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LATINOARTE: INFORMATION ON LATIN AMERICAN ART

by Elsa Barberena

Latin American culture is very rich, yet there is insufficient documentation on Latin American art, and much of the documentation which does exist is not adequately covered by the major art indexes. A number of magazines have set out, especially since the 1940s, to disseminate information about Latin American art, but most have been short-lived. The LATINOARTE project, based in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), aims to develop and to network a database including citations to documentation available in 62 libraries and information centres inside and outside Latin America. Already, some 1,500 records are available on contemporary Latin American art. (The edited text of a paper presented to the IFLA Section of Art Libraries at the IFLA General Conference at Havana, August 1994.)

Justification

Latin America, as a geographical and cultural entity, is the inheritor of a plural, incredible and incalculable wealth. If we glance through the March/April 1994 number of the *Americas* magazine, published by the Organisation of the Americas States, we will find some pages which illustrate this affirmation: the biography of the wife of one of the most brilliant heroes of the South American Independence, Marshal Antonio José de Sucre; a dance which relieves all the tension of a modern-accelerated society; the feminism of the Argentinian film director Maria Luisa Bemberg; the spectacular panoramas of Punta del Diablo; a rustic Uruguayan village inhabited by fishermen; research in Peru which is changing completely the cultivation of potatoes all over the world; the Amazonian dolphin's acclimatisation to the constant changes of the ecosystem; photographs which demonstrate the commitment of a cultural anthropologist and the patience of the Brazilian photographer Valdir Cruz; in the gastronomy section, recipes for five Mexican beverages: champurrado (chocolate-flavoured atole), café de olla (a Mexican kind of coffee), horchata (a beverage made from barley, almonds etc.) sangrita to accompany tequila, and lemon water; finally, a reproduction of the 'Tema de azules, No. 5' by the Argentinian, Sarah Grillo, an oil painting

which is exhibited at the Americas Art Museum in Washington, DC.

Nevertheless, students of the Latin American art do not have enough documented information published in their region.

'After decades of darkness, finally, the world discovers our vocation'. The words of the Peruvian painter, Fernando Szyszlo, echo what Rita Eder, director of the Instituto de Investigaciones of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), pointed out at the XVIII Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte held in November 1993, in Zacatecas: 'Communication and the interchange of knowledge in Latin American Art, made possible by publications and magazines, is limited.' Moreover, the art indexes, at the international level, include little or no information at all. Other bibliographies, and individual indexes of periodicals, are efforts which cannot by themselves bring all the information together.

Indexes

ARTbibliographies Modern, 1974 to date. DIALOG file No. 56 which covers some 330 serials, as well as theses and exhibition catalogues.

Art Index. New York, NY: H. W. Wilson, 1929 to date. This index includes 240 titles of art periodicals

in English, German, French, Italian, Dutch and the Spanish magazine *Goya*. It does not include Latin American publications. A CD-ROM has been available since 1984.

Arts and Humanities Citation Index. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for Scientific Information, 1977 to date. From 1,000 suggested titles, only 58 titles in the art field and 16 in the architecture field include Mexican arts.

BHA Bibliographie d'Histoire de l'Art/Bibliography of the History of the Art. The result of the union of *RILA* and the *Répertoire d'art et d'archéologie*. It has been published since 1990.

Current Contents: Art and Humanities. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for Scientific Information, 1980 up to date. It does not include magazines of Latin American art.

Handbook of Latin American Art. Joyce Waddell Bailey. Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio Information Services, 1984-1986, vol. 1, part 2 XIX and XXc Mexico, Central America, Caribbean; vol. 1, part 2 South America. Includes magazines.

Handbook of Latin American Studies. Washington DC.: The Library of Congress, 1932-.

HAPI (Hispanic American Periodicals Index). Los Angeles, CA: University of California, Latin American Centre, 1975 up to date. In 1993, the compact disc *Latin American Studies Volume 1* was announced as well as the Benson collection of the University of Texas specialized in Latin America. It is also available through the INTERNET network. It includes 11 titles of magazines published in Latin America.

Index to Art Periodicals, collected in the Ryerson Library of the Art Institute of Chicago, Boston, MA; G. K. Hall, 1907-1962. 11 volumes. It includes 355 titles received in the Library; of these titles, four are about Latin American art.

Index to 'Cultura en México' (1962-1972), by Alfonso González. Published by the Latin American Studies Centre of the California University of Los Angeles, CA.

General Index to Cuban Periodicals. Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, 1970-up to date. Includes 31 magazines related to Contemporary Latin American art.

General Index to Latin American Periodicals: humanities and social sciences. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1929-1970. The index was elaborated by the Colon Library of the American States Organisation. Includes 32 titles about Latin American art.

Répertoire d'art et d'archéologie, 1910-1989, since then, it has been joined with *RILA* and *BHA*, and published by the Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris; and it is available through the French data base named QUESTEL.

RILA (Répertoire International de la Littérature d'Art). Williamstown, MA, 1976-1990. Available on

line as *Art Literature International* 1973-1989, DIA-LOG file No. 191. Part of the *BHA* since 1990. This index does not include Latin American magazines.

The database PEPENAR (Latin American Art and Architecture Periodicals) compiled at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras of UNAM as a product of information gathered by students of the master's degree of Latin American contemporary art history, under my supervision, includes 425 titles; only 39 of them are as yet included in the international indexes mentioned above.

Antecedents

Interest in disseminating Latin American art can be found in the magazine *Romance*, founded by Spaniards during 1940-41. In 1949, Miguel Prieto, former artistic director and member of the editing committee of the magazine, was transferred with his same function to *México en la Cultura*, cultural supplement of the *Novedades* newspaper and predecessor of *Cultura en México*, supplement of the magazine *Siempre*.

During that year, Fernando Benítez, with the initial purpose to make Mexican culture better known, founded *México en la Cultura*. At the same time, editions of prehispanic art books were 2,000 to 3,000 copies and most of them available at public libraries.

México en la Cultura used different inks and with an edition of 140,000 copies made it possible that Mexican and foreign people, who were interested in Mexican painting, could know of José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera and David Alfaro Siqueiros.

José Morenó Villa and Ceferino Palencia used to write in *México en la Cultura* and through their writings and the reviews of exhibitions popularised the visual arts of Mexico. José Luis Cuevas also did the same when he wrote a critique about mural painting in the series 'La Cortina del Nopal', published in the same supplement.

In 1962, Fernando Benítez was fired from *Novedades* newspaper and started working with his team at *Siempre* magazine, covering the supplement *Cultura en México*.

According to Alfonso Reyes' statement, there was no other way to become acquainted with Mexico during the 50s than consulting *México en la Cultura*, and one must add the same for *Cultura en México* during the 60s.

The same happened with other Latin American arts magazines. In 1924, in Argentina, the magazine *Martin Fierro* supported the modernism of the 'Paris Group', comprising Forner, Badii, Berni, Spilimbergo and Centurion, who insisted on the idea of a necessary change. The 'Martinierrista Movement' started as a defender of the Latin America avant-garde, and a magazine *Martin Fierro* diffused its objectives and effects.

In 1946, Lidy Prati and Tomás Maldonado, who were also from Argentina, published the *Boletín de la Asociación de Arte Concreto-Inventivo* first and then the *Revista de la Asociación de Arte Concreto-Inventivo*, the Asociación having been created in 1945. The magazine *Arturo*, highly regarded as the first liberating signal of the school of Paris and of its outpost, the Escuela de Buenos Aires, was founded by the painters Kosice and Arden Quin. Kosice also participated in both magazines of the *Asociación de Arte Concreto-Inventivo* and in *Arte Madi*.

The concrete art of Argentina was discussed in other magazines: *Ciclo* (1948); *Nueva Vision* (1951); *Contrapunto*. On the other hand, the non-figurative art defended itself in the seven numbers published in *Perceptismo* magazine, where Abraham Hader and Raúl Lozza wrote the theoretical basis of 'the Perceptive Movement', from 1950 until 1953.

Not only the artists of Argentina championed artistic movements in the magazines; the art historians Aldo Pellegrini in *Que* magazine, Romero Brest in *Ver y Estimar* magazine, Brughetti and Córdoba Iturburu in *Cabalgata* and *Clarín* magazines also drew attention to the Latin American avant-garde.

Unfortunately, publications were few and did not continue: *Martin Fierro* nos. 1-4, 1924-1927; *Arturo* no. 1, 1944; *Boletín de la Asociación de Arte Concreto-Inventivo* no. 1, 1946; *Revista de la Asociación de Arte Concreto-Inventivo*, no. 1, 1946; *Arte Madi* nos. 1-8, 1947-1954; *Ciclo* 1948; *Nueva Vision* 1951-1957; *Perceptismo* 1950-1953; *Cabalgata* vol. 1, 1946; *Que* 1951; *Ver y Estimar* nos. 1-34, 1948-1953, nos. 1-10, 1954-1955.

The Venezuelan architect Carlos Raúl Villanueva

mentions the incredible lack of communication, of cultural interchange, of information, which has existed for decades, and speaks of the amazing ignorance even of mutual experiences which Latin American people suffer from. This lack of information contrasts with the situation in North America and Europe, where information is plentiful.

LATINOARTE

The objective of the database LATINOARTE is to place at the disposal of concerned people part of the cultural wealth of Latin America: artistic information.

The documents are available in 62 information centres, inside and outside the 22 Latin American countries, including UNAM, the 'Benson Latin Art Collection' of the university of Texas, and the 'José Martí Library' of Cuba.

We must seize the opportunity, at a Latin American level and via the Internet, to enhance the database Latinoarte, which has its headquarters in the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at the UNAM.

In the first place, we have to collect all kinds of information about contemporary Latin American art. This has already been done for the period prior to 1980, with 1,500 records included on disk.

As a second, third and fourth step it will be necessary to assemble modern, colonial and prehispanic art information. 8,000 records concerning Mexico already exist.

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