

Editorial Introduction

We're halfway through the first year of publishing *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*, and we have been overwhelmed with support from our colleagues and affiliated societies, especially the College Art Association, the Association for Latin American Art, and the US Latinx Art Forum (USLAF). *LALVC* is truly a collective enterprise; without your support and contributions, this journal could not continue to plant roots and grow as it has over the last twelve months. We extend our ongoing gratitude to all who participated in the launch and initial issues of *LALVC* and eagerly anticipate everyone's contributions to future issues.

Issue 3 presents a methodological range of scholarship that energetically pushes the boundaries of the current state of the field, demonstrating that bodies do in fact matter. In "Flora and Fauna Otherwise: Black and Brown Aesthetics of Relation in Firelei Báez and Wangechi Mutu," Leticia Alvarado juxtaposes the work of Kenyan-born Mutu with that of Dominican-born Báez in an interdisciplinary elaboration of theories of brownness—a critical assessment of dominant racial epistemologies emanating from the Global North. Báez and Mutu work with a shared language of flora and fauna imagery designed to reimagine society's organizing principles. Relating the work of Báez and Mutu enables Alvarado to confront the role of visual representation in assessing, criticizing, and reconceptualizing racial ideologies in the contemporary United States.

In "O arquivo corporal: aquarelas e graffitis de Annie Ganzala," Naomi Pueo Wood critically addresses the erotic painting of the Afro-Brazilian lesbian artist Annie Ganzala, whose work has served as a forum for social protest and collective healing among black lesbian women across Brazil and in the African diaspora. Through the lens of black female sensual pleasure, Wood explores how Ganzala's watercolor and graffiti work visualizes corporeal knowledge. In this article published in Portuguese, the decolonial approaches of the artist and art historian come together to reveal

how erotic and spiritual love produces queer utopias where collective healing can begin.

Rachel Afi Quinn also takes representations of the female body as a jumping-off point for contrasting racial discourses across African diasporic contexts—in this case, in the Caribbean and United States. "Spinning the Zoetrope: Visualizing the Mixed-Race Body of Dominican Actress Zoe Saldaña" considers the visualization of racial identity in the contemporary transnational culture of celebrity. Working from the case study of the Dominican American actress Zoe Saldaña, Afi Quinn argues that the configuration of race in the contemporary Dominican Republic is subject to internal and external cultural factors grounded in visual representations of the female body. Saldaña's perceived racial malleability as a mixed-race Latina has become a powerful tool for imagining global racial identities in the twenty-first century. Afi Quinn concludes that film and media representations of Afro-Latina bodies like Saldaña's commodify racial difference for consumption by a primarily white male gaze.

In her editorial comment, Charlene Villaseñor Black deftly hones in on the chimeric presence and absence of "othered" bodies in contemporary academia in the United States. She emphasizes the significance of the Dialogues section in this issue, organized by Ananda Cohen-Aponte and Elena FitzPatrick Sifford. Cohen-Aponte and FitzPatrick Sifford begin with the findings from their recent demographic study on trends in racial representation in the field of Latin American and Latinx visual culture in the US university system. The groundbreaking results raise many important questions, which are then taken up by the other contributors. Kency Cornejo's story reveals how the politics of knowledge inexorably intersect with individual professional trajectories; the inclusion of othered bodies is not sufficient unless it is accompanied by a disciplinary reconfiguration that gets at the heart of how, where, and by whom

knowledge is produced. In a sincere exposition of her personal narrative, Beatriz E. Balanta underscores how identity, class, upbringing, and cultural background inevitably bear on the professional development of art historians and cultural theorists. Reflecting on his own circuitous path to becoming a scholar of colonial Latin American art history, Emmanuel Ortega calls for shifting of both demographics and the ways Latin American history itself is understood. As a Latinx art specialist, Rose Salseda advocates for increased representation of Latinx specialists in US academia, in part through her trailblazing work as a cofounder of USLAF. Lawrence Waldron comments on how diversity in curricula and across faculties are deeply intertwined. And Arlene Dávila reflects on the representation of Latin

American and Latinx professionals in museums and visual arts organizations in the United States.

Emily A. Engel
Independent Scholar

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Emily A. Engel—is an independent scholar based in Southern California who has published on visual culture in early modern South America. She coedited *Manuscript Cultures of Colonial Mexico and Peru: New Questions and Approaches* (Getty Publications, 2015), and is the founding associate editor of *Latin American and Latinx Visual Culture*.