

# Museums

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## MUSEUMS

# Latino and Latin American artists to meet in Pacific Standard Time

### New research leads curators to rip up the rulebook ahead of the Getty's ambitious PST: LA/LA event

by JORI FINKEL | 30 March 2016



Gustavo di Mario's *Carnaval* (negative 2005, print 2015). © Gustavo di Mario, J. Paul Getty Museum

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From the start, the Hammer Museum's survey

of radical Latin American women artists was expected to be the biggest exhibition in the 2017 edition of the Getty Foundation-funded programme Pacific Standard Time. But over the past two years, the show has rather improbably grown even more ambitious.

Curators decided to expand their focus beyond Latin America to include artists of Latin origin based in the US. “We started thinking more about our audience,” says Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, who is co-organising the exhibition. “With LA being a city of immigrants, how could we not account for the history of border artists here?” The Hammer’s chief curator Connie Butler says the show, *Radical Women: Latin American Art, 1960-85*, has become “bigger in scope and budget than anything the Hammer has done”.

As the Getty prepared to announce “implementation” grants to dozens of California museums on 30 March (see below), it became clear that several exhibitions have changed their focus since the first research grants were awarded in 2013. Some fine-tuning is understandable considering the intensive research period and the fact that few of the in-house curators specialise in this edition’s Latin American/Los Angeles theme (PST: LA/LA for short), unlike the topic of Southern California art history from 1940-85 last time around. But even leading experts have reworked their shows following months of travel visiting studios and doing archival research.

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Latino artists. Chon Noriega of UCLA's Chicano Studies Research Center and Pilar Tompkins Rivas of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Lacma), for instance, were originally planning an exhibition on Latino artists rethinking notions of home and the American dream. They wanted to include artists like Raphael Montañez Ortiz, who destroyed family furniture in New York in the 1960s.

But they kept thinking and talking about artists based in Latin America as well, like Antonio Berni, who integrated detritus from the streets of Buenos Aires—often used to construct shacks in shantytowns—into giant paintings.

The curators' decision to mix Latino and Latin American artists goes against the grain academically because "Latino art is the thing that disappears between Latin American art and American art; neither category really wants to take it up," Noriega says. They have enlisted the Latin American expert Mari Carmen Ramírez of the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, already on their advisory board, as a full co-curator. (The show will travel to Houston after PST.)

Another show that has grown in scope, organised by ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries, is Queer Networks in Chicano LA. Originally, the curators were going to focus on Edmundo "Mundo" Meza, a one-time collaborator of the

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“engaged in art, performance, music, fashion and Aids activism,” says the show’s co-curator David Frantz. He now plans to include work by 35 artists and chart the connections between them. “If done well, it will have a bigger impact on the field,” he says.

## Practical challenges

One of the Getty’s own shows has gone the opposite route, adopting a tighter and more manageable focus. What originated as a survey of “constructed photography” throughout Latin America, starting with 19th-century costumed studio portraiture, now focuses only on Argentina.

“When we travelled to Argentina, I was very impressed with the artists we met. It also seemed to me that its photography was terribly underexposed in the US,” says Judith Keller, head of the Getty’s photography department. She saw similarities between 19th-century Argentine and US photographers’ representations of indigenous populations.

But the issue was practical as well as conceptual, she noted, acknowledging the demands of conducting research across countries “and the actual borrowing of all the material” from different countries, some of which have restrictions on loans.

Then of course there are exhibitions in flux because of museum staffing changes. When

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she left the museum. In its place, Molesworth is organizing a solo presentation of work by Anna Maria Maiolino at the Geffen Contemporary. (Strangely, this leaves Ruiz, one of the few Latin American specialists based in LA, without a project for PST.)

Likewise, when Dan Cameron lost his job as chief curator at the Orange County Museum of Art, his show on Latin American kinetic art from the 1960s was dropped from the schedule. He has since arranged for an alternative venue: the Palm Springs Museum of Art.

While their circumstances differ, museum curators say they have benefited from the Getty's long lead time—a multi-stage research and implementation process that provides the opportunity to rethink or recoup. As Butler at the Hammer puts it: “There’s time for curators to respond to what they’re actually seeing on research trips or in the archives. That’s the way it should be... but of course that’s not always the case.”

## Highlights from the Getty's latest grants

The Getty has awarded \$5.5m in research grants for 45 exhibitions (compared with \$3.6m for 23 projects during the first Pacific Standard Time). On 30 March, it announced the next round of funding: \$8.45m in “implementation” grants to help curators realise their ideas.

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***Home: So Different, So Appealing***

Research: \$210,000

Implementation: \$325,000

**ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at  
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***Queer Networks in Chicano LA***

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