Fifty Years of Latin American Art
Selections from
The Neuberger Museum of Art

February 24 – June 26, 2014
Kean University
Fifty Years Of Latin American Art
Selections From The Neuberger Museum Of Art

This brochure is published in conjunction with the exhibition Fifty Years of Latin American Art: Selections from the Neuberger Museum of Art, presented at Kean University from February 24 to June 26, 2014 and organized by the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York. The exhibition was first presented at GALLERY 1285 Avenue of the Americas from February 28 to May 30, 2012.

Grateful acknowledgement for the realization and support of this exhibition is due to the Friends of the Neuberger Museum of Art; Purchase College, State University of New York; Edith L. Calzadilla and family; George and Edith Rickey; Donna and Marvin Schwartz; Dina and Alexander E. Racolin; Janet Jaffin; Virginia and Herbert Lust; Fritz Landshoff; Arthur A. Goldberg; Betsabeé Romero; and Nicolás De Jesús.

Fifty Years of Latin American Art: Selections from the Neuberger Museum of Art is organized by the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York, and curated by Patrice Giasson, the Alex Gordon Associate Curator of Art of the Americas, and Annabel Rhodeen, a graduate of the MA program in Modern and Contemporary Art Criticism, History, and Theory, Purchase College, SUNY.

Photos by Jim Frank

Catalogue Design and Production
Paul Klonowski • paul@mindsetcs.com

Neil Tetkowski, Director of University Galleries

www.kean.edu/~gallery

Cover: Figure 1: Roberto Matta, The Creators, 1953, oil on canvas, 37 x 47 inches. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris
Frontispiece: Figure 2: Rufino Tamayo, Torse de jeune Fille (Torsa of a Young Woman), 1969, color lithograph on Japanese nacre paper, 30 ¼ x 22 ¼ inches, 16/25. Art © Tamayo Heirs/Mexico/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY
Fifty Years Of Latin American Art
Selections From The Neuberger Museum Of Art

Fifty Years of Latin American Art: Selections from the Neuberger Museum of Art includes more than thirty works from the Neuberger’s permanent collection by some of the most renowned modern and contemporary artists of Latin America. Their works engage a variety of themes including social criticism, self-expression, identity, and liberty. While some of the artists follow the current of conceptual art, others, interested in color, form, and motion, explore optical and kinetic art, seeking new interactions between viewer and object.

This exhibition offers a panoramic view of the last fifty years of Latin American art, expressed through a variety of media, including paintings, prints, photographs, and sculpture. The exhibition is organized by artist and theme rather than chronology or geography.

Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Julio Antonio, Leda Catunda, Carlos Cruz-Diez, José Luis Cuevas, Nicolás De Jesús, Arturo Ducas, Carlos Garaicoa, Florencio Gelabert, Wifredo Lam, Eduardo Mac Entyre, María Martínez-Cañas, Roberto Matta, José Clemente Orozco, Betsabé Romero, Jesús Rafael Soto, and Rufino Tamayo are included in this exhibition.

On behalf of Kean University, I want to thank Paola Morsiani, the Director of the Neuberger Museum of Art, for making the collaboration between our institutions possible and for sharing this spectacular exhibition with Kean University. The project would not have been possible without the scholarship of Patrice Giasson who was essential in selecting works and planning the show. Special thanks to Kean University President Dawood Farahi, Vice President Dr. Jeffrey Toney and Dr. George Arasamowicz, Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts. We appreciate their support for the growing exhibition program and the opportunity to feature Fifty Years of Latin American Art at the Karl and Helen Burger Gallery.

Neil Tetkowski
Director of University Galleries

Opposite: Figure 3. Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Bicicletas en Domingo (Bicycles on Sunday), 1966, gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches.
© 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris
Latin American Art
from the Neuberger Museum of Art

Patrice Giasson and Annabel Rhodeen

The idea of a “Latin American art” has been debated by artists and scholars past and present. In an era when individuals travel and live in multiple places, often outside their native country, one may ask if it is still relevant to think in regional terms. This question is essential, as many Latin American artists prefer not to carry a national banner, but instead consider themselves actors at a universal crossroads, interacting with artists from the Western world, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Any contemporary understanding of Latin America must therefore acknowledge a global orientation where each artist is immersed in a multiplicity of connected and overlapping realities.

Since its founding in 1969, the Neuberger Museum of Art, located on the campus of Purchase College in Westchester County, New York, has assembled an extraordinary collection of art by Latin American artists working both inside and outside of their homelands. In 2010, the first Roy R. Neuberger Prize was awarded to Cuban artist Tania Bruguera, culminating in the exhibition and publication *Tania Bruguera: On the Political Imaginary* (2010). In addition, the Museum featured Latin American artists in the recent exhibitions, *Contemporary Latin American Art from the Luis Calzadilla Collection* (2010), *The Irony of the Skeletons: Nicolás De Jesús’ Amates* (2010), and *Betsabeé Romero: Lágrimas Negras/Black Tears* (2011). Close relationships with both Romero and De Jesús also led to new acquisitions by the Museum that are on view in the present exhibition.

*Fifty Years of Latin American Art: Selections from the Neuberger Museum of Art* brings together a selection of work by some of the most renowned artists of the early twentieth century, including Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Wifredo Lam, Roberto Matta, José Clemente Orozco, and Rufino Tamayo, alongside contemporary artists Julio Antonio, Leda Catunda, Carlos Cruz-Diez, José Luis Cuevas, Arturo Duclos, Florencio Gelabert, Betsabé Romero, Nicolás De Jesús, Carlos Garaicoa, Eduardo Mac Entyre, María Martínez-Cañas, and Jesús Rafael Soto.

“*My country is in time not in space. Those who lived when I lived are my compatriots and what we made of that epoch is our measure.*” — Roberto Matta

*Opposite:* Figure 4: José Luis Cuevas, *The Giants in Matisse’s Atelier*, 1971. Color lithograph, engraving and linoleum cut on paper, 22 1/4 x 29 1/4 inches, 14/100. © 2014 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris
The Awakening of Modern Latin American Art in the Twentieth Century

In the first half of the twentieth century, artists such as José Clemente Orozco, Rufino Tamayo, and Wifredo Lam, developed artistic strategies to define Latin American identity and modernity. Enriched by the experience of living abroad and interacting with avant-garde artists from Europe and the United States, these artists sought to represent their own histories, cultures, and experiences through a new modern lens.

Latin America thus began to see itself not as a peripheral area condemned to copying foreign masters, schools, and movements, but rather came to consider its own regions as capable of becoming the new centers for art. As artists acquired independence, Latin American art gradually gained worldwide notoriety. Orozco recalls in his autobiography:

We began to suspect that the whole colonial situation was nothing but a swindle foisted upon us by international traders. We too had a character, which was quite the equal of any other. We would learn what the ancients and the foreigners could teach us, but we could do as much as they, or more. It was not pride but self-confidence that moved us in this belief, a sense of our own being and destiny.  

By the 1930s, this awakening was recognized by museums, galleries, and collectors, as Mexican muralists contributed to the development of modernism across the Americas. In 1931, New York’s Museum of Modern Art held an exhibition of Diego Rivera’s frescos, making him the second artist to receive a monographic show there, after Henri Matisse. Concurrently, U.S. collectors and galleries began to acquire work by Latin American artists, many of whom were living in New York. In 1944 Roy R. Neuberger, who prided himself on collecting American art, purchased Rufino Tamayo’s *Woman Spinning* (1943) from the Valentine Gallery. Tamayo lived in New York from 1937 to 1949 and became the first Latin American artist to enter the Neuberger’s collection.

With the outbreak of World War II, the Chilean painter Roberto Matta immigrated from Paris to New York along with the writer and poet André Breton and members of the surrealist movement. Matta created fictional landscapes penetrated by light and color and inhabited by anthropomorphic forms. *The Creators* (1953) (Figure 1) features an environment in decay. Its dark edges contrast with the vivid central light, creating a tension that could allude to either the generative forces of nature, or the destructive nature of war.

Though many Latin American artists were living in the United States and Europe during this period, much of the work continued to be influenced by their native landscapes. For Tamayo, who spent nearly twenty years abroad, the dusty colors, porous surfaces, and sandy textures of his series *Mujeres* (1969) (Figure 2) connect intimately with the Mexican terrain. Moreover, the geometric idol-like women, recall clay Pre-Columbian figurines and feature exuberant yellows, pinks, and reds, echoing the lush fruit of his native country. Manuel Álvarez Bravo’s black and white photographs capture and intensify the textures of Mexico. In *Bicicletas en Domingo* (*Bicycles on Sunday*) (1966) (Figure 3), crisp, foreshortened shadows suggest a strong midday sun, and dust merges the distant
mountains into a romantic landscape. Although he never left Mexico, Álvarez Bravo’s work is formally attuned to that of international photographers of the same period, including Walker Evans, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Tina Modotti, and Edward Weston. André Breton, the founder of surrealism, also championed Álvarez Bravo’s images. Although not all of Álvarez Bravo’s photographs possess the dreamlike and unexpected juxtapositions of surrealist imagery, his realist portraits of everyday life frequently present Mexican subjects in moments of contemplation, reverie, and meditation. In El Perro Veinte (Dog Twenty) (1958) a girl stares beyond the frame of the photograph, seemingly lost in her own thoughts.

Mexican modernism from the first half of the century was characterized by the promotion of a nationalist agenda and led to what many art historians have described as a period of isolation. But by the 1960s, a younger generation of artists began to challenge the climate of seclusion, among them master draftsman José Luis Cuevas. Commenting on this period, he stated, “What I want in my country’s art are broad highways leading out to the rest of the world, rather than narrow trails connecting one adobe village to the next.” Cuevas’ warped characters and mottled textures (Figure 4) reveal a sensitive, un-idealized, and often humorous view of humanity.

Staking their own claims to modernism, Venezuelan artists Carlos Cruz-Diez and Jesús Rafael Soto contributed to the Op and Kinetic art movements. Both artists’ work relies on a direct relationship between the viewer and the object to elicit movement. As Cruz-Diez once explained, “There isn’t a single piece that isn’t participatory and that can’t be shared. All of my work dies if you remain static before it. The viewer has to participate in order for the work to exist.” While Cruz-Diez focuses on chromatic relationships that allow color to exist without structure or form, Soto’s fascination with series and music led to objects that explore visual and physical vibration. Soto’s Jai-Alai #3 (1969) (Figure 6) features a series of black and blue bars dangling in front of a striped background, creating a sensation of vibration as the viewer moves before it. Eduardo Mac Entyre, a founding member of the Argentinean movement Arte Generativo, also uses serial systems. Mac Entyre relies on mathematical algorithms to form sweeping compositions of precise line work that appear to vibrate before the viewer. In Punto Luminoso (Bright Point) (1987) (Figure 5) subtle washes of color and a system of arching lines converge and recede into a single central point on the canvas.

After years of conservatism imposed by the repressive dictatorial regimes of the 1970s, new movements such as Brazil’s Geração 80 (Generation 80) emerged. Artists in the group favored the physical expressivity of bodily forms rather than the austere formalism of minimalist or conceptual art. Leda Catunda’s colorful objects transform the traditional stretched canvas into fluid dimensional shapes that pour off the wall. Almofadinhas II (Tiny Pillows II) (1989) (Figure 7) is made from rectangular strips of various fabrics. While formally the work recalls the color-field painting of Abstract Expressionist Mark Rothko, the title alludes to the presence of the body, suggesting a place where one might lay his or her head to rest.
Like many of his South American contemporaries, Wifredo Lam worked in Europe with vanguard artists including Pablo Picasso. Upon returning home to Cuba, he merged Cubist strategies with Afro-Cuban imagery. In Untitled (1966) from the portfolio Flight (Figure 8), strange totemic forms inhabit a universe of colorful constellations. Lam’s work ultimately influenced a generation of younger Cuban artists, including the painter Julio Antonio and photographer María Martínez-Cañas. Following the Cuban Revolution, Cuban artists such as Martínez-Cañas, grew up estranged from the land of their parents. Her silver print Totem Blanco: Mi Huella en su Mar (White Totem: My Foot in your Sea) (1989) (Figure 9) is composed of negative stills that form a totem. In the work, the composite image documents a public monument that is also a site of personal experience, merging the notion of collective memory with that of personal remembrance. Florencio Gelabert, of the same generation as Martínez-Cañas, began his career in Cuba but fled from the island in the 1980s. The thorny Isla de Cuba (1990) manifests the internal struggle triggered by this displacement. His Cuba is a treacherous, spiked piece of jetsam. Appearing bloodied, the object becomes both the source and site location of physical pain and anguish.

Contemporary Latin American art today reaches beyond its own traditions by addressing universal issues that testify to the layering of human experience. In Rastros Mudejar (Mudejar Traces) (2007-2012), Betsabé Romero carves a Moorish pattern into a rubber tire. She fills the recesses with colored chewing gum, merging Iberian-Islamic decorative patterns with the materials of industry and popular culture. Nicolás De Jesús often populates his work with the ubiquitous Mexican skeleton, reminiscent of the iconography found in Guadalupe Posada’s engravings. In some works, his porous figures inhabit a world compromised by financial crisis and a deteriorating environment, while in others, they joyfully climb the ribs of his beloved Eiffel Tower (2003) (Figure 10).

Latin American art of the twentieth century is thus characterized by the awakening of modernist strategies, which eventually laid the groundwork for contemporary expression. Many of the concerns that Latin American artists address today — identity, sexuality, political struggle, consumption, war and repression — appear in the work of artists from all over the world. In this sense, Latin America has become a center of artistic production that participates in a global view of living here and now.

Opposite: Figure 10: Nicolás De Jesús, Paris, 2003, etching and aquatint on amate paper, 25 ½ x 15 ½ inches, 16/150. © Nicolás De Jesús
Exhibition Checklist

All work are from the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase College, State University of New York.
Dimensions are in inches, height precedes width, precedes depth.

MANUEL ÁLVAREZ BRAVO

Ventana a los Magueses (Window on the Agaves), 1976
From portfolio Untitled, 1980
Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10
Published by Acorn Edition Ltd., Geneva 1980
Gift of Donna and Marvin Schwartz, 1981.15.01.03

La Visita (The Visit), 1935
From portfolio Untitled, 1980
Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10
Published by Acorn Edition Ltd., Geneva 1980
Gift of Donna and Marvin Schwartz, 1981.15.01.05

El Perro Veinte (Dog Twenty) 1958
From portfolio Untitled, 1980
Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10
Published by Acorn Edition Ltd., Geneva 1980
Gift of Donna and Marvin Schwartz, 1981.15.01.06

Margarita de Bonampak (Margarita de Bonampak), 1949
From portfolio Untitled, 1980
Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8
Published by Acorn Edition Ltd., Geneva 1980
Gift of Donna and Marvin Schwartz, 1981.15.01.07

Tentaciones en Casa de Antonio (Temptations in the House of Antonio), 1970
From portfolio Untitled, 1980
Gelatin silver print, 10 x 8
Published by Acorn Edition Ltd., Geneva 1980
Gift of Donna and Marvin Schwartz, 1981.15.01.10

Manos en el 210 de Fernandez Leal (Hands on 210 Fernandez Leal), 1976
From portfolio Untitled, 1980
Gelatin silver print, 8 x 10
Published by Acorn Edition Ltd., Geneva 1980
Gift of Donna and Marvin Schwartz, 1981.15.01.12

Recollections, 1971
From portfolio Cuevas’ Comedies, 1972
Color lithograph, engraving, and embossing on paper, center panel of triptych, 22 ½ x 30
14 from an edition of 100
Printed and published by Collectors Press, San Francisco and New York 1972
Gift of Virginia and Herbert Lust, 1976.47.02

Margarida de Souza

JULIO ANTONIO

Mirando Al Muerto (Looking at the Dead), 1988
Acrylic on canvas, 78 x 70
Gift of Edith L. Calzadilla and family in memory of Luis P. Calzadilla, 2009.02.03

LEDA CATUNDA

Almofadinhas II (Tiny Pillows II), 1989
Mixed media on canvas, 43 x 31
Gift of Edith L. Calzadilla and family in memory of Luis P. Calzadilla, 2009.02.09

CARLOS CRUZ-DIEZ

Physichromie, Nr. 214, 1966
Plastic strips, painted wood, 12 ¼ x 24 x 3 3/8
Gift from the George and Edith Rickey Collection of Constructivist Art, 1972.05.19

JOSÉ LUIS CUEVAS

Interior, 1971
From portfolio Cuevas’ Comedies, 1972
Color lithograph, engraving, and embossing on paper, center panel of triptych, 22 ½ x 30
14 from an edition of 100
Printed and published by Collectors Press, San Francisco and New York 1972
Gift of Virginia and Herbert Lust, 1976.47.04

Nicolás de Jesús

Buitres (Vultures), 2003
Etching and aquatint on amate paper, 25 ¼ x 15 ½ x 16 from an edition of 150
Gift of the artist, EL 2007.01.01

Crack Mundial (World Crash), 2008
Etching and aquatint on amate paper, 23 ⅛ x 15 ½
6 from an edition of 25
Gift of the artist, EL 2007.11.02

Miaicdio (Corn-icide), 2009
Etching and aquatint on amate paper, 25 x 15 ½
6 from an edition of 250
Gift of the artist, EL 2007.11.03

Déjate, 2003
Etching and aquatint on amate paper, 25 ½ x 15 ½
16 from an edition of 150
Gift of the artist, 07.2011.04

ARTURO DUCLOS

Voluptas Carnis, 1992
Oil on canvas, 58 x 59
Gift of Edith L. Calzadilla and family in memory of Luis P. Calzadilla, 2009.02.17

CARLOS GARAICOA

En Busca del Santo Grial (Search for the Holy Grail), 1993
Color photograph and hand-painted ceramic tile
11 ½ x 16, photograph; 6 x 6, tile
Gift of Edith L. Calzadilla and family in memory of Luis P. Calzadilla, 2009.02.19 a&b

FLORENCIO GELABERT

Isla de Cuba (Island of Cuba), 1990
Painted and stained wood, 15 x 68 x 8
Gift of Edith L. Calzadilla and family in memory of Luis P. Calzadilla, 2009.02.20

WIFREDO LAM

Untitled, 1967
From portfolio Flight, 1971
Lithograph on Rives paper, 25 ¾ x 19 ¾
84 from an edition of 250
Published by the International Rescue Committee, New York 1971
Gift of Janet Jaffin, EL 12.2000.52.06

EDUARDO MAC ENTYRE

Punto Luminoso (Bright Point), 1987
Acrylic on canvas, 48 ¼ x 48 ¼
Gift of Edith L. Calzadilla and family in memory of Luis P. Calzadilla, 2009.02.25
MARTÍNEZ-CañAS

Totem Blanco: Mi Huella Su Mar (White Totem: My Foot in Your Sea), 1989
Gelatin silver print, 50 x 10
2 from an edition of 2
Gift of Edith L. Calzadilla and family in memory of Luis P. Calzadilla, 2009.02.27

ROBERTO MATA

The Creators, 1953
Oil on canvas, 37 x 47
Gift of Roy R. Neuberger, 1970.02.24

RUFINO TAMAYO

Venus Noire (Black Venus), 1969
From portfolio Mujeres, 1969
Color lithograph on Japon nacre paper, 30 ¼ x 22 ¼
16 from an edition of 25
Printed by Atelier Desjobert, Paris
Published by Tombstone Publishers, New York 1969
Gift of Fritz Landshoff, 1974.27.01.04

JOSÉ CLEMENTE ORZOCO

Untitiled (Aztec Indian Scene), c.1940
Watercolor and gouache, pencil and powdered pigment on paper, 12 ¼ x 19 ¾
Gift from the Dina and Alexander E. Racolin Collection, 1995.12.47

BETSA BÉ ROMERO

Rastros Mudejar (Mudejar Traces), 2007-2012
Gum, tow tire, and vinyl, 20 ½ x 20 ½ x 7
Gift of the artist, 2011.01

JESÚS RAFAEL SOTO

Bleu sur le Rectangle (Blue on the Rectangle), 1965
Oil on board, painted metal plates, 62 ¼ x 42 x 6
Gift of Arthur A. Goldberg, 1972.02.02
Jai-Alai #3, 1969
Plexiglas, nylon line, 19 ¾ x 9 ¼ x 6
Gift from the George and Edith Rickey Collection of Constructivist Art, 1972.05.09

La Négresse (The Black Woman), 1969
From portfolio Mujeres, 1969
Color lithograph on Japon nacre paper, 30 ¼ x 22 ¼
16 from an edition of 25
Printed by Atelier Desjobert, Paris
Published by Tombstone Publishers, New York 1969
Gift of Fritz Landshoff, 1974.27.01.14

Masque Rouge (Red Mask), 1969
From portfolio Mujeres, 1969
Color lithograph on Japon nacre paper, 22 ½ x 30 ½
16 from an edition of 25
Printed by Atelier Desjobert, Paris
Published by Tombstone Publishers, New York 1969
Gift of Fritz Landshoff, 1974.27.01.16

Pastèque #2 (Watermelon #2), 1969
From portfolio Mujeres, 1969
Color lithograph on Japon nacre paper, 30 ¼ x 22 ¼
16 from an edition of 25
Printed by Atelier Desjobert, Paris
Published by Tombstone Publishers, New York 1969
Gift of Fritz Landshoff, 1974.27.01.17

Femme au Collant Noir (Woman with Black Stockings), 1969
From portfolio Mujeres, 1969
Color lithograph on Japon nacre paper, 30 ¼ x 22 ¼
16 from an edition of 25
Printed by Atelier Desjobert, Paris
Published by Tombstone Publishers, New York 1969
Gift of Fritz Landshoff, 1974.27.01.19

Endnotes

8 Interview with the artist by Alexander Alberro in Gabriela Rangel, ed., Carlos Cruz-Diez: (In)Formed by Color (New York: Americas Society, 2008), 53.
9 ibid, 60.