

Editorial Introduction

As we open the fifth volume of *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, we are enthusiastic about the future of the field of Latin American and Latinx visual culture studies and the place of *LALVC* in it as an academically published venue for circulating the most current scholarly topics, approaches, and methodologies driving the field today. With over four years of award-winning contributions, *LALVC* is both a reflection of the state of the field and a driver of scholarly discourse, advancing the field in unexpected ways by publishing groundbreaking content in issue after issue. And this issue is no exception.

In the first scholarly article presented in this volume, Megan Sullivan introduces readers to the modern Peruvian artist Elena Izcue. Izcue was a forerunner in the incorporation of ancient South American Indigenous visual motifs into the lexicon of modern visual expression in early twentieth-century Peru. Working primarily in the field of decorative arts, Izcue was an influential designer, illustrator, graphic artist, and educator both at home and abroad. After a time in Paris on a scholarship to further her formal artistic education, Izcue gained fame for designing a textile line for the Parisian House of Worth. However, before leaving Peru in the late 1920s, Izcue had already dedicated herself to creating decorative arts for the Peruvian urban middle class infused with her interpretations of the ancient Indigenous South American visual and conceptual content. Izcue herself summed up her working philosophy in a pedagogical purpose statement where she stated that teachers must instill in their students “all the pride with which we Peruvians must love the things that are part of our oldest and most admirable artistic heritage.” Sullivan’s essay demonstrates how Izcue used the domestic recuperation of the autochthonous to create a “heritage industry” that became a resource to be used and consumed in the consolidation of an inclusive national community.

Barnaby Nygren also turns his attention to Indigenous Latin American artisans in a scholarly analysis of La Casa del que Mató al Animal, constructed in mid-sixteenth-century Puebla, Mexico. Colonial-era domestic artisanal production also reflects the reconfiguration of ancient and early modern Indigenous and European visual motifs in the creation of domestic decorative expression. Contextualization of the architectural monument during the period of the Spanish conquest of Mesoamerica sheds light on the far-reaching implications of the Spanish metropolitan New Laws and the Valladolid debate. Nygren’s rereading of the building’s iconographic program demonstrates how the merchant class also engaged visual culture and its public display in the crafting of distinctive identities among Spanish *encomendero* and merchant elites. In this essay, colonial visual culture is once again implicated in the sociopolitical complexities of creating hegemonic power structures in the early conquest period.

In her essay, “Tokio descubre México: políticas culturales en la exposición Mekishiko bijutsu-ten, 1955,” Ana Garduño turns her attention to Cold War Mexico and the transcontinental exchange of visual culture facilitated by the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes (INBA) in collaboration with international organizations. The INBA consolidated as a force for transnational cultural exchange between 1946 and 1960. Garduño investigates the display of monumental Mexican artworks in international venues from Venice (1950) to Paris (1952), focusing her attention on the 1955 exhibition *Mekishiko bijutsu-ten* staged in Tokyo. This exhibition in particular was an opportunity for Mexico to position its cultural production as a unique center of modern art distinct from Paris or New York yet equally powerful in the creation of boundary-pushing modern visual expression. *Mekishiko bijutsu-ten* was a powerful expression of international cultural diplomacy. The INBA and its leadership, from

Fernando Gamboa and Víctor Reyes to Miguel Álvarez Acosta, activated Mexican visual culture, resulting in unprecedented cultural exchange.

Maite Barragán's scholarly contribution to this issue also considers how the exhibition of modern art contributed to the creation of national narratives in Latin America. Barragán homes in on Francisco Oller's ambiguous 1893 painting *El velorio* (*The Wake*), showcased to the public that same year in the Exposición de Puerto Rico fair that glorified the period of Spanish colonial domination over the island. Oller depicts a tableau of peasant material culture and ritual that underscores the continued struggle to advance the local peasantry, while emphasizing a narrative of national progress grounded in innovation and improvement. With an underlying subtext supporting social transformation and reform, Oller's painting remains a national symbol in the island territory where contemporary Puerto Ricans identify with the *jibaros* as marginalized subjects of the United States of America.

The *LALVC* editorial team, including a wide-ranging editorial board, dedicated staff, and fastidious editorial leadership, works diligently to publish an engaging array of content in Spanish, English, and Portuguese that spans the field from ancient to contemporary visual culture

created by artists of diverse backgrounds and analyzed by scholars of all ranks. There is more work to be done to incorporate more voices, local approaches, and underrepresented topics in this fruitful era of decolonial scholarship. For example, we are hopeful that more and more contributions will come across our desktops from Indigenous creators and scholars that see *LALVC* as a supportive venue for distributing their work across the field. *LALVC* remains committed to publishing content in Indigenous languages, and we look forward to continued submissions of work that investigates Indigenous cultural production across temporal and geographic contexts. As we look toward the future of *LALVC*, we anticipate future issues of the journal with content reflecting even more diversity, experimentation, activism, collaboration, and innovation. We look forward to receiving your contributions and working together to activate visual culture scholarship in shaping a decolonial vision for our collective future.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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