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**Roberto Velázquez. “Modernism Came Flying: A Micro-History of Artistic Internationalism and Cultural Encounters in US-Chilean Relations, 1968.”** *Cold War History* (2018): 1-24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14682745.2018.1520212>.

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Roberto Velázquez’s “Modernism Came Flying” offers a detailed analysis of *De Cézanne a Miró* (DCAM), a modern art exhibition organized by the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, which traveled to four major Latin American cities, including Santiago de Chile, in 1968. In the Chilean capital, where DCAM was on view for almost four weeks in June and July 1968, the installation of early twentieth-century European paintings from MoMA and other collections acquired near mythic status. Velázquez finds that the exhibition’s reported attendance of 217,550 was almost certainly inflated in the Chilean press, and the show’s publicity and ongoing reputation as the first and most expensive, comprehensive, and attended exhibition of European modern art in Chilean history is, at the very least, distorted. Yet, the intricate and winding path that *De Cézanne a Miró* took from its inception to its canonization is what propels this “micro-history.” A case study of the exhibition’s Chilean sojourn, Velázquez’s article “uses...state and non-state sources to trace the effects of large-scale structures” (5), namely, the transnational network of political and cultural institutions that coalesced to create an impactful cultural event in “a pivotal year for connecting global and local forces across the decade” (23), and at a critical juncture in Chilean history and the Cold War in the Americas.

Basing his research on sources from seven governmental and institutional archives in the U.S. and Chile, as well as catalogues, newspapers, and magazines, Velázquez finds that the MoMA exhibition was “not solely a project of American imperialism” (5); rather, it came about through substantial collaboration among Chilean and U.S. interests. Moreover, the exhibition’s Chilean profile demonstrates an experimental impulse on the part of the show’s promoters to involve broad sectors of the public in the event, described by Velázquez as “the creation of a new programme for statebuilding based on the instrumentalization of local audiences” (5). Drawing substantially on Chilean historiography and scholarship on hemispheric American relations, such as the work of Ricardo Salvatore and Gilbert Joseph,<sup>1</sup> Velázquez’s article also takes part in a wave of recent

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<sup>1</sup> Ricardo D. Salvatore, Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniela Spenser, eds., *In from the Cold: Latin America’s New Encounter with the Cold War* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and

studies about the Cold War in the Americas and twentieth-century Pan American movements, which have sought to elaborate the political and cultural networks that supported exchanges in the arts, architecture, literature, design, and radio, as well as the impact that these programs had in diverse hemispheric and global locations.<sup>2</sup> Broadly speaking, this scholarship approaches the Cold War and U.S. hegemony through fine-grained and multilateral analysis, and it often draws attention to the contestatory and influential roles of artists and audiences in resisting or revising the scripts handed to them in the theatre of Cold War cultural diplomacy.

Velázquez's article admirably introduces a large cast of actors drawn from public and private cultural and political institutions in the U.S. and Chile, who collaborated in bringing DCAM to Santiago. The exhibition was embedded in a long tradition of U.S.-based Pan American cultural diplomacy in which MoMA was a key institutional contributor. By the late 1960s, the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-69) was administering an entropic Alliance for Progress, the U.S.-led effort envisioned by his predecessor, John F. Kennedy (1960-63), which sought to counter the appeal of the Cuban Revolution among Latin American societies through the distribution of foreign aid. As the decade drew to a close, MoMA administrators, who were confronted with growing anti-American sentiment in Latin America, looked to European rather than American art as basis of cultural exchange that would arouse little controversy among Latin American publics, while nevertheless communicating the "visual arts' civilising power" (2). In the pragmatic summary of Waldo Rasmussen, MoMA's executive director of the Department of Circulating Exhibits, "If we look around, modernism is our best option" (7).

Though skeptical of Alliance for Progress objectives in the face of increasing U.S. military interventions in Latin America, Chilean President Eduardo Frei Montalva (1964-70) apprehended the political value of hosting a high cultural event organized by MoMA which he could work to his advantage in an effort to counter national opposition movements. The arrival of the exhibition saw the Christian Democratic, social reform-minded Frei Montalva enter into a tacit alliance with his conservative anti-Communist counterpart, newspaper magnate Agustín Edwards, who financed 40% of DCAM and covered the exhibition glowingly in his influential newspaper, *El mercurio* (12). Meanwhile, Chilean diplomats and arts administrators, including ambassador to the U.S. Radomiro Tomich, cultural attaché to the U.S., Nemesio Atúnez, and director of the Instituto de Extensión de Artes Plásticas (IEAP) Luis Oyarzún, regarded the DCAM exhibition as an opportunity to open channels of communication with New York and other metropolitan centers regarding

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Ricardo D. Salvatore, eds., *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998); Ricardo D. Salvatore, *Imágenes de un imperio: Estados Unidos y las formas de representación de América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 2006).

<sup>2</sup>Among this recent work, see for example, Harris Feinsod, *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Countercultures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017); Claire F. Fox, *Making Art Panamerican: Cultural Policy and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo, y política* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2001); Robert Alexander González, *Designing Pan-America: U.S. Architectural Visions for the Western Hemisphere* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011); Patrick Iber, *Neither Peace Nor Freedom: the Cultural Cold War in Latin America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015); Tom McEnaney, *Acoustic Properties: Radio, Narrative, and the New Neighborhood of the Americas* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2017); Stephen M. Park, *The Pan American Imagination: Contested Visions of the Hemisphere in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014); and Olga U. Herrera, *American Interventions and Modern Art in South America* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2017).

the vitality of Chilean culture and to reclaim global prestige for Santiago's languishing Museo de Arte Contemporáneo. "MoMA Has Chosen Us," proclaimed an item in *El mercurio* (13). While MoMA provided an aspirational model for Chilean cultural administrators, exhibition sponsors and administrators subsidized admission and transportation to DCAM, cannily touting the democratic access that broad sectors of the population had to the magnificent event. The press repeatedly portrayed school children and workers, elites and dignitaries alike taking in the show. Echoing the Alliance for Progress's developmentalist agenda, sympathetic press accounts characterized people viewing modern art as demonstrating their yearning for modernity and modernization. A railroad worker, for example, was quoted in *Las últimas noticias* as stating, "seeing this painting make[s] us feel like we are in a different country. We have so much left to learn about the world" (16).

Other journalists and media outlets, however, observed all of this wonder with a jaundiced eye. Velázquez reproduces political cartoons and opinions from the leftist press that show some critics to have been well aware of DCAM's politically interested patronage and skeptical of the assumption that popular entrée to the exhibition could substitute for more thorough forms of democratic participation. The fact that Velázquez presents dissent from the left toward his article's conclusion reiterates his initial assertion that "the realm of culture became an increasingly important battleground" for the hearts and minds of Latin Americans (4). The implicit equation between aesthetic modernism and modernization articulated in the effusive press coverage of DCAM, as well as the fragile coalition sustained by Frei Montalva and Edwards, would soon be dramatically challenged through the 1970 presidential election of Salvador Allende, who swiftly implemented the social program known as the "Via Chilena al Socialismo" (Chilean Path to Socialism) (4).

The acerbic political cartoons about the exhibition reproduced in Velázquez's article invite other questions about the legacy of DCAM in Chile. The caricatures are critical both of the elites who promoted DCAM as well as the paintings themselves, which the cartoonists rendered as meaningless blotches or scribbles. Here is an opening for further research which would delve into the exhibition's content and reception by Chilean artists and distinct sectors of society. By the late 1960s, the works by Impressionists and the School of Paris that were deemed by MoMA to be safe for travel to Latin America had already been engaged by several generations of Chilean artists, who had participated in diverse vanguard movements, as well as surrealism, abstraction, and experimental aesthetics that emerged in the 1960s. The leftist political cartoons that appear in Velázquez's article are interesting in that they do not recognize the ways in which modernist aesthetics themselves had been embraced by artists on the left, often ones working from anti- or decolonial perspectives which did not equate modernism with modernization. The cartoons hint that committed art means painterly realism and "popular" art forms, which raises fascinating questions about the configuration of Chilean art worlds on the eve of Salvador Allende's election to the presidency.

Velázquez concludes his article with a brief anecdote that stands the well-worn trope of Chilean exceptionalism on its head by locating the birthplace of this idea within the matrix of Cold War inter-American relations, and specifically in the esteem that MoMA administrators held for Chile following the DCAM exhibition in Santiago. Velázquez describes a small reception held in 1969 at the home of the U.S. Ambassador to Chile, where guests viewed "Art in Embassies," an exhibition of abstract expressionist painting. That this show, featuring a "risky" U.S.-identified aesthetic, would travel to the Chilean ambassador's residence following the hyperbolic reception of DCAM, in the words of Velázquez, "not only confirms Chile's exceptionality regarding MoMA's artistic internationalism but also exposes the centrality that visual arts had in mediating strategic relations" (23).

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