
Lessons from Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA

ELENA SHTROMBERG AND C. ONDINE CHAVOYA

ABSTRACT This interview features seven academic curators involved in organizing exhibitions and catalogues associated with the recent Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA initiative, which took place in fall 2017 throughout Southern California. Roberto Conduru, Tatiana Flores, Andrea Giunta, Colin Gunckel, Bill Kelley Jr., Aleca Le Blanc, and Chon Noriega describe their approaches to research and exhibitions on Latin American and Latinx art and recall how they became involved in PST: LA/LA. Several explain how teaching informed the exhibitions they organized and their approaches to the catalogue and related texts. Their responses provide insight into the role of curatorial work in art historical research and in forging new directions in scholarship, drawing attention to the intellectual labor involved in curatorial projects. Curators' scholarly contributions as exhibition catalogue authors and editors exert lasting impacts in the fields of Latin American and Latinx art.

KEY WORDS academic curator, exhibition catalogues, Getty Foundation, Latin American art exhibitions, Latinx art exhibitions, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, PST: LA/LA

RESUMEN Una entrevista con siete conservadores académicos que participaron en la organización de exposiciones y catálogos asociados con la reciente iniciativa Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (PST: LA/LA), que se realizó en el otoño de 2017 a lo largo del sur de California. Los conservadores Roberto Conduru, Tatiana Flores, Andrea Giunta, Colin Gunckel, Bill Kelley Jr., Aleca Le Blanc y Chon Noriega hablan de su aproximación a la investigación y las exposiciones sobre el arte latinoamericano y latinx y de cómo llegaron a participar en PST: LA/LA. Varios conservadores explican cómo el trabajo docente dio forma a las exposiciones que organizaron e influyó en sus aproximaciones al catálogo y los textos relacionados. Las respuestas dan información sobre el papel del trabajo de los conservadores en la investigación de la historia del arte y en la creación de nuevos caminos en materia académica para llamar la atención sobre el trabajo intelectual involucrado en los proyectos llevados a cabo por los conservadores. Las contribuciones académicas que hacen los conservadores en calidad de autores y editores de catálogos de exposiciones permiten anticipar un impacto duradero en los campos del arte latinoamericano y latinx.

PALABRAS CLAVE catálogos de exposiciones, conservador académico, exposiciones de arte latinoamericano, exposiciones de arte latinx, Getty Foundation, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, PST: LA/LA

RESUMO Uma entrevista com sete curadores acadêmicos envolvidos em organizar exposições e catálogos associados à recente iniciativa Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA (PST: LA/LA), que ocorreu no outono de 2017 no sul da Califórnia. Os curadores Roberto Conduru, Tatiana Flores, Andrea Giunta, Colin Gunckel, Bill Kelley Jr., Aleca Le Blanc e Chon Noriega descrevem sua abordagem à pesquisa e a exibições sobre arte latino-americana e latinx e discutem como se envolveram no PST: LA/LA. Diversos curadores explicam como a prática do ensino informou as exposições que organizaram e influenciou suas abordagens ao catálogo e a textos relacionados. As respostas provêm uma visão sobre o papel do trabalho curatorial na pesquisa histórica da arte e no sentido de forjar novos rumos no campo acadêmico, chamando a atenção para o trabalho intelectual envolvido nos projetos curatoriais. As contribuições acadêmicas de curadores como autores e editores de catálogos de exposições sinalizam impactos duradouros para os campos da arte latino-americana e latinx.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE catálogos de exposições, curador acadêmico, exposições de arte latino-americanas, exposições de arte latinx, Getty Foundation, Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, PST: LA/LA

ES AND OC: Elena Shtromberg, co-curator (with Glenn Phillips) of *Video Art in Latin America*, LAXART; and C. Ondine Chavoya, co-curator (with David Evans Frantz) of *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.*, MOCA Los Angeles and ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at

USC Libraries, traveling through 2020 in partnership with Independent Curators International
RC: Roberto Conduru, co-curator (with Patrick Polk, Randal Johnson, and Sabrina Gledhill) of *Axé Bahia: The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis*, Fowler Museum

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- TF: Tatiana Flores, curator of *Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago*, Museum of Latin American Art
- AG: Andrea Giunta, co-curator (with Cecilia Fajardo-Hill) of *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, Hammer Museum
- CG: Colin Gunckel, editor of the catalogue for *LA RAZA*, Autry Museum of the American West (curated by Luis Garza and Amy Scott)
- BK: Bill Kelley Jr., curator of *Talking to Action: Art, Pedagogy, and Activism in the Americas*, Otis College of Art and Design
- AL: Aleca Le Blanc, co-curator (with Andrew Perchuk, Tom Learner, Pia Gottschaller, and Zanna Gilbert) of *Making Art Concrete: Works from Argentina and Brazil in the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection*, Getty Museum
- CN: Chon Noriega, co-curator (with Mari Carmen Ramírez and Pilar Tompkins Rivas) of *Home—So Different, So Appealing*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

By now there has been much press coverage, largely in the form of art criticism, reviews, and promotion, of the many projects comprising the Getty Foundation's Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA, which took place in fall 2017 throughout Southern California. According to the Getty Foundation, there were eighty exhibitions related to Latin American and Latinx art included under the LA/LA banner, and of these, fifty (including several film series and performing arts programs) received grant funding from the foundation.¹ Another 120 art exhibitions were presented by some seventy commercial galleries in connection with the theme.²

Since their launch in Southern California, a number of PST: LA/LA exhibitions have begun to travel to different parts of the United States and some international venues, including several (too few) in Latin America.³ Notably, none of exhibitions focused on Latinx art are traveling to

1. According to data received from the Getty Foundation on May 15, 2018, the monies allocated to PST: LA/LA were: research and planning, \$5.5 million; implementation, more than \$10.7 million; overall, more than \$16.2 million (in press, usually rounded to over \$16 million).

2. Information received from the Getty Foundation, June 1, 2018.

3. In a list of traveling exhibitions published in *ARTnews* in January 2018, none of the exhibitions focused on Latinx art are noted as traveling to Latin America or outside the United States. Maximiliano Durón, "Getty Foundation Releases List of Traveling PST: LA/LA Exhibitions," *ARTnews*, January 24, 2018, <http://www.artnews.com/2018/01/24/getty-foundation-releases-list-traveling-pst-la-la-exhibitions/>.

Latin America (or anywhere outside the United States). Though the scale of the initiative has consistently been lauded, one could also argue that the magnitude of offerings in such a compressed time frame complicated the viewer experience. While there was the euphoria of having so much to choose from in fields that had historically been marked by a scarcity of museum offerings, the three months or less allocated for most of the exhibitions made such an abundance difficult to contend with in practical terms, even for the most dedicated followers. One wonders why, in a city with so many ties to Latinx and Latin American culture, the initiative was so short-lived and more was not invested in assuring its longevity.

In an effort to assess the impact of the initiative, we invited seven academic curators—by which we mean curators whose primary appointments involve teaching at a university or college-level institution—to reflect on their experiences with and contributions to PST: LA/LA. By targeting academic curators, we sought to emphasize how the scholarly contributions of curators as authors and editors of exhibition catalogues signal a longer-lasting impact on the fields of Latin American and Latinx art. Roughly fifty exhibition catalogues were produced as a result of the initiative, some of which have already garnered accolades and awards, and other publications are still in production. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this conversation with the academic curators was initiated by two scholars with faculty teaching appointments who also served as curators for PST: LA/LA.

The number of academic curators involved in PST: LA/LA attests to the emphasis the Getty Foundation placed on research and scholarship, but perhaps also reflects a relative lack of specialists in this field among museum staff of the region, particularly in curatorial and leadership capacities, a point that a number of the respondents included here make in different ways. We must mention that many of the exhibitions discussed below were co-curated, and we in no way wish to diminish the contributions of collaborating curators. Instead we were looking to hone in on how the balance of teaching and curating might influence the scholarship that guided and was generated from the exhibitions, and will continue to do so into the future through the training of students and curriculum development.

Many of the scholars represented here, including the interlocutors, have had ongoing conversations about our experiences as curators, especially in anticipation of and

throughout the PST: LA/LA initiative. A number of these have been staged in public arenas, such as academic conferences and Getty convenings, or in university classrooms and lecture halls.⁴ Often they concentrated on questions of process and methodology as well as various issues and obstacles encountered in the process of proposing, developing, and mounting the research and exhibition projects.⁵ Bill Kelley identified one such issue in the call for proposals and the timeline of the grant process, which he thought privileged curators who were already affiliated with institutions to apply, ignoring more community-related projects. In our conversation with academic curators we chose to focus on an insider look at the challenges and successes of working within the limitations of the PST platform, including some of the obstacles. Confronting obstacles, it seems, is critical to productive change, as Chon Noriega suggests, especially when working within a museum context. We were especially engaged with the question of *how* and *if* this initiative significantly changed how we

4. For instance, at the ASAP/9 Arts of the Present conference held in Oakland in October 2017, Tatiana Flores organized the panel “New Directions in Latin/o American Art: Projects from Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA” with Le Blanc, Chavoya, and Shtromberg. More informally, Jennifer Josten invited Chavoya and Shtromberg to speak to her “Latin America on Display in L.A.: Surveying the Field” seminar devoted to PST: LA/LA in spring 2017 at UCLA on our roles as curators and scholars in the field. In February 2018 there were multiple panels at the annual College Art Association conference in Los Angeles organized by Charlene Villaseñor Black and Elisa Mandell, including “Borders and Breakthroughs: The Afterlife of Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA,” which featured presentations by Noriega and Flores. Kelley also spoke about his PST exhibition *Talking to Action* on a CAA panel dedicated to “Case Studies in Teaching from Exhibitions,” and curators Iurre Alonso and Selene Preciado invited Le Blanc and Chavoya to present on the panel “Reconsidering Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA” by discussing exhibitions they were not directly involved in curating. In March 2018 the Center for Latin American Visual Studies at the University of Texas at Austin invited Giunta and Chavoya to collectively discuss their roles in organizing PST: LA/LA exhibitions.

5. Some of the issues identified during these conversations, such as the exclusion of artists, groups, and regions from the PST: LA/LA platform, owe in part to confusion surrounding the many different departments of the Getty involved in overseeing and managing the large-scale initiative. The Getty Foundation—not be confused with the Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, or the Getty Trust, but which oversees all of these—worked independently in presenting the call for exhibitions and allocating grant monies. An outside committee comprised of scholars was convened to evaluate the proposed projects, with one Getty Research Institute affiliated staff member included in the group. According to Getty Foundation program assistant Selene Preciado, the Getty Foundation worked with everyone who submitted an exhibition proposal to help make the projects more viable for the outside committee. See the “Who We Are” page on the Getty website (<http://www.getty.edu/about/whoware/index.html>) for more information about the structure of the Getty’s different departments and programs.

understand the fields of Latin American and Latinx art as they exist today. As the dust settles, but before we all move on to other projects, now seemed a particularly opportune moment to continue this necessary dialogue and collectively reflect on PST: LA/LA and its afterlife.

In the questionnaire we prepared for the seven scholars who generously agreed to respond to our prompts, we sought to highlight the often intricate and multiple collaborations between individuals and institutions involved in the development of research and production of scholarship that was made manifest in the public form of museum exhibitions.⁶ What can academic curators bring to the curatorial process, and what can curating bring to academic research? The contributors’ responses offer insight into the role of curatorial work in art historical research and in forging new directions in scholarship. If the field of Latin American art “was established as an area of study in the United States through exhibitions and their catalogues,” as Aleca Le Blanc asserts, and a similar argument could be made for Latinx art history (where catalogues likewise “remain a major source of new scholarship,” as Noriega posits), then the question of the role of exhibitions and catalogues is absolutely central. We must continue to ask how curatorial labor is recognized within academic institutions and by our academic colleagues, and how curatorial work and writing for exhibition catalogues is valued alongside other forms of scholarly production. In an academic context it is important to draw attention to the intellectual labor involved in curatorial projects, which is not always transparent or recognized in the museum or in academia. The responses presented here make visible and describe the various mechanisms of the curatorial process that are perhaps not always evident or discernible. Museums, after all, are expert at making labor (among other things) invisible.

ES AND OC: How and when did you get involved with PST: LA/LA and the exhibition(s) you developed?

RC: In 2014 I was invited by the Fowler Museum to consult on an exhibition on Afro-Brazilian art in Bahia. After participating in two workshops (the first in Salvador, the second in Los Angeles), I was invited to be co-curator along with Patrick Polk, Randal Johnson, and Sabrina Gledhill. Later we named the show *Axé Bahia: The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis*.

6. We initially reached out to nine curators, and the seven included here replied to our request.



FIGURE 1. *Talking to Action: Art, Pedagogy, and Activism in the Americas*, installation view at Otis College of Art and Design, 2017, showing Sandra de la Loza and Eduardo Molinari, *Donde se juntan los ríos: Hidromancia archivista y otros fantasmas* (Where Rivers Meet: Archivistic Hidromancy and other Phantasms, 2017), and BijaRi, *Contando con nosotros* (Recounting on Us, 2011).

BK: The PST: LA/LA exhibition I curated was called *Talking to Action: Art, Pedagogy, and Activism in the Americas*, which brought together artists and activists working on issues of community collaboration and decolonial learning (Figure 1). It made sense to address the question of pedagogy up front, given that the proposal was situated at Otis College of Art and Design, and given that I am both a curator and a teacher in Otis’s Graduate Public Practice program.

AL: Unlike many of the other exhibitions, which were developed in response to the Getty Foundation’s call for projects, the material presented in *Making Art Concrete: Works from Argentina and Brazil in the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection* was already the subject of a multiyear international research project. It was jointly supported by the Getty Research Institute, where I was then based as a research specialist, and the Getty Conservation Institute, where my collaborator, Tom Learner,

was the head of science, as well as by the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros. In 2014 we determined that an exhibition should be one of the products of our research, in addition to the private workshops, public conferences, international partnerships, and publications. This sequence—first conceived as an internal research project and then converted into a public exhibition—had a lasting imprint on the exhibition and the publication.

Because of the public attention drawn by PST, as well as the prominence of the collection we were working with, what had started as a modest research project evolved into a much larger and more robust curatorial undertaking. We hosted several international gatherings at the Getty and traveled to other workshops and conferences, primarily in Brazil and Argentina. As the project expanded, so did our team. In the end, we were five co-curators (Andrew Perchuk, Tom Learner, Pia Gottschaller, Zanna Gilbert, and myself). We did not apply for funding from the Getty

Foundation because they cannot support in-house exhibitions due to conflict-of-interest concerns.

TF: I was involved in the launch of PST: LA/LA as an invited speaker in July 2013, where I established contact with the then-curator of the Skirball Cultural Center, Doris Berger, and the then-director of Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Stuart Ashman. Doris approached me to ask about exhibition ideas for the Skirball, and I recommended looking at Anita Brenner and her circle, which is what they eventually decided on.⁷ I was invited to be part of the advisory committee for the exhibition. At MOLAA I was asked to join the advisory committee for their PST show as well, which saw different iterations. The curator who first approached me ended up leaving the museum, so Stuart took over to oversee the PST show on behalf of the museum.

When he contacted me to let me know the Getty had approved the exhibition, it was on an altogether different topic than what I had originally signed on for. But since the exhibition had the Caribbean as the main focus, I was happy to remain involved. Being part of MOLAA's advisory committee was incredibly enriching. We traveled to Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti together. Most of the members of the committee were specialists on Cuban art, but I was always interested in the topic of Caribbean insularity and how the island experience has differed from that of continental Latin America.

In November 2015, I took over the role of curator for MOLAA's PST contribution. Keeping with the theme of the Caribbean, I reconceptualized the show in collaboration with my Rutgers University colleague Michelle A. Stephens, a professor of English, who came on board as an official adviser and coeditor of the exhibition catalogue. At this point the funds for the research portion of the grant were almost all used up, as was the time left to spend them. In January 2016 we submitted a draft of the new proposal to MOLAA and the Getty and finalized it with their feedback the following month. From that moment on, I worked on the exhibition until it opened in September 2017.

AG: Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and I were working since 2010 on an exhibition that was initially for

7. The publication resulting from this show is Karen Cordero, ed., *Another Promised Land: Anita Brenner's Mexico* (Los Angeles: Skirball Cultural Center, 2017).

MOLAA, and to which Cecilia had invited me to participate as a guest curator. When the PST initiative was opened, our project (*Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*) was among the first to be accepted. In this exhibition I had many roles: co-curator, coeditor, author of five essays in the catalogue (one in collaboration with Cecilia), and co-organizer of the inaugural lecture, along with intense installation of the exhibition. I carried out several research trips, interviews, and archival research, and edited the texts of the catalogue contributors, who were closely followed and given very precise guidelines by Cecilia and me.

I worked on three other exhibitions as well, writing essays for the catalogues *The Words of Others: León Ferrari and Rhetoric in Times of War* (REDCAT), *Memories of Underdevelopment: Art and the Decolonial Turn in Latin America, 1965–1980* (Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego), and *Indigenisms*, also for a venue in San Diego, which was ultimately canceled, even though I wrote the essay for the catalogue.⁸

CN: Starting in 2004, I was involved in the Getty's survey project on Los Angeles art that became the basis for the first Pacific Standard Time initiative. The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC), where I am the director—together with the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), the Hammer Museum, and MOCA—served as a planning partner in both PST: Art in L.A. 1945–1980 and PST: LA/LA. For the latter I co-curated *Home—So Different, So Appealing* at LACMA. I also initiated two other exhibitions: *LA RAZA* at the Autry Museum of the American West (Figure 2) and *Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell* at the Vincent Price Art Museum. These two exhibitions developed in relation to collections or holdings at the CSRC. Through the CSRC, I started discussions at each museum, helped identify the curator(s), put together the research advisory committees, and developed the initial proposals for the research phase. In putting together the advisory

8. The publications accompanying the first two of these are Ruth Estévez, Agustín Diez Fischer, and Miguel A. López, eds., *The Words of Others: León Ferrari and Rhetoric in Times of War* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2017); Julieta González, ed., *Memories of Underdevelopment: Art and the Decolonial Turn in Latin America, 1965–1980* (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, 2018). *The Words of Others* traveled to the Pérez Art Museum in Miami. *Memories of Underdevelopment* traveled to the Museo Jumex in Mexico City.



FIGURE 2. *LA RAZA* installation view at the Autry Museum of the American West, 2017. Photo: courtesy the Autry Museum of the American West.

committees it was important to involve a multi-generational group of scholars, but also to broaden the disciplinary range brought to bear on the projects. I worked with the curators and advisory board during the research phase, then from that point onward each museum oversaw the curatorial phase, and the CSRC oversaw the catalogue production.

CG: I became involved with *LA RAZA* in 2013, as the initial proposal was being written. At some point, Chon Noriega and I had had some informal conversations about what kind of exhibitions might be ideal for the next round of PST. As it so happened, the CSRC had just acquired the *La Raza* Newspaper and Magazine Records collection, which includes more than twenty thousand images taken by the publication's photographers. I'd been eager to dive into that collection for my research, so this project was an ideal fit for me. In addition to *LA RAZA*, I was also on the curatorial board of the UCLA Film and Television Archive's project "Recuerdos de un cine en español: Latin American Cinema in Los Angeles, 1930–1960," which was

based in part on the research I'd conducted for my 2015 book *Mexico on Main Street*.⁹ Archive director Jan-Christopher Horak discovered the book in the process of researching potential PST projects, and I was recruited to be on the curatorial team.

ES AND OC: What was the extent of your involvement? For example, did you actively participate in the initial proposals to the Getty Foundation? In the conceptualization of the topic? In research and travel? In conceiving the checklist? The display strategies for the works selected, the in-gallery texts? Marketing and press? Visitor tours of the exhibition? Other public programming?

BK: *Talking to Action* was the second of several parts of my involvement in bringing together community actors and activists to think about relevant issues. The first part was co-organizing the "LA/LA: Place and Practice" conference (May 2 and 4, 2015) with

9. Colin Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street: Transnational Film Culture in Los Angeles before World War II* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2015).

Pilar Tompkins Rivas and Ken Gonzales-Day. That two-day event, held at the San Diego Museum of Art and the Getty Center in Los Angeles, was an attempt to situate Los Angeles within the border region of this larger migratory nexus. We also focused on bringing together artists and other cultural workers and thinkers who were either connected through a community-based practice in the region or directly engaging questions along these lines in their studio practice. Situating Los Angeles in this geographic space was a main concern after I began to realize that *this L.A.* was being indiscriminately separated from *that L.A.* Given how cultural institutions in Los Angeles had never seemed to acknowledge that half the constituency of their host city is Latino, I wanted to make sure we at least put that forward early on in the PST: LA/LA conversation. The conference, it should be noted, was born from a series of community meetings with artists and activists in Los Angeles who were worried about the language and positions being presented by the Getty. Our response was to call for a meeting with the Getty leadership, and to their credit, they accepted our offer to put “LA/LA: Place and Practice” together.

CN: For *Home*, the three curators were extensively involved in all these areas, plus the catalogue. The CSRC oversaw development, curatorial, and catalogue production. Mari Carmen Ramírez and I were involved in significant fund-raising above and beyond the crucial Getty support.

Home developed through my ongoing discussions with Pilar Tompkins Rivas starting in winter 2012. We had worked together—along with Tere Romo—on the four concurrent exhibitions that made up the *L.A. Xicano* project at the Autry, the Fowler, and LACMA from 2008 to 2012. That experience deepened our understanding of the uncharted space between the Chicano arts and mainstream art museums—not just as a matter of art history, but also in terms of how each arena functions internal to itself and what each arena knows about the other. In *L.A. Xicano*, this had extremely practical consequences, which then impacted how the work would be presented, documented, and interpreted. We were successful to a certain extent in bending the institutional culture of the museums so that the labels and wall texts adequately described the contexts out of which the works were produced and first seen. Museums have their established ways of presenting art, and they also

have an established history of not presenting works by Chicano artists. So as we were bringing in Chicano artists who had been active since the 1960s and had never been in these museums, it became apparent that the professional culture and racial exclusion have some interrelationship, and that we needed to address that nexus.

Even in advance of the announcement of the second PST, Pilar and I knew we wanted to push further, posing the question of what’s next in presenting Chicano art in mainstream art museums. Our first thought was to broaden our scope to “Latino,” not as a self-consistent identity category, but as an occasion to start from other premises related to the art itself. We set out considering hundreds of artists, posing various questions, and yet somehow we always ended up defending the category—that is, trying to define Latino *before* we even engaged with and selected the artworks.

So one day, I proposed to Pilar with we each write down the titles of ten artworks that we carry around with us—that we think about, that we return to in our minds or (when possible) in a gallery, and that function as lodestars in our individual journeys as curators. When we shared our lists, we were surprised to see that each artwork had to do with home. When we took that concept back to the artists and artworks we had been considering, we were able to see something new in these works and about the artists. We were on the path to claiming Latinos as a significant example to explore a universal concept. But as we developed the exhibition, a funny thing happened: we kept slipping in Mexican, Cuban, Colombian, and other artists. Then we’d take them out because they were not US Latinos. And they’d slip back in. At that point, we realized that the Latino artworks we were engaging wanted to be in dialogue with similar works in other countries and across decades. Mari Carmen Ramírez was already on our advisory board, and we invited her to join us a co-curator.

CG: Because my exhibition was a collaboration between the UCLA CSRC and the Autry Museum, I worked in a coordinating capacity. Specifically I liaised between the two curators at the Autry, the digitization project at UCLA, and the scholars contributing to the catalogue. My central task was to provide catalogue contributors with access to both the photographic material and the research generated by the curators as the exhibition developed. I also coordinated two convenings of the *LA RAZA* advisory board (composed of researchers, CSRC staff, contributing authors, and the curators), the

central purpose of which was to generate an ongoing conversation among all participants. In these meetings, the authors presented early drafts of their catalogue essays and received feedback from the team. The curators also presented their ideas for the organization and design of the exhibition. In many ways, the entire board was responsible for contributing to the conceptual organization of the show. These meetings were also valuable insofar as the board included individuals with a range of disciplinary expertise and diverse backgrounds, all of whom viewed the photography in distinct ways. These convenings helped to create a dialogue that ensured that the exhibition would speak to a variety of audiences, from those interested in Chicano movement history to those interested in the relationship of this work to histories of photography and art.

As catalogue editor, I worked closely with the curators on image selection and assisted with the checklist. Given that we had more than twenty thousand images from which to choose, this was no minor task. In addition, I worked with the CSRC staff to gather accurate information, as many of the images in the collection arrived with little or no metadata or identifying information (or, as we discovered in some cases, inaccurate information).

TF: The conceptualization of the topic was done in close dialogue with Michelle A. Stephens, who brought her theoretical and literary background to the project. The checklist was conceived by me, but I consulted extensively with Michelle (who gave input on every object on that list) as well as with other informal advisers. The display strategy and exhibition design were completed far ahead of time with the generous support of Samir Bernárdez, an artist from Cuba, who mapped the MOLAA galleries with a 3-D animation program, which virtually allowed me to see how the works would look, and mutually dialogue, in the galleries. I wrote the wall texts, and the director of public relations edited them. Once the show was up, MOLAA participated in the REDCAT PST performance festival with a program that I curated, featuring three artists from the exhibition.

AG: I worked on all these aspects you mention, particularly the conceptualization of the exhibition. The notion of the body politic and the focus on the body as a theme was the idea that Cecilia Fajardo-Hill and I agreed on during the research period at the University of Texas at Austin in 2012. At that

time the exhibition covered the period 1945 to 1985, focused on the transition between modernity and conceptualism, and included the aesthetics of abstraction. It did not yet have a specific theoretical perspective, and the scale was almost that of a biennial or a Documenta. In the set of works that we had selected up to that time, it was clear to me that the body emerged as a new problem. It was approached from a complex set of perspectives that were historically unprecedented.

I understand the notion of “body politic” in several senses—meaning, a political body insofar as these new approaches re-administered the very meaning of the body, but also a political body because in many cases they were artists whose bodies had been politically involved in revolutionary or feminist emancipation struggles, and because they had been the subject of repression. The artists referred to the bodies of women under dictatorship in their work. Let’s not forget that dictatorships resorted to specific torture methodologies—rape, clandestine births, cesarean sections performed without anesthesia, appropriation of children—that ended in death.

All these parameters were fundamental in deciding on the proposal that we presented to the Getty Foundation, the checklist, the curatorial script, the themes that organized the exhibition, the texts, the extended labels, marketing, the inaugural conference, press, tours, and talks by the artists in the galleries. I participated in all the processes of the exhibition from beginning to end, although in some cases at a distance, since I was not in Los Angeles. Cecilia worked closer to the institution. All of this work was much more intense than the demands of a typical exhibition.

AL: The initial research project grew out of art historical questions I had been asking for many years about the sudden appearance of unusual industrial materials in Latin American artworks during the postwar period—particularly in Brazil, but also in Argentina, Venezuela, and Mexico. Since 1995, when I worked for the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, I had handled many of the paintings that we would ultimately study, puzzling over how they had been constructed and how one should hang them on the wall.

Initially I approached Tom Learner, who is a chemist, because his particular area of expertise is modern paints. We quickly determined that there had not been a systematic

study of the materials used in these works of art, either in the United States or Latin America. In 2013 Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, chief curator of the Cisneros collection, offered to lend us works to have physical materials to study, and from there the project was under way. We were able to borrow forty-seven works and have them in Los Angeles for three years.

I was deeply involved in the foundation of the project and the conceptualization of the exhibition. For example, I made the initial selection of works from which we developed our checklist. I was also involved in setting the overriding parameters that drove the installation. I was determined to break from the chronological and national models that govern many shows—and that have been the organizing structure for most of the exhibitions of the Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros—and so the galleries were designed around broader themes or strategies deployed by artists in all three cities, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. We also avoided focusing on the various group formations and dominant narratives that have been so often repeated, for instance about which European artists traveled to Brazil or Argentina, which artists collaborated and fought, et cetera. This history was included, but at a secondary or tertiary level of information, not in the introductory texts. This was very important to me if we were to present these works in a new way. In the end, there were some wonderful pairings among works that might otherwise not have been shown together.

However, because I left the Getty Research Institute for a tenure-track teaching position at University of California at Riverside in July 2014, I did not participate in all of the day-to-day business that is required in planning an exhibition, including writing object labels, scripting the didactic videos, arranging tours, and so on. I did attend weekly curatorial meetings over the course of three years where the team would review and make decisions regarding the issues at hand.

RC: I joined the *Axé Bahia* team as co-curator in December 2014, and helped to conceptualize the show after the initial proposal had been approved by the Getty (Figure 3). I traveled to Bahia and São Paulo with the Fowler Museum team from 2014 to 2016, and in 2016 I went to Los Angeles to discuss the checklist. In a very collaborative way, I worked with the other curators (mainly with Patrick Polk) and the Fowler Museum team to conceive the checklist, edit the catalogue, think through display strategies, write exhibition texts, and discuss the public programs.

ES AND OC: How did you conceptualize, target, or discuss the audience for your show? How did this audience relate to, and/or how was it distinct from, the institution's standard audience?

AG: We imagined an audience involved in a complex sphere that combined feelings, aesthetics, intelligence, and politics. The installation of the exhibition began with the performance of Victoria Santa Cruz, who reaffirmed her black identity with her words, body, and rhythm, and immediately involved the spectator. An empathic relationship was produced that was also found in the work of many artists who approach Indigenous or non-normative sexualities in their works (Anna Bella Geiger in *Brasil Nativo, Brasil Alienígena* [1977], or Paz Errázuriz in the series *La manzana de Adán* [Adam's Apple, 1983] about Santiago's transvestite brothels). The public at the Hammer, as much as that of the Brooklyn Museum, and the Pinacoteca were prepared to see an exhibition like *Radical Women*.

RC: The audience for the show was always a crucial topic in our discussions during the trips to Bahia and São Paulo, and in our meetings, due to the historically different conceptions and approaches to race, gender, and sexuality in the United States versus in Brazil, with its particularities in Bahia. This is something that really affected the checklist.

BK: The audience was drawn from the interest in local community and advocacy issues addressed in the work.

TF: We knew there would be a broader audience—likely based in Los Angeles and well versed in contemporary art—from the one that usually comes to MOLAA. The institution's primary audience is more local to Long Beach and includes a large number of Latino families.

CG: In many ways, the advisory board was a microcosm of our intended audience, as it consisted of individuals variously interested in photography, art history, the history of Los Angeles, Chicano movement history, community-based historical research, et cetera. As such, our conversations were oriented toward achieving a balance between these, since photography speaks in so many ways to different audiences. We knew that we could not arrange the exhibition as a historical timeline of important events or individuals. That kind of organization would mirror more conventional Chicano movement narratives and would speak primarily to an audience invested



FIGURE 3. *Axé Bahia: The Power of Art in an Afro-Brazilian Metropolis*, installation view at the Fowler Museum, 2017, showing Caetano Dias, *Delírios de Catarina* (The Ravings of Catherine, 2017). Photo: Roberto Conduru, courtesy the Fowler Museum at UCLA.

in the topic from that perspective. At the same time, the curators were conscious of over-aestheticizing the photography, of having the show perceived as a primarily art historical endeavor, detaching the images from their contexts of production.

There was also a conscious effort on the part of the advisory board to engage viewers by creating a participatory dimension to the exhibition. We anticipated (or hoped) that it would appeal to younger generations largely unfamiliar with this history. We wanted to avoid just having a bunch of photos hanging on a wall with labels next to them. In terms of allowing audiences to engage with the broader archive, I think *LA RAZA* was successful. There was an interactive digital tool that allowed visitors to peruse images in the collection, which were organized as nodes connected by event or individual. Not only did this provide access to more *La Raza* photography than could reasonably be printed and hung, but it very productively

presented the Chicano movement as an interconnected constellation of actors rather than a linear timeline of notable events and recognizable leaders. The exhibition also served as a way to gather metadata for individual photographs: visitors could fill out cards to identify individuals, locations, or events they recognized in the images. I think this interactive dimension of the show was rather successful, insofar as it represented a creative solution for presenting the depth of the archive *as* a museum exhibition. There were early discussions about having part of the exhibition focus on the production of the original *La Raza* publication, from the darkroom to layout boards, as a way of giving younger viewers an understanding of the pre-digital conditions and technology from which the newspaper emerged. These plans were eventually scrapped, however, given space limitations.

CN: We thought about the audience a lot. Given our focus on a universal concept, we conceived of

the audience in general or comprehensive terms: everyone who comes or would come to a comprehensive art museum. To our mind, that included Latino viewers. So it had less to do with the museum's standard audience per se than it did with an approach that went against the grain of the museum's standard marketing, which differentiates exhibitions by existing categories based on nation, region, period, genre, style, and so on. There was a strong sense that we needed to tell people that the exhibition was about Latino and Latin American art, even though the museum also knew that viewers interested specifically in that art make up a smaller subset of the total museum audience. There was concern that visitors might think the show was about design, architecture, or themselves (the non-Latino viewer), and then be upset to find out otherwise. Whereas we figured anyone and everyone walking into the first gallery would be engaged, would be able to connect the artworks to their own experience of home, and then go from there.

It was important to hash it out with the museum staff. We all had the same goal, but different understandings of how to reach that goal. In the end we negotiated a mixed approach: the marketing inside the museum kept the title we had developed (*Home—So Different, So Appealing*) and the press release materials added a subtitle that flagged the show as being about art of the Americas since the late 1950s.

I think that our curatorial approach proved correct in opening up a space for Latino and Latin American art to speak beyond identity, or to be a point of identification for non-Latinos. The *Home* attendance at LACMA was 132,000, or about twice the audience for comparable shows with a roughly four-month exhibition run. It was also double the attendance for *Phantom Sightings: Art after the Chicano Movement* (2008), the first exhibition organized by CSRC and LACMA. *Home—So Different, So Appealing* also made the *Art Newspaper* list of the most popular exhibitions in the world for 2017. But what was most impressive is that the audience for *Home* was also more diverse (40 percent nonwhite), younger (eight years below the museum average), and heavily comprised of first-time visitors (46 percent) and non-members (80 percent).

ES AND OC: Can you discuss some of the obstacles, if any, you encountered with the host institution for your exhibition? And/or any obstacles with the Getty Foundation?

TF: My relation to MOLAA was strained as a result of staff turnover, and the Getty Foundation was instrumental in helping resolve certain impasses with the museum. Although I felt excluded from the process of the traveling portion of the show, despite having been the person to bring the four hosting institutions on board, I support the museum and wish it great success moving forward.

BK: The central concern for the Getty and their advisors was wanting to know what the work in the exhibition looked like (or would look like). Social practice is process-based work, and this kind of practice requires people and takes time. It also seeks to dialogue and negotiate with its context, up and down the chain of command. This is not typical curatorial work. It requires a different understanding of community and collaboration. Most institutional curators may not be prepared for this.

CG: From my perspective, the structure of the collaboration between the UCLA CSRC and the Autry presented most of the obstacles, especially given the immensity of the archive and the challenges of translating it into an exhibition and catalogue. On the CSRC side, the digitization and accessibility of the collection fell behind due to staffing issues, which meant that catalogue contributors did not initially have access to all twenty thousand images, and we ended up cycling through at least three different digital interfaces. The very basic task of sorting through, selecting, and identifying thousands of photos consumed considerable energy, and meant that other potential avenues of research (digging into related archives, for instance, or oral histories with photographers) fell by the wayside. It was a frustrating and trying experience, but that could not be avoided. The collaborative structure led to miscommunications and assumptions that certain tasks were the purview of "someone else" or the other institution. In retrospect, there could have been a clearer, more explicit division of labor and better communication.

AG: We did not have problems with the Getty Foundation. One observation that is important to make is that the exhibition did not transform the museum collection or the curatorial staff of the museums. This is something that can be noted with respect to the entire museographic landscape of Los Angeles: the city hosted seventy exhibitions of Latin American art, yet there was no change of direction in the collections; no collections were acquired nor did

any regional universities create new jobs in modern or contemporary Latin American art. All that enormous effort did not result in any substantial change, and in that sense it was a great missed opportunity. Yet although PST: LA/LA did not transform the museographic or academic institutions of Los Angeles, it did have an effect in the field of knowledge that reached far beyond the city from which the initiative was launched. In terms of knowledge and production of new research, PST: LA/LA made a powerful mark on the field of Latin American art. The exhibitions will endure as catalogues and as references for future research.

CN: Through the CSRC, I have had a close working relationship with both the Getty and LACMA since 2004. My involvement with LACMA actually goes back to the 1990s. The obstacles are par for the course: these relationships are predicated on a strong commitment to diversify the arts, and that means structural change, not just importing some new content on a regular basis. It's not easy to change institutional culture and the sense of what is "right" in terms of hiring practices, curatorial methodology, exhibition design, marketing and media relations, public programming, and development. Engaging obstacles is critical to such change.

ES AND OC: To what extent did your teaching experience inform how you organized your exhibition and approached the catalogue and other supporting texts such as wall labels and publicity?

TF: My teaching had a deep impact on the exhibition. Rutgers University established a program in critical Caribbean studies about ten years ago, which resulted in the recruitment and hiring of faculty working on Caribbean topics and the founding of the Rutgers Advanced Institute in Critical Caribbean Studies. It is a vibrant community. My colleagues Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Michelle A. Stephens contributed to the catalogue. Another colleague, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, gave helpful feedback on the exhibition proposal. Along with institutions in Miami and New York, I believe that Rutgers is the US university most committed to critical study of the Caribbean. More specific to my teaching, I had worked with several of the artists before, either on exhibitions that became integrated into the curriculum or as invited speakers to campus.

CG: I would say the catalogue was greatly informed by my teaching and vice versa. As someone who has

written about both the press culture and the photography of the Chicano movement, I've struggled to find the most effective ways to frame these for a classroom setting and to engage students (much less to find useful readings to assign). In some ways I consciously aspired to produce a catalogue that I could use to teach this topic, and made sure that the essays collectively engaged intersecting contexts and histories: the Chicano movement, the underground press, black civil rights image production, photographic precedents or affinities, the history of Los Angeles, the broader field of media activism, and more.

The process of producing the catalogue also informed my teaching of the subject. In other words, I have a clearer sense of how to frame and contextualize these issues for students after being immersed in the publication for a few years. At the same time, I think the catalogue aptly demonstrates that there is no single way to research, analyze, or historicize this work, which also resonates with the way I prefer to teach.

AL: Recognizing the fact that Latin American art was established as an area of study in the United States through exhibitions and their catalogues, I gave a great deal of attention and care to the conceptualization and realization of our exhibition catalogues. Because the Cisneros collection has been exhibited so widely in the past two decades, it was very important to offer new perspectives on its works, in the installation as well as the publication. In fact, at early gatherings and symposia to discuss the launch of PST: LA/LA, several people made the point that they did not want to see any more geometric abstraction. (However, Alma Ruiz, former senior curator of Latin American art at MOCA, rightly argued that this perspective was very insular and coming from people who were already deeply embedded in this small field, who in large part lived on the East Coast.) Before *Making Art Concrete*, this collection had not been shown on the West Coast.

I had a strong vision for the book and knew I wanted to include multiple shots of each work of art, not just the compositions on the surface. (It was actually much harder to decide how to convey this research in the galleries.) This was important to me from the start and was based on my personal experience of studying these works, largely in

absentia, for the better part of two decades, combined with the frustration of knowing that the extant reproductions only gave us some superficial information about the frontal composition. One of my primary objectives was to emphasize the physical nature of the works that we were studying. We achieved this by representing each work with a suite of images, recto and verso, as well as close-up details and shots with different lighting conditions (for instance raking light, or UV) to show texture and surface quality. Because we had the works available to us on extended loan, we were able to collaborate with the exceptional team of staff photographers at the Getty Museum, in particular Stacey Rain Strickler, to rephotograph them all from multiple perspectives. This was a huge endeavor in terms of time and resources, and, I think, one of the project's biggest and most lasting contributions. We also broke from the more typical exhibition catalogue model of contracting several essays in favor of publishing two lengthy texts, one that I wrote about the art historical aspects and the other by Pia Gottschaller about the technical discoveries.

RC: All my activities are connected: curating, teaching, writing. An exhibition is a very specific way to present a view on a topic, an opportunity to argue with artworks in connection to texts and other exhibition devices such as videos, photographs, and graphics. *Axé Bahia* was particularly special as it provided the opportunity to pursue new research, to present artworks (one guideline of the Fowler Museum director was to select the most representative artworks and objects), and to develop the framework and arguments of the exhibition in dialogue with so many people: artists, curators, scholars, and the Fowler Museum team.

AG: My work in teaching has a lot to do with my curatorial work. I approach the exhibit as an aesthetic engine that also drives knowledge. With Cecilia we thought of the catalogue almost as a reader for a course. Each work in the exhibition had a clearly written extended wall text and we included a comparative and detailed chronology about each country. We wanted the public to have at their disposal all the knowledge and information they might require right there in the room. We imagined, in this sense, a public eager to see and spend time in the exhibition. Many visitors stayed for many hours, or came more than once. There was a lot of contextual data. People could watch a video, and also read about the video. It was not an ascetic, or

sanitary design. However, we avoided colors on the walls in order to give centrality to the works. It was a complex balance to offer visitors clarity, aesthetic intensity, and knowledge.

CN: I suppose catalogues are like graduate seminars, and wall texts are like undergraduate surveys.

ES AND OC: What do you see as the primary contribution(s) of your catalogue to the field of Latinx and/or Latin American art? How did you conceive of the exhibition catalogue in relation to existing scholarship on the topic?

CN: For Latinx and/or Latin American art, catalogues remain a major source of new scholarship. The *Home* catalogue opens up a different way to approach these abstractions—and they are abstractions, just like “American” is. We were bringing together two related but sometimes conflicting fields: US Latino art and Latin American art. We tried to ignore the usual arguments and instead let the art guide us in seeing the connections based on our topic.

TF: I think that *Relational Undercurrents* challenged the conceptual borders of Latin America, which most of the PST exhibitions seemed to take as a given (by which I mean, Hispanophone and Lusophone countries of the Western Hemisphere) (Figure 4). I offered a reinterpretation of the map of Latin America to include the Caribbean islands and also diaspora regions.

The exhibition catalogue brings together comparative and theoretical essays with single-country thematic essays. The single-country essays refer to islands that are typically considered part of the geography of Latin America: Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. The thematic essays expand on the idea of the archipelagic, which was the framing theme of the show. Archipelagic theory is often invoked in addressing Caribbean culture, especially in literary criticism. There have not been many comprehensive exhibition catalogues on the topic, but notable titles include *Caribbean: Art at the Crossroads of the World* and *Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art*.¹⁰ These volumes are different in their focus but provide nice counterpoints.

10. Deborah Cullen and Elvis Fuentes, eds., *Caribbean: Art at the Crossroads of the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012); Tumelo Mosaka, ed., *Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art* (London: Philip Wilson, 2007).



FIGURE 4. *Relational Undercurrents: Contemporary Art of the Caribbean Archipelago*, installation view at the Museum of Latin American Art, 2018, showing Engel Leonardo, *Antillas* (2013). Photo: Ifi Flores, courtesy KADIST, Paris and San Francisco.

RC: Besides being a unique reference on Afro-Bahian art, the *Axé Bahia* catalogue participates in renovating the historiography of Brazilian art, which in recent decades has been changing but still needs much work. It also considers the African dimensions of what is called Latin American art.

The catalogue had already been conceived when I entered the project, and scholars working in Brazil and the United States with specializations in Afro-Brazilian art and culture had already been invited to contribute essays. As we traveled to Brazil, interviewed artists, saw exhibitions, visited museums, galleries, and private collections, and prepared the checklist, the structure and content of the catalogue changed. The *Axé Bahia* catalogue is certainly a unique reference for Afro-Bahian art from the mid-twentieth century to now because of its comprehensive character, emphasis on specific cultural context, and focus on five generations of artists. Some of the artists presented are not well known even in Brazil—in some cases, even in Bahia. The catalogue offers updated readings of their works, other arts, and Afro-Bahian culture (especially religion and carnival) in connection to the slave trade and enslavement of African people and their

descendants since the Portuguese colonization and after Brazilian independence.

CG: There is surprisingly little scholarship on Latinx photography, whether in the context of social movements or otherwise. In this sense, the catalogue represents perhaps the most extensive effort to historicize and analyze these intertwined phenomena, something that has been studied more extensively (but only recently) relative to the post-war black civil rights movement. What remains most exciting to me about the catalogue—and something largely absent from other scholarship in this general area—is the potential initiation of a conversation between art history and social movement histories. In other words, the catalogue hopefully compels scholars in both fields to think about social movement image production in aesthetic or visual terms, rather than only as historical documentation or photojournalism. I sincerely believe the publication will remain a touchstone in the field for some time to come.

Beyond breaking new ground in terms of subject matter, however, each essay suggests a different approach to the material. Each represents a new avenue of inquiry and research enabled by the availability of this photographic collection. For instance, Maylei Blackwell and Ernesto Chávez wrote essays that use the photographs as a point of departure for thinking in new ways about the movement: Blackwell uses the archive to challenge conceptions of movement participation and leadership that have typically marginalized Chicanas, while Chávez focuses on photographic evidence of multiethnic solidarity and political organization, an element of the movement that has only recently been acknowledged and historicized. In both cases, the discovery of unexpected or intriguing photographs serve as points of departure for new understandings of the movement. Individually, each scholar approaches the archive from the vantage point of their respective discipline or research. Collectively, however, they gesture toward the possibility of a photograph (or an archive thereof) being understood simultaneously as historical document and artistic practice, or for understanding aesthetic practice in political terms.

But the catalogue doesn't succeed by being extensive or definitive; rather, its impact will reside in opening points of departure through which to research and write about Latinx photography moving forward. Furthermore,



FIGURE 5. *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960–1985*, installation view at the Hammer Museum, 2017, showing the “Mapping the Body” theme. Photo: Brian Forrest.

the diverse range of photography reproduced in the catalogue gestures toward all that remains to be discovered in that archive.

BK: I sought to stay true to the artists’ practices throughout the different phases of *Talking to Action*. I worked with several researchers in Latin America and the United States to develop key issues around the exhibition. Those researchers were given a great deal of space to develop and work with artists in the show in a collaborative manner. Those relationships and that labor resulted in the essays you see in the publication.

Even though these practices can be traced back decades both here and there, they rarely, if ever, have been studied in Latin America as “art,” so framing them as “art” took some care, and the researchers I worked with are the people in the continent doing just that. We took a hemispheric approach, by which I mean we weren’t interested in continually reinforcing the North Atlantic channel of theoretical development. There is a language around liberation that emerged from the south and traveled north. This approach to trying to decolonize the language and origin of theory was important for us as researchers in the field. So, a publication that is bilingual and addresses these issues is important. I would say that most PST: LA/LA exhibitions did not carry that as a concern.

AG: *Radical Women* was one of the few exhibitions that included Latin American, Chicana, and Latinx themes, and in that sense it inaugurated a field of research in which there is much to be done (Figure 5). The catalogue is a fundamental contribution. Each essay called for intense research. All

of our colleagues who collaborated on the catalogue took our commitment seriously.

AL: As someone who has migrated back and forth between the museum and the academy throughout my career, it works the other way around for me. My curatorial experience and years of working directly with objects does more to inform my teaching than my teaching informs the curatorial work.

ES AND OC: Would you identify your exhibition as focused mainly on Chicana/Latina art, Latin American art, or Latinx and Latin American art? And was the focus constant, or did it change during the research and implementation stages? If one of the goals of the initiative was to bring Latinx art into dialogue with Latin American art and vice versa, or to think through Latinx art in conjunction with Latin American art, was this successfully achieved?

AL: *Making Art Concrete* was about one of the most canonical and well-studied periods of modern art from Latin America (Figure 6). If I had been involved with PST: LA/LA in a different capacity, as a curator writing a proposal for an exhibition, then I can imagine that I would have organized a thematic show that drew together works from across the traditional Latin American and Latinx divide. This kind of cross-fertilization did not happen in *Making Art Concrete*, and I’m not sure how much it happened in the initiative on a larger scale. That said, I think this cross-fertilization is one of the intellectual products for those of us who had the opportunity to attend many of the exhibitions and are now reading the catalogues. It is one of the major successes of the initiative. Having the entire region saturated with artworks from across these fields meant that even those of us “in” the field learned about new artists, movements, histories, media, collections, and practices. It got many people who are either completely unfamiliar with most of this field, or familiar only with their particular corner of their specialization, to enjoy sustained experiences with works from other parts of the larger field.

CG: Given that *LA RAZA* focused so definitively on the Chicano movement, it contributed almost exclusively to the study of Chicana/Latina art. Esther Gabara’s essay for the catalogue provocatively traces multiple points of affinity between *La Raza* and transnational social movements and

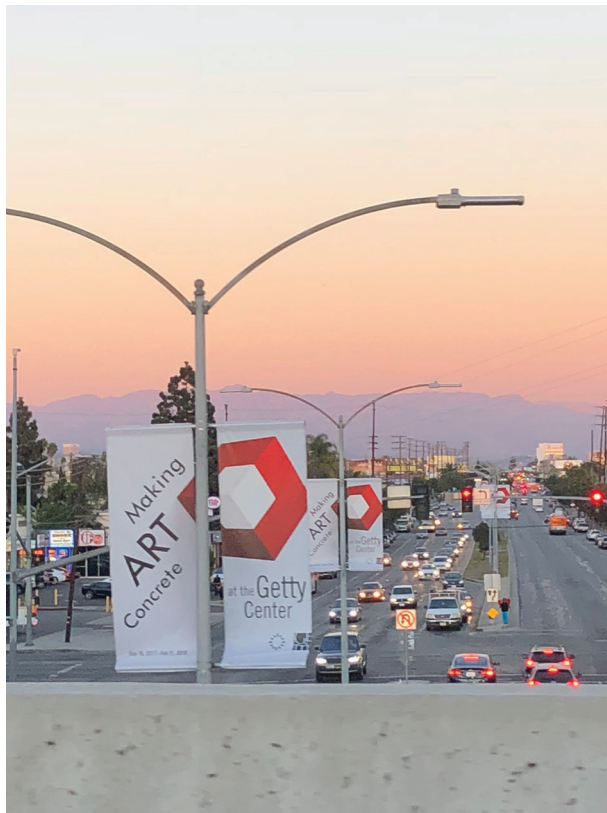


FIGURE 6. *Making Art Concrete: Works from Argentina and Brazil in the Patricia Phelps de Cisneros Collection* banner, Getty Center. Photo: Aleca LeBlanc.

popular culture between the United States and Mexico. Many of the Latinx shows integrated a Latin American dimension, although these relationships were not at the center of those projects. Likewise, I know Latinx artists were integrated into some of the more Latin American-centric exhibitions. While I think these inclusions in both directions were valuable and meaningful, they seemed less organic or somewhat under-theorized and under-historicized. But I do appreciate every attempt to think across these categories to any extent, given that there are few precedents for doing so.

TF: I don't see geographies in the terms you outline above. I argued in the exhibition that Latin America includes all the Caribbean islands and diasporic regions (in the United States and elsewhere). This focus was constant and was the premise of the show. I believe it was successfully achieved in *Relational Undercurrents*. I do not think other exhibitions were so successful. *Radical Women* had a very traditional understanding of

the map of Latin America, even though it included Latina artists. I liked how *Talking to Action* deconstructed the map of Latin America, but I wish the curators had outlined their position a bit more cohesively. Overall I would have liked to see more pushback on the conceptual category of "Latin America" across the PST: LA/LA exhibitions.

AG: We incorporated Chicanx and Latinx themes during the course of the exhibition, after a workshop that we organized to discuss the project. The research on Latinx/Chicanx was carried out by Cecilia and Marcela Guerrero. I focused on other areas, mainly the Southern Cone, although I also researched a lot about Mexico and Colombia.

BK: I put Los Angeles-based artists such as Ultra-red in the same category of methodological development in their practice as the Iconoclastas from Buenos Aires. I was looking for points of solidarity instead of difference. Sandra de la Loza had a long-term collaboration with Eduardo Molinari (also from Buenos Aires), each working in the other's region, sharing similar research tactics and epistemological worldviews. These close collaborations are the foundation of their collective work, so it made sense to position methodologies together across national or ethnic boundaries.

CN: The *Home* exhibition began as a Latino exhibition and became one that included equal parts Latino and Latin American artworks and artists (Figure 7). Pilar was the one person who consistently worked on both sides, whereas for Mari Carmen and myself we were each moving into somewhat new territory, as it were. In other words, we had one curator in each position: Latino, Latin American, and both. The challenge for us was to keep the dialogue a lateral one grounded in the artworks, since the weight of past exhibitions placed Latinos in a derivative position. That meant maintaining sustained and open attention on the work itself, while also putting our very different sensibilities, knowledge bases, and intellectual commitments into the discussion. There's something that three strong-willed, hard-working curators can bring into place that one person simply cannot.

RC: As far as I remember, we did not discuss how to accommodate *Axé Bahia* within these categories. *Axé Bahia* was an opportunity to consider art in its multiple connections and its geopolitics, beyond marketing restrictions.



FIGURE 7. *Home—So Different, So Appealing*, installation view at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 2017, showing Pepón Osorio, *Badge of Honor* (1995). Photo: © Pepón Osorio, © Museum Associates/LACMA.

ES AND OC: What do you see as the principal contributions of PST: LA/LA, specifically with regard to curatorial practice and the resulting scholarship produced? And what would you identify as the major weaknesses of PST: LA/LA?

AG: As I said before, I think that PST: LA/LA was a watershed in research on Latin American art. It took the study of the subject to a new level.

CN: PST is a sui generis platform for exhibitions exploring a common theme. There's nothing else like it in the world. There is the fact of mobilizing the collective strength of arts institutions across Southern California, the cumulative impact of new scholarship hitting the shelves, and the social impact of all these exhibitions taking place in one of the most diverse regions of the country. In terms of curatorial practice, that's an open question. The answer will depend on how Latino and Latin American art factor into the exhibitions by the participating museums in the next five, ten, and twenty years. Will the curatorial pool shift to reflect a longer-term commitment to this work?

Unfortunately, during PST: LA/LA itself, three curators specializing in this area lost their jobs (and two of the related exhibitions never happened), and for a good number of exhibitions, the curators came from outside the institution. I am hopeful, but we have to see what develops, or not.

RC: Among the contributions of PST: LA/LA, I would highlight that the many exhibitions produced an updated overview of art related to Latin America, but one that is not closed or definitive.

BK: PST: LA/LA was an amazing opportunity, and my respect to the Getty for the *garras* to attempt something like this. But at the risk of sounding negative or ungrateful, I would say two things. The first is that it's too early to know if the institutional racism that has permeated the cultural spaces in Los Angeles (this cannot be denied) can be properly teased out until we confront this issue head-on. We, as a community of Latino cultural critics and advocates, have not done that. The second is that the community should have been given enough time to organize itself before PST: LA/LA

launched and proposals for our respective institutions had to be completed. I believe this led to a selfish rush to gather assets and was a lost opportunity for us, as Latino curators and advocates, to collaborate. The Getty grant framed us as institutions, and I'm not assigning blame to the Getty, because we as a community should have been more vocal and asked for what we needed. If we believe that having a Latino curator or artist is somehow different than what we have experienced up to now, then that difference is undoubtedly related to some community experience—and that experience was mostly explored within institutional platforms. I'm not sure we even considered this as an opportunity to truly collaborate and build something outside the institution. And honestly, that says more about our relationship to academia and art institutions in general than it does about the Getty.

TF: It will always be a career highlight for me to have contributed to PST: LA/LA. The initiative was enormously important in catapulting the cultural production of Latin Americans and US Latinos to mainstream visibility. As a specialist in the field, I have always regarded PST through a critical lens that reflects my particular research interests. For example, I think the Getty had some favorite shows they promoted heavily—such as *Radical Women*, *Home*, and *How to Read El Pato Pascual*—whereas other exhibitions that I considered more compelling did not get as much attention.¹¹ I think PST reflected the current cult of the celebrity curator and projected the stereotype that country-based scholars know best.

What most disappointed me about PST: LA/LA was that it did not seem to generate substantive discussions on issues I consider important. I heard a lot of complaints from Chicana groups in Los Angeles maligning the Getty for having overlooked them, which I did not believe was the case. But I do think the Getty Foundation should have made more of an effort to balance out the overall program because there were many omissions, such as Afro-Latinos, Central America, the Andes, Paraguay, Indigenous peoples, early twentieth century. Overall I believe the program should have been much more inclusive than it was.

11. *How to Read El Pato Pascual: Disney's Latin America and Latin America's Disney*, Schindler House, West Hollywood, and Luckman Arts Complex at California State University, Los Angeles.

CG: I was thoroughly impressed by the range of projects and the various interpretations. The fact that PST funded exhibitions of Latinx art, Latin American art, projects on L.A. history, and the places where these intersect was truly impressive. *LA RAZA* and the film series “Recuerdos de un cine en español” undoubtedly broke new ground and pushed multiple fields in productive new directions, and the sheer amount of research left to be done on each topic is both exciting and staggering. Ultimately, PST: LA/LA demonstrated to all of us, regardless of discipline or subject area, how much exciting work is still out there, waiting.

I think the initiative pushed certain institutions outside of their comfort zones (at least temporarily) to think in different ways about their mission and constituency. From the perspective of Latinx art, it funded exhibitions that pushed in very productive ways on conventional approaches to the research and exhibition of Latinx art. Both the quantity and quality of catalogues produced as part of PST: LA/LA will forever mark a shift in the study of Latinx art, both because they collectively consider new or overlooked artists, artworks, media, and objects, and because they represent an exciting diversity of approaches, methods, and conceptualizations relative to the study of Latinx art. At the same time, some institutions and curators remained firmly within their comfort zones, and in particular avoided thinking creatively across the slash in “LA/LA” or across the implicit Latinx/Latin America divide.

Perhaps this is my bias speaking, but I was most excited by the projects that did this effectively. For instance Josh Kun's musical events and catalogue *The Tide Was Always High* and the *How to Read El Pato Pascual* show were both in the spirit of PST: LA/LA as I understood it.¹² Whereas an example of a comfort zone resulting in some missed opportunities was another project I co-curated, the UCLA Film and Television Archive's “Recuerdos de un cine en español: Latin American Cinema in Los Angeles, 1930–1960.” It ended up as a film series, which audiences without access to the undergirding research, without awareness of the various connections between Los Angeles and Latin American cinema, could conceivably have understood as nothing more than a very solid Latin American film retrospective. How can we convey to a film screening audience the multiple layers of cross-border exchange surrounding

12. Josh Kun, ed., *The Tide Was Always High: The Music of Latin America in Los Angeles*, published in conjunction with six musical events (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

the production, distribution, exhibition, and reception of a single film, much less the thirty-year scope of the project?

ES AND OC: As someone who designs college/university-level curricula on topics related to Latinx and Latin American art, how likely are you to teach the work of Latinx and Latin American artists together post-PST: LA/LA, given that existing scholarship is largely divided into two fields? What are some takeaway lessons from PST: LA/LA?

BK: I'm not sure which two fields you are referencing? If you're referring to Latino and Latin American, then we need to begin to address hemispheric connections. I already teach both together. Issues of memory and migratory experience don't have to belong to one or the other. As a takeaway, we need more Latino and Latin American faculty teaching art, especially in and around Los Angeles. L.A. produces several hundred MA and MFA graduates every year, but take a look at who are the tenured faculty. This is urgent, and it's a massive lapse within academia that we failed to address during this PST.

RC: PST: LA/LA reinforced the necessity to decentralize art history, and showed once more how important is to write with different voices. As for teaching, I will try to move beyond this division, transitioning between these and other fields.

AG: Definitely. In my Latin American art course at the University of Buenos Aires I include at least three catalogues: *Radical Women*; *Axis Mundo: Queer Networks in Chicano L.A.*; and *Memories of Underdevelopment*. The press coverage and the large number of catalogues created an updated bibliography.

TF: I would like to see a solid survey show of Latinx artists, as carefully researched and argued as *Axis Mundo* but engaging artists from across the United States in comparative perspective. In terms of curricula, I always teach the work of Latin American and Latinx artists together, but the PST: LA/LA exhibitions give me a lot more to work with. Art history departments are deeply Eurocentric, and in the times of Donald Trump, I think departments should rethink their missions. The problem of inclusion lies less in museums and more at the university level, and I wish that foundations and the College Art Association would recognize the problem and work to remedy it.

CG: I could certainly imagine using some of the PST: LA/LA shows and essays to teach Latinx and Latin

American art together. I think doing so would be particularly enabled by individual essays from various catalogues rather than by a single exhibition per se. For instance, I could imagine teaching a course that included C. Ondine Chavoya's essay on correspondence art networks between L.A. and Latin America from *Axis Mundo*, Esther Gabara's *LA RAZA* essay on the labyrinthine cultural exchanges between L.A. and Mexico, and some of the essays in Josh Kun's edited volume *The Tide Was Always High*. I could also envision a course that would be as much about the individual artists or works as about analyzing various research approaches, methods, and the construction of arguments.

Ultimately, the quality, diversity, and sheer quantity of scholarship produced for PST: LA/LA is a game changer. The availability of scholarship on art forms like photography and mail art means that a single course could include a broader range of cultural production, productively diversifying the categories of Latinx art. PST has already changed how I advise graduate students. I no longer secretly lament that scholars in this field haven't taken up certain challenges, approaches, or subject areas; we are now in the enviable position of having to catch up on all this groundbreaking work and reassess the field accordingly.

AL: In terms of teaching, I will certainly be featuring artists I had not known or considered before in my courses.

From my perspective, there were two major shortcomings of the overarching initiative, both of which pertained to visitor experiences. The first has to be the poor quality and dearth of Spanish translations within the exhibitions. I firmly believe this is something that should have been mandated by the foundation and centralized. Translation work is difficult and expensive, but we live in a city where a huge population is bilingual, and many of the curators and scholars working on these shows are as well, not to mention the large numbers of visitors who came to Los Angeles from across Latin America. That the translations in the exhibitions were inconsistent, in some cases almost nonexistent, and generally of low quality was a huge problem and lost opportunity to embrace and engage new publics.

My other complaint is with the quality of the promotional materials. The campaign was lackluster in concept and confusing in design. The website was impossible to figure out and provided very little help in planning visits, keeping track of events, and opening and closing dates—the most

basic information. The buttons that were made for many of the exhibitions were far too obscure to be effective in any way. I collected at least a dozen and now cannot remember which button came from which show, nor which work of art the description was trying to evoke. This, to me, is a failure. Ironically, the most useful piece of marketing was the old-fashioned paper booklet that was available at the admission desks at many of the museums and other venues.

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