

Latin@ Art at the Intersection

Adriana Zavala

This essay explores the alarming underrepresentation of US Latin@ art within the academic discipline of art history.¹ What follows is based on personal experience and reflection, on information and insights gathered from colleagues who currently teach and conduct research on Latin@ art, and on data gathered from other sources. I am an art historian whose training and research focus principally on the modern art of Latin America, but my teaching has come to include US Latin@ art. My goal in undertaking research on this issue and presenting it here is to raise awareness of the fact that today, at least among art historians, interest in US Latin@ art lags alarmingly behind the booming interest in Latin American art. At the same time, Latin@ art is not yet entirely accepted as part of the history of American art either (Ramos 2014, 34). Latin@ art bridges these fields of the discipline, yet it also occupies a liminal position as *both* within American art and related to Latin American art. Within each field it is often assumed to belong to the other. I also suggest that the dismissal of Latin@ art is surely undergirded by race and class biases and by assumptions that it is monolithically concerned with identity politics and/or is lacking in aesthetic and conceptual experimentation.

I define Latin@ art as including artists from any of the Latin American diasporas including Brazil, though I would note that many who identify as Mexican-descent, Chicano, Hispano from New Mexico, or Puerto Rican, for example, do not consider themselves “diasporic” because they are not immigrants or descended from immigrants. My own opinion is that artists who are still active principally in their home countries or whose work is not yet fully immersed in the “US experience,” even if they exhibit and work here, are probably more accurately grouped under the rubric “Latin American art,” itself a geopolitical construct.² I also understand the term *Latin@* as anything but monolithic in terms of culture, race, and class, and

I acknowledge the problematics of the label “Latin@ art.” Is it a meaningful category? Should an artist who identifies as Chican@ or Mexican American, or post-Chican@, be categorized also as Latin@? For some the term raises concerns that artists will be confined to an ethnic ghetto. I would never impose the category on anyone who chooses otherwise. Labels and identities are rarely absolute.

Based on the research I present here, I would contend that unless we embrace the Latin@ category, the extraordinary accomplishments of many artists will continue to be relegated to the margins of both Latin American and American art history. I also want to propose that while scholarly work benefits from an intersectional understanding of identities and from interdisciplinarity, we need to bring greater visibility to Latin@ art within academia and especially within the field of art history. Toward this end, those of us committed to the study and validation of Latin@ art should consider founding an association of art historians committed to the field. Such an association would be affiliated with the College Art Association and with the Latin@ Studies Initiative (in formation within the Latin American Studies Association), the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS), the Puerto Rican Studies Association (PRSA), the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC), and the Inter-University Program for Latino Research, University of Illinois at Chicago (IUPLR).

I want to acknowledge, at the outset, that I am something of a novice in the field of US Latin@ art, and I continue to learn from veteran scholars across disciplines. I am self-taught, and a succinct telling of how I came to this field seems apropos, since I have learned recently how much it echoes the experiences of colleagues in the field.

My Journey to US Latin@ Art

My immersion into Latino studies and Latin@ art has been both transformative and overwhelming. In 2007 I taught my first course on Latin@ art and visual culture at Tufts University, where I am associate professor in the Department of Art and Art History. I was hired in 2001 to teach courses on colonial through contemporary Latin American art with an emphasis on

ADRIANA ZAVALA is an associate professor in the Department of Art and Art History at Tufts University. Her teaching fields include modern and contemporary Latin American and Latino art. She also directs Tufts’s Consortium of Studies in Race, Colonialism, and Diaspora, as well as the university’s Latin@ Studies Program.

modern Mexico, my primary research area. I began integrating Latin@ art in my courses at the request of my students. I currently teach one course dedicated entirely to Latin@ art but have only done so since 2007, and I have directed our Latino studies minor, an interdisciplinary program, since 2010. At Tufts, I find I must qualify Latin@ with “US” routinely because if I don’t, many students and colleagues alike assume the term to be a synonym for or inclusive of Latin America. All of us in our Latino studies program often find ourselves explaining that the term refers to the experience of people of Latin American descent in the United States, and that the interdiscipline is intersectional with American studies and Latin American studies.

In the first two iterations of my course in 2007 and 2008, I called it “The Latin@ Body in Visual Culture.” The focus and conceptual underpinnings were representations of Latin@ bodies in US visual culture and popular media (film, television, and music), along with counterrepresentations and decoloniality in Latin@ visual art and culture. The material was contextualized historically and in terms of contemporary US politicized discourse about Latin@s (immigration reform, demographic shifts, the “Latinization” of the United States, class, race, queerness, etc.). Since 2012 I have taught the course twice and have settled on the title “The Latin@ Presence in Art and Visual Culture.” The theoretical underpinnings remain the same, but the course now focuses more closely on visual art, studied as aesthetic and cultural expression but also in relation to the social forces that shape it and are shaped by it. Why the shift? For at least four reasons: First, I am an art historian. Second, I found an extensive body of literature on Latin@ culture but much less on visual art. Third, my students were more versed in Latin@ culture, since they encounter it nearly every day (in media, music, food, and so on); but depending on where they are from, most have relatively little knowledge of Latin@ visual art, and they are eager to learn. Finally, my course is cross-listed in art history but it was designed primarily with our American and Latino studies programs in mind, and at the encouragement of my colleagues in those programs. While my colleagues in art history are supportive, Latin@ art was simply not on their radar the way it was for my colleagues in American and Latino studies.

Preparing my course syllabus and teaching the course presented a steep learning curve, especially the first three times. As I have since confirmed, most of us, at least in my generation and earlier ones, who do this work have had few direct mentors and have studied Latin@ art principally in a self-directed way. My Latin@ art course is the one I have spent the most time on in my thirteen years at Tufts, building an image inventory and

immersing myself in the histories and cultures of various Latin@ artists, groups, and movements. I have strived along the way to impart to my students a historical grounding and understanding of the experiences of hardship, discrimination, and inequality that Latin@s have experienced in the United States, but also, and above all, an appreciation of their resilience, joy, sophistication, and creative brilliance.

Teaching this course also requires sensitivity to its impact on the Latin@ students in the classroom. The class provides them access to knowledge of their communities' histories, often for the first time, while simultaneously making them and their communities subject to the gaze of the non-Latin@ students in the course. It can be both empowering and a painful experience for them. Meanwhile, the non-Latin@ students, especially the white students, are confronted with critiques of the ongoing structural inequalities in the United States, as well as with the history of US imperialism in the Western hemisphere as a factor in the steady growth of the Latin@ population in the United States. While the course is challenging for my students and for me, it is also one of my favorites. Along the way, I have learned so much from my esteemed colleagues at Tufts and beyond, who are committed to teaching about and sharing the Latin@ experience across disciplines.

The last thing I want to say about my course is that the demographic composition of the enrollment has been quite interesting. At Tufts, the undergraduate population of Latin@ students is approximately 6 percent, but this may include international students (Tufts 2013–14, 86). My course usually enrolls about twenty-five students, and on average the class has been approximately half Latin@ students and students of color and half white. This affirms my belief that Latino studies as an interdisciplinary field is both a mirror and a window. It is a crucial site of affirmation and learning for students of Latin@ descent (a mirror); but just as important, given demographic shifts in the country, it is a means for non-Latin@s to understand the historical, cultural, and political complexity of the Latin@ experience (a window).³

Latin American Art: Tipping the Balance

In 2013 I was invited to speak on the state of Latin American art history within the academy at a workshop associated with the Getty's upcoming initiative *Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA*.⁴ I oriented my comments toward the extraordinary growth of Latin American art as a field over a twenty-year

period (1992–2012). I started with 1992 in part because the quincentennial gave rise to numerous important exhibitions that generated new interest in Latin American art. The research in preparation for my workshop comments was eye-opening.

Simply put, the field of Latin American art has grown rapidly since the mid-1990s and today has a secure place within the discipline of art history. The number of scholarly monographs attests to this, as does the ever-growing number of museum exhibitions dedicated to Latin American art. It is also evident in the number of full-time field specialists in tenure-stream faculty positions in departments of art history at US and Canadian colleges and universities. An important indicator is the growth in the number of doctoral dissertations completed in the last decade and especially the extraordinary number of doctoral dissertations currently “in progress,” as listed on the website of the College Art Association (CAA).⁵ The challenges of the academic job market notwithstanding, this scholarly production heralds future growth of the field of Latin American art history.

In terms of graduate studies in Latin American art (pre-Columbian through modern/contemporary), there are now approximately ninety-five colleges and universities in the US and Canada with field specialists.⁶ A student wishing to pursue graduate study in Latin American art history has forty-nine doctoral programs and thirty master’s-only programs to apply to. In 1993, the year I applied to graduate school, there were approximately ten PhD programs in art history with specialists in the field: six in pre-Columbian or colonial, and four in modern Latin American art.⁷ In addition to these, an additional sixteen colleges have departments of art and/or art history with Latin American field specialists.

The number and quality of recently minted PhDs in Latin American art history in the United States and Canada is astonishing. According to the College Art Association’s online index of doctoral dissertations, in 2002–12 ninety-one doctoral dissertations were reported complete in the “Latin American/Caribbean Art” category (table 1).⁸ It is noteworthy that in 2003 the CAA revised its subject area categories of art history and visual studies to include “Pre-Columbian Art” (which prior to 2003 had been grouped with “Native American,” even if the latter included modern and contemporary topics) and “Latin American/Caribbean Art” (which prior to 2003 had been subsumed under “Pre-1945 North and South American Art” and “Post-1945 World Art”). In the 1990s the category employed in the CAA’s *Art Bulletin* was “Post-1945 North, South and European Art,” and in the 1980s the category was either “Native American, Pre-Columbian

Table 1. Number of Dissertations Completed in Latin American Art History

Dissertation type	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Dissertations reported to CAA in the Latin American/ Caribbean Art category	6	3	4	9	5	8	10	14	8	8	16	91
Dissertations reported to CAA in another category ^a	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2
Dissertations not reported to CAA ^b	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Total	6	3	4	9	5	8	10	14	9	10	18	96

a. Other categories in which dissertations on Latin American or US Latin@ art may be reported include, but are not limited to, “Contemporary Art,” “Critical Theory/Gender Studies/Visual Studies,” “Drawings/Prints/Works on Paper,” “Eighteenth-Century Art,” “Nineteenth-Century Art,” “Performance Studies,” “Twentieth-Century Art,” and “World Art.”

b. These completed dissertations were identified through the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database and personal communications with the author.

and Latin American Art” or “Pre-Columbian and Latin American Art.” Occasionally dissertations on modern or contemporary Latin American art are (and have been) reported under “Contemporary Art,” “Twentieth-Century Art,” and “Performance Studies,” among other categories.⁹ More could be said about the shifting and arbitrary nature of these categories and the degree to which they render scholarship visible or invisible. Of most interest here is that the categories now in place give visibility to topics in pre-Columbian, colonial, modern, and contemporary Latin American art—but there is no dedicated category for US Latin@ art.

Today, dissertations in art history on US Latin@ art are reported most often in the “Latin American/Caribbean Art” category and occasionally in other categories, among them “Art of the United States,” “Twentieth-Century Art,” “Performance Studies,” and “Contemporary Art.” A dissertation on US Latin@ art certainly belongs in these categories as well, but for the purpose of tracking trends by topic, locating these pioneering studies is a laborious process of searching multiple categories. As a result, dissertations in the field of US Latin@ art history remain marginalized at

Table 2. Number of Dissertations in Progress in Latin American Art History

Dissertation type	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Dissertations reported to CAA in the Latin American/Caribbean Art category ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	NA ^b	4	70	74
Dissertations reported to CAA in another category ^{c, d}	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	1	1
Total										4	71	75

a. Figures for 2002–2009 were not tabulated as most dissertations in this category were reported complete by 2012.

b. Two dissertations listed by CAA in 2010 as in progress were completed in 2011; they are included in the count for 2011 in table 1.

c. Other categories in which dissertations on Latin American or US Latin@ art may be reported include, but are not limited to, “Contemporary Art,” “Critical Theory/Gender Studies/Visual Studies,” “Drawings/Prints/Works on Paper,” “Eighteenth-Century Art,” “Nineteenth-Century Art,” “Performance Studies,” “Twentieth-Century Art,” and “World Art.”

d. Figures for 2002–2010 were not tabulated as most dissertations in these categories were reported complete by 2012.

best and invisible at worst. I suggest, therefore, that a discreet category be created by the College Art Association to bring greater visibility to the field, and that these studies be cross-listed, as they frequently are already.

The explosion of interest in Latin American art history is reflected as well in the number of dissertations on Latin American/Caribbean art, in any category, listed by CAA as “in progress” as of 2011–12: seventy-five (table 2). Assuming all seventy-five are eventually completed, this means that within the next couple of years, 171 PhDs in Latin American/Caribbean art history will have been granted since 2002.

Latin@ Art: Marginal or Invisible?

Unfortunately, among art history graduate students, the same pattern of booming interest is not taking place with respect to the study of US Latin@ art. This may result in part from the difficulty of finding encouragement and mentorship within departments of art history. The following numbers attest

to this slow growth: in 2002–12, only thirteen dissertations on Latin@ art history were listed with the College Art Association as complete. Four of these were listed under “Latin American/Caribbean Art,” and four in other categories; five did not appear in CAA’s online index but were found in the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database.¹⁰ It should be noted that this total includes dissertations that examined Latin@ art in comparative US and/or Latin American perspective. It also includes studies of so-called mainstream artists whose inclusion within the Latin@ category has been questioned in the past based on their art world success or ethnic/national origins (e.g., Jean-Michel Basquiat, Félix González-Torres, and Ana Mendieta, to name just three). Among these thirteen dissertations, four focused on Chicana/o art and one on Nuyorican art (table 3).

Even more startling is the very low number of art history dissertations in progress on Latino@ art (table 4). In comparison to the seventy-five dissertations in progress on Latin American art in 2011–12, the total in progress on Latin@ art, as reported to the College Art Association for 2012, was five. Of these five, two are now complete. Taína Caragol-Barreto’s dissertation, defended in 2013, examines boom-and-bust cycles in Latin American and Latin@ art in New York exhibitions and auctions from the 1970s to 1980s. Beth A. Zinsli’s dissertation, defended in 2014, examines contemporary photography by artists from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and its US diasporas. By word of mouth, I was able to locate three additional PhD students in art history preparing dissertations on Latin@ art, for an identified total of six that are currently “all but dissertation” (ABD). To underscore the comparison: at this writing, there are six dissertations in progress on US Latin@ art in the field of art history compared to seventy-five in progress on Latin American art.¹¹

Given the small number of ABDs in Latin@ art history, it is worth citing these six courageous students and their PhD dissertations in progress by name: Margarita Aguilar, “Traditions and Transformations in the Work of Adál: Surrealism, El Sainete, and Spanglish” (City University of New York, Katherine Manthorne, adviser); Joshua Franco, “Marfa, Marfa: Minimalism, *Rasquachismo*, and Questioning ‘Decolonial Aesthetics’ in Far West Texas” (Binghamton University, Tom McDonough, adviser); Tatiana Reinoza, “Latino Print Cultures in the US, 1970–2008” (University of Texas at Austin, Cherise Smith, adviser); Rose G. Salseda, “The Visual Art Legacy of the 1992 Los Angeles Riots” (University of Texas at Austin, Cherise Smith, adviser); Mary Thomas, “Contested Sites: Artist Interventions and the Visual Politics of Urban Space in Los Angeles” (University

Table 3. Number of Dissertations Completed in US Latin@ Art History

Dissertation type	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Dissertations reported to CAA in the Latin American/ Caribbean Art category	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	1 ^a	0	4
Dissertations reported to CAA in another category ^b	1 ^c	0	0	1 ^c	1, 1 ^c	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Dissertations not reported to CAA ^d	0	1	1 ^e	1 ^e	0	0	0	2 ^e	0	0	0	5
Subtotal Dissertations completed on US Latin@ art history	1	1	1	4	2	1	0	2	0	1	0	13
Dissertations completed in other disciplines on or inclusive of US Latin@ art	4	5	1	1	5	3	5	3	3	4	2	36
Total	5	6	2	5	7	4	5	5	3	5	2	49

a. Denotes a dissertation that is inclusive of both Latin American and US Latin@ art and/or artists.

b. Other categories in which dissertations on Latin American or US Latin@ art may be reported include, but are not limited to, “Contemporary Art,” “Critical Theory/Gender Studies/Visual Studies,” “Drawings/Prints/Works on Paper,” “Eighteenth-Century Art,” “Nineteenth-Century Art,” “Performance Studies,” “Twentieth-Century Art,” and “World Art.”

c. Denotes dissertations on artists who may be considered mainstream (or, conversely, Latin American) and are not usually studied within the US Latin@ context (e.g., Félix González-Torres, Ana Mendieta, Jean-Michel Basquiat).

d. These completed dissertations were identified through the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database and personal communications with the author.

e. Denotes a dissertation that sets US Latin@ art and/or artists in some other comparative focus (e.g., as “American” art in comparison to work by black or African American artists, etc.).

Table 4. Number of Dissertations in Progress in US Latin@ Art History

Dissertation type	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Dissertations reported to CAA in the Latin American/ Caribbean category ^a	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0	1, 1 ^b , 1 ^c	3
Dissertations reported to CAA in another category ^{a, d}	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	1 ^b	1 ^b	2
Dissertations not reported to CAA ^e	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0	0	3	3
Total									0	1	7	8 ^f

a. Figures for 2002–2009 were not tabulated as most dissertations in this category were reported complete by 2012.

b. Denotes a dissertation that is inclusive of both Latin American and US Latin@ art and/or artists.

c. Denotes a dissertation that sets US Latin@ art and/or artists in some other comparative focus (e.g., as “American” art in comparison to work by black or African American artists, etc.).

d. Other categories in which dissertations on Latin American or US Latin@ art may be reported include, but are not limited to, “Contemporary Art,” “Critical Theory/Gender Studies/Visual Studies,” “Drawings/Prints/Works on Paper,” “Eighteenth-Century Art,” “Nineteenth-Century Art,” “Performance Studies,” “Twentieth-Century Art,” and “World Art.”

e. These dissertations in progress were identified through personal communications with the author.

f. Two of these dissertations in progress were completed by May 2014 (those of Caragol-Barreto and Zinsli).

of California, Santa Cruz, Jennifer González, adviser); and Luis Vargas-Santiago, “Bridging Zapata: Transnational Images across Mexico and the US” (University of Texas at Austin, Andrea Giunta, adviser).¹²

The trend among this youngest generation of scholars is to set Latin@ art in a comparative framework, and this is consistent with the intersectional, trans-Latino, transnational, and global turn in Latin@/Chican@ studies, ethnic studies, and art history. This turn has benefits for the study of Latin@ art. No one would deny Judy Baca’s or Asco’s roots in the Chicano civil rights movement, but we can no longer ignore or diminish their signal contributions to the history of American and contemporary art. The same holds true for Adál, Elia Alba, Firelei Báez, Mel Casas, Papo Colo, Teresita Fernández, Rupert García, Scherezade García, Ken Gonzales-Day, Richard

Lou, Linda Lucero, Miguel Luciano, Ana Mendieta, Amalia Mesa-Bains, Delilah Montoya, Raphael Montañez Ortiz, Pepón Osorio, Ernesto Pujól, and Juan Sánchez—to name just a few.

Latin@ Art: A Meaningful Category

Whatever the alleged limitations of the curatorial frameworks used in the Smithsonian American Art Museum's *Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art*, curated by E. Carmen Ramos (2013), the curatorial statement makes clear that Latin@ art is American art. Latin@ art should be understood and studied intersectionally; however, the category is still *essential* for producing knowledge about our communities and ourselves, although it must be kept in mind that there is nothing static about individual or group identity. The category is also essential for raising the visibility of Latin@ art within art history and criticism. As Alex Rivera stated in his rebuttal to Philip Kennicott's (2013) review of *Our America*, Latin@ art is a necessary category given the underrepresentation of artists of Latin@ descent in mainstream museum and gallery exhibitions (Kennicott and Rivera 2013). Furthermore, what Kennicott was apparently not able to see was the level of scholarly rigor that went into the exhibition, catalog, and website podcasts, especially when compared to previous exhibitions such as the justly criticized *Hispanic Art in the United States* (Beardsley and Livingston 1987). As E. Carmen Ramos (2013) explains, Latin@ artists have participated in mainstream movements, many have "imbued their works with references to Latino culture and experience," and many have contested marginalization within American society. The strength of *Our America* is that it brings forth the nuanced experiences of exclusion and inclusion.

Landmark exhibitions like *Our America* have been accompanied by a growing body of literature on Latin@ art—for example, the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center series *A Ver: Revisioning Art History*, edited by Chon A. Noriega. Yet the academic field of Latin@ art history has seen only slow growth. This may be attributable to two principal factors. First, my own experience tells me that the elitism and racial bias within the field of art history, and academia generally, have an impact on the field. Karen Mary Davalos is a senior scholar who teaches and publishes on Chican@ art, although her training is in cultural anthropology, and she has served as an external reviewer for several art history tenure and promotion cases; however, as she noted to me in an e-mail (June 15, 2014), scholars in some art history departments will not assign her book because she is not

an art historian. While we all have our methodologies, such disregard is shortsighted if not unsurprising.

Second, as noted above, there are simply not enough faculty in art history departments with doctoral or master's programs who are committed primarily to teaching and research on Latin@ art. Based on program searches and faculty contacts, as well as an e-mail survey conducted in June 2014, I identified twenty-four PhDs in art history who are tenure-stream in, or affiliated with, art history departments and who specialize in or teach at least one course focused on or including Latin@ art.¹³ These colleagues represent eighteen programs that offer PhD or MA degrees and six colleges. While twenty-four departments of art history with (some) offerings on Latin@ art is not an insignificant number, it is far below the ninety-five programs offering specialization in Latin American art history.¹⁴ While many of us studied with advisers who were not experts in our chosen fields, and there can be benefits to doing so, I still find this imbalance between the fields disheartening. It bears noting that of the twenty-five art historians, myself included, who include Latin@ art in our courses, only seven wrote doctoral dissertations focused on or substantially inclusive of Latin@ art, and only three teach and write principally in the field; the rest of us also teach postcontact/colonial, modern, or contemporary Latin American or global contemporary art. This means that most art historians who specialize in and teach Latin American art do not include US Latin@ art in their courses. Nevertheless, there are art historians who are experts in the field and more to come, younger scholars who will carry on the work of the first generation of Chican@/Latin@ art historians such as Eva Cockcroft, Shifra Goldman, Gary D. Keller, Jacinto Quirarte, Victor Sorell, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto.

Finally, of the twenty-four colleagues in art history whom I was able to identify as including or focusing on US Latin@ art history, twelve responded to my e-mail survey. In terms of their teaching, four focus on Chican@ art and eight on Latin@ art more broadly. When asked if they were "self-taught" in Latin@ art history, almost all responded affirmatively. Even the scholars who wrote dissertations on Latin@ topics worked with mentors who were not experts in the field. George Vargas, associate professor of art history in the Art, Communications, and Theatre Department at Texas A&M University, Kingsville, who was the first PhD in Chicana/o art at the University of Michigan (1988), shared the following about his experience in graduate school:

At that time, there were no scholars at U of M [University of Michigan] teaching ancient Mexican art history, colonial art, and Mexican modern art, let alone Chicano art, and I had to search for primary sources without

a compass. Then, Chicano art history was perceived as second to the European and Anglo American aesthetic. Today, the struggle continues, with the rise and fall of ethnic studies again impacting Chicano studies and Chicano art history. (Déjà vu, all over again, to paraphrase Yogi Berra.) (E-mail to author, June 14, 2014)

Vargas's comment signals the pervasive biases within European, American, and Latin American art history that work against the growth of Latin@ art history. While these fields provide a place for discussions of political oppression and artists' response to it, I would venture to say that many art historians feel ill at ease with the overtly activist element of much Latin@ art—its concern with civil rights and with the structural social, economic, and political inequalities at the heart of the “American experience,” along with colonialism and gender subordination. Many of us remember how long it took for politicized (figural, revolutionary, angry) Latin American art to get seated at the table. In the 1980s, the casting of Latin American art as “fantastic” made it exotic and palatable to the mainstream (Ramírez 1992). The current vogue for the constructivist/geometric abstract current in Latin American art is enabled by its easy, if complicated, association with a more uplifting and optimistic image of the global South. The fact that many, though certainly not all, Latin@ artists engage with decolonization, with race, class, and gender subordination, and with migration and exile/diasporic consciousness makes it harder to assimilate their work within the frameworks and methodologies of art history—the turn to critical theory, including postmodernism and postcolonial studies, notwithstanding. I would also venture that the casting of contemporary art as “post-Latin@” or “post-Chican@” risks being misunderstood, even if the intention behind such concepts is not to promote “blindness” but rather to acknowledge that many contemporary artists who happen to be Latin@ don't feel as grounded in the aforementioned struggles or compelled to make art that looks the part or fits the so-called mold.

Latin@ Art as an Interdiscipline

A final issue to be raised is that if art history as a field has been slow, even reluctant, to open the doors of the ivory tower to Latin@ art, other fields, especially American and ethnic studies, have been considerably more welcoming. In preparing this essay, my research assistants and I undertook to identify as many scholars as possible who earned PhDs in other disciplines but who wrote doctoral dissertations touching on Latin@ visual art (defined

a bit more capaciously in our search to include performance studies, film, and some aspects of visual culture), or who have written on Latin@ art and/or currently teach or include Latin@ art in their courses.¹⁵ We were able to identify sixty-three such scholars, thirty-six of whom completed dissertations inclusive of Latin@ art between 2002 and 2012 (see table 3); twenty-three currently teach or list Latin@ visual art and/or culture as an interest. Of these scholars, eleven responded to my e-mail survey. The information they provided was rich in detail, but I will summarize as follows: in their teaching, eight of the eleven include Latin@ art and visual culture, and three of them focus on Chican@ art; only two have cross-listed courses with departments of art history; eight identified as self-taught in the field; and only three described some form of mentorship, two of whom earned their PhDs in 2011. Several of these scholars, and many more in other fields, publish on Latin@/Chican@ art. Their work is an indispensable part of the pipeline for younger scholars regardless of field.

If there is an optimistic message in all of this it is that across the board, the scholars I corresponded with are passionate and deeply committed to promoting the study of Latin@ visual art. Graduate students *are* coming up through the pipeline, no matter how complex and intertwining that pipeline may be, or how light the flow for now. Once they secure tenure-track appointments and begin publishing and, crucially, teaching, the next generation will follow.

Notes

I acknowledge the research assistance in 2013 of Sonja E. Gandert, my MA advisee, who wrote an extraordinary master's thesis in art history that both affirmed and complicated the category of "Latin@" artist ("*Hacer the Trips Corazón: Practicing Thirdspace in the Art of Cuba, Mexico, and the Latino United States,*" 2013). Additional research was completed with the assistance of Laura Suárez.

1. I employ the @ ending to promote gender equality and neutrality by challenging the Spanish-language convention of assuming that masculine or feminine nouns are gender-inclusive.

2. It is worth noting that the integrity and utility of the term *Latin American art* has also been debated within that field for years. Some scholars defend the term in order to promote scholarship and give visibility to the field, while others argue for its full integration into "global" art history. This debate took place, for example, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art symposium "Shifting Paradigms: Re-visions

of Latin American Art History,” November 2, 2002. The integration paradigm undergirded a symposium at the University of Texas at Austin’s Blanton Museum of Art, “Sin Título: An International Symposium on Latin American Art in a Global Context,” April 27–29, 2006.

3. For this insight, I am indebted to my colleague Deborah Pacini Hernandez, professor of anthropology and founding director of Latino studies at Tufts University.

4. This series of linked exhibitions will explore Latin American and Latino art in dialogue with Los Angeles, beginning September 15, 2017, and continuing through January 31, 2018. “LA/LA” in the title stands for Los Angeles/Latin America.

5. See “Dissertations by Year” on the CAA website, <http://caareviews.org/dissertations>. Dissertations completed and in progress began to be indexed online by CAA in 2003. Previously the index was printed in the annual June issue of CAA’s *Art Bulletin*.

6. This figure includes the list of programs on the website of the Association for Latin American Art, <http://www.associationlatinamericanart.org/programs.php>, as well as several other departments offering Latin American art history that I have identified.

7. Like many students, however, I worked with a Europeanist after I made the switch from colonial to modern Mexican art.

8. The figures that follow exclude dissertations listed only under “Pre-Columbian Art,” since such studies are chronologically incompatible with the study of US Latin@ art.

9. There is a margin of error or overlap, since it is department representatives who are asked to report these statistics and who may select the category, rather than individual authors.

10. The subject terms and keywords used to identify Latin@ art dissertations in art history in the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database are too numerous to list here.

11. After this research was completed, the 2013 index for PhD theses completed and in progress was released. CAA reports that seventeen of the seventy-five theses listed in 2012 as in progress in the “Latin American/Caribbean Art” category were complete by 2013; another sixty-one remain in progress.

12. The titles of Aguilar’s, Franco’s, Reinoza’s, and Vargas-Santiago’s dissertations in progress are all listed by the College Art Association under “Dissertations in Progress by Subject, 2013: Latin American/Caribbean Art.” Salseda’s is listed under “Dissertations in Progress by Subject, 2013: Art of the United States.” Online at http://caareviews.org/dissertations/year/2013/in_progress. Thomas reported the working title of her dissertation to me by e-mail (June 19, 2014).

13. The survey included four questions: “1. Name, title and department affiliations; 2. I have taught the following courses focused on U.S. Latin@ visual or performance art; 2b. Courses were listed in art history or cross-listed with another department or program (please specify); 3a. As an MA/PhD student I was able to study U.S. Latin@ art in a focused way with a mentor; 3b. I trained myself to teach and write in the field of U.S. Latin@ visual art; 4. My doctoral dissertation or MA

was focused on U.S. Latin@ visual art.” The survey was sent to seventy scholars with PhDs in art history or in various other fields such as American studies, ethnic studies, Chican@/Latin@ studies, media studies, and comparative literature. They were selected based on their teaching or research interests in Latin@ art and/or visual culture, as indicated by their publications or faculty websites. I also sent the survey to seven advanced graduate students (five in art history, one in American studies, and one in performance studies).

14. There is overlap between these programs, since, for example, I would include Tufts as offering graduate and undergraduate curricula in Latin American and Latin@ art history.

15. We gathered this information based on prior knowledge and through the aforementioned survey, as well as by examining bibliographies on Latin@ art, searching the dissertations bibliography of the American Studies Association, and doing subject and keyword searches in the ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Database.

Works Cited

- Beardsley, John, and Jane Livingston. 1987. *Hispanic Art in the United States*. Exhibition catalog. Washington, DC: Corcoran Gallery; Houston: Museum of Fine Arts.
- Caragol-Barreto, Taína. 2013. “Boom and Dust: The Rise of Latin American and Latino Art in New York Exhibition Spaces and the Auction House Market, 1970s–1980s.” PhD diss., City University of New York.
- Kennicott, Philip. 2013. “Art Review: ‘Our America’ at the Smithsonian.” *Washington Post*, October 25. <http://wapo.st/19F72i4>.
- Kennicott, Philip, and Alex Rivera. 2013. “Alex Rivera, Philip Kennicott Debate Washington Post Review of ‘Our America.’” *Washington Post*, November 1.
- Ramírez, Mari Carmen. 1992. “Beyond ‘The Fantastic’: Framing Identity in US Exhibitions of Latin American Art.” *Art Journal* 51, no. 4: 60–68.
- Ramos, E. Carmen. 2013. “Introduction: Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art.” Smithsonian American Art Museum YouTube channel. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL7gn_68Hr4h_Jy1EF4SVVqVSRgRti73Ia.
- . 2014. *Our America: The Latino Presence in American Art*. With an introduction by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto. Exhibition catalog. Washington, DC: D. Giles.
- Tufts University. *Tufts University Fact Book 2013–2014*. Office of Institutional Research & Evaluation. <http://provost.tufts.edu/institutionalresearch/files/Fact-Book-2013-14.pdf>.
- Zinsli, Beth A. 2014. “Fragments along the Archipelago: Photography of the Contemporary Spanish Caribbean and Its Diasporas.” PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison.