Editorial Introduction

The neither-here-nor-there-ness of *nepantla* describes a state of being in the middle that has been shaped into a valuable methodological tool. Contemporary scholars of Latin American and Latinx cultural studies work within, around, and through this conceptual framework as they analyze transnational, pansexual, and interdisciplinary material, cultural, visual, and performative artifacts. This particular type of border thinking provokes challenging questions, stoking intellectual debate that is essential to advancing the field. If *nepantla* is “that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another,” to use Gloria Anzaldúa’s words, then it is from this groundwork that we can begin considering the contents of the second issue of *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*.¹

The contemporary Cuban American artist María Magdalena Campos-Pons uses “uncertain terrain” as the foundation for her performance and installation work. In this issue, Adriana Zavala presents a critical assessment of Campos-Pons’s *Alchemy of the Soul, Elixir for the Spirits*, commissioned in 2016 by the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. In this work, Campos-Pons interrogates the relation between sugar and colonialism as she reenvisions the process by which New England rum was distilled from imported Cuban sugar in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The work and the context of its contemporary display undulate among layers of in-between-ness. Through a lens of “colonial unknowing,” Zavala demonstrates how the violence of colonialism and slavery, today posited as historical relics, persisted in shaping relations between the artist, institutional patron, and viewers of the work in the New England museum where it was installed. Zavala uses *Alchemy of the Soul, Elixir for the Spirits* to consider how we can think about intersectional identities in the United States and Latin America today.

The historical and contemporary relationship between Canada and Latin America is itself a place shaped by border thinking, as Alena Robin demonstrates in her history of collecting, “Mapping the Presence of Latin American Art in Canadian Museums and Universities.” For several generations, Canadian museums and universities have collected Latin American visual culture objects, and this essay aims to contribute to a hemispheric and transnational understanding of those interactions. Drawing from extensive primary research into art collections and university curricula, Robin discerns that there is potential for further transnational study and analysis of Latin American visual culture from alternative Canadian perspectives. The supplemental material published online to complement this essay not only delivers a valuable archive of data that we hope will inspire further research, but also demonstrates the possibilities of *LALVC* as a powerful digital humanities platform.

Gigi Otálvaro-Hormillosa explores the crossing and manipulations of shifting boundaries in “Metamorphic and Sensuous Brown Bodies: Queer Latina/x Visual and Performance Cultures in San Francisco Strip Clubs, 1960s–1970s.” This essay documents the history—or “her-storiography,” to use the author’s term—of San Francisco’s strip club industry from the 1960s through the 1990s. Latina performers such as Lola Raquel, Vicki Starr, and Roxanne Lorraine Alegria, as well as other burlesque performers, female impersonators, strippers, and both transgender and cisgender activists, played key roles in shaping the city’s visual and performance culture, which is now in danger of being lost as cultural memory fades. Otálvaro-Hormillosa’s ethnographic research, documentary project, and activist scholarship, which can be described as a Latinx feminist pornographic archive, exists in a place of *nepantla*. This bold scholarship challenges negative perceptions of

marginalized women by curbing the epistemic erasure of memories and landmarks of the San Francisco strip club industry and LGBTQ movement.

The scholar-curators Elena Shtromberg and C. Ondine Chavoya have compiled a special research note for this issue of *LALVC*. “Lessons from Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA” is a critical assessment of the Getty-sponsored Pacific Standard Time exhibition program that stretched across Southern California in fall 2017 and continues to ripple across the globe. Shtromberg and Chavoya, themselves curators of exhibitions presented as part of the initiative, asked seven of their curatorial peers (Roberto Conduru, Tatiana Flores, Andrea Giunta, Colin Gunckel, Bill Kelley Jr., Aleca Le Blanc, and Chon Noriega) to reflect on how they approached the organization of exhibitions in a collaborative curatorial initiative of unprecedented scale. While there are many lessons to be learned from this reflective process, the contributors conclude that the exhibitions of PST: LA/LA demonstrated unequivocally how curatorial work is positioned to reshape the fields of Latin American and Latinx visual culture studies.

For this issue of *LALVC*, we invited Barbara E. Mundy to organize a dialogue focused on colonial Latin American visual culture. Mundy, observing the current state of the field, gathered together conservators working on colonial art from the perspective of material culture. In the absence of archival records, conservation science can provide valuable insights into the nature of the artistic process in historical contexts. The essays demonstrate how conservation science can help reveal aspects of artistic intention and historical creative processes. Ellen J. Pearlstein exposes the complexities of feathered masterworks from the Museo degli Argenti, Florence; Davide Domenici looks at the material agency of Indigenous artists in the Codex Mendoza; Dorothy Mahon, Silvia A. Centeno, and Louisa Smieska analyze Cristóbal de Villalpando’s painting *Adoration of the Magi*; and Joseph Fronek reflects on his work on a Miguel Cabrera *casta* painting. As with every dialogue presented in *LALVC*, this conversation is intended to reflect issues at the forefront of scholarly investigation, promote methodological innovation, and inspire debate across the field. The ways in which scholars and museum professionals confront material, methodological, disciplinary, theoretical, and pedagogical boundaries in this issue of *LALVC* demonstrate how operating from a place of *nepantla* may perhaps point the way forward.

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