

Critical Debates Concerning Latin American art and the 'Mainstream': a Brief History

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'Although the term 'mainstream' carries democratic reverberations, suggesting an open and majority-supported institution, it is in fact rather elitist, reflecting a specific social and economic class. In reality, 'mainstream' presumes a reduced group of cultural gatekeepers and represents a select nucleus of nations'.¹

Luis Camnitzer

In the last decade, there has been an ever increasing profile for Latin American art in the UK. Blockbuster exhibitions at the Tate Modern have included a number of Latin American artists,² major London auction houses such as Christie's are selling the works of Latin American artists for record breaking prices,³ and the art fair of Latin American art, PINTA, arrived in London for the first time in June 2010 and is set to continue.⁴ Instrumental to the increase in demand for Latin American art on the art market are the private collectors who buy artwork from commercial galleries and auction houses, and the public institutions who acquire, exhibit, promote, and legitimise such artwork.

¹ Camnitzer, Luis, 'Access to the Mainstream' in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.218

² <http://pintaart.com/2010london/exhibitors/leon.php> [Accessed 20.3.11]

³ The recent Post-War and Contemporary Art sale at Christie's King Street, London in February 2011 sold *Parede com Incisões a la Fontana II* by Brazilian artist Adriana Varejao's work for a price of £1,105,250. <http://www.christies.com/about/press-center/releases/pressrelease.aspx?pressreleaseid=4547> [Accessed 20.3.11]

⁴ <http://pintaart.com/2010london/exhibitors/leon.php> [Accessed 20.3.11]

The inclusion of Latin American art into the European/ Western art historical canon and 'mainstream' art market⁵ has followed many years of more or less complete exclusion from European and North American collecting institutions.⁶ The 1980's and 1990's, however, represented a moment of growing exposure for Latin American artists in Europe and the United States, which was also reflected by extensive academic and institutional critique published in English. This critique frequently referred to the categorization of 'Latin American art' and its role within the 'mainstream' European and Western canon. Such texts were often linked to public arts institutions, be it either in the form of a publication or an exhibition catalogue text, and their publication in English targeted an international audience outside Latin America. As we embark on a new moment for Latin American art in the 21st century, where Latin American art is increasingly included within 'mainstream' institutions as part of the global policy of 'geo-aesthetic revisionism',⁷ it is important to continue to refer to past debates in order to assess the on-going critical issues that exist today. The critical debates concerning Latin American art published in English in the 1980's and 1990's continue to provide a platform for institutions, private collectors, and students today to assess the complexities of the collection, display and sale of Latin American art in the 'mainstream' art system.

In this essay, I will first briefly introduce the context within which such critical debates were produced, and the background behind the seminal InIVA publication *Beyond the Fantastic*.⁸ I will then analyse the main issues such debates address, which principally concern the categorisation, exhibition and

⁵ The canon has been stated to be 'a term that covers the set of works of art that are thought, at a particular moment, to embody the peaks of Western civilisation...It can be argued that the major museums of the West act as the repositories of the canon'. Edwards, Richard (ed.), *Art and its histories: a reader*, New Haven, 1999, p.3

⁶ As Perez Barreiro highlights, since the 1930's, MoMA has held a great collection of Latin American art, donated primarily by the Rockefeller family. However, after 1943 when the Museum exhibited the Latin American Collection of MoMA, 'most of the collection returned to storage and has rarely seen the light of day since'. Pérez-Barreiro, Gabriel, 'The Accidental Tourist: American Collections of Latin American Art', in Adler, Phoebe, Howells, Tom, and Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos, *Contemporary art in Latin America*, London, 2010, p.177.

⁷ Barriandos, Joaquín, 'Geopolitics of Global Art: The Reinvention of Latin America as a Geoaesthetic Region' in Belting, Hans and Buddensieg, Andrea (eds.), *The global art world: audiences, markets, and museums*, p.98

⁸ *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, London: Institute of International Visual Arts (InIVA), 1995

wider market for Latin American art in the 'mainstream'. I will conclude by addressing more current critical discussions of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' of art from the region in today's 'mainstream', proposing that although the profile of Latin American art today has changed dramatically, many of the same debates regarding European/ Western superiority and influence on international art historical narratives still remain relevant.

'In the past decade there has been an enormous growth in the external recognition of a 'Latin American' art. Large international exhibitions and publications have attempted to categorize and define the existence of such a phenomenon. This shift in the concerns of the international art market has, however, only served to highlight the ambivalent position of many of the producers of culture within Latin America. The defining voice of the international 'Latin American Boom' has remained that of the outside observer'.⁹

Oriana Baddeley

The 1980's and early 1990's were recognized as an era of a 'Latin American boom' internationally, primarily referring to Europe and the United States.¹⁰ It was only in these years that the field of Latin American art started to be defined on the art market.¹¹ This 'boom' consisted of large international survey exhibitions, most notably *Art of the Fantastic: Latin America, 1920-1987* (1987) at the Indianapolis Museum of art, *Art in Latin America* at the Hayward Gallery, London (1989), and *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century* (1992) a Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) exhibition which toured Europe before concluding in New York.¹² The surge in museum activity for Latin American art in the United States during the mid-1980's has been widely

⁹ Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, London: Institute of International Visual Arts (inIVA), 1995, p.9

¹⁰ Brett, Guy, *Transcontinental: an investigation of reality*, p.5

¹¹ Perez-Barreiro, Gabriel, 'The Accidental Tourist: American Collections of Latin American Art' in Adler, Phoebe, Howells, Tom, and Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos, *Contemporary art in Latin America*, London : Black Dog, 2010, p.178

¹² Ibid.

linked to the changing political stance of the United States towards Latin America in an age of heightened global integration.¹³ In terms of the commercial art market, the sale of Latin American art on the secondary market in the United States was seen as a 'discovery'¹⁴ by the main auction houses Sotheby's and Christie's, and it soon became 'a strategic economic asset on the market'¹⁵ with record-breaking sales in 1989 and 1990.¹⁶

The blockbuster exhibitions in the 1980's and early 1990's were often accompanied by large catalogue publications surveying and critiquing art from the region.¹⁷ Previous to this, little had been written in English about contemporary Latin American art,¹⁸ often considered a peripheral area of research in the Euro-centric art historical academy.¹⁹ However, as numerous articles, books and exhibitions outside Latin America 'attempted to give definition to the diverse cultural output of this complex political and geographic entity',²⁰ critical debates surrounding the field of Latin American art began to be published internationally by academics, curators and arts institutions. As Mary-Anne Martin, the founder of the Latin American Art department at Sotheby's auction house²¹ stated, 'the eighties created many questions, the nineties are trying to produce some answers'.²² A seminal publication of the 1990's was Gerardo Mosquera's *Beyond the Fantastic*,²³ which consisted of

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.180

¹⁵ Belting, Hans and Buddensieg, Andrea (eds.), *The global art world : audiences, markets, and museums*, Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2009, p.100

¹⁶ Perez-Barreiro, Gabriel, 'The Accidental Tourist: American Collections of Latin American Art', p.180

¹⁷ Barnett, Holly, 'Review: Latin America in Art History and Criticism', *Art Journal*, Volume 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), p.97

¹⁸ Baddeley, Oriana, and Fraser, Valerie, *Drawing the Line: Art and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latin America*, London and New York: Verso, 1989, p. 7

¹⁹ Sullivan, Edward J., *Latin American art in the Twentieth Century*, London: Phaidon Press, 1996, p. 8

²⁰ Baddeley, Oriana, (ed.), *New art from Latin America: Expanding the continent*, Volume 9, Issue 7, London: Academy Editions, 1994, p.7

²¹ Belting, Hans and Buddensieg, Andrea (eds.), *The global art world*, p.104

²² Mary-Anne Martin in Baddeley, Oriana (ed.), *New art from Latin America: Expanding the continent*, 1994, p.xi

²³ Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995

Latin American art criticism never previously published outside Latin America in English.²⁴

*Beyond the Fantastic*²⁵ explores debates concerning Latin American art and identity, multiculturalism and difference. Such debates were pertinent at the time in both Europe and the United States, where a wave of discussion regarding globalisation theories and the politics of identity was taking place in response to increasingly 'multicultural' societies'.²⁶ Institutions such as InIVA supported 'difference' and 'diversity' in the arts,²⁷ and these were also the values being promoted at the time by UK arts funding institutions such as the Arts Council.²⁸ The 'post-colonial' discussions which InIVA engaged with aimed to address the historical legacy of 'modernism' as a Euro-centric, totalising style and art historical canon.²⁹ The 'modern' canon of art was believed to have constituted subordinate relationships between the 'Centre' or the 'Self' as the dominating, Euro-centric, colonial power of the West, sitting in opposition to the non-Western or outsider geographies which became constituted as 'the Periphery' or 'the Other'.³⁰ InIVA was based on the values of 'negotiation', 'hybridization', 'de-centering', 'margins' and 'appropriation',³¹

²⁴ Barnett, Holly, 'Review: Latin America in Art History and Criticism', *Art Journal*, Volume 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), p.97

²⁵ InIVA Publications:

http://www.iniva.org/publications_shop/voices_on_art_amp_culture/beyond_the_fantastic
[Accessed 28.4.11]

²⁶ Ponce de León, Carolina, 'Random Trails for the Noble Savage' in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.225. See also Perez-Barreiro, Gabriel, 'The Accidental Tourist: American Collections of Latin American Art', p.178

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.23. Tawadros, Gilane, (ed.), *Changing states : contemporary art and ideas in an era of globalisation*, London : The Institute of International Visual Arts (InIVA), 2004, p.10. The discourse of cultural identity and difference which was discussed internationally in the 1980's and 1990's, however, was not a new discussion in Latin America. Gerardo Mosquera highlights how, 'Paradoxically, new critics are questioning old notions of identity just when the issue has become relevant to the West as a result of multiculturalism.' Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.10

²⁸ See: Khan, Naseem, *Towards a Greater Diversity: Results and legacy of the Arts Council of England's cultural diversity action plan*, London: Arts Council England, 2002

http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/towards-a-greater-diversity-results-and-legacy-of-the-arts-council-of-englands-cultural-diversity-action-plan/ [Accessed 8.9.11]

²⁹ As Walter Mignolo states, 'Modernity is the name for the historical process in which Europe began its progress toward world hegemony. It carries a darker side, coloniality.' Mignolo, Walter D., *The Idea of Latin America*, Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2005, p.xi. See also Camnitzer, Luis, 'Access to the Mainstream' in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.218.

³⁰ Amor, Mónica, 'Cartographies: Exploring the Limitations of a Curatorial Paradigm', in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.248.

³¹ Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.33

and *Beyond the Fantastic* would address such issues in terms of Latin American art.

One of the principal discussions which was addressed in Latin American art criticism of the 1980's and 1990's was the term itself 'Latin American art'. This term had been used frequently to define, focus and limit the discourse concerning art from the region as its international exposure and related scholarship increased.³² In terms of the commercial art market, the marking of 'Latin American art' as a collecting category in the United States provided a clear definition of a vast region with a common heritage.³³

However, the categorisation of 'Latin American art' and a 'Latin American artist' was deemed to be increasingly problematic in terms of the region's cultural identity.³⁴ The term in its essence was considered to have direct connotations with the 'colonial' identity of the continent and a 'posited set of political values'.³⁵ As Mignolo describes it, 'Latin' America is 'an imperial and colonial invention'.³⁶ The term was believed to relate to the 'classificatory mania of modernity',³⁷ a reductive and totalizing term which was 'misused to denote common cultural heritage'.³⁸ Its categorization also suggested a 'dangerous ghettoisation' and exclusion from the mainstream Western art canon,³⁹ which has directly inferred notions of 'otherness' and 'difference'. It

³² Baddeley, Oriana, and Fraser, Valerie, *Drawing the Line: Art and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latin America*, p. 7

³³ Mary-Anne Martin in Belting, Hans and Buddensieg, Andrea (eds.), *The global art world*, p.104 . The 'horizontal' grouping of the region, rather than a 'vertical' country by country strategy, was said to have 'come at an opportune time, breathing new life into a market that was struggling for definition'.

³⁴ Baddeley, Oriana, (ed.), *New art from Latin America*, 1994, p.7

³⁵ Baddeley, Oriana, and Fraser, Valerie, *Drawing the Line: Art and Cultural Identity in Contemporary Latin America*, p. 7. Also reference here to Helena Chávez's argument in Chavez McGregor, Helena, *Categories of the Other*, Class Text, 2011

³⁶ Mignolo, Walter D., *The Idea of Latin America*, p.xi

³⁷ Amor, Mónica, 'Cartographies: Exploring the Limitations of a Curatorial Paradigm', in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.248

³⁸ Sullivan, Edward J., *Latin American art in the Twentieth Century*, 1996, p. 9. Edward Lucie-Smith's highlights that 'Latin America' and 'Latin American' are terms 'exceptionally difficult to define', due to the geography and ethnic mixes throughout the continent and even within each country. He refers here to the theories of Colombian critic Marta Traba and the division of countries in Latin America according to migration waves. Edward Lucie-Smith in Day, Holliday T., and Sturges, Hollster, *Art of the Fantastic : Latin America, 1920-1987*, (Exh. cat), Indianapolis: Indianapolis Museum of Art, 1987, p.15.

³⁹ Baddeley, Oriana, (ed.), *New art from Latin America*, 1994, p.7

has been stated that, 'The homogenous category of 'Latin American art' simultaneously neutralizes both the interior complexity of its expressive registers, of its cultural, historical, and social processes, and the strategies it exercises to present and re-present itself in relation to the centre'.⁴⁰

Another critical discussion regarded the innately Euro-centric/Western attitude of 'mainstream' institutions in Europe and the United States and the international curatorial strategies employed in large-scale exhibitions of Latin American art. Gerardo Mosquera vehemently dismisses the mainstream market as an instrument of Euro-centric, Western power, 'a centralised system of museums, galleries, publications, collectors and market networks'.⁴¹ The curators within such a system were considered partly responsible for the continued degradation of Latin American art as an outsider to the European/Western 'mainstream'. Mosquera states that, 'At their convenience curating cultures select, legitimate, promote and purchase'.⁴² He refers to the continued colonizing mentality of curators from the West, stating that they act as 'the postcolonial explorers, who penetrate our urban 'hearts of darkness' in order to scout out their wealth'.⁴³ The old colonial narratives of 'discovery' continued to be promoted in the geography of art.

The all-encompassing survey format of the large-scale exhibitions in the 1980's was particularly criticised. It was seen to encourage the 'homogenization of another reality',⁴⁴ inevitably over-simplifying art from the region. Such exhibitions stressed the difference between the non-Western and Western canons of art, emphasizing the 'polarized relationship between 'there' and 'here', between 'they' and 'we'.⁴⁵ The exploration and promotion of a 'Latin American' cultural identity were said to arouse a 'confused collection of stereotypes', in which are included the clichés of colourful, emotional,

⁴⁰ Ponce de León, Carolina, 'Random Trails for the Noble Savage' in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.226

⁴¹ Mosquera, Gerardo, 'Some Problems in Transcultural Curating', in Fisher, Jean, *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, 1994, p.134

⁴² Ibid. p.135

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Brett, Guy, *Transcontinental: an investigation of reality*, p.5

⁴⁵ Ibid.

fantastic, magical and chaotic.⁴⁶ It was stated that, 'Latin American art, shown within the standards of modernist or pre-modernist conception (both ideologically charged), is recognized for its multiple exoticisms: sexual, social, ritual, or political- the preindustrial paradise of magical realism and postcolonial condition'.⁴⁷ Although art from the region was being included into the Western canon, rather than being similarly accepted as 'modern', it in fact became 'the alternative projection of modernity based on the irrational, the primitive, and the unconscious'.⁴⁸ Mari Carmen Ramírez believed that '...*Art of the Fantastic* [referring to the Indianapolis Museum of Art exhibition in 1987] best exemplifies the tendency towards reductionism and homogenization that underlay the representations of Latin American identity in these exhibitions'.⁴⁹

Survey exhibitions such as *Art of the Fantastic* also raised questions regarding the authenticity of the narrative of Latin American art and its relationship with European modernist movements.⁵⁰ Latin American art was often described as an offshoot copy of European tendencies, without having any cultural agency of its own. Edward Lucie-Smith's catalogue essay in *Art of the Fantastic* comments on 'what Latin American artists have made of North American and European models...[and]...the transformations these styles have undergone'.⁵¹ He claims that just as 'Colonial artists changed and re-handled the compositions they found in imported prints; contemporary Latin American painters and sculptors have just as little hesitation about adapting what they find in modern reproductions'.⁵² He even says that North American or European critics may be 'disconcerted and perhaps angered' by such

⁴⁶ Baddeley, Oriana, (ed.), *New art from Latin America*, 1994, p.10. These terms reflect the stereotypes of both the content of the region's art production and the mythologized sense of the continent itself.

⁴⁷ Ponce de León, Carolina, 'Random Trails for the Noble Savage' in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.226

⁴⁸ Ramírez, Mari Carmen, 'Beyond "The Fantastic": Framing Identity in U. S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art', in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.232

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.234. Ramírez states that identity was conceived of 'in terms of a primal, ahistorical and instinctual essence that was presumed to convey the peculiarities of the Latin American character by allowing itself to be expressed through art'. *Ibid.*, p.235

⁵⁰ Ramírez, Mari Carmen, 'Beyond "The Fantastic": Framing Identity in U. S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art', p.234

⁵¹ Edward Lucie-Smith in Day, Holliday T., and Sturges, Hollister, *Art of the fantastic : Latin America, 1920-1987*, 1987, p.15

⁵² *Ibid.*

transformations.⁵³ Such commentary was considered to infer that internationally Latin American art was still derivative of European or North American forms,⁵⁴ and the placing of a Latin American cultural identity within the parameters of Western modernity in such exhibitions was deemed to contribute further to the production of reductive stereotypes.⁵⁵

The presence of Latin American artists in the 'mainstream' began to change from the late 1990's. As Joaquín Barriendos has explained, '[t]he 1990's saw the proliferation of a series of urban global phenomena that deeply modified the geographic economy and the symbolic configurations of the art system'.⁵⁶ The 21st century signalled a change in terms of 'increasingly permeable polarities' between 'local/international, contextual/global, centres/peripheries, and West/non West'.⁵⁷ The increased waves of international migration continued to change populations, making simple geographical divisions between the European/Western countries and the non-Western increasingly difficult.⁵⁸

The internationalization of art circuits, with new high profile international survey exhibitions such as the Venice, Istanbul, and Sao Paulo Biennials, was beginning to draw attention to the important contributions that young artists

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ramírez, Mari Carmen, 'Beyond "The Fantastic": Framing Identity in U. S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art', p.234. The critical debate surrounding the notion of copy, imitation, and appropriation of a European style has consistently been discussed in post-colonial discourse. See Schwartz, R., 'National by Imitation', in Beverly, J., Oviedo, J., and Aroma, M., *The postmodernism debate in Latin America*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1995). Such theory often references the Brazilian aesthetic movement of the 1920s, *Antropofagia* (Anthropophagy), as an example of the rejection of the appropriation of European influences. Mosquera, Gerardo, 'Against Latin American Art', in Adler, Phoebe, Howells, Tom, and Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos, *Contemporary art in Latin America*, 2010, p.15

⁵⁵ Ramírez, Mari Carmen, 'Beyond "The Fantastic": Framing Identity in U. S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art', p.234

⁵⁶ Barriendos, Joaquín, 'Geopolitics of Global Art: The Reinvention of Latin America as a Geo-aesthetic Region', p.98. Barriendos states that this phenomena 'could be summed up as 1) the massification of cultural tourism 2) the globalization of art museums 3) the *biennialization* of international exhibitions and 4) the transnational corporatization of contemporary art'.

⁵⁷ Mosquera, Gerardo, 'Against Latin American Art' in Adler, Phoebe, Howells, Tom, and Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos, *Contemporary art in Latin America*, London, 2010, p.12.

⁵⁸ Globalization and internationalism today has led to 'a state of perplexity and uncertainty' which cannot be reduced to clear-cut terms. Belting, Hans and Buddensieg, Andrea (eds.), *The global art world*, p.280.

from Latin America were making to contemporary art practice.⁵⁹ Major public arts institutions that had previously not been exposed to such work were becoming familiar with contemporary Latin American artists. Tate, for example, began to respond to this increasingly 'global' environment for contemporary art.⁶⁰ Their curators were travelling out of Europe and going to international exhibitions such as the Sao Paulo biennial⁶¹ and Documenta, and becoming familiar with artists who they might never have known before. Other arts institutions in the UK also reacted to the growing international circuit of contemporary art, such as the Art Fund, which in 2007 launched Art Fund International 'in order to encourage UK museums and galleries to build outstanding collections of international contemporary art',⁶² reaching further than Europe and North America.

It has been commented that in the United States, 'the commercial gallery circuit has been one of the places where the long-yearned-for dissolution of the essentialist category of "Latin American Art" has effectively taken place'.⁶³ More and more artists were able to become part of the 'mainstream' through gallery representation, and artists such as Gabriel Orozco and Felix Gonzalez-Torres, whose work was not framed as specifically 'Latin American', could break into the market as 'global' artists of international appeal.⁶⁴ 'There was a sense of an 'international style' that was supported by the biennial circuit.⁶⁵ Unlike in the past where many Latin American artists 'were inclined toward 'otherising' themselves, in a paradox of self-exoticism...new artists have broken away from the marriage between art and national or regional IDs'.⁶⁶

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Notes of Taína Caragol interview with Tanya Barson, Curator of International Art, Tate Modern, 9 November 2002, *Latin American and the UK Research Project*, University of Essex

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² <http://www.artfund.org/grants/art-fund-international> [Accessed 9.8.11]

⁶³ Perez-Barreiro, Gabriel, 'The Accidental Tourist: American Collections of Latin American Art' in Adler, Phoebe, Howells, Tom, and Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos, *Contemporary art in Latin America*, 2010, p.179

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.180

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Mosquera, Gerardo, 'Against Latin American Art', in Adler, Phoebe, Howells, Tom, and Kotsopoulos, Nikolaos, *Contemporary art in Latin America*, 2010, p.20-22

With increased inclusion within the 'global' art circuits, do the issues previously dealt with by critics in the field in the 1980's and 1990's still apply? The recent conference at the Museum of Latin American Art (MOLAA), Los Angeles, '*Between Theory and Practice: Rethinking Latin American Art in the 21st Century*', March 2011 highlighted that the discussion concerning the categorization, exhibition and collection of Latin American art on the international art circuit continues to exist today. Despite increased international dialogue and exchange, the issues of regional difference, centre and periphery narratives, and restricted access to the mainstream still appear to be pertinent. Are their underlying issues which have not yet been resolved?

Joaquín Barriendos states that the 'geopolitical revisionism' taking place in museums today appear to fail due to 'a Eurocentric geo-epistemological point of departure, a universalistic understanding of what global art and world art history should be'.⁶⁷ Similarly, at the MOLAA conference, José Falconi explained how Latin American art in the European and North American 'mainstream' has gone from one of extreme paradigm as an exoticised 'other', valued for its 'difference' to the European and North American art historical canon,⁶⁸ to the other extreme that collecting from the region is 'only about Latin American art in tune with all European/ North American art practice throughout 20th century, stressing a smooth continuity'.⁶⁹ This second scenario, however, only means that 'one extreme paradigm has been replaced with the exact opposite', without changing any of the underlying Euro-centric narratives.⁷⁰

67 Barriendos, Joaquín, 'Geopolitics of Global Art: The Reinvention of Latin America as a Geoaesthetic Region', p.98

68 'Latin American art, shown within the standards of modernist or premodernist conception (both ideologically charged), is recognized for its multiple exoticisms: sexual, social, ritual, or political- the preindustrial paradise of magical realism and postcolonial condition'. Ponce de León, Carolina, 'Random Trails for the Noble Savage' in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.226

69 Falconi, José, 'Latin American Art as Center Stage: or How to Make Sure We Never Lose the Asterisk Completely(*)' in *Between Theory and Practice: Rethinking Latin American art in the 21st Century*', Conference at Museum of Latin American Art, Los Angeles (MOLAA), 11-13th March, 2011, <http://www.molaa.com/Art/Exhibitions/upcoming-exhibitions/Between-Theory-and-Practice-Rethinking-Latin-American-Art--in-the-21st-Century.aspx> [Accessed 8.9.11]

70 Ibid.

Tate, for example, is finally including non-Western geographies in its traditionally Western canon of art in an attempt to be more global, more inclusive and less homogenous.⁷¹ However, this continues to be framed from a European/ Western perspective, building connections with an already existing collection which primarily consists of artworks from Europe and North America. The focus on an 'international language'⁷² in fact continues to exclude those artists who do not comply with the 'mainstream' tastes of the museum, for example, Tate's focus on minimal and conceptual art and its legacies. The new 'global' concept often overlooks significant local contexts, histories, and realities, and therefore obscures an accurate reading of art from the region. As Gerardo Mosquera states, 'the problem remains of the possible exclusion or undervaluation of significant poetics simply for not responding to the codes legitimated at an international scale'.⁷³

Although recent criticism has stated that 'Latin American art is being valued more as an art without surnames...a participant in a general practice that does not by necessity show its context',⁷⁴ there continues to be a constructed idea of what 'Latin American art' is. Whether it is Frida Kahlo or Helio Oiticica, the idea continues to be pinned on a select number of key figures. The public does not often get the opportunity to see the local diversity, context and depth of the art that a great number of artists in Latin America are creating.

The continued 'power struggle'⁷⁵ of Latin American art and the 'mainstream' continues to concern practical issues and the lack of physical access that artists outside the traditional canon may have to the 'mainstream' market. Guy Brett has written that 'cultural booms don't change fundamental divisions

71 Demos, T.J., 'The Tate Effect', in Belting, Hans and Buddensieg, Andrea (eds.), *The global art world: audiences, markets, and museums*, Ostfildern, 2009, p.256

72 The institutional policies through which 'international art' is integrated into the 'mainstream' relies on 'inclusion' above valuing 'difference' and 'diversity' in the arts. Tate's policy of inclusion and integration reflected a political change in the UK from the 1990's to 2000's where values of 'difference' and 'diversity' were exchanged for 'social cohesion' and 'inclusion'. Hall, Stuart, *The Changing Landscape of "Cultural Diversity" in the Visual Arts*, London: Iniva, 2008. See also Montes, Silvia, 'Beyond Multiculturalism: A Comparison of Latin American Art in Britain and the USA', p.575

73 Mosquera, Gerardo, 'Against Latin American art', p.18

74 Mosquera, Gerardo, 'Against Latin American Art', p.20

75 Mosquera, Gerardo, 'Some Problems in Transcultural Curating', in Fisher, Jean, *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, 1994, p.133

and inequalities...in differences of cultural infrastructure and therefore the possibility of producing art'.⁷⁶ Many cultural circuits in Central and South America still remain under-resourced and in this way inhibited to participate further in international, 'mainstream' dialogue and exchange.⁷⁷ In this way, artists from the region continue to be excluded from the global art circuit because they are unable to travel, or do not have the necessary funding to make European or 'mainstream' art market connections.

To conclude, Jose Falconi reminds us that we should not, as critics and specialists in the field, let excitement at initial changes in the integration of Latin American art and the 'mainstream' make us forget the narratives and discourses still at work.⁷⁸ As Latin American art becomes more and more included in the 'mainstream' art historical canon, it is a more crucial time than ever for critics, collectors, curators to continue to ask questions.⁷⁹ Critics are no less guilty of legitimising certain artists and not others, for they also want to establish themselves and be supported on the 'international mainstream' and therefore often respond to the tastes of the public institutions. Critics should not only question public institutions but also question themselves, their own biases, and their own tastes.

The context in which the critical discussions of the 1980's and 1990's grew has undoubtedly changed in the 21st century. The language of 'difference' and 'exclusion' has shifted to that of 'inclusion' and a 'global' language. It is evident that the 'porous times of migrations, communications, trans-cultural chemistries, and re-articulations of power',⁸⁰ signal an exciting time for art from Latin America and no longer is it essential to talk about Latin America in terms of its 'periphery', outsider status, excluded from the wider 'mainstream'. In future years, 'It seems likely that the art market will be redistributed more

⁷⁶ Brett, Guy, *Transcontinental: an investigation of reality*, p.5

⁷⁷ MOCA New Methods Symposium, Museum of Contemporary Arts, North Miami
<http://www.mocanomi.org/new-methods/> [Accessed 05.05.11]

⁷⁸ Falconi, José, 'Latin American Art as Center Stage: or How to Make Sure We Never Lose the Asterisk Completely(*)' in *Between Theory and Practice: Rethinking Latin American art in the 21st Century*, Conference at Museum of Latin American Art, Los Angeles (MOLAA)

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

evenly on a larger scale around the world, based on knowledge, wealth, the competing intermediaries who promote and sell art, and above all, artistic talent'.⁸¹ However, the critical discussions concerning the notion of 'Latin American art' continue.

While social, cultural, and economic differences between nations and continents remain, and collections in Europe and the United States continue to 'include' Latin American art with European/North American art as their starting point, it seems unlikely that the discourse surrounding art from the region and its inclusion into the 'mainstream' will cease to exist.⁸² It therefore continues to be useful for both 'mainstream' critics and institutions to look backwards at past discourses as well as forwards. In this case, it would be worth considering art from Latin America as Monica Amor stated in *Beyond the Fantastic*: 'It is not a matter of dismissing issues related to cultural identity but of ceasing to treat them in general terms, as abstractions, and of moving towards a closer reading of the images, objects and performative aspects of our cultures'.⁸³

⁸¹ Goodwin, James, The international art markets : the essential guide for collectors and investors / consultant editor, London ; Philadelphia, 2008, p.2

⁸² As Luis Camnitzer highlights, 'Subordinate and peripheral cultures will continue to maintain their underprivileged status as long as their own and specific markets remain underprivileged'. Camnitzer, Luis, 'Access to the Mainstream' in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.220

⁸³ Ramírez, Mari Carmen, 'Beyond "The Fantastic": Framing Identity in U. S. Exhibitions of Latin American Art', in Mosquera, Gerardo (ed.), *Beyond the Fantastic*, 1995, p.248