

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE

LATIN AMERICAN VISUAL ARTS

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PAINTING

Overview Painting in Latin America extends from the pre-history long before the emergence of the pyramid-building forgers of civilizations, the Maya, Aztec, and Inca. The earliest inhabitants of Latin America painted in the caves they lived and practiced religion in. Later, painting became a form of communication (hieroglyphics and pictograms). After that, it was used to communicate value systems, beliefs, and practices. Finally, art came full circle as it sought to deconstruct and destabilize a system of beliefs and aesthetics that it had, in earlier times, sought to unite church, state, and the hearts of men and women. Latin American art has both inspired and followed European traditions, even into the most contemporary art.

PRECONQUEST

Cave paintings: Cueva de los Manos (Santa Cruz, Argentina) 13,000 – 9,000 years ago. Stenciled hand paintings (mainly left hands), 9,000 years old. Also, sun, geometric shapes, hunting scenes.

Petroglyphs: Pedra Furada, northeast Brazil. Iron oxide pigment, animals, hunters, geometric shapes. Carved 9,000 years ago. Altavista, Pacific coast of Mexico. Carved by the Tecoxquines (2300 – 2000 BCE). 56 petroglyphs representing rains, crops, religious rites. The petroglyphs in Checta, Peru feature animal, human, geometrical shapes.

Maya: The painting of the Maya was often expressed through their hieroglyphics, which were painted in their codices.

Moche: Predating the Incas, the Moche created elaborately decorated ceramics. Very little was known about Moche life except for their pyramids until the 1980s when explorers happened upon untouched tombs. In them, they found elaborate murals that depict everyday life. The ceramics are also painted. What is unique about the ceramics is that more than 500 are explicitly sexual and display not only giant genitals, but also human figures engaged in sexual acts, including intercourse between heterosexuals, intercourse between human females, intercourse between females and mythical creatures.

Inca: Incorporated painting in articles for daily life as well as for religious ceremonies. The dedicated a great deal of work painting with ceramics. Woven art, while not painting, also created meaning through colorful patterns that could be found in the textiles they created. The geometric shapes and colors had symbolic meaning. The finely woven textiles were used as currency.

Aztecs: The Aztecs painted to communicate, and much of their painting was in the form of brightly colored and detailed pictograms which appear in the Codices.

Colonial (Early Modern)

Indochristian Art: Arts of the Mission Schools: When the Spanish and Portuguese established missions in Latin America, their objective was to convert the Amerindians. At the same time, they needed to construct missions, churches, chapels, and other buildings. In using the converted Amerindians, a great fusion of indigenous and European traditions occurred. The Catholic priests brought in architects and artists from Europe, but they could not complete their work without the help of the local artisans. Indochristian art often incorporates the techniques of carving, sculpting, and uses the bright colors of the indigenous art.

Cuzco School: Cuzco, which was built on the foundations of a great Incan religious center, became known as the first center of European-influenced painting in the Americas. The Quechua artists, under that tutelage of European artists, became masters of the Andean Baroque, and developed their own ornate decorative styles. In addition, the artists included uniquely Andean elements, such as documenting the meeting of Atahualpa and Francisco Pizarro. Artists included Guaman Poma de Ayala, Jose Manso de Velasco, and Vicente Alban.

Casta Paintings: In eighteenth-century New Spain, artists often painted portraits that included placed the subjects within racial categories (castas). The titles of the paintings would record the racial category as well as the names; for example, the Peruvian casta painting entitled *Mestizo, Mestiza, Mestizo* which depicted a married couple and their child. Casta paintings were popular until the Nineteenth Century, when legal racial categories were abolished.

Botanical Drawings: Because so many of the Europeans arriving in the New World wished to chronicle their discoveries, there as a surge in still lifes and sketches that carefully depicted the fauna and flora. Many discoveries were made by such artists. Perhaps the most dramatic was that of John Lloyd Stephens, who, while drawing sketches of the flora, fauna, and landscape, discovered that the small hills were really vegetation-covered Maya ruins. Other examples include still lifes of fruits, painted by an Ecuadorian artist.

Art of Scientific Inquiry: In addition to still life paintings and sketches of flora and fauna, painters such as the Dutch-born Brazilian painter, Albert Eckhout painted detailed ethnographic representations of Brazil's inhabitants, still lifes of flora and fauna, and depictions of indigenous (Tupi) dance traditions. Painted in the tradition of Flemish realism, Eckhout's paintings provide valuable records of social life, flora, fauna, and ethnography in colonial Brazil. Frans Post was another painter who chronicled life in Dutch Brazil. Post was well-known for his sweeping landscapes.

Artisan and decorative painting: In a fusion of Spanish and indigenous traditions, designs were developed for painting on ceramics, tiles, furniture, and pottery, all for use in everyday life. One of the most celebrated examples is that of Talavera, which feature whimsical patterns, bright colors, and a distinctive thick glaze. Talavera pottery is a kind of maiolica pottery which was imported by the Spanish in the 16th century where it flourished in Talavera, Puebla (often referred to as Talavera Poblana to differentiate it from Talavera, Spain).

Baroque in Cathedrals: As mines were developed, and wealth acquired from the vast stores of gold and silver, funds were available to construct elaborate churches and cathedrals throughout Mexico. In addition to containing sculptures, the often included frescoed ceilings and walls. Excellent examples can be found in Puebla, Mexico, with its vaulting with frescos, and in Guanajuato, Mexico, all of which are characterized by pronounced chiaroscuro.

Ultrabaroque (or Churrigueresque). Examples of the highly ornate painting can be found in the Retablo de los Reyes (Metropolitan Cathedral, Mexico City).

Nineteenth Century

Self-portraits by indigenous and mestizo artists. The nineteenth century was a time of breaking away from Spain and Brazil, and also of creating a national identity. While the indigenous peoples were still denied access to the economy in significant ways, there was a tacit understanding that they were needed in order to attain critical mass in breaking away. They were also valuable soldiers and support in the battles for independence. There were also examples where the artists were able to obtain formal training, as in the case of Manuel Ocoranza, born in Uruapan, Mexico. His self-portrait shows influences of the philosophy of the Cuban Jose Marti, positioned as it is with the Castle of Chapultepec in the background.

Heroic depictions of battles. Romanticism began to supplant the neoclassicism of the colonial period. One of the most popular genres was that of the military painting, particularly that which showed valor in fighting for independence from Spain. Examples include Patricio Ramos Ortega's *Hand-to-Hand Fighting* (1862) (part of the Battle of Puebla series), and *Fusilamiento de Maximilano, Miramon, y Mejia* (unknown artist, 19th century).

Costumbristas. Perhaps the most important artistic movement of the nineteenth century was that of the "costumbristas" whose focus was on the daily life and times in towns, villages, and among ordinary people. They

were painted in realist style, and have come to be of great importance in understanding the social customs, traditions, and change of the societies of Latin America. The movement progressed in tandem with the development of the regional novel. Examples artists include Francisco Pradilla y Ortiz, Agustín Arrieta (Mexico), Joaquín Pinto (Ecuador), and Prilidiano Pueyrredón (Argentina). Pueyrredón, whose father was the first president of the republic of Argentina, painted landscapes and portraits that capture the vastness of the Argentine pampas, and working people's connection to agriculture, ranching, and the construction of a dream.

Twentieth Century

Avant-garde: All art is political and has an agenda that involves convincing the viewer of the validity of the world it represents. It may be produced to supplant existing belief systems, and also to illustrate social norms and aspirational goals (sometimes tangible in the here and now; but more often pointing to a glorious afterlife). Dramatic art production was also used to overwhelm the masses with the sheer sensory overload of the cathedrals and churches, to reinforce the spiritual and governmental powers. In the twentieth-century, art was charged with open subversion; social change that went far beyond the independence of the nineteenth-century, which left the church and the class system brutally in place. The anarchist (and later Bolshevik) political movements in Europe found artistic expression in Futurist, Vorticist and Dadaist art. In Mexico, the Mexican Revolution was accompanied by art that demanded action and also envisioned social justice.

Modernism in South America: In Brazil, 1922 was a pivotal moment in art, which reminds one of the impact of the Armory Show in 1909 in New York City. For Brazil and the rest of Latin America, modernist art was not tied to political activism but was more of a celebration of the arrival of technology, with important developments such as electricity, telephone communications, dams, transportation systems, and more. In that sense, they were perhaps more aligned with the Italian and French Vorticists who sought to represent machine and electric energy on a canvas. As a result, the elements one sees in South American modernist art are of then geometric shapes representing wire, electricity, transformers, gears, and machines.

Modernist Ethnographies on Canvas: Inspired by Europeans Paul Gauguin and Henri Rousseau, whose art explored the primal, the exotic and the world of the imagination, Latin American artists turned to their own cultures. Their work may be said to explore the exotic (as did the Latin American modernist poets), but above all, it affirms the "Otherness Within" – and constitutes an auto-exoticization, which is to say that it "makes it new" and imbues a procreative mythos into what was previously relegated to a lower social class. Examples include the Uruguayan painter Pedro Figari (1861–1938) who painted numerous canvases that explored the Creole traditions of his homeland. The Uruguayan artist Joaquín Torres-García (1874–1949), who later studied and worked in Barcelona incorporated pre-Columbian motifs into his constructivist works.

Impressionism: Latin American impressionism was influenced by the French Impressionists, but it focused less on the effects of building up the surface by applying paint with small brush strokes, and more explorations of color fields. For example, Venezuelan artist Armando Reverón painted white-on-white to represent a coastal landscape suffused in harsh light and haze. He also sculpted dolls that he used as models. .

Mexican Muralism: The "big three" Mexican Muralists: José Clemente Orozco (1883–1949), Diego Rivera (1886–1957), and David Alfaro Siqueiros (1896–1974), painted in a naturalist and representational genre that inspired many of the world's reformist and utopian artists (Thomas Hart Benton is perhaps the distinguished in North America). The muralists were asked to paint murals on the walls of public buildings in Mexico in order to unite a fragmented post-Revolution Mexico, and to develop a coherent sense of Mexican identity. The philosophical underpinnings were spelled out in a 1921 manifesto published by Siqueiros, which suggests that public art should teach and engage (and in this sense is very much like the Renaissance philosophy of poetry – to delight and instruct - as expressed by Sir Philip Sidney)

Frida Kahlo: A talented diarist and artist and a passionate advocate of Mexican culture, Frida Kahlo dedicated herself to painting after she was gravely injured in a bus accident. She painted many self-portraits (55) as mirrors of her conflicted sense of identity as a Mexican woman. Her naive style, which some categorized as Social Realism, but which artist André Breton considered Surrealist, explored identity, gender, cultural heritage, life, death, myth and constructed narrative.

Abstract Expressionism: In Latin America, abstract expressionism took a different form, and began as Constructivism and then metamorphosed into two different movements: the “Concreto Invencion” (Concrete Invention), and then the “Neo Concretism” of Brazil and surrounding nations. Works from the later Concreto-Invención included shaped canvases by Carmelo Arden Quin (Uruguay), Lidy Prati (Argentina), and Tomás Maldonado (Argentina). Neo-Concretism emerged in Brazil with Brazilian artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica as well as the kinetic and optical abstractions of Gego (Venezuela), Soto, and Carlos Cruz-Diez (Venezuela).

Surrealism: The most recognized Latin American surrealist painter was born in Barcelona, and moved to Colombia with his parents as a young child. Alejandro Obregon (Colombia) was unique among surrealists in that he explored the boundaries between surrealism and abstraction. Another surrealist, Roberto Aizenberg, was born in Argentina and his work is evocative of Andre Breton, Salvadore Dali, and Rene Magritte.

Abstract / Color Fields: Manabu Mabe (Japanese-Brazilian) began his work as an artist who painted silk ties. Later, he painted large canvases, becoming well-known for his bold brush strokes, dripping paint, bright colors and calligraphy.

Discussion/Questions

1. Being able to envision the gods, and to point out just how different they were from human beings was very important to the different groups of people who lived in Latin America before the arrival of the Europeans. Showing the people the consequences of the gods’ displeasure was important, particularly in the case of the “Decapitator” gods of Tiwanaku, the Moche, and later, the Incas in the Andes. At the same time, the worldview extended far beyond the bounds of the earth, and incorporated depictions of calendars and celestial bodies. Explain how pre-Hispanic painting depicted beliefs and traditions, both religious and secular.
2. When the Spanish established their system of government, while they continued supporting the growth of the Catholic Church, they wanted to build a solid foundation of European-style art. To that end, they encouraged artists from Spain to travel to the New World and guide public works projects, as well as the construction of churches and schools. There were not enough artists, though, and it was necessary to recruit indigenous or mestizo artists and artisans. As a result, a new style emerged, which was a fusion. Describe the form and function of early Colonial painting.
3. When the spirit of independence began to inflame regions in Latin America, Simon Bolivar and others who shared his enthusiasm for the French philosophers’ notions of liberty, equality, and brotherhood, sought ways to communicate the break from the past. Independence needed to look like heroic victory, although war rarely looks as glorious as it does in a painting or as statue. Discuss how painting was used to express emerging national identities separate from Spain and Portugal during the nineteenth century.
4. The French influence Latin American culture in many ways during the nineteenth century. Not only did the spirit of revolution result in a torrent of Romantic work, it also focused on other aspects of society that were not considered worthy subjects of art by the NeoClassicists who bulwarked the monarchies. In France, writers such as Zola started to write about the working class and even the underclass. In Latin America, the same emphasis on realism could be found, with an emphasis on authenticity and cultural history. The paintings that depicted everyday life and the customs and activities came to be known as “costumbrismo.” It was as much as a philosophical statement (a refusal to idealize) as an aesthetic exercise. Describe costumbrista painting styles.
5. The Mexican Revolution occurred after years of dashed hopes as the Mexican Independence in the Nineteenth Century did little to level the playing field, but simply reinforced the power of the colonial families. Coincidentally, the same frustration was felt in Europe as Russian and Italian Futurists created art that simultaneously celebrated technology (electricity, motors, film) as it embraced the anarchist, avant-garde spirit of the times. The Mexican Revolution’s messages were reinforced by artists who embraced abstraction as well as the vibrant blends of typography, geometrical patterns, bold colors, and abstraction. Explain how political and artistic agendas merged in the twentieth century, and how Futurism, Vorticism, and Abstract from Europe merged with indigenous influences in Latin America.

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SCULPTURE

Overview Sculpture has played an important role in Latin American culture because of its use in the public sphere where it served to remind people of history, beliefs, identity, and community. While the Conquistadors often attempted to destroy the artifacts of the indigenous peoples, later artists integrated the cultural history of the past to reflect the often complex blend of cultures and traditions which typifies the Latin American nations.

PreConquest

Mesoamerica

Olmec (1200 – 400 BC): Living in the tropical forests of south-central Mexico (Veracruz and Tabasco), the Olmec produced massive basalt portrait heads of their rulers. They also created small-scale jadeite objects that corresponded to religious roles and practices. The Olmec were remarkable in their ability to create sophisticated products without the use of knives.

Maya: Maya sculptures, especially during the Classic Period (250 – 900 AD) are worked from limestone and volcanic tuff. They are primarily carved bas relief into walls and portals in the pyramids and large buildings. The subjects are individuals, deities, and animals, the most common being Quetzalcoatl, Chac (rain god), aristocracy, priests, and animals (jaguars, lizards, etc.). They also carved calendars and representations of the Tree of Life.

Jade figurines: Costa Rica (400 – 800 AD) Atlantic watershed. Abstract figures of people and animals, masked people, frog (fertility), birds (offerings).

Gold figurines: Colombia and Costa Rica. (400 – 800 AD) Primarily animals, reflecting shamanistic beliefs and practices. Frog, birds, deer, jaguar, iguana, lizard gods.

Terracotta figurines: Small terracotta figurines have been found in tomb shafts in Mexico and in graves in the Andes. They often depict people, roles, and daily life in their communities.

Aztecs: Archeologists have found many thousands of Aztec sculptures that were produced in all many sizes and with many functions ranging from personal homes, public monuments, temples, ball courts, and more. They were

produced from volcanic rock as well as from semi-precious stones such as jade. In addition to shapes corresponding to gods, animals, and leaders, the Aztecs also intricately carved calendars.

South America

Moche: A pre-Inca civilization, the Moche (100 – 800 AD) lived in northern Peru where they produced useful yet intricate ceramics for daily and ceremonial use. The ceramics were often in the form of humans and animals, often in humorous or surprising poses (monkeys sitting next to each other, arms on each others' shoulders; a couple engaged in the act of copulation).

Tiwanaku (300 – 1150): Large carved blocks in shape of human, with huge heads, massive eye sockets. These are largely monumental to accompany the blocky architecture of the ceremonial centers. The figures are sometimes depicted with human heads in their hands, which suggests human sacrifice.

Inca: The Inca created vast quantities of sculptures and figurines of all sizes. Some of the sculptures and figurines had a purpose in daily life, but the vast majority was used in conjunction with ceremonial practice.

Colonial

Baroque sculpture: Often carved of wood, then gilded with a layer of gold, or covered in plaster and then painted. They were often dressed in rich costumes. The subjects tended to be religious (Virgin Mary, Jesus, saints and the apostles). There were also elaborately carved crucifixes and altarpieces, often quite ornate, as in the case of the complex and detailed ultrabaroque Churrigueresque style, which features ornate decorative detailing.

Antonio Francisco Lisboa (1730 – 1814) (Brazil) created painted wood sculptures as well as stone statues of the twelve apostles.

Bernardo de Legarda (1700 – 1773) sculpted the Virgin of the Apocalypse (1734) of wood. It is the most outstanding example of the “Quito School” which is characterized by color, motion, and intricate carved details.

Retablos, which resemble triptychs, often contained tiny figurines depicting religious scenes such as the Nativity and the Ascension. They represent a blending of folk art and religious monuments.

Rococo sculpture: Life-sized carved sculptures of the Virgin Mary were painted with bright pastel colors then dressed in elaborate costumes, and installed in a church where they served as reminders of religious teachings and devotion.

19th Century : Independence and Nation-Building

Monuments to liberators and heroes: Simon Bolivar, who led independence movements throughout Latin America, appears on horseback as a triumphant figure in many countries. Many countries recognize national heroes, particularly those who died during a turning point battle. One example is the Monument to the Heroic Cadets of Chapultepec (Mexico City).

Pegasus statue, Cartagena, Colombia. A large statue of the winged horse, Pegasus, was erected to commemorate the valor of the people of Cartagena after declaring independence from Spain in 1811, and then enduring a siege in which more than 7,000 died. The sculpture, which was erected in the mid 19th century, is near the gates of the wharf. The artist is unknown.

20th Century : Modern

20th-Century Latin American Sculpture: Sculpture in the 20th century in Latin America was often commissioned by governments to honor indigenous cultures. Other works were commissioned by hotels or tourist developments to unify themes associated with the town or region. Often surreal or abstract, the sculptures are often placed in colonial settings, where the juxtaposition with buildings from the 17th century creates a postmodernist blend.

Christ the Redeemer (1921-1933). Created by French sculptor Paul Landowski and constructed by Brazilian engineer Heitor da Silva Costa, the Christ the Redeemer statue is an enormous Art Deco monument 125 high (including the pedestal). It is located on Corcovado Mountain, and has become a cultural icon of Rio de Janeiro and of Brazil.

Fernando Botero (b. 1932, Medellin, Colombia) is the best-known Latin American contemporary sculpture. His large bronze sculptures depict people and animals with large, balloon-like bodies, often with humorous or satirical effect.

Discussion/Questions

1. When the Spanish arrived in the Americas, they found a veritable treasure trove of sculptures. Unfortunately for the indigenous peoples, many of the sculptures were made of gold and precious stones, which inflamed the greed and ambition of the explorers. The most finely worked were in gold and in jade. While many were melted down, some still exist. Describe some of the gold and jade sculptures and explain how the cultures differed from each other.
2. When construction began on churches, cathedrals, and government buildings, one primary goal was to create a monument that would transmit many messages, both of religious and political importance. How did religious sculpture communicate Christian history and values? How the large sculptures also communicate the wealth, power, and influence of Europe? Please provide at least four examples that explain how sculpture communicated history, values, and collective aspirations?
3. PreHispanic art tended to be semi-representational, which is to say that it clearly indicated what it was, but it was rarely realistic in the sense of Greek and Roman sculpture. Colonial and Nineteenth Century sculpture tended to be every elaborate and realistic. However, Twentieth Century sculpture represents a dramatic break, and is often abstract or uses unusual colors or materials. How do the Modernist styles reflect the larger political and aesthetic trends that were occurring at that time? Please provide at least four examples.

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ARCHITECTURE

Overview Latin American architecture reflects its history and the relationship with its very hierarchical society in a way that encourages the individual to contemplate the true impact of environmental art on its beholder. When the Europeans arrived, they attempted to dominate the culture by erasing it; but in reality what occurred was a fusion. In fact, in some cases, the resulting blended art forms that were created by mestizo artisans were deeply subversive. In any event, the architecture of Latin American changed from being an intricately planned city that closely correlated to the religious cosmogony, to a fusion anchored by massive European constructions designed to communicate complete cultural dominance. The architecture reflects both the success and failure of the attempt to impose a new culture and system, because the original beliefs and customs have been remarkably vibrant, and in fact, a point of enduring pride and sense of identity.

PREHISTORY

Stilt houses with grass roofs: The earliest dwellings in MesoAmerica and South America consisted of wood frames with grass roofs. They were often on stilts, particularly in coastal or jungle areas.

Cave dwellings: Cave art throughout Mesoamerica and South America indicates that early peoples lived in caves. Perhaps the famous, the “Cave of the Hands” in the Serra da Capivara National Park in northeast Brazil. In the archaeological site, Pedra Furada, more than 15,000 drawings depict animals, humans, birds, representations of the

sun, and hunting scenes. So, while the people who lived in the caves did not construct the caves, they did modify them for their purposes.

CLASSICAL

The Philosophy of the Latin American Precolumbian City: Latin American religious systems had, at their heart, the need to express their belief in outward manifestations – tangible, concrete forms – that perfectly replicated the structure and relationships of the gods, the solar system, the movement of moon and stars, the history of the world, and how they related to the life of beings on the earth. The cities were microcosms and living models of a cosmogony. The cities were a framework for worship, but even more profoundly, they were a framework – even a machine – that shaped behaviors, inculcated beliefs, and unified mindsets. Whether there was any room for new ideas or the discussion of new paradigms is not clear; but what is very clear is that throughout Latin America, the architecture of the cities was used to harmonize (even control) the thoughts and behaviors of the people, and it may explain why it was possible to attain a high level of productivity and to sustain populations of 100,000 inhabitants and more, who cohabited in evident peace and prosperity.

Pyramids: Perhaps the most characteristic Latin American architectural form is the pyramid. While it is important as the focal point in the city or religious center, it is by no means the only building in the typical Latin American city. The Olmecs, Maya, Aztec, and Inca placed the pyramid at a point of prominence in their cities. There they brought people together for religious ceremonies, sacrifices, and for interment of their leaders. The pyramid became a living symbol of power; at times of the great transcendent and protective power of the belief system; at times an internalized control mechanism to demonstrate how precarious life was and how important blood sacrifice was. The Maya rituals that were enacted in the pyramids were typical: The ruling class mutilated themselves (women piercing their tongues; men drawing blood from the penis), and in the spectacle of extreme pain and bloodshed, established a connection to the gods and even took on attributes of the gods.

Orientation of the City: The cities were very carefully designed so that they aligned with celestial occurrences such as equinoxes, alignments of planets, and more, not only to achieve certain lighting effects, but to instill a relationship between the time of day and conditions of light. What resulted was a mental programming that related times of days to certain rituals or beliefs, which were carved on the walls and embedded in the design. For example, in the “Castillo” of Chichen Itza, a Mayan pyramid, the lighting is such in the stairway that the serpents carved on the walls appear to move, which reminds the viewer of the fact that the powerful sky god, the Plumed Serpent, Kukulcan, is alive and always present.

Ball courts: The architecture of the ball court resulted in the fact that the individuals playing the sports were also enacting the journey between the underworld and that of the living, and the mysteries of being in two places simultaneously. While much has been said of the fact that the game itself had sacrificial elements, the focus really should not be on the individual feats of strength or athleticism. Instead, the ballcourt represents the dynamic processes of life and community, and the spectators (who actively participated and bet on outcomes) enact the collective energies in the struggles to emerge from darkness, and the need to understand what happens in the underworld. Not all cultures had the same emphasis on ballcourts. The largest ballcourt can be found at Chichen Itza. The Olmecs in Veracruz state had, at El Tajin, more than 18 ballcourts.

Portals to the Sun (Tiwanaku): The pre-Incan culture of the Tiwanaku and the Incans themselves built their cities to connect the human spirit with the energy of the sun. As a result, they constructed portals or gateways that represented that moment in which the human being merges with sun energy. The Gate of the Sun at Tiwanaku, Bolivia, is oriented so that the rays of the sun shine through the portal and illuminate the figure of a man whose head is surrounded by 24 linear rays. The carvings on the gate – human heads and condors – suggest transmogrification, and a merging of human and soaring condor spirits.

COLONIAL

Impact of Catholicism: The Catholic Church, with its roots in Roman and medieval Europe iconography, had already developed an ecclesiastical architecture that was designed to instruct and to awe a largely illiterate population. So, it, too, functioned as a kind of machine to construct knowledge by means of a kind of enforced pattern of behavior or ritual. However, as opposed to the Latin American PreHispanic approach to architecture, the

Catholic Church focused on the places of worship and the supporting buildings, but was not at all concerned about the city as a whole. Thus, European cities were often chaotic, squalid, and labyrinthine, with a dramatic, ethereal cathedral rising up from the fetid maw of the city. When the conquistadors arrived in Latin America, they tore down what they viewed as the equivalent of their cathedrals, and then replaced them with their own cathedrals. The rest of the city was left to its own devices, which quickly replicated the European counterparts, but many Latin American cities were, thanks to mining riches, newer, cleaner, and more architecturally advanced than European cities. It is useful to keep in mind as well, that the monarchies of Spain and Portugal also needed to establish their power, sway, and legitimacy in the “New World,” and they, too, had a need to construct architectural monuments that communicated their message. They did not necessarily coordinate their efforts with the Church, resulting in a more random city design than in the case of the Olmecs, Maya, Aztecs, and Inca. The attempts of thought control were equally intense; but one can argue that the architecture of the twisting, narrow alleyways (callejones) introduced a mindset of secrecy, duplicity, and espionage, on the one hand, and protected, creative, and divergent thinking on the other.

Baroque Cathedral: The original cathedrals in Latin America were constructed over the most important active religious sites, much in the way that Henry VIII razed the Catholic monasteries and used the stones to construct his own Anglican Church religious buildings. They were constructed in the style of European cathedrals, with gothic and Romanesque elements. The largest were constructed over Aztec and Inca cities, mainly in Quito and Mexico City.

Baroque Governor’s Palace: While the Catholic Church worked to replace what they viewed as satanic rituals with their own religion, the kings and queens of Spain and Portugal were eager to lay claim on the gold, silver, and other riches of the territories they claimed as their own. The architecture was designed to put the stamp of European culture. So, in each main city, the Europeans constructed a center plaza and usually at one end, or at least nearby, a “Palacio del Gobierno” which incorporated Spanish and Portuguese architectural elements, including Romanesque arches, rows of columns, windows to individual offices, and a clear message that these were the offices that housed the power to influence day-to-day life. Important examples are in Quito, Rio de Janeiro, Cartagena (Colombia), Guanajuato (Mexico), Guadalajara (Mexico), Antigua (Guatemala), and more.

Missions: Missions were simple chapels surrounded by workshops and sleeping quarters for the priests and hundreds of converted indigenous peoples who were kept separate from possible bad influences. The missions were often established in outposts, rather than in the large city centers, and were a mechanism for expanding the reach and influence of the Europeans. They were established by different Catholic orders of priests: mainly Jesuit, Benedictine, and Dominican. The Jesuits were very active in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay, where they set up “reductions.” Very little remains of the missions, which were built in the 1600s. They typically have a central chapel, a belltower, and numerous outbuildings. The indigenous peoples were taught trades such as masonry and carving, and in doing so, they developed a unique “mestizo” style of decorative work characterized by ornate, “churrigueresque” patterns, gilt overlay, and flowing robes.

Churrigueresco: Extremely ornate, with expressive and intricate styling, the “churrigueresque” style began in Spain in the 17th century, with the Catalan sculptor, Jose Benito de Churriguera (1665-1735). It achieved full flowering in Latin America where the indigenous craftsmen and artisans in the missions developed a Mestizo style that was florid, ornate, and detailed, while it also incorporated the colors and stylings of earlier, Pre-Hispanic art. As such, the Churrigueresque of Latin America is, at some level, deeply subversive, because it does not take much to see the echoes of the writhing plumed serpent, Kulkulcan (Maya) or the ornate costumes and masks of Quetzalcoatl. In South America, hints of the decapitator gods and the condors are evident in the altarpieces and also in the colors and movements in the wooden statues carved to mimic the robes and the hair of the Madonna. Important examples of churrigueresque art are in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Mexico City, in the main cathedrals of Potosi, Bolivia; Arequipa (Cusco, Peru); Santo Domingo Cathedral, La Paz (Bolivia), Catedral El Carmen (San Luis Potosi, Mexico); San Francisco de Acatepec (Mexico); Cusco, Peru.

Andean Baroque: The Andean Baroque is an artistic movement that appeared in the Viceroyalty of Peru. It was used in both secular and religious buildings in the 17th and 18th centuries, and is characterized by ornate carvings, sculptures and elaborate paintings that narrate history (Biblical or mythological). The purpose is to communicate to the people that the established European church and government was a strictly hierarchical society, and that the power emanated from the top. Excellent examples are in Cusco, Cajamarca, and Lima.

19th CENTURY

French influence (Mexico, Argentina, Chile)

The French philosophes influenced Simon Bolivar and the individuals who urged independence from Spain. The independence was often followed by occupation by French (or at least enhanced commercial interests). As a result, many Latin American cities have a very significant French influence in their architecture and design. In Mexico City, there is the French Rococo; in Brazil, the main cathedral of Rio de Janeiro possesses the characteristically white, gold, and cerulean blue walls, pillars, and ornamentation. The Biblioteca Nacional of Santiago de Chile is another example. Later in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, French influence was expressed in Art Nouveau. Examples exist in Mexico City, Guanajuato (Mexico) and especially in Buenos Aires, which is considered the capital of Art Nouveau in Latin America.

Public Sculpture in Buildings: While there is a great deal of sculpture that stands alone in street corners and plazas, much of the architecture of Latin America includes sculptures of human personages. They may be heroes of the revolution or independence, or may be luminaries of art and music. Of course, the preponderance of such art forms is religious. For example, the indigenous Madonnas such as La Virgen de Guadalupe are important presences that are placed not only in churches and cathedrals, but on the ledges of the roofs of buildings and in windows, where they reinforce national and cultural pride.

20th CENTURY

Art Nouveau: Called Modernismo in Spanish, Art Nouveau represented a break from academic rigidity of design. It is characterized by numerous curves, plant-inspired decorative elements with the goal of harmonizing with nature. Excellent examples in the Palace of Fine Arts (1904-1934) in Mexico City. Other examples are in Guanajuato, Mexico. The most dramatic examples are in Buenos Aires, where buildings as well as interior décor feature art nouveau, with floral and plant-inspired windows. In addition, there is stained glass in the style of Louis Tiffany.

Art Deco: Art Deco is a style of visual arts, architecture and design that emerged in France before World War I, and was adopted in New York City and in Latin America. Its sleek lines, use of chrome and frosted glass, and the polished surfaces made it ideal for communicating optimism about technology, the future, and human invention. In Latin America, Havana was deeply influenced by Miami, which is renowned for its Art Deco buildings on South Beach. In Mexico City, the National Insurance Building utilizes Art Deco. Brazil embraced Art Deco in a dramatic way in Rio de Janeiro and in Sao Paulo. Many of the hotels in Copacabana Beach had Art Deco, and the massive Christ the Redeemer statue is a good example of Art Deco style.

Nationalistic Modernism: Although Le Corbusier only designed one building in Latin America selected to be included in UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Maison Curutchet in La Plata, Argentina, Le Corbusier's clean grid-like lines, generous use of glass and open spaces, were embraced by many countries seeking to demonstrate their entrance into the modern age. Le Corbusier-inspired buildings tended to be massive and part of the public space. They included public housing projects in Rio de Janeiro, the library of the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, and numerous airports, government buildings, and private residences. The modernist stylings were perfect for appropriation as they could be used as spaces for massive murals (often socialist realism or abstract), elaborate mosaics, and other spaces that could cheerfully and openly proclaim an ideological position or vision.

Surrealist Modernism: A subset of the Nationalistic Modernism, "Surrealist Modernism" can be found throughout South America where adventurous architects experiment with curves, angles, and unique placements in nature. Examples include the architect Eladio Dieste's church in Atlantida, Uruguay, a rose-brick and wood building that looks like waves in an ocean. Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, was designed to be the first entirely modernist city. In this aspect, surrealist architecture reveals itself to be deeply utopian as in the case of the architect Tadao Ando, whose use of Le Corbusier-inspired openness mesh with natural materials (stone and wood), and a use of windows to bring in the dramatic mountain landscapes, sunsets, and storms, as in the case of the University of Monterrey, Mexico.

Discussion/Questions

1. Early man was attracted to caves. Certainly they could be dark, and potentially filled with danger if they were a part of an extensive karst system with underground rivers and potential cave-ins. However, they represented a unique type of shelter as well as a location for religious rites and ceremonies. The early cave dwellers were hunters and gatherers. Describe the cave drawings and what they illustrated. What do they tell us about their lives and lifestyle?
2. The movement of the sun, moon, and stars were deeply important to Latin American civilization. Not only did they dictate when crops would be planted and ceremonies would be held, they predicted their history, including invasions from other peoples, death, and destruction. Describe the observatories, pyramids, ball courts, gates, and temples in the Pre-Hispanic (Maya, Olmec, Inca, Aztec, Tiwanaku, etc.) world and speculate how daily life might have been in these early cities.
3. When the Europeans arrived in Latin America, some of the first building projects were designed to convey the message that the twin powers of Europe – the Catholic Church and the Spanish monarchy – were too rich and powerful to be resisted, and in fact, they should be regarded in awe. Select five or six examples of buildings in the colonial era that communicated that message and describe the architectural and design elements which reinforced the message.
4. Technological breakthroughs resulted in new materials as well as new ideas about the man's potential in the world. Many countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico celebrated great modernization and breakthroughs while they also took pride and embraced their indigenous roots. Modernist styles and the use of steel, glass, mosaics, murals, and bright colors characterized the architecture. Analyze examples of twentieth century architecture in Latin America and make connections between the architecture, the function of the buildings, and the messages they were intended to convey.

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