

Introduction

In 1959 a sudden surge of exhibitions devoted to contemporary Latin American art began to unfold in museums across the United States (for a partial list, see the appendix). This 1960s boom, while largely forgotten today, was no small-scale or niche phenomenon tucked away into one corner of the art world. Rather, as this book charts, it manifested in some of the country's most powerful museums, including the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Walker Art Center, and Art Institute of Chicago. National and international art journals as well as regional and national newspapers covered the shows. This press, along with museum publications and archives, reveals that the exhibitions sparked rivalrous discourses among prominent art historians

across the hemisphere—including Mário Pedrosa, John Canaday, Jorge Romero Brest, Marta Traba, Lawrence Alloway, and Martin Friedman—who proposed disparate visions of Latin American art in the sixties. Between 1959 and 1968, major U.S. institutions and publications indeed focused on Latin American art with an intensity that had not been seen since the 1930s-40s, when U.S. galleries, universities, and museums enthusiastically showcased hemispheric figuration, particularly the Mexican muralists. This first phase of cultural exchange began to taper off around 1945, just when the need to court wartime support for the Allies ended.¹

After a fifteen-year lull following World War II, U.S. museums conspicuously revived their engagement with

contemporary Latin American art at the very moment inter-American relations entered one of their most strained, and nearly catastrophic, phases in history.² Between 1958 and 1962, a rapid-fire succession of events sent shock waves through the country, dispelling, in journalist John Gunther's words, "the delusion [that] persisted in the U.S. that, if only because of reasons of geography, Latin America in general will always be on our side."³ During a 1958 goodwill tour in South America, protesters hurled insults and rocks at Vice President Richard Nixon; news of an assassination attempt even surfaced. This episode, splashed across the front pages of newspapers and popular magazines, forced U.S. policy makers, journalists, and the public to acknowledge the escalating opposition to U.S. interference in the region.⁴ Seven months later, Fidel Castro's rebel forces overthrew Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, whose U.S. financial backing was nearly as well known as his repressive, violent measures. Throughout 1959-60, the U.S. press and government anxiously monitored Castro's intensifying connection to the Soviet Union and his gradual establishment of a communist foothold in the Western Hemisphere. In April 1961 the failed Bay of Pigs invasion exposed to the world the newest episode in the United States' long history of violating Latin American nations' sovereignty, including but certainly not limited to the seizure of Mexican land in the nineteenth century, the "banana wars" (1898-1934), and the Guatemalan coup (1954). In 1962 the Cuban Missile Crisis brought the world to the brink of nuclear war. The polarized fears and hopes surrounding Cuba's revolution were never just about Cuba but rather about the fate of the entire hemisphere. Many wondered if, in President John F. Kennedy's words,

"the Castro regime was to provide a lever to pry away the whole southern half of the hemisphere."⁵ Supporters and detractors alike believed the Cuban model and its charismatic leaders capable of sparking a revolutionary wave that could sweep the Americas, possibilities that resurfaced throughout the sixties with the rise of youth, labor, and anti-imperialist movements.

Beginning in 1958—when the U.S. public started to perceive the fractious state of inter-American relations—multiple art museums began to plan major Latin American initiatives; such projects included *The United States Collects Pan American Art* (Art Institute of Chicago, 1959); *Latin America: New Departures* (Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, 1961); and *The Emergent Decade: Latin American Painters and Painting in the 1960's* (Guggenheim Museum, 1965-66). Newspaper and television headlines chronicling inter-American frictions fueled interest in the region and escalated the stakes for these new cultural projections of hemispheric relations. Numerous outlets provided funding for these art-world endeavors, including economically and politically interested parties: corporations seeking favorable conditions for their petroleum or air travel businesses as well as nonprofits such as the Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations, which possessed deep ties to Washington's foreign-policy establishment.⁶ Parallel developments unfolded with the marked growth of Latin American studies (sparked by the 1958 National Defense of Education Act) and the Latin American literary boom (beginning in 1961), academic and publishing phenomena integrally linked to Cold War concerns.⁷

The politically volatile environment clearly sparked the new wave of museum projects, yet the shows' curators built a facade of apolitical distance for their

exhibitions. With telling uniformity, these curators—overwhelmingly white, non-Latino, male, U.S.- or European-born art historians, most of whom specialized in U.S. and European art—evaded direct reference to contemporary inter-American frictions in the texts they wrote and the artworks they selected.⁸ However, this does not mean these shows should be read as apolitical. Such willful dodging of Cold War realities constituted a profoundly political act by making room for the construction of Cold War fantasies of hemispheric harmony. The exhibitions entered into a complicated dialogical relationship with the combustive tensions surrounding them. They could perform a very particular model of political messaging because they appeared cloistered from the conflicts exposed in newsreels. These curators embraced the hermetic potential of the white cube, which might banish political and economic entanglements. As first theorized by Brian O’Doherty in 1975, the white cube—with its spare walls, sealed-off windows, uniform lighting, and strict architectural and behavioral conventions—fostered a domain in which “the outside world must not come in.”⁹ This illusion O’Doherty addressed has been shattered, as contemporary discourse recognizes museums as fraught spaces deeply imbricated in systems fostering asymmetrical power. Yet in the early to mid-1960s, within this space coded apolitical, curators staged alternative and profoundly useful distorted projections of Latin America for U.S. audiences.

Although multiple curators from many different institutions arranged the shows that constituted this second boom, I argue that several marked consistencies pervaded their structural, discursive, and stylistic choices.

If in the 1930s-40s museums tended to host shows devoted to specific nations and individuals, with particular emphasis on Mexico, in the 1960s curators favored a broad Latin American scope with displays dominated by South America, especially Argentina and Brazil. Curators employed, debated, and ultimately further entrenched the idea of “Latin American art,” which “as a *discrete field* of study and collecting . . . [was a] North American concoction” of the 1920s-40s, utilized to coalesce cultural production across a vast, heterogeneous domain.¹⁰ In the sixties the U.S. general public’s limited knowledge of Latin America and the relative hiatus in attention to its art since 1945 rendered the category particularly pliable in the hands of these curators. The construct coursed through institutions and publications, packaged for U.S. consumption, intersecting with political and pedagogical agendas. Yet, in the sixties, artists’ increased international travels and broad stylistic practices undermined strict limits that might have been sought for the category. Today the term “Latin American art” still proliferates in U.S. exhibitions and publications yet is consistently, rightfully debated.¹¹

Where exhibitions of Latin American art in the 1930s and 1940s predominantly featured figurative painting (namely, social realist and surrealist approaches), in the 1960s curators did not emphasize a single style. Instead, U.S. audiences encountered chaotic displays showcasing neofiguration, assemblage, *and* geometric and gestural abstraction. Rather than attempting to study a specific aesthetic phenomenon from the region, the curators focused on picturing Latin America itself, thus making their evasion of political realities all the more pointed. Most of the curators grounded their choices in two key

goals: to reflect the region's aesthetic heterogeneity and to challenge how muralism and folkloricism dominated U.S. perceptions of Latin American art. The shows introduced new viewers to a wide range of exciting work by artists such as Alejandro Otero, Alejandro Obregón, Fernando de Szyszlo, Sarah Grilo, José Fernández-Muro, and Armando Morales.¹² However, the catalogues, wall texts, and exhibition reviews never articulated the artists' specific innovations, which stunted critical discourse and delayed for decades U.S. audiences' understanding of the artists' ideological and aesthetic contributions. Powerful works were exhibited but undertheorized in U.S. museums and publications.

The curators largely selected painting and sculpture that bore at least some visual relationship to the U.S. and Western European styles they and their audiences already knew. Organizers did not incorporate into their shows the new conceptual, performance, neoconcrete, and installation art recognized as core, prominent practices in 1960s Latin America, often predating counterparts in the United States. When curators, emboldened by the formalist methodologies and privileged attitudes prevalent in U.S. circles, then failed to differentiate the Latin American works on view from U.S. and European contemporaries, they left audiences and critics at sea within what they perceived to be a swim of "international styles." Politically, this aesthetic configuration cast Latin America as a region that had abandoned its social realist ties back in the 1940s and now spoke the contemporary aesthetic lingua francas of anticomunist Western alliance. In the 1950s, abstract expressionism had been the favored moniker for U.S.-branded liberty; however, by the 1960s, with the style's heyday

left in the past decade, aesthetic variety became the updated symbol of the individualistic freedom of expression promised by the Western Bloc in contrast to the Soviet Union's mandate of socialist realism. Thus, the exhibitions examined in this book had the potential to assuage U.S. anxieties regarding two conflict situations: Cold War inter-American discord and Latin American art's potential destabilization of U.S.-Eurocentric cultural narratives and conceits. Taken together, the shows staged Latin America as a politically *and* aesthetically nonthreatening ally, a bold distortion that obscured not only the power of the artworks displayed but also the anti-U.S. critiques proliferating in Latin American politics and art.

Accusations of "derivativeness" haunted these exhibitions, a sinister charge still deployed in cultural gatekeeping today, often to undermine women and artists of color.¹³ When facing 1960s exhibitions of Latin American art, numerous U.S.-based critics and even some of the curators themselves viewed the displays' cultivated and decontextualized stylistic kinship as an invitation to declare the artists derivative. For example, in his catalogue for *The United States Collects Pan American Art*, curator Joseph Randall Shapiro claimed that the artists demonstrated an "increasing adherence to European and American styles."¹⁴ In 1964, *New York Times* critic John Canaday dismissed the Argentine artists he saw at the Walker Art Center "as proficient followers of several vogues rather than leaders."¹⁵ Edgar Driscoll wrote of the Guggenheim's *The Emergent Decade*: "the Latin Americans may be Johnnies-come-lately. . . . Certainly there is little to distinguish many of these paintings from works produced today in say, Italy, Spain, Germany or the

good-old U.S.A.”¹⁶ In some cases, reviewers marshaled such rhetoric to perpetuate the belief that New York had become the center of the art world, with its styles the dominant influences. It was indeed a contradictory task to reinforce U.S. artistic exceptionalism and Western Bloc togetherness to communicate Latin America’s alterity and its containment within an anticommunist alliance. Yet the chapters of this book reveal how these conflicting messages manifested across numerous exhibitions and publications.

By and large, the curators organizing these museum exhibitions were not what Mari Carmen Ramírez termed “cultural brokers,” scholars sought for their regionally specific knowledge and authority.¹⁷ As briefly mentioned earlier, nearly every curator of the 1960s boom was a white, male, non-Latino, U.S.- or European-born art historian trained in U.S. and European art. There were two exceptions: the Cuban-born director of the Pan American Union José Gómez Sicre, who curated *South American Art Today* (Dallas Museum of Art, 1959), and the Argentine art historian Jorge Romero Brest who co-curated, with Jan van der Marck, *New Art of Argentina* (Walker Art Center and Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, 1964). While three key U.S.-based curators—Alfred H. Barr Jr., Stanton Catlin, and Terence Grieder—did have substantial prior experience engaging with Latin American art, most of the central figures, including Thomas Messer, Joseph Randall Shapiro, Martin Friedman, Lawrence Alloway, and Jan van der Marck, previously had never or barely worked with Latin American art. So why were they entrusted to organize these shows? These curators were endowed with the authority conveyed by prominent institutional affiliations and broader cultural superiority complexes

that permitted them to discriminate artistic excellence abroad according to supposedly “international” standards that were in fact decidedly narrow and biased. They operated according to the old idea of the curator as arbiter of quality, a problematic value judgment fiercely debated and yet deployed in the 1960s. The white, heteropatriarchal moorings of U.S. curatorial practice and authority—prominently on display in this sixties boom—would not be robustly confronted until the 1990s academic and curatorial turn toward feminist and postcolonial theory.

I argue that U.S. museums’ approach to Latin American art in the 1960s strikingly parallels the contemporaneous Alliance for Progress (1961–ca. 1967). Through this ambitious governmental initiative, Kennedy sought to improve inter-American relations by expanding and intensifying Operación Panamericana, proposed by Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitschek to Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1958.¹⁸ The Alliance for Progress was designed to foster economic development, democracy, and social reform driven by modernization theories as a means to inoculate the region against the “communist virus” and growing antipathy to the United States. While the organizers pitched all these goals in concert with one another, U.S. prioritization of defeating communism and safeguarding its economic investments led the government to habitually employ antidemocratic measures. These measures included the CIA-directed invasions of Guatemala (1954), Cuba (1961), and the Dominican Republic (1965), as well as the counterinsurgent destabilization of democratically elected reformers in Argentina (1962), Brazil (1964), and other nations, which paved the way for U.S.-supported military

dictatorships. The Alliance for Progress suffered not only from its fundamental hypocrisy, which redoubled the very anti-U.S. sentiment it endeavored to dispel, but also from failure to meet its projected goals. The program's guiding belief in the universal applicability of U.S. institutions as models that would inevitably foster economic growth and social reform emboldened many officials to eschew rigorous consideration of regionally specific needs and instead apply ill-fitting policies.

The exhibitions studied in this book mirror the Alliance for Progress in their goals (goodwill and understanding cultivated through financial and cultural support), successes (some U.S.-backed opportunities), and problematic conceits (belief in the universal applicability of U.S. and European models or styles). Government bureaucrats and curators haphazardly applied their own ideas rather than seeking adequate input from Latin American experts. Decisions regarding who received aid and who received exhibition opportunities followed a similar pattern. The Alliance for Progress allowed Cold War interests centering U.S. strategic gains to guide their choices, so only countries willing to conform to U.S. political dictates received benefits. Similarly, curators generally gave visibility to artists whose styles seemed to play by U.S. and European rules and whose works contained no readily recognizable anti-U.S. messaging.

In both governmental and curatorial arenas of authority during the sixties, Latin America became a testing ground to prove the universal viability of competing world orders, with the arts becoming a potential visual barometer of success. As historian Hal Brands phrased it, "Moscow, Havana, and Washington looked to gain influence in Latin America by remaking the region

in their own images."¹⁹ While Brands was speaking about broader political and ideological influence, not art, actual images did have a role to play in these campaigns. U.S. exhibitions could not only pitch arguments about U.S. aesthetic influence in the region but also provide concrete opportunities for Latin American artists that might dissuade potential camaraderie with Cuba or the Soviet Union. With the Alliance for Progress enacted abroad and thus largely invisible to the U.S. public, save governmental and media mention, these exhibitions served as local visible evidence of U.S. efforts to generate a hemispheric coalition. The shows offered viewers dioramas of the hemisphere that the Alliance for Progress sought to secure: they articulated not radical solidarity but rather stabilized unions on terms non-threatening to U.S. Cold War agendas.²⁰ To be clear, I do not argue that these curators were pawns or malicious actors in cahoots with politicians but rather that their shows reflected the intersection of pervasive Cold War ideology with specific art-historical *modi operandi*.

Among many Latin American intellectuals and artists, the Alliance for Progress and these U.S. exhibitions reinforced not the intended Pan-American bonding but rather the widespread perception of the United States as domineering and manipulative. In the 1965 assemblage *Aliança para o Progresso* (Alliance for Progress; fig. 1), Brazilian artist Marcello Nitsche exposed the program's gesture of kinship as one of imprisonment. He shackled the handshake insignia sometimes emblazoned on U.S. goods sent to Latin America as aid, warning that partnership with the United States could have dire consequences for one's liberty. In 1964, the year before Nitsche created this work, the U.S. government helped install a military dictatorship

1. Marcello Nitsche, *Aliança para o Progresso* (Alliance for Progress), 1965. Synthetic enamel on wood with metal chain, 122 x 80 x 10 cm. Coleção Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, Donation AAMAC. Artwork courtesy of the artist. Digital image courtesy of MAC USP Collection.



in Brazil, instituting a violently repressive era and dealing a profound ideological blow to the Alliance's progressive promises. Nitsche's assemblage is a prime example of the kind of directly political artwork excluded from U.S. museum exhibitions during this era. This erasure of 1960s politically engaged Latin American art is glaring, especially in light of its prominence in recent decades.²¹

While the efflorescence of Latin American art surveys offered some artists opportunities to exhibit internationally, the problematic dynamics they encountered in the United States often soured the experience.²² Throughout the 1960s, many artists traveled to the United States for residencies and visiting professorships, funded by Fulbright and Guggenheim grants. New York began to have such a pull that Argentine artist Jorge de la Vega, upon arriving in Paris in 1962, remarked that he felt he had traveled in the wrong direction.²³ Yet, upon reaching the United States, he was troubled by how local art institutions conceptually framed his work. In Argentina, De la Vega was celebrated in "New Generation" shows and by progressive new organizations such as the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella.²⁴ However, U.S. museums routinely reduced his works to regional representatives in more traditional exhibitions. De la Vega and critics alike panned the Guggenheim's Latin American survey, but according to different criteria. De la Vega opined that the museum sacrificed rigor for opulence, while U.S. critics hinged much of their commentary on the "derivative" discourse. The exciting, experimental methodologies arising in galleries and alternative spaces in Buenos Aires and New York threw into high relief the conservative retrenchment of U.S. museums' Latin American exhibitions. To gain visibility in these major

museum shows, artists often had to accept geographic and stylistic labels that did not adequately characterize their work. In several instances, artists declined participation. For example, Chilean artist Enrique Castro-Cid refused to be included in the major exhibition *Magnet: New York—A Selection of Paintings by Latin American Artists Living in New York* (1964) because, as explained in *Art in America*, "he wished to exhibit in New York as an artist and not as a national."²⁵ Artist-theorists Luis Felipe Noé and Luis Camnitzer (who shared a studio in New York in 1964) wrote searing invectives against the art-world dynamics they faced in the United States as they watched their works problematically framed or ignored. Noé confronted the reductive methodologies U.S. cultural workers applied to Latin American art, and Camnitzer exposed how museums claimed international coverage but practiced colonialist exclusionism.

Critical rebuttals like Noé's and Camnitzer's not only surrounded the exhibitions but sometimes even subtly arose within them. Although never as overtly as Nitsche's *Aliança para o Progresso*, some of the artworks on display voiced coded dissent against cultural superiority complexes, abuses of institutional power, and the received rules of "Western Art." They covertly pushed against the ideological frames purporting to hold them. Curators never articulated the presence of these dissident messages when they appeared. I cannot definitively say whether this nonacknowledgment reflects knowing evasion of political and pedagogical disruption, nonrecognition based on a lack of expertise, or broader disinterest in elucidating these artworks' specificities. These disruptive artworks, which I highlight in each chapter, underscore the fact that exhibitions are not

monolithic entities controlled by a single curator but rather complex “contact zones” or “counter-sites” in which competing voices collide.²⁶ Contextualizing artists’ critical voices within the 1960s boom not only offers new insight into their projects but also challenges traditional curation history by highlighting the distortions generated when curators’ ideas are presented unchallenged as the exclusive ideology of the show, with artworks as supporting evidence.

Toward the end of each chapter, I examine at least one artist’s rebuttal to the discourses generated by or around the shows addressed in that chapter. In chapters 1 and 2, Noé and Camnitzer voice their objections from outside of the museum (from a gallery installation and an exhibition review, respectively); in chapter 3, multiple artists critically recast the ideas of newness and nationhood from within the exhibition *New Art of Argentina*; and in chapter 4, Cildo Meireles confronts Cold Warriors in a later manifestation of a project developed within MoMA. Other artists’ rebuttals percolate throughout the chapters. Their perspectives provide crucial counterpoints to narratives driven largely by U.S. cultural workers. Over the past twenty years, scholars of Cold War studies like Odd Arne Westad have argued that the field must dispel the widespread presumption that the Cold War operated principally between two superpowers, with the rest of the world mere puppets whose agency has been largely sublimated by historical accounts.²⁷ This critical assertion informs my approach, particularly the artists’ dissenting messages highlighted in each chapter. However, this book is forthrightly a story of U.S. museums and critics wielding institutional power as they crafted visual imaginaries of a region Cold

Warriors sought to control. This is of course only one of many possible lenses through which we can better understand this vast, complex inter-American network of exchange and representation in the sixties.

Cold War in the White Cube is the first book to survey how U.S. museums exhibited Latin American art in the sixties, charting the rhetoric, aesthetics, and politics that made up this largely forgotten phenomenon.²⁸ While scholars today are abundantly familiar with the booms of the 1930s–40s and since the 1980s, this 1960s cluster of exhibitions has been generally ignored, except in a handful of valuable sources produced over the past fifty years. In a brief yet powerful section of her 1977 book *Contemporary Mexican Painting in a Time of Change*, Shifra Goldman charted key relationships among U.S. Cold War cultural politics, the Mexican School, and exhibitions of Latin American art.²⁹ A decade later Eva Cockcroft, Félix Angel, and Carla Stellweg first historicized the 1960s flow of Latin American art and artists into the United States in their essays for *The Latin American Spirit: Art and Artists in the United States, 1920–1970*.³⁰ In 1996 Ramírez first identified and briefly characterized the “second boom.”³¹ Beverly Adams devoted a portion of her 2000 dissertation on the promotion of Argentine and Brazilian art abroad to exploring Latin American art’s reception in the United States in the sixties, mapping some of the key cultural events and actors discussed in this book.³² I am greatly indebted to Andrea Giunta’s pioneering *Vanguardia, internacionalismo, y política: Arte argentino en los años 60* (2001), which examines artists, curators, and organizations that promoted Argentine art across the globe in the sixties, with particular emphasis on

the fractious politics that operated within and around their core projects; this book helped spark a new wave of scholarship examining Latin American art and the Cold War.³³ Where her book focuses primarily on the export of Argentine art, my project emphasizes the importation initiatives executed by U.S. museums attempting to stage Latin America as a whole, thus expanding on a conversation she established regarding reception and circulation.

Within extant scholarship, the propagation of Pan-Americanism through art in the Cold War-era United States has been largely attributed to two institutions: the Pan American Union (PAU) and the Center for Inter-American Relations (CIAR, now the Americas Society). However, this analysis is narrow for two reasons. First, it supports a flawed caricature of both organizations' visual arts programs of the sixties as purely Cold Warrior outlets. Key publications by scholars such as Gabriela Rangel, José Luis Falconi, and Claire Fox have revealed that these organizations produced conflicting messages; sometimes programming supported hemispheric integration strictly on Washington's terms, while at other times it hosted defiant articulations of Latin American solidarity that excluded or criticized the United States.³⁴ Second, holding the PAU and CIAR exclusively responsible among U.S. arts organizations for 1960s Pan-American messaging ignores the central role played by museums. While the PAU and CIAR fundamentally contributed to this exhibition ecosystem (indeed, both field-specific institutions crop up repeatedly in this book), I focus on powerful U.S. museums with supposedly international scopes in order to explore how they turned their attention to Latin American

art at a tense political moment and broadcasted to wider art-world audiences specific representations of inter-American relations.³⁵

The subject of Latin American art's efflorescence in U.S. museums from 1959 to 1968 offers a fresh vantage point on art's role in the Cold War, a topic that has received uneven treatment and has been largely concentrated in a few specific camps. Some scholarship focuses on confrontations between the directly oppositional United States and Soviet Union. This book, in contrast, examines U.S. engagement with a region considered volatily nonaligned and therefore potentially gettable or losable. One side of this story has been well established since the 1970s; Max Kozloff, Eva Cockcroft, Serge Guilbaut, and others have chronicled how the United States paraded its artistic thoroughbreds (particularly abstract expressionism) across the globe as emblems of the country's postwar economic, political, and cultural power, thus demonstrating its appeal across the Western Bloc and to potential new adherents.³⁶ However, we know comparatively little about the flow of art in the other direction, *into* the United States. To address this gap in the literature, three questions guide this book: How did U.S. museums portray Latin America—a region viewed as a crucial Cold War battleground susceptible to communist influence—on U.S. soil for U.S. audiences? How did those cultural projections intersect with contemporaneous political messaging? And, lastly, how did some artists and artworks within and around these exhibitions assert agency and stake dissenting claims, thus revealing that U.S. curators and critics did not possess a monopoly on the perceptions offered about Latin American art and its relationship to the rest of the world?

This book is not arranged to present a linear, chronological timeline, as this structure would disperse and dilute the core debates, which ricocheted across time, institutions, and publications. Instead, each chapter groups together multiple shows according to the geographic scope they tackled. Chapter 1 explores the Latin American survey, chapter 2 the international biennial, and chapter 3 the nation-based exhibition. The final chapter examines MoMA as an institution with a unique historical standing in the field of Latin American art. My approach for the first three chapters pushes to the forefront a key issue of this text and era: art's relationship to geographic categories. As art, artists, and exhibitions circulated across the globe with unprecedented intensity, debates raged regarding whether cultural production more compellingly fit under macroregional, international, or national umbrellas. Since today we still frequently employ these formats—the Latin American survey, the international biennial, and the nation-based show—it is useful to examine the shapes they took and the critiques they garnered in the 1960s. This synthesizing approach also brings together institutions and individuals traditionally isolated from one another. This book puts major museums into dynamic juxtaposition for the first time, unearthing phenomena previously ignored within their siloed historiographies. Specific artists and styles of the sixties (now typically studied separately) sat side by side, in fact often chaotically intermixed, on the walls examined in this book, and the ramifications of their cohabitation are explored. Through checklists and installation photographs archived by the museums, we can trace precisely which paintings and sculptures circulated during this period

and how they operated as compelling travelers that accumulated meaning as they departed the studio to inhabit new contexts. Ultimately, this book approaches these exhibitions as complex sites of dialogue and discord, institutional power and individual will.

Chapter 1 analyzes the most popular exhibition format of the 1960s boom: the Latin American survey. The category “Latin American art” became at once entrenched in museums, debated by key artists and critics, and entangled in volatile inter-American relations through exhibitions such as *The United States Collects Pan American Art*, *Latin America: New Departures*, *The Emergent Decade*, and *Art of Latin America Since Independence*. This last show, organized in 1966 by the Yale University Art Gallery and the University of Texas Art Museum (now the Blanton Museum of Art), provides a salient example of how U.S. exhibitions deradicalized the region's image. Curators excised the original references to “revolution” in favor of U.S.-friendly terms like “independence” and “freedom.” Installation choices reinforced this vision of the hemisphere as a liberated realm that had already cast out its imperial oppressors, thus discounting the United States' contemporary neoimperial maneuvers. In 1966 art historian Marta Traba and artist Noé offered critical rebuttals to this deradicalization phenomenon. I underscore the fact that Traba's and Noé's collisions with the 1960s boom played a significant role in catalyzing their larger theoretical shifts and anti-imperialist perspectives.

Chapter 2 charts how curators framed art from Latin America within the Carnegie and Guggenheim Internationals—the only two international biennials hosted in the sixties in the United States. These Internationals offered U.S. curators particularly powerful opportunities

to stage their own visions of international art—and, importantly, the relative positions of the United States and Latin America therein. Both Internationals sparked contentious debates regarding international style, biennale syndrome, cultural representation, and prizes in the art world. Polarized attitudes regarding art’s increasing internationalization surfaced, as evidenced by two curators’ approaches to the Guggenheim International (in 1964 and 1967). While Lawrence Alloway challenged ingrained conceits like hierarchic ordering and teleological narratives, Edward Fry exhibited almost exclusively art from the United States and Western Europe, declaring that “with few exceptions the English-speaking peoples exert a sculptural hegemony over the rest of the world.”³⁷ Critics’ and artists’ repudiations of the Guggenheim International’s failure to be international contributed to the series’ cancellation and offer compelling examples of institutional critique. Since I developed the first comparative study of the Carnegie and Guggenheim Internationals, I also consider how each series either ameliorated or exacerbated the negative facets of its host institution’s public image, which in part explains why the Guggenheim canceled its International after only six installments, while the Carnegie’s recently celebrated its 120th anniversary. As these diverging historical trajectories make clear, decisions made in the 1960s carry long afterlives and deep-seated implications for the present.

Chapter 3 examines exhibitions devoted to discrete nations, a format that proved less popular than the Latin American and international shows of the 1960s. However, fascinating dynamics surrounded two exhibitions at the Walker Art Center titled *New Art of Brazil* (1962) and *New Art of Argentina* (1964, co-organized with the Instituto

Torcuato Di Tella). In the early sixties—when “the new” had become a key cultural value in the United States, Brazil, and Argentina—we find at play a Cold War contest among artists, curators, and critics regarding who got to define and earn the coveted label “new.” While the titles of the Walker’s exhibitions indicate intention to showcase the new art of Brazil and Argentina, several curators and critics overtly undermined Brazilian and Argentine bids to be declared new. Such acts served to safeguard newness for the United States, thus reinforcing U.S. aspirations to stand alongside or supersede Europe as the gatekeepers of contemporary art. Analysis of *New Art of Brazil* shows how major U.S. museums excluded radical artists such as Lygia Clark only to, a few years later, herald U.S. minimalists as the next big thing due to aesthetics and ideas that very much paralleled Clark’s. The archives also reveal key conceptual clashes between specific U.S., Brazilian, and Argentine art historians. The chapter concludes by examining how several artworks included in *New Art of Argentina* offered progressive reinterpretations of “the new” and “the national,” alternatives to their competitive, territorial weaponization by key curators and critics.

Finally, chapter 4 documents MoMA’s approach to Latin American art in the 1960s, bracketing this institution as a special case for several reasons: its powerhouse status within the field, the politicized bookends of its periodic engagement with Latin America, the prominent Cold Warriors at its helm, and the methodology it employed at the time. In direct contrast to its blockbuster and bulk collecting expeditions of the 1930s and 1940s, MoMA approached this new decade tentatively. MoMA canceled or downsized the major surveys

originally envisioned to shape the “Latin American Program” proposed in 1962. Instead, curators integrated artworks by Latin American artists into displays to expand the geographic, temporal, and ideological scopes of the “international styles” they championed in thematic shows such as *The Art of Assemblage* (1961) and *The Responsive Eye* (1965). Rather than developing new Latin American canons, MoMA employed the art to support new formalist canons of the 1960s. This chapter traces the resonances these methods acquired within an institution whose Cold War maneuvering (particularly through the International Program) has been well documented and yet understood in limited terms, due in part to the exclusion of consideration of Latin American art’s role in its displays and collections.

After 1968, U.S. museums organized fewer exhibitions devoted to Latin American art. The exhibitions of the prior decade had largely proven critical failures, catalyzing rebukes from two factions on which they relied. The shows were attacked throughout the decade by U.S.-based art journalists and, beginning in 1967, by a coalition of Latin American artists living in New York. In the years immediately after 1968, Latin American artists of course continued to participate in U.S. art circuits, but many exhibited in alternative spaces instead of museums and as individuals instead of geographic representations. An efflorescence of critical performance, conceptual, and installation art by many of these artists reflected and contributed to the widespread anti-institutionalism that combusted into the global protests and revolutions of 1968. It is perhaps no

surprise that this context dismantled the 1959–68 boom, a phenomenon that mobilized museological power and was underpinned by U.S.-Eurocentrism, forces only just beginning to be shaken by institutional critique and anti-imperialist discourses. By the late 1960s, Cold War politics had also changed course, as U.S. policy makers and press shifted their primary focus away from Latin America and toward Vietnam; projects like the Alliance for Progress were abandoned as the United States covertly supported the installation of more dictatorships across the Americas. While this shift proffers a tellingly political end to the burgeoning of Latin American exhibitions, there were of course other logistical, pedagogical, and contextual reasons for this bookend, which are discussed in the conclusion.

The 1959–68 boom mapped in this book constitutes an instructive, largely ignored episode in the genealogy of Latin American art in the United States. During this period, major museums across the country staged specific versions of contemporary Latin American art, projections designed by U.S.-based curators for U.S. audiences and Cold War contexts. Armed with the megaphone bestowed to the powerful institutions mounting these shows, cultural workers debated how Latin American art would be visually and conceptually installed for broad U.S. viewership in the sixties. Methodological and conceptual residues from this period still haunt the field today, a legacy that this book aims to historicize by charting the intellectual battles unleashed by the curators, critics, and artists drawn into the exhibitions’ orbits.