both idealistic and apocalyptic) of modernization and globalization.

Latin American urban studies in the last half-century has featured a number of geographers, demographers, sociologists, and policymakers who sound timely alarms about the social ills wrought by the emergence of the Latin American megacity in the twentieth century. Effective urban planning and the implementation of social policies depend on such powerful analyses of quantifiable and structural problems caused by overpopulation, rapid and uncontrolled immigration to urban centers, pollution, failed industrialization movements, and corrupt or inept local governments. An equally powerful analysis of the continually negotiated images of urban space, however, is required to produce an affective understanding of the lived city. Such analysis must eschew the rhetorical safety of objective distance; it must find ways to enter into the urban imaginary it hopes to describe.

The Mexican philosopher and educational activist, José Vasconcelos, wrote about what it means to enter into the urban imaginary after his first visit to Rio de Janeiro in 1925:



Satellite view of Buenos Aires, 1995. Instituto Geográfico Militar.



Elena Castro, "Calle del Cartucho." Photograph taken in Bogotá, 1992.
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Entrar en la esencia de una gran ciudad es tarea complicada y fascinadora; se necesita una sensibilidad instantánea, una como telepatía para recibir a un tiempo muchos mensajes. Penetramos en los senderos nuevos, enlazamos analogías, nos remontamos a los antecedentes, abarcamos el conjunto, adivinamos mil proyecciones y perseguimos en el ambiente una íntima esencia creada por el roce y el ansia de las almas particulares. (Vasconcelos [1925] 1928, 53)

To enter into the essence of a major city is a difficult and fascinating task; you need an instantaneous sensibility, like telepathy, to receive multiple messages all at once. We forge paths, we connect analogies, we overcome antecedents, we grasp the whole of it, we divine a thousand projections, and we follow an intimate essence created by the friction and the yearning of individual souls.¹

Today the urban scene in Latin America comprises an even more vertiginous array of messages and images than Vasconcelos confronted with such poetic sensibility. His argument that one must combine multiple forms of perception with intentional analysis in order to understand a city is more necessary now than ever before. A careful parsing of this passage will help frame key concepts and set the stage for my argument that critical engagement with cities must be approached as a creative art in the same way that today's cities themselves are best understood as knotty conglomerations of creative practices.

Vasconcelos begins by addressing the challenges of movement and definition. The goal is “to enter into the essence of a major city” rather than to describe it or fully account for it. Vasconcelos seeks “the essence” rather than a simple, direct definition or circumscription of the city. Notably, he does not mention buildings, infrastructure, politics, economics, or competing social groups when fleshing out what this concept implies. His search for the essence of the city focuses on the challenge posed to the traveler, to the person who wishes to enter the city. Thus, the urban scholar or critic imagines him- or herself, taking a physical journey in order to gain a type of knowledge that is to be “followed” rather than possessed.

Vasconcelos's elaboration of this journey addresses temporality, communication, direction, connection, originality, the relation of the whole to its parts, and the role of individuals in the constitution of the urban collective. Regarding temporality, Vasconcelos underscores the “instantaneous” nature of attending to many messages at once. In the Rio of the 1920s, this means

the messages sent to urban pedestrians by storefront advertisements, overheard conversations, and styles of clothing. One might easily expand this reference to the instantaneous messages sent by old architectural styles that have endured for centuries to stand in aesthetic juxtaposition to new ones. Instantaneity in this case refers to the physical proximity of past and present in buildings and streets whose designs have evolved over time.

The idea of direction in the Vasconcelos passage combines space and time. He writes, “*penetramos en los senderos nuevos*,” which I translated as “we forge paths.” The Spanish phrase is richer than my translation would indicate; its ambiguous use of “new paths” allows for the possibility that they are forged for the first time, and that they are encountered for the first time by the first-person plural subject of *penetramos*. We penetrate, explore, or enter paths new to us; we also forge paths that have never been walked before. The urban traveler’s role must be dual; we follow those who go before us, and we invent new itineraries.

“We connect analogies, we overcome antecedents.” This rhetoric of bringing together disparate images and of adding to, or transcending, older stories also emphasizes temporality. Connecting analogies implies finding parallelism among different ways of entering the city. For example, a tourist or resident can stroll through the historic center to visit the colonial cathedral, the former palace, the administrative buildings, the plaza, and the open marketplace that remain in many Latin American cities today. It is possible to trace with one’s steps the sites, architectural styles, and human impact of different forms of government and economy that have dominated these places. This journey in the present can parallel the historic passage of political epochs. The synchronic nature of the city, which can make the past visible in the present, ironically preserves the diachronic nature of the city, which requires us to acknowledge the many paths that have led to the present.

“We overcome antecedents, we grasp the whole of it.” This segment of Vasconcelos’s rhetorical thread indicates that our combination of synchronic and diachronic images of the city allows us to imagine the big picture. Perhaps that was possible in 1925, but the scale of Latin America’s twenty-first-century cities renders this statement absurdly romantic for our present. Interestingly, Vasconcelos immediately retreats from it, and offers his synthetic summation of what he believes to be the real task of the critical urban traveler: “We divine a thousand projections, and we follow an intimate essence created by the friction and the yearning of individual souls.”

Here Vasconcelos seems to abandon the notion of “the whole of it.” He now foregrounds creativity, diversity, and discontinuity. The thousand projections he refers to may come from city planners, governments, architects, scholars, or the city’s heterogeneous residents. Vasconcelos’s traveler, however, divines those projections, which is to say he or she imagines and interprets them based on the urban analogies and antecedent images or stories to which he or she has access. To this store of received and projected images and narratives the traveler adds an awareness of individual people and their experiences. After all, individuals make up the city. They do so in two ways. First, in the simple sense, population *makes* a city. In a more complex sense, by pointing out that the “friction and yearning” of individual souls creates the intimate essence of the urban, Vasconcelos suggests that real, conflictive experience combines with imagination and desire to *make up* a city. The city’s essence consists of its inhabitants’ real experience in the past and present as well as their yearning for the future. Combining the past, the present, and the future, the urban imaginary is both a real and a made-up projection.

By including both diachronic and synchronic perspectives, Vasconcelos’s eloquent passage helps us to map the ways in which Latin American cities have been addressed within urban studies. Disciplinary differences lead scholars to privilege specific threads that are tied to other equally important threads in the urban knot. They tell the story of how Latin America’s cities have developed by focusing on certain trajectories that typically track in tandem with other ways to map the passage from colonial settlements to today’s teeming metropolises. Reading these histories of Latin American cities provides a hands-on exercise in “connecting analogies.” Some studies focus primarily on changes in the region’s political economy and governmental policies since the conquest.² A different frame for seeing the city emphasizes shifts in the relative power wielded by certain social groups.³ Yet another emphasizes public policy and the problem of managing large urban systems.⁴ Some accounts highlight nationalism and its ramifications for the rural/urban divide after the nineteenth-century independence movements.⁵ Other narratives trace developments in urban planning, architecture, and aesthetics over time.⁶ Still others explore the changes in how certain cities serve the global financial and communications network by debating the definition of global or world cities (Lo and Yeung 1998; Pacioni 2001; Sassen 1991, 2000).

All of these studies acknowledge the connections their narratives make to other disciplinary approaches. While they seldom provide one-to-one cor-

responsibility in their organization of the major periods in Latin American urban development, they all generally account for how cities both reflect and influence the region's broad historical trajectory. These various ways of approaching the city in diachronic studies reveal a predilection for seeing cities as nerve centers for socio-economic projects, as providers of services, as uninhabited groups of buildings and street plans (one can certainly better appreciate the intricacies of baroque architecture when not distracted by passersby on the sidewalk), or as containers of representative social groups (Morse 1992).⁷ All of these accounts illuminate important aspects of the city, but the current situation of Latin American urban centers exceeds their explanatory capacity. An additional "instantaneous sensibility" is required if we wish to engage productively with the cultural implications of the Latin American urban scene today.

Almost every type of historical narrative or current snapshot of Latin American cities culminates in a discussion of the contemporary crisis of urban definition and manageability. The region's enormous cities and conurbations,⁸ with their teeming streets, towering buildings, and sprawling cityscapes, have long overshadowed pre-twenty-first-century images of the region as primarily rural and undeveloped. In *Planet of Slums* (2006), Mike Davis explores the causes and results of the fact that the worldwide urban population has now surpassed that of the countryside. Since the 1980s megacities (defined as cities with over 8 million inhabitants) and hypercities (those with over 20 million inhabitants) in Latin America have grown at rates that dramatically outstrip their capacity to manage or plan for urban expansion. For example, Mexico City's population was 2.9 million in 1950, and 22.1 million in 2004. In the same period of time, São Paulo went from 2.4 million to 19.9 million; Buenos Aires, from 4.6 million to 12.6 million; Rio de Janeiro from 3 million to 11.9 million; Lima from 0.6 million to 8.2 million; and Bogotá from 0.7 million to 8 million. And the population increases are not limited to these extremely large conurbations. Even though primary cities have traditionally shown the most growth, "secondary cities such as Santa Cruz, Valencia, Tijuana, Curitiba, Temuco, Maracay, Bucaramanga, Salvador, and Belem are now booming, with the most rapid increase in cities of fewer than 500,000 people" (Villa and Rodríguez 1996, 27). This vertiginous shift of the majority of the population to the cities reflects overurbanization, a situation in which cities grow in spite of not offering improved job opportunities or a quality of life superior to that of the countryside.⁹

In the early twentieth century, the region's largest cities benefited from



Evandro Teixeira, "Favela doña Marta." Photograph taken in Rio de Janeiro, 1988. Reprinted with the artist's permission.

the era of import-substituting industrialization, during which Latin American countries invested heavily in the development and protection of local industry. The First World War and the Great Depression caused shortages of goods formerly exported from Europe and the United States, and Latin America's domestic industry profited. This shift attracted manufacturing plants and expanded government bureaucracies to the advantage of large cities (Szuchman 1996, 20–22). Capital cities in the region received direct investment from national governments to expand social services, architectural innovation, parks, roads, and public works. In turn, large urban migrations brought people streaming in from the countryside to fill the need for industrial labor and to enjoy new urban services. As a result, the period from 1940 to 1980 saw unprecedented urban growth and development.

However, the 1980s export-oriented model of development, applied in response to recession and debt crisis, severely harmed much of Latin America's domestic industry. Governments reduced protections against imports. Subsidies for national industry were curtailed. The largest cities, already becoming overburdened by swelling populations, saw their manufacturing capacities slowed. In the decade of the 1980s, for example, the gross national product of Latin America and the Caribbean declined by 8.3 percent (Gilbert 1994, 33). Absent the promise of continuing economic growth, the cities were less able to provide the advantages of upward mobility and social services they had formerly offered (Gilbert 1998, 196). Trade liberalization shifted wealth away from public development and toward transnational corporations, their managers, and stockholders. That process dramatically increased inequality in Latin America's metropolises. This social division appears in the uncontrolled growth of slums of all types and a concomitant increase in government-sponsored "slum clearance as an indispensable means of fighting crime" (Davis 2006, 111). As Alan Gilbert has pointed out, "the rich are able both to benefit from the advantages of large cities and to escape from most of the diseconomies. There may be excellent hospitals, clubs, restaurants, and universities in large cities, but most are open only to those with money. The poor might as well be living in a different city as far as these kinds of facility are concerned. . . . If the poor gain few of the advantages offered by the mega-cities, they reap most of the disadvantages," like traffic congestion, pollution, and the privatization of services traditionally considered infrastructure (such as water, street paving, and sewers) (Gilbert 1998, 193). While the scale of these problems has reached epic proportions,

the uneven distribution of the positive and negative aspects of city life is really nothing new to Latin America.

Long before the current urban demographic explosion, and indeed since the birth of the first Latin American cities during the European conquest, cities have loomed large as central sites in a complex struggle over the power to define the future of Latin America itself. The Aztecs, Mayas, and Incas had established large cities as much as a thousand years before the conquest. European invaders were stunned to find evidence of sophisticated urban planning and social management, sometimes in communities larger than the largest European cities. The Iberians' subsequent destruction of existing indigenous cities and the establishment of a new network of towns therefore played a powerful role in the creation of Latin America. Spanish and Portuguese colonial administration of the so-called New World relied on this early urbanization to facilitate the communication and exercise of

Unknown artist, *The Conquest of Tenochtitlán* (seventh painting in a cycle of eight), second half of the seventeenth century. Oil on canvas. Copyright by Jay I. Kislak Foundation, Miami Lakes. Reprinted with permission from the Kislak Collection, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress.





Plano de el terreno comprendido entre la Ciudad de Santiago de Chile y el Río Mayo con el proyecto de un canal para conducir agua desde dicho río a el de Mapocho de esta ciudad, Santiago de Chile, 1800. Manuscript map. Copyright by Archivo General de Indias, Seville. A.G.I. Ref. Perú y Chile, 141.

royal authority. Colonial towns were designed to replicate the Iberian urban model of the central plaza surrounded by administrative buildings, a church or cathedral, and elite residences. Where topographically possible, streets were planned in grids, ensuring a homogeneous, angular mapping of space outward from the center. Relative distance from the central plaza signified relative positions in the hierarchy of power.¹⁰ The network of such settlements centralized colonial administrative power physically and symbolically throughout Latin America. Remarkably, as Alan Gilbert points out, this urban web has remained in place, even though the size and manageability of each city has drastically transformed the nature of Latin American urban life (Gilbert 1994, 24).¹¹

The tension between the archeological presence of pre-conquest urban forms and the imposed morphology of colonial cities molded the physical contours of many of the Latin American cities we see today. That same tension also shapes the social realities that urban planning and design attempt to manage, contain, or eradicate, whether we are speaking of the colonial period, the independence and nation-building period, or the decentraliza-

tion of political power caused by twenty-first-century globalization. Cities reveal the concentrated effects of all the forces that bring about rapid change in social structures and experiences. They do so in multiple and multiply competing ways, from the centers of power as well as from the peripheral rings of poverty and exclusion. Through various historical moments, then, Latin American cities continue to serve as crucibles in which the modernizing process exacerbates tensions between the masses and the elites, the residents and the planners, the preexisting and the possible, the real and the imagined.

Latin American Urban Cultural Studies

In the face of competing urban imaginaries, what does it mean to “do” Latin American urban cultural studies? Any single answer to this question would be inadequate. Because they both take multiple urban imaginaries into account, the most interdisciplinary urban studies projects and the most contextualized cultural studies projects often resemble each other. However, if the primary focus of urban studies tends to be the relationship between policy and planning (or the lack thereof) and their outcomes (whether “successful” or not) in relation to Latin American political economy, the primary focus of cultural studies tends to be meanings and their relationship to power. Specifically Latin American cultural studies engages many critical traditions and analyzes a potentially unlimited number of practices and products. Whether it is conducted from a primarily anthropological, geographical, sociological, literary, or historical perspective, it defines culture generally as “the realm of production, circulation, and consumption of meanings” (García Canclini 2004, 338).

Latin American cultural studies deconstructs simplistic notions of what kinds of cultural expression matter for the circulation of meanings in this particular region of the world. Drawing from the strong multidisciplinary tradition of Latin American cultural theory, literature, and international critical theory, it translates practices and products related to the cultural industries (the design of museums, the dissemination of mass-media, or the formation of national literary canons, for example) as well as those that appear in daily life (playing soccer, riding the metro, selling trinkets on the street, or going shopping) into legible texts that reveal, contest, and in turn shape knowledge about such weighty issues as power, ideology, and social change. The mutual effects of power and culture constitute the core preoccu-

pation of cultural studies (Castro-Klarén 2006). In pursuing its analysis of that mutuality, cultural studies both responds to and produces its objects of study as bearers of meaning.¹²

If it is difficult to formulate any simple definition of cultural studies as a method of analysis, the challenge of analyzing cities per se is exponentially greater. Néstor García Canclini asks in this volume, “what is a city?” and his essay demonstrates how cities famously elude definitive classification. The fact that cities have names suggests that they also have individual character and history in addition to recognizable physical form. However, their physical integrity is continuously violated. Urban design can be altered by informal processes like squatting or slum-building as well as by formal processes like planned urban renewal. Cities’ boundaries are flexible and contested; they grow and adapt to economic, political, and demographic changes. In this sense, cities are alive. They consist of collections of things and networks (buildings, streets, marketplaces, transport systems, sewers, electricity grids, mountains of refuse, and so on), but it is not as if cities are simply the hard structure through which human beings flow. People’s use of these objects and systems defines cities more than the objects themselves. The material aspects of cities are created by and also interact with human imagination; the two constantly alter each other.

Reading Vasconcelos’s prescription for how to “enter into the essence of a major city” from the standpoint of cultural studies, we might understand his use of the term *essence* as a codeword for the ways in which Latin America’s cities produce and circulate meanings. Of course, cities are especially charged sites of contested meanings. They are symbols of technological achievement and modernization, but their flaws and internal contradictions erode popular belief in “progress.” They bring large numbers of people together in physical proximity, but they also increase social alienation and types of exclusion. Cities live in real space and time, and they are made of real material objects like concrete and bricks. However, they carry meaning only through the ways in which people live in them, imagine them, and represent them. It is impossible to separate objective definitions, descriptions, and explanations of cities from questions of perception, value, and meaning. The fact that cities are at once material and imaginary, that they defy fixed definition on either side of that dichotomy, grants them privileged status as rich sites for cultural studies.

Contemporary Latin American urban cultural studies draws from the region’s violent socio-economic history as well as from cultural theory to

account for the heterogeneous nature of its present-day cities. Major topics of debate in the field involve the relationship between formal and informal urban practices, defining that relationship along various axes. Some arguments highlight the difference between dominant and subaltern groups and ideologies. They account for the ways in which formal urban design embodies social exclusion while subaltern practices resist that process (Hardoy 1997; Muñoz 2003).¹³ Other studies are concerned with the proper status of signs and symbols relative to materiality; they examine the role of mass media, global marketing, and consumption in structuring urban life on the local level (Monsiváis 1995; Sarlo 2001a, 2001b; García Canclini 1990, 1995a). Yet others address the problem of scale and perspective by attempting to balance systemic views of the city with residents' discrete experiences (García Canclini, Castellanos, and Rosas Mantecón 1996; Sarlo 2001a). Some scholars critique the difference between questions and methods that originate from within Latin America and those that come from elsewhere (Castro-Klarén 2006, Sarlo 1995, Achugar 1998, Moreiras 1998). Finally, other studies worry that by attending exclusively, or simplistically, to the realm of signification and the imaginary, urban cultural studies may risk blocking the possibility of overcoming the current urban crisis in reality (Sarlo 1995; Gorelik 2004).

Angel Rama's *La ciudad letrada* (*The Lettered City*) (1984) figures prominently in Latin American urban cultural studies, because it articulates core questions about the exercise of power in relationship to signification and real urban structures. Rama makes the crucial observation that due to the nature of the conquest and subsequent colonization process, Latin America's cities, more than those of any other region of the world, owe their existence to writing (14–15). The well-ordered foundations of colonial cities were the physical manifestation of legal and theological documents that laid out plans for architecture, street design, and social divisions that would mirror the power of monarchy and church. This process relied on faith in the direct equivalence of the form of a city to the form of its social order (Mumford 1961, 172; qtd. in Rama 1984, 3). It also relied on the idea that the pre-conquest New World was empty of culture, that it offered vacant spaces ready to be written on by civilizing forces. This idea paved the way for the power of words and drawings (urban planning) to pre-imagine cities. It fed the faith that perfect planning could establish and preserve order in the real—and over time (Rama 1984, 8).¹⁴

However, *La ciudad letrada* charts the development, not so much of Latin America's real cities, as of its intellectual classes—*los letrados* of various types—in their attempts to shape Latin America through writing. Whether they write to support state power or popular resistance to it, Rama argues, they are caught in the same type of projective thinking that founded Latin American cities: “El sueño de un orden servía para perpetuar el poder y para conservar la estructura socio-económica y cultural que ese poder garantizaba. Y además se imponía a cualquier discurso opositor de ese poder, obligándolo a transitar, previamente, por el sueño de otro orden” (Rama 1984, 11). (The dream of order served to perpetuate power and preserve the socio-economic and cultural structure guaranteed by that power. And it was also imposed on any discourse opposed to that power, obligating it to pass first through the dream of a different order.) Rama's exploration of the oppressive as well as the liberating implications of this situation up to the late twentieth century confirms the primacy of the imaginary in any discussion of Latin American cities. It draws from Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966), which argues that different discourses of knowledge respond more to the prevailing values and logic of their particular historical moments than to any transcendent truth or material reality. Rama analyzes the historical founding of cities in Latin America, the professionalization of different types of writing, the independence movements, and twentieth-century revolutions—all quite concrete phenomena—in order to elucidate the complex and changing interaction between the “ciudad letrada” and the “ciudad real.” The imaginary is made, then, of projections (*sueños*) as well as efforts to understand and respond to their real effects.

Whereas Rama's work foregrounds words and writing as the sources of knowledge of Latin American cities, Alberto Flores Galindo's *La ciudad sumergida. Aristocracia y plebe en Lima, 1760–1830*, published the same year as *La ciudad letrada*, deals more directly with space. It serves as a complement and counterpoint to Rama's influential study by exposing the city hidden by all the signs that Rama analyzes (Spitta 2003, 11–12). Flores Galindo focuses on violence in colonial Lima, describing the walled enclaves built by the white aristocracy to isolate itself from the masses of blacks and Indians whose settlements surround the center. By foregrounding the people who were excluded from what Rama calls the *ciudad letrada*, Flores Galindo understands the city as a site of real threats and fear more than as a site of imaginary projections and plans. In her preface to the essay collection, *Más allá de la ciudad*



Plano de la ciudad de Lima y sus fortificaciones, Lima (Ciudad de los Reyes), 1687. Manuscript map. Copyright Archivo General de Indias, Seville. A.G.I. Ref. Perú y Chile, 13 A.

letrada: Crónicas y espacios urbanos, Silvia Spitta (2003) argues that current Latin American urban cultural studies vacillates its attentions between these two poles of imagined order and real chaos.

It must be noted that Flores Galindo's treatment of subaltern resistance to elite dreams of containment relies on his analysis of legal documents and claims made by the heterogeneous population of free workers and slaves. Spitta observes that "while Rama sees writing as a silencing of orality, Flores Galindo makes legal records tell their stories as if through them one could hear the din of Lima's streets, endless gossip, and the spatial and verbal collage that has always constituted the city and its masses" (Spitta 2003, 19). When urban analysis uncritically privileges the lettered elite, it obscures or dismisses the productive agency of "the people," or the masses. However, as Flores Galindo's historical method exemplifies, revealing the role of non-

lettered culture in constituting the urban scene—its violence, its distribution of space, its chaos—also relies on writing and signs. Talking or writing about the city from either “above” or “below” requires creative, imaginary (re)constructions of real people’s creative activity.

Along with the urban scholars who work primarily in the social sciences, however, Angel Rama finds it particularly difficult to analyze the urban situation toward the end of the twentieth century. The era of late capitalism and the global reach of electronic media fundamentally alter the ways in which culture can be defined (Jameson 1984; Franco 2002). The Argentine literary and cultural studies critic Beatriz Sarlo examines the effects of global capitalism on local urban cultural practices (Sarlo 1994). She focuses particularly on the ways in which technology—whether literally accessible to people or only displayed to them through advertising—enters the popular imaginary and shapes (post)modern thinking. She argues that the field of cultural production must be considered in ever more expansive terms if we are to gain any understanding of the contemporary urban experience. The design of shopping malls and video games, or the nature of popular and middle-class consumption of electronic media, leads to a blurring of the formerly clear lines between a dominant, or “high” culture defended by elites and a subaltern culture of the poor. The conditions of global capitalism shift the defining poles of culture, and thus of how cultural production circulates meaning. This is especially true in cities where the percentage and visibility of economically privileged residents are dwarfed by the percentage of underemployed urbanites, even as electronic media project dreams of commodity acquisition to all social sectors equally.

Thus, despite the boundless circulation of meanings pertaining to a globalized urban imaginary of unlimited consumption and economic competition, the fact remains that twenty-first-century Latin American cities still symbolize dysfunction and disunity more than social progress and opportunities for all. At the same time and often in the face of severe social tensions, they also symbolize cultural identity and a sense of belonging for millions of people. As Richard Morse argues, addressing this vexed mix of issues that constitute the contemporary Latin American city is no longer a question of how governments or city planners either dominate or incorporate marginalized groups: “As migrants continue to pour into cities, as the best economic strategies imposed from above go awry, as middle classes collapse into a ‘lumpen-bourgeoisie,’ and as even ‘democratized’ regimes squabble over what democracy is and how it can be achieved—one under-

stands why the heart of the urban question has been misconstrued. One may continue to speak of incorporating the marginals but only be redefining marginals. For impoverished migrants are not marginals; they are the *people*. The marginals are the elites, technicians, bureaucrats, and academicians. It is *they* who require incorporation” (Morse 1992, 18). While this statement might seem to echo those studies that focus on class difference as the primary constitutive factor in urban reality, it actually complicates “the heart of the urban question” in a somewhat different way. Morse significantly urges the need for *incorporation* regardless of which group is considered central and which is considered marginal.

In this regard, we must take care to recognize the difference between studying urban imaginaries and discouraging urban imagination. By analyzing the variety of ways in which individuals, artists, governments, scholars, and others envision the nature of the city, cultural studies can identify the goals and biases of different urban imaginaries. For example, modernist urban planning is often strongly criticized for its attempts to manipulate the populace in the service of state power. This critique sees such efforts as an unself-aware continuation of the legacy of the conquest and the colonial foundation of Latin American cities. In this case, the critical discourse of urban imaginaries is used to chip away at the illusions of failed city plans and rigid political programs for urban development. However, limiting analysis to the simple identification and recording of the variety of representations of the city poses two risks. It can become reduced to a facile exercise in naming perspectives and fantasies with no connection to the real. Alternatively it can tend to accuse indiscriminately all organized efforts to intervene in urban developments of top-down authoritarianism (Gorelik 2004).

Therefore, Morse’s proposition distinguishes between a stagnant, dichotomous imaginary and a more progressive form of urban imagination. He argues that those concerned with urban dysfunctionality ought to stop seeing the urban poor as the problem facing contemporary Latin American cities, regardless of whether one thinks they should be democratically incorporated into or somehow purged from the city. On the contrary, it is the “elites, technicians, bureaucrats, and academicians” whose urban imaginaries have not caught up to the current reality. Morse attempts to redirect thinking about the city away from simple classification, authoritative imposition, idealization, and denunciation. He looks to the unprogrammed, popular initiatives that are reshaping the Latin American urban environment

in far more spontaneous and creative ways than traditional public planners imagine: “The city as a whole must increasingly depend on popular initiative for reworking institutions, for providing security and dispensing justice, for reconceiving the physical city, for developing alternative services (transport, health, education, religion, leisure), and for creating fresh norms for language and the literary and expressive arts. What the common folk have accomplished in the peripheral or interstitial residential areas during the past forty years now offers guidelines for what must happen to the city as a whole. Cities are now nodal points for the nation and not its citadels of control” (Morse 1992, 19). Morse’s expertise centers on questions of economic and political viability rather than aesthetic practices per se. Still, his argument resonates with that of the urban anthropologist Néstor García Canclini, who has focused more on the relations among urban imaginaries, consumer practices, and artistic production.

García Canclini struggles to account for the dialectic between, on the one hand, the metaphor of the urban leviathan as an insatiable monster that devours individuals and cultural distinctions, and, on the other hand, popular cultural practices that carve out paths along which individuals and small groups can navigate the immense urban landscape in order to create a sense of belonging and enjoyment. In his essay in this volume, which is adapted from a lecture series he presented in Buenos Aires in the late 1990s, García Canclini insists on the intertwined elements of actual and imagined space in our experience and assessment of cities: “We should think about the city as simultaneously a place to inhabit and a place to be imagined. Cities are made of houses and parks, streets, highways, and traffic signals. But they are also made of images. These images include the maps that invent and give order to the city. But novels, songs, films, print media, radio, and television also imagine the sense of urban life. The city attains a certain density as it is filled with these heterogeneous fantasies. The city, programmed to function, and designed in a grid, exceeds its boundaries and multiplies itself through individual as well as collective fictions.” The real city confronts us with concrete, slums, high-rises, plazas, monuments, traffic, crowding, public transportation, pollution, shopping centers, sewage systems, local governance, specific odors, noises, crime, wealth, underemployment, advertising, and global banking and communications. That reality does not necessarily correspond to the imagined city of urban planning, literature, photography, film, museums, or globalized politics.



Carlos Garaicoa, *Nuevas arquitecturas, o una rara insistencia para entender la Noche*, 2000. Installation. Reproduced with permission from the Archivo Fotográfico Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid.

City/Art: The Urban Scene

A walk through the city may evoke more positive, uplifting, or inspiring feelings than do despairing representations of contemporary urban life that one might find in an art gallery or a sociological study of urban violence. Of course, the comparison might just as easily work the other way to underscore the difference between some modernist visions of orderly, clean, productive cities and the gritty realities of life on the streets. But then again, we apprehend the all-too-real signs of the hyper-urban only through images. Our hurried passage through the streets gives us only snapshot views, partial vistas, representative objects, slogans, and billboards. Perhaps our perception of the incommensurability between the real and the imagined city depends less on the distinction between the material and the abstract, and more on a difference of scale. That is, our bodies inhabit the city through small-scale, direct forms of contact while our minds comprehend the city as a network of large-scale economies. Whether we associate them primarily

with the smells wafting from street vendor's food carts, with multi-ethnic metro passengers, with super highways, or with the invisible electronic monetary transactions they support, big cities in Latin America present themselves on numerous scales all at once. Through images we perceive simultaneously on various levels, we gain fragmentary awareness of how and why the urban scene in Latin America manifests large-scale social and economic change in local, visible, and profound ways.

The urban scene in Latin America offers us a privileged view of the social effects and projections of colonialism, postcolonialism, modernization, industrialization, migration, deconstruction, and globalization. In this context, the art of urban cultural studies can be found in its attempt to register multiple scales of urban reality simultaneously, where "art" is understood as the intersection of material expression, ideas, and aesthetics. The scholar, traveler, or resident moves in a single moment and from a single perspective into different levels and layers of the connections that destabilize the difference between the real city and the imagined city. That movement allows us to follow their interrelationship, producing and responding to multiple urban imaginaries at once.

In this book, essays by anthropologists, an architect, a philosopher, literary critics, and cultural critics are based on the notion that Latin America's major cities render particularly problematic the distinction between the real city and the imagined city. They argue that urban arts shape the imagined space of Latin American cities by also structuring real, lived urban space. By placing creative activity at the center of an examination of the lived city, this book explores a variety of practices that manage, reflect, and continually (re)construct the urban scene in Latin America. It sheds new interdisciplinary light on major sites as different in size and character as Mexico City, Brasília, Buenos Aires, Santiago de Chile, Rio de Janeiro, Havana, Miami, Montevideo, and São Paulo. In such contexts, "the arts" necessarily refers to officially sanctioned as well as commercial and popular forms of expression. The term includes creative urban planning as well as both staged and impromptu performances of the ever-evolving survival strategies employed by urban inhabitants. It also comprises critical discourses that attempt to chart and analyze those performances.

The studies gathered into this volume complicate and extend García Canclini's observations regarding the relationship between cities as physical places and cities as events, or fantasies, that "take place" in Latin America. Following Vasconcelos's advice, the present volume assembles studies by a

group of particularly sensitive, attuned, “telepathic” writers, activists, and scholars who dare to *entrar en las ciudades latinoamericanas* in a variety of ways. All of the essays resonate with Armando Silva’s project of assessing Latin American urban space through inhabitants’ aesthetic experience and inventions:

If São Paulo is as grand and extensive as it is flat, if Bogotá is flat but also surrounded by hills, if Valparaíso runs high to low . . . it is because all cities yield to spatial representation. But we also say that São Paulo and Bogotá are gray even if Rio is yellow or Valparaíso is blue; or that we can find feminine streets in Bogotá . . . and dangerous streets or certain places we visit only during the day or only at night; saying that is no less important than identifying the geometric shapes of that which is flat, enclosed, mountainous, or high and low. They are definitions born of their use. Some collective representations come from geometry, but others are born of the built environment or even of the chromatic world of urban color. (Silva 1993, 100)

This collection focuses on the essence of Latin American cities as the intersection of their physicality and their fictionality, where fictionality is understood quite broadly as representation-in-time. This representation is produced by all social sectors and in diverse forms: history, fantasy, association, description, performance, building, resistance, and creative response.

The title *City/Art* cites the São Paulo urban intervention group, *Arte/Cidade*. Nelson Brissac Peixoto, one of the contributors to this volume, curates the group’s “interventions” in the megacity. Based on extensive research on the planning, design, and evolution of specific areas in the city, these projects invade office buildings, de-industrialized sites, and the vacant areas between highways and viaducts to install collectively produced works of public art. In *Windowless City* (1994) they occupied an abandoned slaughterhouse to emphasize the multilayered uses and meanings of urban space. *The City and its Networks* (1994) installed a variety of elevators, lighting arrangements, periscopes, and telescopes in a group of downtown buildings to explore the disorientation of scale and perspective in the contemporary megacity. They have also stacked full-size, painted train cars on one another in an abandoned steelworks zone to symbolize the precariousness of postindustrial economies. They have built temporary, communal housing for the homeless in supposedly “dead space” under a city viaduct. The idea is to model “strategic alternatives for the city’s global restructuring, for decen-

tralized urban politics” in locations that make highly visible “the structural complexity and socio-spatial dynamics that characterize the megalopolis.” The group’s guiding principle is that public art has the power to help people design “the landscape of global urban reorganization.”¹⁵

In keeping with that project, this essay collection confronts the difficulty of accounting for the myriad ways in which Latin American cities exceed the category of the socially constructed object to be represented. These cities not only inspire, facilitate, and house creative practices; they also *are* the art produced by an anonymous collective. Thinking of them this way allows for thinking in multiple frames at one time, the kind of attentiveness that Vasconcelos calls “an instantaneous sensibility.” As with *Arte/Cidade’s* projects, attending to the city as art should be understood as entering into alliance with the kind of urban studies that seeks to protect, preserve, develop, and reform real cities.

The book’s subtitle, “The Urban Scene in Latin America,” attempts to conjure a number of contradictions that its individual essays address. A scene provides a setting; it gives place to an event or an object so that it can be examined (for example, the “scene of a crime”). A scene can also be captured or framed through painting or photography, both art forms that interpret complex experience by carefully defining a point of view. As opposed to that notion of a “still scene,” a dramatic scene is enacted; it cannot be considered static. A scene can be an exaggerated expression of feeling (as in “don’t make a scene”). A scene can be a certain social or marketing network (the “dating scene,” the “international banking scene”). In all of these senses, a scene is both that which presents itself to us (the real) and that which is constructed to express and elicit certain responses (art).

This collection necessarily draws from a range of disciplines. The essays explore how urban design, graffiti, film, literature, architecture, performance art, museums, tourist advertising, monuments, shopping centers, and music function in tandem with nationalist rhetoric, historical discourse, and cultural studies to produce and define the Latin American cities that are then marketed, critiqued, and consumed in the international arena. The authors engage intellectual history, literary theory, art history, performance studies, marketing, and the study of culture industries. In order to provide a map through this multidisciplinary terrain, with its many divergent and convergent intellectual paths, the collection is divided into three parts: “Urban Designs,” “Street Signs,” and “Traffic.” This division invites readers to journey from the abstract cities we imagine, to the material cities

we inhabit and mark, and finally to the volatile cities through and between which we move as social actors and consumers. The thesis of each essay, however, leads us to the realization that this map could never be exhaustive or even accurate; it is merely useful as a way to enter the city. The three categories are, in fact, blended together in every effective form of urban art or urban analysis.

Part 1, “Urban Designs,” contains three essays that focus on the discourses of urban planning and management and how they differ from residents’ representations and experiences of the city. *Design* refers to plans, ideals, and illusions. It also refers to the plots into which scholars, writers, artists, and politicians have inserted certain cities. This double meaning of *designs* highlights a variety of processes that interact with one another to produce urban imaginaries. First, the laying out of urban forms on maps and grids represents a two-dimensional, idealized construction of what will inevitably become an unwieldy, unpredictable space of human commerce. Next, the descriptions of the city proffered by politicians, urban planners, and public intellectuals digest and manipulate “original” ideal city plans, adapting them to contingent realities of how urban spaces must be controlled, divided, shifted, or allocated. Attempts to represent the city, whether through the ideological projections of modernist urban planners, through the verbal medium of literary narrative, or through interviews with urban travelers, reveal imaginary maps of social relations, the romanticized identities of particular barrios, or memories and projections of what the city means to certain groups of people. The essays in this section all attend to the question of how we conceive of cities. What are our motives? How and why do we choose to see them from certain points of view? Is it possible for a city to see itself?

Néstor García Canclini’s “What is a City?” establishes some major themes of the collection. This essay is adapted from two chapters of García Canclini’s book *Imaginarios urbanos*. It critiques some basic definitions of the city that have been used in urban studies. It then juxtaposes those attempts at fixing the parameters of the object of study to García Canclini’s own research into how residents of Mexico City think of the metropolis. Employing group interviews of people whose work entails travel through the city, he and his team of researchers acknowledge the impossibility of producing comprehensive maps of it. Rather, they attempt to enter “the essence of the city” (to again borrow Vasconcelos’s phrase) through the eyes and experiences of those who live there. This method of analysis em-

phasizes the importance of travel through urban space as the way to register its complexities. García Canclini's study makes visible the disjunction between the systemic thinking of urban studies scholarship and residents' individualized tactics for problem-solving in their daily confrontations with the city.

While García Canclini's essay concerns primarily how differences of scale and point of view affect people's experience of living in Mexico City on a daily basis, Adrián Gorelik's "Buenos Aires is (Latin) America, Too" traces the history of Buenos Aires's preoccupation with its own status and cultural identity. His essay attends to structural interventions in the city as well as to literary and political descriptions. To illustrate Buenos Aires's ambivalence about being Latin American, Gorelik uses the trope introduced in Bernardo Verbitsky's novel *Villa Miseria también es América* (1957), in which a young *bonairense* is shocked to discover a pocket of poverty in the middle of his city. This moment of discovery establishes the idea of Latin America as a fragmented and even triangulated mirror for the city. It sees itself against European, North American, and South American backdrops. Gorelik follows the evolution of Buenos Aires's relationship to a Latin America understood successively "as an idea, a project, and a destiny." He quotes Claude Lévi-Strauss to point out that the problem with Latin American cities is not the weight of tradition. Rather, it is the weight of the modern. Since the European conquest and the intentional "founding" of the Latin American cities as non-indigenous, urban change has continually imposed new structures over the old. Where it does so superficially, it never transforms or transcends the underlying problems of morphological contradiction and social exclusions or inequalities.

In "The Spirit of Brasília: Modernity as Experiment and Risk," James Holston takes up the case of Brazil's quintessentially modern urban project. Brasília represents the height of modernist urbanism. It was built in a mere three and a half years in the mid twentieth century to serve as the administrative center of Brazil. It stands alone in the center of the Central Plateau of Brazil "like an idea, heroic and romantic, the acropolis of an enormous empty expanse." Holston explores the national desire to project itself as modern through experimentation with a new capital city that would seem to appear out of nowhere, and have no history to limit its future. However, Holston argues that the original plan for Brasília was based on premises that actually led to competing notions of the urban. It was motivated by the idea that urban design can directly restructure social order. Brasília's proponents

assumed that the city's success would then model the future of Brazilian society as a whole. Holston shows that they were right, but in ways they did not foresee. Holston finds that the discrepancy between total design and master planning on the one hand and contingency design and improvisation on the other produces in Brasília the same tensions that the modernist project was meant to overcome for Brazil as a whole. By attempting to preserve and memorialize the original plan for Brasília, he suggests, the nation recognizes it as an important aesthetic and social innovation, but ironically denies it a future. Acknowledging the ways that Brasília has evolved beyond and in spite of the original plan, Holston defends the real "spirit of Brasília." He believes that spirit would celebrate multiple and competing forms of urban innovation, regardless of whether they are planned by designers and architects or produced by the workers who built and serve the city.

The first two essays in part 2, "Street Signs," engage the idea of signs as both physical writing in the city and aesthetic works that stress the visual in urban contexts. The third and fourth essays in this section deal with how cities themselves are represented as signs, or symbols of particular identities. In all cases, signs in the city and cities as signs structure human activity, channeling it in certain directions. People write on the city in material and symbolic ways. The four pieces featured here highlight different types of interventions into urban designs. They explain how art actions, graffiti, writing, and film not only redirect our gaze in the physical city, but also affect the meanings cities can bear beyond their physical limits.

Nelly Richard's "City, Art, Politics" takes political messages to the streets in Santiago de Chile through the performance-art works of Lotty Rosenfeld. From her street paintings in the 1980s to her 2002 video installation called *Moción de orden* (Point of order) (2002), Rosenfeld's work exemplifies a segment of Chilean artistic production actively engaged with critical reflection on the relations among urban landscapes, daily life, and artistic happenings. She responds to Chile's repressive political history by critically and forcefully occupying the interstices between urban order and critical and aesthetic disorder. Richard analyzes Rosenfeld's painting on the pavement of real streets, as well as her performances, installations, and videos to explain how they thwart the assumptions about social order that make daily life in the city seem smooth even when it is predicated on diverse forms of violence. Rosenfeld's work exposes the fissures in the buildings and systems that support the illusion of rational urban function. Richard argues that this disruptive work forges spaces in the apparently seamless wall of dominant

power structures, spaces for the exercise of radical democracy as well as cutting-edge art.

Marcy Schwartz's "The Writing on the Wall: Urban Cultural Studies and the Power of Aesthetics," argues that literal writing and drawing on subway tunnels or city walls can alter common notions of the task of cultural studies. Schwartz offers a comparative reading of Liliana Porter's public mosaics in a New York subway station and Julio Cortázar's short story "Graffiti" (1979) to illustrate her claims. Whereas some strains of cultural studies tend to dismiss certain creative products as representative of elite or bourgeois interests that compete with more progressive, popular, or low forms of cultural expression, Schwartz identifies two works that self-consciously blend high and low discourses. She finds that Cortázar's story dissolves the boundaries between form and content by subtly blending words with visual images. His characters communicate with each other through graffiti in the context of a repressive regime in an unnamed city. Schwartz explains how Porter dissolves those same boundaries by installing into a New York City subway station a tile mosaic that represents the pages of a book. Schwartz examines Porter's and Cortázar's creation of "narrative subways and verbal graffiti" that meld urban space, visual art, and writing. This comparative approach defends the political power of urban aesthetics.

Turning to the question of cities as signs, or ciphers, for particular identities, José Quiroga asks what Miami means to the story of Cubans in the United States. His essay, "Miami Remake," treats two popular texts as examples of the way in which the city has been re-coded in relation to specific, traumatic historical events. Quiroga analyzes Joan Didion's journalistic work *Miami* (1987), and Brian De Palma's film *Scarface* (1983). Both texts appeared after the Mariel boat lift from Havana to Miami in 1980, which profoundly changed the Cuban American community. Quiroga points out how that event created a new Miami. The city no longer symbolized primarily the hope for return to Cuba. It began to take on a different symbolic weight for its residents as well as for the larger United States. Quiroga shows that both Didion and De Palma respond to the emergence of "the foreign within the very structure of the city." They register this change in the city by depicting modes of consumption. They distinguish overtly between urban landscape and internal affect to address the consumption of commodities as well as explanatory narratives. The trope of the "foreign" resonates in Quiroga's observation that only outsiders to Miami (neither Didion nor De Palma lived there) could represent any coherent image of the city in the 1980s. Quiroga

finds that rereading these texts is instructive for understanding the present-day relationship between Miami's exile community and the approaching end of its "defining narrative of exile."

Amy Kaminsky's "The Jew in the City: Buenos Aires in Jewish Fiction" juxtaposes twentieth-century narrative texts to reveal the variety of definitions of Jewishness that the city has been taken to symbolize. This study sheds light on the global nature of the city by examining the links between the European and North American imaginary concerning Buenos Aires, the experience of Jews in the city, and the idea of a transnational Jewish cosmopolitanism. Kaminsky compares Antonio Muñoz Molina's *Carlota Fainberg* (Spain, 1999) and Dominique Bona's *Argentina* (France, 1984) to the work of non-Argentine Jewish novelists like Isaac Bashevis Singer and Judith Katz; she also considers Argentine Jewish as well as non-Jewish writers who represent Jewish Buenos Aires. Kaminsky's essay explores the strength of ethnic networks, the central role of migrations, and the power of multiple marginalities to shape what we can "know" about a city. That multi-layered knowledge produces not only an internationalized, or globalized, Buenos Aires, but also the persistent association of certain diasporic identities with certain cities.

Part 3 of the collection, "Traffic," considers exchange and flow. It underscores the ever-fluid dynamics of dissemination and consumption. Where superhighways link private, gated suburban communities to dispersed commercial centers, they bypass de-industrialized zones of the city, slums and informal settlements. How do culture and hypercapitalism interact to alter the urban landscape in Latin America? What sort of traffic, or connection, is possible among the increasingly isolated and fragmented sectors of Latin America's metropolitan areas?

Commerce in the era of the shopping mall and global marketing alters the space and time of urban intercourse. Hugo Achugar's essay, "On Maps and Malls," analyzes the physical and functional transformation of Montevideo's former Punta Carretas Prison into a downtown mall now called the Punta Carretas Shopping Center. He argues that this transformation of a state-run jail into a market-run site of privileged consumption illustrates Uruguay's transition from the dictatorship of 1973 to 1985 to the era of democratic restoration. Achugar examines the shopping center's architecture and aesthetics, reading it as a contemporary version of both Piranesi's eighteenth-century images of fantastic, multi-storied prisons and Walter

Benjamin's reflections on Paris's nineteenth-century arcades. He describes the mall's unique relationship to the city around it. Then Achugar expands his interpretation to offer a metaphorical reading in which the mall's effects on those who walk through it mirror the socio-political effects of Uruguay's contemporary, market-driven self-image. He connects the Punta Carretas Shopping Center to various moments in Montevideo's and Uruguay's history, in which imposed maps and willful forgetting erase the memory of foundational violence. The mall's design and function impose the temporality of the global market on Montevideo's center. They also deliberately obscure the violent history of the building and the city it occupies.

In "Culture-Based Urban Development in Rio de Janeiro" George Yúdice also addresses the relationship between building projects and urban renewal. He juxtaposes two responses to urban crises in Rio de Janeiro since the 1980s. One, represented by the failed plan to build a Guggenheim museum in the port area of the city, involves "lavish investment in cultural infrastructure." It banks on the assumption that improving the city's external image, attracting capital, tourists, and high-end cultural consumers to depressed zones, correlates directly to urban revitalization. The other response, represented by groups such as Central Unica das Favelas and Grupo Cultural Afro Reggae, supports community-based efforts to deal creatively with "exclusion, marginalization, and lack of opportunities." Yúdice asks whether projects like the Rio Guggenheim plan, insofar as they eschew collaboration with the residents of the urban areas they hope to develop, are capable of confronting urban problems such as violence from narco-traffic, segregation, racism, and classism. He argues that citizen-based initiatives like those of Grupo Cultural Afro Reggae are better able to mobilize local values and culture toward urban development. On multiple levels, they practice the collaboration, consultation, and complex networking necessary to effect real urban change. Based on his study of Rio's cultural movements, Yúdice calls for a public investment in urban creative enterprises that attend just as much to the social dimension as to "the economic dimension of culture." His essay offers hope that the frustrated bid to host a new Guggenheim museum in the port area of Rio de Janeiro may in fact have opened space for dialogue with other creative and far more effective sources of urban revitalization.

The last essay in this section, Nelson Brissac Peixoto's "Latin American Megacities: The New Urban Formlessness," serves as a provocative, open

ending to the collection. It is a lyrical manifesto on the need to invent a new kind of urban cartography. Like Richard Morse, Peixoto argues that twentieth-century notions of urban planning and urban decay render us blind to the productive creativity at work when traditionally marginalized social groups occupy city structures—and, perhaps more importantly, the spaces between those structures—for unpredictable purposes. To reconceptualize the typical tension between authorities (whether economic or governmental) and the people, Peixoto employs terms drawn from the theoretical work of Gilles Deleuze: flow, merger, connection, and flooding. He emphasizes the combinations of physical, economic, global, and local factors that are turning Latin American megacities into radically new zones of social, spatial, and functional fluidity. If unregulated mass migrations, radical class disparity, crumbling infrastructure, deindustrialization, pollution, and faulty or corrupt city planning are the most-often cited causes of Latin American urban decay, Peixoto asks whether we might see those processes with different eyes. Rather than focus on the ineffectiveness, or loss, of traditional, monumental, industrial city centers in the face of popular disregard for their planned uses, what happens when we look to the energized, subversive, corrosive, but also potentially reconstructive practices that are in fact continually reshaping the region's urban spaces and experiences? By posing this question, Peixoto challenges us to review the three sections of the present volume with a fresh perspective. We can no longer see the various cities only as places to be represented. We now see them as living sites and sources of unlimited creative potential.

This collection takes multiple detours through urban space. Its appeal to urban design, street signs, and traffic provides familiar landmarks, but it does not lead to any single destination. It does not reach any particular endpoint, or city center. It does not mean to deal with a representative sample of Latin American cities. It does not reduce the particularity of each city to a set of common characteristics. Nor does it seek to limit the definition of urban creativity to the forms addressed here. Rather, this collection of essays should serve as a model for how to open up specific, concrete urban sites to creative, comparative, analytic inquiry. It enters and then moves through many cities, many images, theories, experiences, and perspectives to elucidate how cities produce the arts that in turn produce cities.

Notes

- 1 Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.
- 2 *La ciudad iberoamericana* (Generalitat Valencia 1992) provides a useful introduction to the founding of a number of important Latin American cities. It includes colonial maps and the physical evolution of the cities in separate essays on Santiago, Buenos Aires, Cuzco, Havana, Montevideo, Salvador da Bahía, Cartagena, Mexico City, Caracas, Santiago de Guatemala, and Quito. See also Mark D. Szuchman's narrative of the historical evolution of Latin American urban issues in *I Saw a City Invincible* (Szuchman 1996). He arranges this history into categories of colonial organization and postindependence challenges: "The Middle Period" (the seventeenth century through the early nineteenth), "The Age of Reform," "The Challenge of the Countryside and Urban Recovery," and "The Leviathan."
- 3 For example, José Luis Romero divides his book into seven chapters: "Latinoamérica en la expansión europea"; "El ciclo de las fundaciones"; "Las ciudades hidalgas de indias"; "Las ciudades criollas"; "Las ciudades patricias"; "Las ciudades burguesas"; and "Las ciudades masificadas" (Romero 1976).
- 4 *The Mega-city in Latin America* (Gilbert 1996) is a useful and representative collection that demonstrates high quality approaches of this sort, while focusing exclusively on the largest cities.
- 5 Jorge E. Hardoy offers a particularly insightful and cogent example of this approach in "Las ciudades de América Latina a partir de 1900" (Hardoy 1997).
- 6 The architect and urban designer Jean-François Lejeune (2003b) traces this history in his elegant essay, "Dreams of Order: Utopia, Cruelty, and Modernity." He divides his narrative into categories that mark the philosophical and political motivations for the development of certain aesthetic principles in Latin American urban design: Roman influence and medieval foundations; the culture of perspective; the first instructions of population; the encounter of pre-Columbian space; a Renaissance and Mexican utopia; the Laws of the Indies; consolidation and syncretism; modernization in Hispanic America and Brazil; the city as landscape; university cities—the last utopia; modernity, globalization, and cruelty.
- 7 "In the Western world the inherited ways of classifying cities tend to fall into taxonomies determined by those who design them (classical and baroque cities), by functions that cities perform (for administration, religion, defense, maritime and internal trade, agrarian-based activities, industry, leisure), by modes of transportation that condition their growth (animal haulage, canals, railways, automobiles, airplanes), by sociological paradigms (orthogenetic-heterogenetic), and so forth. When cities are identified with social actors (José Luis Romero's aristocratic, creole, patrician, bourgeois, and massified cities, for example), the actors in question may be treated more as representing than as creating a social order, or as being exemplars rather than agents of urban change" (Morse 1992, 3).
- 8 This term is sometimes used to refer to "greater metropolitan areas"; in other

contexts it refers to urban zones in which two or more neighboring cities have expanded so much that their outer limits blend into each other.

- 9 “Rather than the classical stereotype of the labor-intensive countryside and the capital-intensive industrial metropolis, the Third World now contains many examples of capital-intensive countrysides and labor-intensive deindustrialized cities. “Overurbanization,” in other words, is driven by the reproduction of poverty, not by the supply of jobs. This is one of the unexpected tracks down which a neoliberal world order is shunting the future” (Davis 2006, 16).
- 10 Jean-François Lejeune (2003b, 32) explains that this pattern of checkerboard city blocks with a central square arose from “a fluctuating synthesis of four main influences: the new foundations in Spain during the medieval Reconquista; the theories of the Renaissance and the Ideal City; the expression of a rational will of Roman-imperial inspiration; and, finally, the encounter with the pre-Columbian cities and civilizations.” He cites Salcedo Salcedo 1996 and Gasparini 1991 as sources for this explanation of the primary form of colonial Latin American urbanization.
- 11 Accessible accounts of this history can be found in Hardoy 1975 and Morse 1971.
- 12 See Trigo 2004 and Ríos 2004 for two essays that provide a useful introduction to the foundational texts and trends of Latin American cultural studies, and the field’s distinction from and relationship with British and U.S. cultural studies.
- 13 “Si la ciudad encarna la forma más lograda del dominio humano sobre la naturaleza, es también el espacio donde el estado de colapso de la modernidad capitalista, bajo el signo de la ausencia de poder para el ciudadano y la multitud, se muestra de modo más claro” (If the city represents the most successful form of human dominion over nature, it is also the clearest site of capitalist modernity’s collapse, all under the sign of citizens’ and the masses’ lack of power) (Muñoz 2003, 76). Jorge E. Hardoy also points out that the current situation in Latin American cities has been reduced to a competition between “two parallel, tightly interconnected cities, but with different visual expressions”: the legal city and the illegal city (Hardoy 1997, 273).
- 14 “El orden debe quedar estatuido antes de que la ciudad exista, para así impedir todo futuro *desorden*, lo que alude a la peculiar virtud de los signos de permanecer inalterables en el tiempo y seguir rigiendo la cambiante vida de las cosas dentro de rígidos encuadres. Es así que se fijaron las operaciones fundadoras que se fueron repitiendo a través de una extensa geografía y un extenso tiempo” (“The notion that statutory *order* must be constituted at the outset to prevent future *disorder* alludes to the peculiar virtue of signs: to remain unalterable despite the passage of time and, at least hypothetically, to constrain changing reality in a changeless rational framework. Operating on these principles, the Iberian empires established rigid procedures for founding new cities and then extended them methodically across vast stretches of time and space” [Rama 1996, 6]) (Rama 1984, 8).
- 15 See Arte/Cidade’s website, <http://www.pucsp.br/artecidade>.