

Art/Histories: Migrations, Transculturality & The Idea of Latin America

Conference of the Research Group “Art Production and Art Theory in the Age of Global Migration”

Universität Zürich, Lateinamerika-Zentrum Zürich



Recently, migration in a Latin American context has drawn a lot of international attention. Central American “transmigrants” on their way up north are often confronted with drug cartels, human traffickers, and corrupt police forces immobilizing them at what frequently becomes a tragic turning point on their voyage – the Mexico-United States border. The pictures conveyed by the media coverage of their struggles are contrasted and broadened by an increasing number of artistic modes of expression addressing the subject both north and south of the “political equator” (Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman). The ‘border’ has become emblematic of contemporary migrant movements, and a source of both real politics and artistic positions concerning the inclusion or exclusion of Latin-/America.

In spite of the impactful US-Mexico wall project, transculturality remains a historical fact in both Americas represented in image and art practices. Since pre-colonial times, transculturality and migration in Latin America have been forms of cultural exchange reflecting power relations and processes of appropriation. Moche culture iconographies, for example, were culturally assimilated by the dominant Inka, and the Codex Mendoza shows the Aztec myth of origin as a travel movement symbolized by small foot prints.

With the ‘discovery’ and colonial submission of the South American continent, migrant image practices acquired a new dimension. The colonial exploitation process triggered a “cycle of money and art” involving intercontinental slave trafficking, and a global trade with mass produced baroque and sacral paintings (Das Potosí-Prinzip. Koloniale Bildproduktion in der globalen Ökonomie. Exh.-Cat. Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Cologne 2010).



In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Latin America was a main destination of European emigration and exile for artists who initiated an intensive transatlantic artistic exchange. Today, the continent is marked by innumerable internal migration movements caused by political conflict as in Venezuela and Colombia, or by economic recessions. These movements are increasingly becoming the subject of artistic expression. Fred Ramos has captured caravans of young migrants in aesthetically appealing and disquieting photographs, and Christa Cowrie has portrayed Guatemalan migrants in southern Mexico fleeing their country's dictatorship in the 1980s. The ways art projects are conceived today often reflect transculturally entangled migratory movements: Burcu Dogramaci and Helene Roth identify photography as the medium of migration (Dogramaci/Roth 2019), and Estudio Teddy Cruz + Fonna Forman develops artistic architecture in the border region of San Diego-Tijuana. A critical discussion of modern and contemporary conceptions of art as an occidentalist extension of colonial power relations as described in "aesthesis decolonial" (Vasquez Barrera 2015) casts a light on the migration of concepts and ideas about art (Bal 2002).

Migration should therefore be understood as an activity that generates transculturality. In this vein, the conference suggests a perspective on the various concepts of migration and transculturality that stresses the obvious and complex relationship between both phenomena. In the context of migration, we understand transculturality as a vantage point to address conflict, incommensurability, and specific forms of appropriation in transcultural processes of exchange, including the power relations that accompany such processes.

The conference seeks to critically discuss and theoretically question human migration as a mode of travel for ideas, forms, and iconographies. Based on case studies, we aim to examine the 'migration of images' – the recognizable continuity of aesthetic formulas and 'anthropological imagery constants' across time and space – and its applicability in the Latin American context. The conference seeks to historicize the "Idea of Latin America" (Mignolo 2005) in art, and critically question it from a perspective informed by transculturality and migration. We will put a special focus on trans-historical perspectives.

Conception and Organization:

Dr. Pauline Bachmann, Universität Zürich

Dr. Miriam Oesterreich, Technische Universität Darmstadt



Universität
Zürich^{UZH}

Lateinamerika-Zentrum Zürich



MODE UND
ÄSTHETIK



Research Group

Art Production
and Art Theory
in the Age of
Global Migration

Program

Kunsthistorisches Institut
Universität Zürich
Raum RAA-G-01
Rämistrasse 59
CH-8001 Zürich

Thursday, 5 March 2020

- 17-18 Conference Opening Lecture
Prof. Dr. Alexandra Karentzos (Technische Universität Darmstadt)
Reframing Migration and Transculturality. Theoretical Approaches and Art Practices in Latin America
Moderation: Dr. Miriam Oesterreich
- 18 Opening Reception & Video Screening

Friday, 6 March 2020

- 9.30-10 Introduction
Dr. Miriam Oesterreich (Technische Universität Darmstadt)/
Dr. Pauline Bachmann (Universität Zürich)
- 10-10.45 Dr. Ursula Grünenwald (Goethe-Universität Frankfurt)
Displacement. Images of Indigenous Women in Guatemala Since the 1980s
- 10.45-11 Coffee Break
- 11-11.45 Pablo Santa Olalla (Universitat de Barcelona)
From the 'mendicant artist' (1972) to *Les voyages de Ginzburg* (1972-1982).
Carlos Ginzburg's conceptualist critique of mobility in the *Jet Age*
- 11.45-12.30 Fortunata Calabro
Precarious Life
- 12.30-14 Lunch
- 14-14.45 Dr. Laura Karp Lugo (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München)
Exile Sociability and Artistic Networks in Buenos Aires at the Beginning of the 20th Century
- 14.45-15.30 Prof. Dr. Martin Schieder (Universität Leipzig)
Lo que pasa a bordo? Lo que pasa en el mundo? Die Überfahrt der S.S. Sinaia 1939 nach Mexiko
- 15.30-16 Coffee Break



- 16-16.45 Dr. Emily Engel
The Portrait as Itinerant Icon in Revolutionary South America
- 16.45-17.45 Keynote
Dr. Lisa Andrew (University of Wollongong):
Modified Fruit: Weaving a Transcultural Practice Through Leaving, Returning
and about Being from Elsewhere
Moderation: Dr. Pauline Bachmann
- 18 Dinner
- 19.30 Vernissage at „La Cápsula“ art space

Saturday, 7 March 2020

- 10-10.45 Dr. Hanna Büdenbender (Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken)
Landscape of Migration: Photographic Discourses of the US-American-Mexican
Border Region since 1847
- 10.45-11 Coffee Break
- 11-12 Keynote
Prof. Dr. David Taylor (University of Arizona, Tucson)
Border, Boundary, Frontier: Marking Change Over Time
Moderation: Dr. Miriam Oesterreich
- 12-13.30 Lunch
- 13.30-14.14 Round Table Discussion
Dr. Miriam Oesterreich/Dr. Pauline Bachmann/Prof. Dr. Paula Barreiro
López/Prof. Dr. Liliana Gómez/Prof. Dr. Tristan Weddigen (mind map by María
Ordoñez)
- 14.30-16 Internal AG Meeting

With the friendly assistance of Lateinamerika-Zentrum Zürich and Brazilian Studies at UZH

Images:

Codex Boturini, Emigration from Aztlan, ca. 1530-1541, Museo Nacional de Antropología, Mexico City, source:
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tira-1.jpg>

Judi Werthein: Brinco/Jump, 2005, Oakland Museums of California, source:
<http://collections.museumca.org/?q=collection-item/201161>