

LATIN AMERICAN CULTURE – 20th Century

Overview In the Twentieth century, the art and literature of Latin America led the world, with important movements such as Magical Realism and world-renowned authors such as Pablo Neruda, Octavio Paz, and Gabriel García Márquez. Latin American art and architecture also led the world in innovation, with muralists such as Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo bringing together populism, Marxist ideologies, and a deep regard for the cultural roots of Latin America. The Cold War gave rise to conflicts, but also triggered artistic expression while motivating religious leaders to become political activists. The twentieth century was also a time of great synthesis, as dance, art, literature, and other cultural productions embraced the indigenous and mestizo / creole heritage.

VERBAL ARTS

Literature

Modernismo: In Latin America, the movement that came to be known as “Modernismo” actually began in the late nineteenth century. It was deeply influenced by French symbolists and fin-de-siecle writers who rebelled against what they considered to be a limiting and materialist view of life (realism). Instead, they preferred to explore the hidden, the occult, and the transcendental, in the same manner as the French symbolist poets such as Baudelaire and Rimbaud. They focused on jarring metaphors and an emphasis on decadent sensuality to explore reality in a new way. Modernismo was forged by the Nicaraguan poet Ruben Dario, and deeply influenced by the literary journal, *La Revista Azul* (The Blue Magazine). He influenced other poets, including Antonio Machado, and the writers Juan Ramon Jimenez and Ramon Maria del Valle-Inclan. Amado Nervo, who was born in Tepic, Nayarit, Mexico, wrote intensely emotional poetry in the style of Modernismo. It emphasized the quest for peace after tragic loss, and was clearly impacted by the suicide of his brother and the death of his wife. For Nervo, the Modernist style aligned with his quest for spiritual peace and understanding.

Before the Boom: The beginning of the twentieth century saw the rise of “indigenismo” which referred to literature that focused on restoring and respecting indigenous cultures. It took the “costumbrista” tradition a bit further as it sought to validate and legitimize the culture of the indigenous peoples, long devalued and forced to occupy lower rungs on the social hierarchy. Writers included Jose Marti, and the Peruvians Manuel Gonzalez Prada and Jose Carlos Mariategui.

Psychological Fiction: A type of literature that incorporated philosophical exploration was born with Jorge Luis Borges, whose works, most notably “Ficciones,” explored the nature of reality and consciousness, and aligned well with both minimalism and surrealist art trends. Other explorations of reality (of people and of civilizations) took shape in novels and short stories. They included Romulo Gallegos (Venezuela) and his novel, *Dona Barbara*. Other authors of fiction (both novels and short stories) who explored psychological states included Horacio Quiroga (Uruguay), Machado de Assis (Brazil), Juan Rulfo (Mexico), Alejo Carpentier (Cuba), and Mariano Azuela (Mexico).

Boom: The “Boom” referred to the time of economic prosperity after World War II, and it ushered in a time of remarkable literary innovation. In poetry, Pablo Neruda (Chile) developed a style of poetry that brought together earth, desire, and a sense of wonderment. Gabriela Mistral (Chile) and Mario Benedetti (Uruguay) addressed social issues, while Octavio Paz (Mexico) plunged into the heart of Mexican identity and history.

Novelists of the Boom were also recognized for their stylistic innovations as well as their willingness to explore non-linear narratives and fragmentations of self and identity. The most famous, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, received many accolades for his work, especially *100 Years of Solitude*. In it, he pioneered what came to be known as magical realism. Other authors such as Mario Vargas Llosa (Peru), Julio Cortazar (Argentina), Carlos Fuentes (Mexico), Augusto Roa Bastos (Paraguay), and Jose Donoso (Chile).

Post-Boom and Beyond: While the Boom explored magical realism with the goal of exploring the limits of the phenomenal world, the Post-Boom world embraced the world, often with the goal of satirizing it, or reinforcing its essential gritty humanity. Authors include Roberto Bolano (Chile), Paulo Coelho (Brazil), Laura Esquivel (Mexico), and Luisa Valenzuela (Colombia). Authors also responded to the “dirty wars” and “disappearances” of the political dictatorships of Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay with scathing novels, often written in exile. Authors included Ariel Dorfman (Chile), Eduardo Galeanos (Uruguay), Isabel Allende (Chile), and Clarice Lispector (Brazil). Transgressive fictions were explored by authors such as Jaime Bayly (Peru) and Fernando Vallejo (Colombia).

Discussion

The economic boom in the middle of the twentieth century led to the rise of new forms of literature that brought together philosophy, ideas of reality, identity, and existence. Authors found a wildly receptive audience. Describe the Boom authors and their accomplishments.

Boom authors responded to military dictatorships, and many wrote their work while in exile. Many of the Cold War issues led to changes of power and also different types of repression. This change in the geopolitical and economic situation resulted in another wave of post-Boom authors, many of whom wrote to expose or resist military dictatorships and/or communism. Who were some of the main authors in the post-Boom era?

Readings

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Language

Spanish: Spanish is the language of the Conquistadores, and thus became the “lingua franca” of all of Latin America. That said, there are wide variations regional usage. Colombia became the enforcer of a standard Spanish, and maintained its continuity and consistency. Perhaps the most pronounced regional variations occur in Argentina and also in the Caribbean, where a kind of “creole” can be found. In Argentina and Uruguay, the “castellano rioplatense” is spoken. It utilizes elements of archaic Spanish (“voseo”) and its intonation bears a resemblance to Neopolitan Italian, from which a number of the inhabitants immigrated.

Portuguese: Because of the relative isolation of Portugal from its colony, and the fairly independent administration, the language was able to morph into a very distinctive dialect which has pronunciation patterns quite different from Portugal, or of African colonies’ Portuguese, for that matter. Brazilian

Portuguese has been an important literary language as Brazil produced a great number of poets, novelists, essayists, and philosophers.

French: French is spoken in the former French colonies, particularly in Haiti. French has been influenced by African languages, as well as voodoo culture, resulting in a Creole dialect that can be quite difficult for outsiders to understand.

English: English was the language of colonies settled by English pirates, adventurers, and plantation owners. English is the original language of Belize, Virgin Islands, and other islands. It is closer to British English than American English.

Dutch: Spoken in former Dutch colonies, which include Aruba, Sint Maartens, and Suriname, Dutch continues to be an important conduit for government, economic assistance, tourism, and resource development (offshore oil and gas development, for example).

German: Spoken in Argentina, Paraguay, Chile, Mexico, Brazil and in other countries where mining engineers and Mennonite settlers decided to live and contribute to society. In some cases, due to being cut off from Germany itself and becoming peripheral isolates, the German spoken by the cut-off groups can be quite archaic.

Discussion

There are subgroups in Latin America that fiercely preserve their special languages, and the languages within their languages (idiolects). For example, the Mennonites in Mexico, Ecuador, Peru, and Paraguay speak an archaic German that helps them communicate as w=frpu. Explain how language groups may have a unifying impact on a group.

Readings

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O'Connor, Loretta, and Pieter Muysken. *The Native Languages of South America: Origins, Development, Typology*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014.

Script / Writing

Avant-Garde Concrete Poetry Broadsides: In the 1920s, Mexican writers such as Manuel Maples Arce, created one-page flyers containing poetry fused with abstract art, inspired in many ways by the Russian Futurists of the 1920s, and earlier, the Italian Futurists of pre-World War I Italy (many of the Italian futurists were killed in the war they thought they wanted, which would “liberate” aesthetics from old, tired, aristocratic forms). They were printed on one page and often included wood-block printing of block graphics and calligraphy. Calling it, a “Super-poema bolchevique en 5 cantos” poet-graphic artist-print designer Manuel Maples Arce, used a combination of block letters to create dramatic black, red, and white poems that also served as posters. German Arzubide produced work as well, under the name of “El Movimiento Estridentista” (The Strident Movement), which captured the bold, strident form and message of the innovative writing forms and design.

Writing and the development of Innovative Fonts: Stridentism, which was associated with the Mexican Revolution, and which took inspiration from the avant-garde Futurist movements in Italy and Russia in the early 20th century, was unique in its development of a blockish font that was an edgy echo of Dada and Art Deco, which always contained a loud cry to action. Poets Manuel Maples Arce, German List Arzubide, German Cueto and others produced one-sided broadsides and posters, as well as magazine covers. Surprisingly, it did not spring out of Mexico City but in Xalapa, the capital city of the state of Veracruz.

Revolutionary Broadsides and Posters of the 1960s: Writing styles and forms merged with pop art and culture in the 1960s, with the result that many posters containing minimalist poems, combined with collages of photographs (usually of Che Guevara in with beret) and colors / sketches inspired by comics. The skillful use of design to give the message a vibrant, relevant feeling was important in creating a “brand” and the kind of warrior banners that idealistic youth of the 1960s could rally around.

Discussion

In the twentieth century, technology and urban living put pressure on discourse (writing). Old forms suddenly were too slow to produce or required too much time to fully interact with it. Describe how comics, graffiti art, different types of fonts, newspapers, posters, and broadsides found ways to communicate in a world of diverse people, emerging technologies, and the fast pace of life.

Reading

Script / Writing:

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U.S. Library of Congress (2014) An American Time Capsule: Three Centuries of Broadsides and Other Printed Ephemera. <https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/connections/time-capsule/file.html>

The Bradshaw Foundation (2016) The American Rock Art Archive.

<http://www.bradshawfoundation.com/america/index.php>

Mythology

Discussion Question

Mythology:

It can be argued that rapid industrialization and technological change create great social instability and the only way to combat it or harness it for the good is to have in place a series of myths that reinforce the notion of individual agency and the possibility of self-actualization. In other words, people have to believe that they can plunge into the fast-moving stream of rapid change and use that force to create wealth, security, and freedom for themselves and their families. Describe just how the twentieth century myths encourage such activities, and how even the dystopian myths can be harnessed to control rapid social, economic, and technological change for the good.

Readings

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Folklore

Urban Legends: Children tell each other ghost stories, people email supposed testimonials, and parents tell bedtime stories of creatures that have their origins in folklore, but which have been modified to fit the times. Supernatural creatures include the Chupacabra (Puerto Rico) that comes in the night to attack and drink one's blood. La Llorona (Mexico) is a weeping woman who kidnaps children. Some are cautionary tales, and others open the door to a belief in magic and transformation. One example is a strange wild woman of the forests with magical powers known as Ciguapa (Dominican Republic). Other oral narratives are omens, such as the whistling apparition whose presence presages death, El Silbon (Venezuela and Colombia). Other oral narratives feature protagonists are tricksters such as the apparition with a large hat who stirs up trouble, the Sombreron (Guatemala) and El Pombero (Paraguay) who sneaks in during siesta to impregnate teenage girls.

Celebrity Legends and Scandal-Making: With the advent of newspapers, television, and later, internet-based communications and social media, celebrity and political scandals have served to sell products and shape public opinion. Oral narratives are often repeated in the form of "memes" which are transmitted through society social media, email, mass communication, and more. The impact of social media and the desire to promulgate oral narratives for one's own ends can be found in the political satire, *La Dictadura Perfecta (The Perfect Dictatorship)*, a Mexican film directed by Luis Estrada and released in 2014.

Discussion Question

Describe urban legends and the reason why they tend to propagate quickly and enthusiastically. In a time of identity shaped by social media, what are some of the anxieties that urban legends reveal to us? Also, how do urban legends mirror a culture's ambivalence about change, technology, and outsiders (the "Other")?

Readings

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Carey, David. *Oral History in Latin America: Unlocking the Spoken Archive*. Forward by Alessandro Portelli. London: Routledge, 2017.

Fagundes, Francisco Cota, and Irene Maria Blayer. *Oral and Written Narratives and Cultural Identity: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. New York: Peter Lang, 2007.

VISUAL ARTS

Painting

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 Reveron 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 artista Andre 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 Question

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.

Readings

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Sculpture

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 Question

Sculpture in the 20th century began to focus on different messages than that of the 19th century. In addition to identity, the messages were multiple and had to do with the role of technology in society, the capacity of technology to transform people and society for the good, the way that technology could be used to interject fear of extermination, the subversion of the “eternal verities” as represented by big government and big religion, and the substitution of consumer culture for religious or political self-actualizing aspiration. Please select three works that call into questions traditional values and explain how and why they do so.

Readings

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Architecture

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 Question

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.

Readings

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Schenone, Hector H. Iconografía del arte colonial. 2 vols. Buenos Aires? Fundación Tarea, 1992.

PERFORMING ARTS

Dance

Bachata (Domenican Republic): Emerging in the first half of the 20th century, the Bachata is danced to music that blends European, African, and indigenous musical traditions. It is similar to the Cuban bolero, and featured highly stylized choreography. The bachata has become very popular in many communities, with "sensual bachata" and the rise of bachata competitions.

Cha Cha Cha (Cuba): A highly energetic and stylized dance of Cuban origin which is performed to a very characteristic rhythm, the Cha Cha Chai s stunningly popular with dance clubs, proms, and competitions.

Mambo (Cuba): An Afro-Latin dance which originated in Cuba with Arsenio Rodriguez, a composer and musician. The dance was invented by Perez Prado, and became very popular in the 1940s and 50s in

Havana, Mexico City, and New York City. At first, the dance form was very improvisatory, but later became standardized in order to penetrate markets and appeal to ballroom dancing constituencies.

Merengue (Dominican Republic): The official dance of the Dominican Republic, the merengue is a ballroom dance in which two dancers hold hands and perform a series of rapid moves, maintaining a closed position.

Salsa (Caribbean): With possible origins as the Cuban son, the current salsa is extremely popular, and has penetrated virtually all of Latin America. It is a social dance, and the movements are very easy to learn, which makes it ideal for gatherings, parties, and contests. The salsa is a relatively new genre, as it originated in the 1970s in New York, mainly as a hybrid fusion of son, cha cha cha, and mambo.

Samba (Brazil): Danced to music in a quick 2/4 time, the samba is an energetic African-Brazilian dance form that evolved from African rhythms and movements. The samba originated in Rio de Janeiro in the early 20th century. It is often danced during Carnival, and the dancers wear dramatic costumes with elaborate headdresses, beaded dresses, and brightly colored feathers.

Tango (Argentina): Originating in the late 19th century in Argentina, the tango achieved extreme popularity in the early 20th century where it was danced in tango-themed dance clubs in Argentina and Uruguay. The dance is a fusion of Spanish and African slave traditions, and it originated in the working-class neighborhoods of Buenos Aires and Montevideo. There are many different types of tango, but all have the typical accordion and small concertina (bandoneon), which are used for melody as well as the characteristic tango rhythmic stylings.

Discussion Question

The fusion of cultures gave rise to many different musical traditions. In the Caribbean and Brazil, the influence of West African music and dance were very important. Sometimes they even incorporated spiritual beliefs, and at times they included costumes that enabled the dancers to role-play. Select three modern dance forms and describe how the costumes, music, and choreography reflected cultural fusion. For those that tell a story, discuss the meaning of the story.

Reading

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Music

Alberto Ginastera (1916 – 1983, Argentina) Alberto Ginastera was influenced by his teacher Aaron Copland, and like Copland, he incorporated folkloric musical elements and indigenous instruments.

Antonio Carlos Jobim (1927 – 1994, Brazil) Jobim was born in Rio de Janeiro and was well known for incorporating the bossa nova music in orchestral works.

Manuel Ponce (1882 – 1948, Mexico). Ponce was a scholar of Mexican folk music and he incorporated the elements into classical guitar and orchestral compositions.

Ernesto Lecuona (1895 – 1963, Cuba) Lecuona wrote more than 600 pieces, mainly for the piano, and incorporated traditional Cuban songs into his own. Many of his compositions, such as Malagueña and Andalucía, became standards.

Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887 – 1959, Brazil) Born in Rio de Janeiro, Villa-Lobos is the best-known Brazilian composer, and his use of dissonance, indigenous melodic and rhythmic elements within traditional classical Western forms influenced many composers.

Discussion Question

Modernism, nationalism, and a pride in the nation's indigenous heritage were major influences on musical composition in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century. Who are some of the main composers of 20th century Latin America, and what are they famous for?

Readings

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Schechter, John M. *Music in Latin American Culture: Regional Traditions*. New York: Schirmer, 1999.

Theatre

Marco Antonio de la Parra (Chile): Best known for his play, *Lo crudo, lo cocido, lo podrido* (The Raw, the Cooked, and the Rotten), written in 1978, de la Parra attacks what he sees as corrupt and ultimately mediocre politicians and the overall political system. The play features three protagonists who come to a restaurant where their conversation reveals them to be not the great men they are thought to be, but instead, shallow, cruel, even sadomasochistic. De la Parra's other works continue the same themes, and also attack consumer culture and the invasion of alien pop culture.

Roberto Ramos-Perea (Puerto Rico): Born in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico, Ramos-Perea has written numerous plays as well as essays and columns. His most-acclaimed works, *Miéntame Más* (*Lie to Me Some More*) and *Morir de Noche* (To Die by Night) have been widely performed. *Miéntame Más* explores the impact of unethical medical experimentation and the ultimate uselessness of revenge.

Rodolfo Santana (Venezuela): The author of more than 80 works of art, Santana first won recognition on the stage for *La Muerte de Alfredo Gris* (The Death of Alfred Gray). His work has also been made into movies, such as *El caracazo*, Travelling Companion, and more. His work explores the nature of relationships and perception.

Eduardo Rovner (Argentina): In one of his most lauded works, *Tinieblas de un escritor enamorado* (*Darkness of a Writer in Love*), contains echoes of the surrealist tradition of the Boom and Post-Boom writers. In it, the protagonist, Ernesto, enters into an altered state of consciousness (either post-death or in a fantasy) and then embarks on a quest for a long-lost love. In the labyrinths and catacombs of the psychological netherworld, converses with people along the way and explores the nature of connections, the past, and the essential fragility of true love.

Guillermo Schmidhuber (Mexico): Considered one of Mexico's most important writers, Schmidhuber's plays build on his literary research, which includes work with long-lost manuscripts of Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz that he discovered and translated. His play, *Los Héroes Inútiles* (*Useless Heroes*) three soldiers in

the Mexican Revolution find themselves trapped in someone else's aspirations, and instead of being able to rise and achieve their dreams, they are trapped in banality and mediocrity.

Maritz Núñez (Peru): In addition to writing plays, Maritz Núñez has received acclaim for her works of poetry. Her play, *La Niña de Cera* (The Wax Child), is a play in two acts which explores the life of Chilean poet and educator, Gabriela Mistral. The play touches on the wrenching childhood and traumatic formative events in Mistral's life and how she used the tragedies to transform herself.

Nelson Rodrigues (Brazil): Originator of the concept of the "Theatre of the Unpleasant," Rodrigues was born in Recife, northeast Brazil, and then moved with his family to Rio de Janeiro, where his father owned a newspaper. Covering stories for his father's paper, Rodrigues was exposed to many aspects of Brazilian society, and in doing so, he formed a philosophy of theatre in which he believed it should hold a mirror to society and reveal, with unflinching honesty, its true state.

Ariel Dorfman (Chile): In *La Muerte y La Doncella* (*Death and the Maiden*), Dorfman explores what could happen when a victim of torture encounters her torturer. She kidnaps him, and then contemplates subjecting him to the same tortures he exacted upon her. In a move reminiscent of *A Clockwork Orange*, Schumann's *Death and the Maiden* is the work always played during the torture sessions, with deep psychological consequences.

Discussion Question

The plays of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been very political, with messages that could be dangerous because they enact political repressions, kidnapping, torture, and the efforts of a military dictatorship to suppress dissent or resistance. Consider the examples of the plays that have political themes and discuss whether they stand up as works of art rather than propaganda. Why or why not? How can they be meaningful during times of peace?

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Cinema

Origins of Latin American Cinema The first filmmaking efforts in Latin America were inspired by the Lumieres Brothers in France, and they tended to focus on capturing objects in motion. For example, the first Argentine film was *La Bandera Argentina* (*The Argentine Flag*), which involved a large Argentine flag waving in the breeze of the Plaza de Mayo in Buenos Aires. In Mexico, the short films were those documenting battles of the Mexican Revolution. In Brazil, the first short films were inspired by the Lumiere brothers as well as Thomas Edison, and showed such things as the arrival of trains, young people dancing, and passengers disembarking.

Genres Latin American cinema has been instrumental in helping develop its own versions of classic genres such as documentaries, musicals, and romances. Musicals that feature folklore and regional

music were not only popular in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, but found enthusiastic audiences throughout the world. The often harsh explorations of poverty, social inequality, and political corruption have also been a feature of Latin American cinema. The very popular long-running telenovelas (Latin American soap operas) resulted in a new form of consciously and often rather ironically melodramatic romance.

Mexican Cinema Mexico's rich cinematic tradition when audiences flocked to see Mexican screenings of Thomas Edison's one-minute kinoscope films such as *Arrival of a Train*. Salvador Toscano Barragan is generally considered to be the first Mexican filmmaker. He created a film version of the novel, *Don Juan Tenorio*, and then went on to film battles during the Mexican Revolution. Inspired by European film-makers, Mexican directors and film studios received a huge boost when U.S. and European film-makers had to severely curtail their activities due to rationing of celluloid and other materials. Mexican studios, which had no such restrictions, were able to produce films, and they found an enthusiastic global export market. The Mexican studios, as in Hollywood, focused on creating bankable stars and screenplays with wide appeal. What resulted was the "Golden Age," launched by Maria Candelaria, and followed by hundreds of high-quality movies produced by well-funded studios who relied on a domestic network of movie theaters and a well-developed export market. After decades of pre-eminence the Mexican film industry declined in the 1970s, but experienced a resurgence in the 1990s and 2000s with films that probed the human condition, made great satirical statements about politics and "progress," and took intellectual and aesthetic risks to parallel the literary world. Standouts include *Amores Perros* and *Pan's Labyrinth*.

Mexico's "Epoca de Oro" (Golden Age): 1933 – 1964 Because of the relative paucity of U.S. and European output during the late 1930s and 1940s, Mexican films were embraced by enthusiastic audiences who enjoyed the studios' output, which ranged from adaptations of famous films (for example, Ramon Gallegos's *Dona Barbara*), comedy (such as the films of Cantinflas), romance (Maria Candelaria), and musicals that featured rancheras (*Siempre Tuya*). Many of the films explored social issues such as the problems of rural poverty and systemic prejudice against indigenous peoples. The studio system generated a number of well-liked stars, which included Dolores Del Rio, Pedro Infante, Jorge Negrete, Maria Felix, and Cantinflas.

Maria Candelaria (dir. Emilio Fernandez, 1944) Starring Dolores del Rio and Pedro Armendariz, Maria Candelaria explores issues of true love, romance, social inequality, prejudices against the indigenous peoples of Mexico, and the natural beauty of the Mexican countryside. It was the first Mexican film to win the First Prize (Palme d'Or) at Cannes.

Maria Felix (1913 – 2002) Maria Felix achieved great fame and recognition during the Golden Age of Mexican cinema. Known as a fascinating femme fatale, Maria Felix was often referred to as "La Dona" after her character in "Dona Barbara" (1943). With a total of 47 films, many of which were distributed in multiple countries around the world,

Pedro Infante (1917 – 1957) When it was announced that Pedro Infante had died in a tragic plane crash near Merida, Yucatan, the entire nation plunged into mourning for their beloved actor and singer. He often portrayed a hero in his more than 60 films, and as such, he embodied the qualities that Mexican (and indeed, global) audiences admired: a loyal and courageous friend, a devoted family member, and a passionate and impassioned lover. His range of songs made him very popular as well, and many of his recordings continue to be considered standards even today.

Cantinflas (Mario Moreno) (1911 – 1993) The comical "Everyman" of the underclass, Cantinflas often played the quick-witted scamp from society's underclass who exposed "polite society" as pompous, and whose activities often made him a champion of the underdog. He was well-known for his costume (sagging pants, frayed shirt, ragged towel over his shoulder) and for his way of speaking quickly but

saying nothing, and for his comical dancing. Cantinflas made more than 50 films, primarily working with the director Miguel M. Delgado.

Jorge Negrete (1911 – 1953) Born in the historic mining town of Guanajuato, Jorge Negrete entered a prestigious military academy when he was a young teenager. There, he distinguished himself not only for his academic excellence but for his musical talent. Negrete trained as an operatic singer, where he met his initial success. Negrete later began singing music of mariachis. He also embraced acting, where he often acted the part of heroes who could also sing. He appeared in more than 40 movies, and helped develop the “charro” (Mexican cowboy) singing tradition. When he died from complications of a sudden illness, his fans were devastated.

Dolores Del Rio (1904 – 1983) Dolores Del Rio was born in Durango to parents who had been wealthy during the time of Porfirio Diaz, but who lost everything during the Mexican Civil War. Dolores fled with her mother to Mexico City, where she received an education in a Catholic private school. Del Rio was unusual among Mexican actresses in that she first achieved fame and fortune in the U.S. in Hollywood. Later, she returned to Mexico, where she acted in numerous films in genres that included romance, adventure, musical, and comedy. Del Rio was considered one of the all-time beauties of the cinema. She made more than 50 films.

Argentine Cinema Historically, Argentina has been considered one of the top three countries in Latin America for cinema, along with Mexico and Brazil. The first Argentine movies were silent shorts, made in the manner of the Lumiere Brothers. Later, Argentine film-making blossomed during Argentina’s “Golden Age” which extended from the 1930s and into the 1950s. In the 1960s, the French “New Wave” (Nouvelle Vague) emphasized an art-house sensibility and explored the way the camera could reflect and problematize identity and reality. During the military dictatorship, most filmmakers found it safest to focus on comedy. However, after the return to democracy in 1983, filmmakers began to probe the themes that had been off-limits, with a resulting surge in movies that addressed political atrocities (torture, the “disappeared”), as well as social problems. At the same time, film adaptations of literature of the “greats” such as Cortazar and Borges were made. Argentine cinema continues to be highly respected, and to receive prestigious awards.

Argentina’s “Third Cinema” (1950s and 1960s) For many, the “First Cinema” consisted of escapist spectacles, and the “Second Cinema” was focused on self-absorbed “auteur” works. However, a “Third Cinema” followed on the heels, and even though they were not commercially as successful as the first and second phases, they were important. During the 1960s and 1970s, a Latin American film movement emerged that had as its core mission to expose the evils of neocolonialism and capitalism. While its core values may have been political, the resulting works are most known for their exploration of psychological conditions, and the consequences of exile and estrangement. One of the most influential of the “Third Cinema” directors is Fernando Solanas, whose works are often overtly political.

Brazilian Cinema The early development of Brazilian cinema was slow, and the dominant genre, the chanchada (burlesque musical comedies), were popular, but not considered serious art. Later, in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, the chanchadas achieved even more popularity, and their emblematic star, Carmen Miranda, was adored by many. In the 1960s and 1970s, the “Cinema Novo” emerged as a more “serious” movement. Cinema Novo changed the focus of Brazilian cinema from entertainment, to works that explore social inequality in Brazil, neorealism, working class / middle class. The song, “The Girl from Ipanema” (written by Antonio Carlos Jobim and performed by Astrud Gilberto and Stan Getz) captures the emotional elements of beauty and sadness, an anticipation of nostalgia.

Carmen Miranda (1909 – 1955) Carmen Miranda, born in Portugal but relocated to Rio de Janeiro when her parents emigrated to Brazil. Miranda embraced opera and music, despite her parents’ disapproval. Miranda entered show business as a singer, but quickly showed her flexibility by acting and

dancing for “chanchada” movies, and for participating in Carnaval (Mardi Gras). Her most famous films featured Miranda in all the roles she loved: singing, poetry, and dancing. Miranda quickly became well-known as a “Brazilian Bombshell” instantly recognizable by her tall headdress replete with tropical fruits.

Brazilian “Cinema Novo” Movement (1960s and 1970s) Influenced by the French New Wave, Italian Neorealism, and Soviet cinema of the 1960s, the Brazilian Cinema Novo (New Cinema) changed the focus of films from big-budget musicals, comedies, and adventure to one that encouraged a freedom of aesthetic, political, and ideological expression. Led by director Glauber Rocha, the movement probed rural poverty and social inequality with a style that was resolutely avant-garde. His development of an “aesthetics of hunger” brought together the literal and the metaphorical. Rocha’s film, *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol (God and the Devil in the Land of the Sun)* (1964), follows the fate of people in rural areas during a time of drought. The film is characterized by a combination of realism and symbolism, and seeks to encourage the audience to question the prevailing cultural values. The film’s use of hand-held cameras and its disturbing violence gave it authenticity, and also encouraged other filmmakers to take risks.

Discussion Questions

1. While the first cinematic experiments took place in France and in the United States, where the focus was often on whimsical explorations of science fiction, such as in the case of *Voyage to the Moon*, in Mexico, film was used to chronicle important aspects of its history. What are some of the ways in which Mexican filmmakers sought to use film to chronicle their unique history as a nation, and also to make people aware of the heroes of the Mexican Revolution?
2. Mexico’s Golden Age was fueled by a time of relative peace and prosperity following the Mexican Revolution and also a surge in demand for their films, due to the fact that American and European filmmakers were not able to continue during World War II due to rationing of film and other supplies. The Golden Age made international stars of many Mexican actors. Who were some of the main actors and actresses in Mexico’s Golden Age? What were they known for?
3. Brazilian and Argentine filmmakers have long been lauded for their willingness to tackle very difficult social issues. In Brazil, the influence of 1960s French filmmaking (*nouvelle vague*) was very intense, and it resulted in films that featured rather unlikely heroes who were often of the underclass. In Argentina, films exposed the military dictatorship and the disappearance of youth who dissented. Describe films that explored social issues and evaluate their impact.

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Writing

Avant-Garde Concrete Poetry Broadside: In the 1920s, Mexican writers such as Manuel Maples Arce, created one-page flyers containing poetry fused with abstract art, inspired in many ways by the

Russian Futurists of the 1920s, and earlier, the Italian Futurists of pre World War I Italy (many of the Italian futurists were killed in the war they thought they wanted, which would “liberate” aesthetics from old, tired, aristocratic forms). They were printed on one page and often included wood-block printing of block graphics and calligraphy. Calling it, a “Super-poema bolchevique en 5 cantos” poet-graphic artist-print designer Manuel Maples Arce, used a combination of block letters to create dramatic black, red, and white poems that also served as posters. German Arzubide produced work as well, under the name of “El Movimiento Estridentista” (The Strident Movement), which captured the bold, strident form and message of the innovative writing forms and design.

Writing and the development of Innovative Fonts: Stridentism, which was associated with the Mexican Revolution, and which took inspiration from the avant-garde Futurist movements in Italy and Russia in the early 20th century, was unique in its development of a blockish font that was an edgy echo of Dada and Art Deco, which always contained a loud cry to action. Poets Manuel Maples Arce, German List Arzubide, German Cueto and others produced one-sided broadsides and posters, as well as magazine covers. Surprisingly, it did not spring out of Mexico City but in Xalapa, the capital city of the state of Veracruz.

Revolutionary Broadsides and Posters of the 1960s: Writing styles and forms merged with pop art and culture in the 1960s, with the result that many posters containing minimalist poems, combined with collages of photographs (usually of Che Guevara in with beret) and colors / sketches inspired by comics. The skillful use of design to give the message a vibrant, relevant feeling was important in creating a “brand” and the kind of warrior banners that idealistic youth of the 1960s could rally around.

Reading

In a way that seemed to come full circle and echo the pictograms of the Aztec Codices, the early twentieth-century Mexican poets forged a new, graphics-intensive way to communicate their message. It brought together abstract art, geometric shapes, bright colors, and text, and the result was a poem that was part poster, part illustration, and part exhortative message, all created on a single sheet of paper called a “broadside.” Explain how writing forms such as broadsides lent themselves to messages of the people and political activism, as well as avant-garde artistic expression.

Discussion

In a way that seemed to come full circle and echo the pictograms of the Aztec Codices, the early twentieth-century Mexican poets forged a new, graphics-intensive way to communicate their message. It brought together abstract art, geometric shapes, bright colors, and text, and the result was a poem that was part poster, part illustration, and part exhortative message, all created on a single sheet of paper called a “broadside.” Explain how writing forms such as broadsides lent themselves to messages of the people and political activism, as well as avant-garde artistic expression.

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WORLDVIEW

Religion

A Religious War: The failure to truly achieve a separation of church and state resulted in the violent Cristera War in Mexico. After that war, the government of Mexico officially declared that church and State must remain separate.

Liberation Theology: Politically active priests such as Romero in El Salvador, sided with Marxists rebels during the Cold War, resulting in clashes between priests, nuns, the Church, and fascistic right-wing dictators. The use of Christian doctrine to rise up against social inequality and fascism was referred to as “liberation theology,” and it was often mixed with the Marxist writings of Che Guevara and others.

Discussion Question

In the 20th century, the advent of mass media profoundly changed the way that we obtain information and how we decide the best way to practice our religious beliefs. Describe how mass communications transformed religious groups into political activism.

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Philosophy

Generation of 1900 (Generation of Founders) (1910 – 1940): The “Generation of Founders” was a movement that reacted against the positivist philosophies of the time because they were seen as simply reinforcing the very rigid class hierarchy. Jose Enrique Rodo (1871-1917) published his seminal work, *Ariel*, in 1900, in which he argued that the world tended to see Latin Americans as “Caliban” in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, but instead it should be an idealistic spirit, such as the character of Ariel. Other important members of this generation are Alejandro Korn (Argentina), Antonio Caso (Mexico), and Raimundo de Farias Brito (Brazil).

Generation of 1915: In this generation, the anti-positivist revolt continued. It was seen as a revolt against the social, economic, and cultural domination of the elites and a desire to recognize the indigenous peoples, and the poor mestizos. The underlying dream or vision was to create a new mixed race that would fuse all races and achieve peace and a restoration of ancient traditions. Jose Vasconcelos’s *The Cosmic Race* (1925) articulates the vision, and suggests that the 1910 Mexican Revolution was an enactment of the vision of creating a peaceful world through a new people. Interestingly, this also corresponded with the American writer, Jean Toomer’s mystical vision of a brave new race in *The Blue Meridian*.

Generation of 1930: Known for forging the framework of what was considered to be a new philosophical framework that was uniquely Latin America, and thus fused from multiple traditions (indigenous, African, European). Their main focus was on finding a new perspective, and they were deeply influenced by the work of the Spanish philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset, who encouraged looking at reality deliberately from a different perspective. Miro Quesada first used the term, “forjadores” (forgers) to describe the process, and he was accompanied by Samuel Ramos (1897-1959) and José Gaos (1900-1969) in Mexico; Francisco Romero (1891-1962) and Carlos Astrada (1894-1970) in Argentina; and Juan David García Bacca (1901-1992) in Venezuela.

Generation of 1940: Philosophies of norms and institutions. This group of philosophers turned to the universities and state-supported institutions of culture and education to solidify and codify what was considered to be a uniquely Latin American philosophical perspective. The Latin American philosophy continued to emphasize a fusion of indigenous mindsets, as well as deep questioning of the European social fabric. In many ways, this group put together a framework that made universities not only bulwarks of identity, but also the muscle behind future revolutions or paradigmatic upheavals later in the 1960s and 1970s. It is important to note that these institutions were state-supported and access was free to qualifying citizens, which allowed greater diffusion within society. Philosophical thinkers included Risieri Frondizi (1910-1985) and Augusto Salazar Bondy (1925-1974) in Argentina; Miguel Reale (1910-2006) in Brazil; Arturo Ardao (1912-2003) in Uruguay; and Leopoldo Zea (1912-2004) and Luis Villoro (1922-) in Mexico.

Generation of 1960: Liberation philosophies. Philosophy manifested itself in social upheavals and political action in this generation. Marxist ideologies found receptive hearts and minds in the universities and public institutions that had been focused on the efforts of looking at the world through uniquely Latin American lenses. Thus, Marxist and deconstructivist philosophies that emphasized discovering the often hidden hegemonic and self-interested forces that determine (and enforce) a socially constructed notion of reality, were welcomed because they could find many examples in Latin American daily social, economic, and political daily life. Further, ethics and issues of the rights of the indigenous, women, and issues of protecting the environment were incorporated. Key thinkers include Paulo Freire, Arturo Andrés Roig (1922-2012), Enrique Dussel (1934-), and Horacio Cerutti Guldberg (1950-). Most were imprisoned or fled in exile due to the fact that their ideas were destabilizing for the dictators that ruled their countries.

Generation of 1980 and Beyond: The ideas of the Europeans, primarily Rorty, Habermas, Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida, were extremely influential in the 1980s and beyond, since they provided a framework upon which the ideas of globalism, postmodernism, and postcolonialism could rise. Feminist thought, which expanded into a general notion of the phenomenology of oppression, and the exposure of the webs of exclusion based on gender, class, ethnicity, language, sexuality, and level of “otherness” was powerful. Many authors (along with artists) focused on the ways in which otherness manifested itself. They opened the door to an examination of how existing power structures tended to fall into a state of decadence instead of finding ways to adapt or grow. It is useful to note that the “Power/Decadence” decline happens to all, regardless of how “pure” the original philosophy might have been. Important thinkers include Raul Fonet-Betancourt, Walter Mignolo, María Lugones (1948-), and Susana Nuccetelli (1954-) from Argentina; Jorge J. E. Gracia (1942-) and Ofelia Schutte (1945-) from Cuba; Linda Martín Alcoff (1955-) from Panama; and Eduardo Mendieta (1963-) from Colombia. One example is Luis Villoro (1922-2014) a Mexican philosopher who explored the metaphysical concept of Otherness, the limits and extents of reason, as well as the link between knowledge and power. Completed an important study about Indigenismo in Mexico, which he called ‘The Revolution of Independence’, after the uprising of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in 1994.

Discussion Question

Costumbristas recognized and documented indigenous cultures and folklore, along with mestizo traditions. The 20th century philosophers took it a step further and made a conscious effort to incorporate indigenous beliefs into a philosophical framework. Explain how the 20th century philosophers incorporated older ideas and traditions with the new ideas coming from Europe.

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Science

Animal husbandry: Beef became a main export in the early 20th century with the advent of new canning and freezing technologies. Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico were leaders in developing breeds of cattle with genetic qualities allowing them to resist heat and to gain weight quickly. Brazil quickly dominated the international beef industry, thanks to the vertical integration of the beef, from farm all the way to stockyard, slaughter, and packaging.

Canning science: Canning is a way to preserve and transport processed food in an airtight container. Canning technologies were developed in Argentina to export beef (primarily in the form of corned beef), and the double-seamed process was perfected with a double-coated liner to assure the integrity of the contents.

Cataract surgery: Cuban eye clinics are world-renowned for their state of the art technology for the diagnosis and surgical intervention for eye diseases including cataracts and glaucoma.

Lithium mining: The Uyuni Salar of Bolivia, with its lithium-rich brines that lie within layers of an ancient lake bed, has been the site of process innovation in the production and processing of minerals such as lithium. They are found dissolved in the salty brines of the lacustrine deposits.

Astronomy: The largest single-aperture telescope in the world was launched in 1963 in Arecibo, Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican scientists, collaborating with scientists from around the world, developed new workflows and processes for using the telescope for radio astronomy, atmospheric science, and radar

astronomy. Major breakthroughs were accomplished in the areas of detecting perturbations in the ionosphere, which would potentially portend the deployment of nuclear warheads, which made the Arecibo telescope a vital part of military defense.

Color Television: Guillermo Gonzalez Camarena, who lived and worked in Guadalajara, Mexico, is widely recognized as the inventor of the color-wheel type of color television. As both an electrical and mechanical engineer, Gonzalez Camarena was able to integrate the transmission system and the electronic production of images. His first patent for the system was awarded in 1942.

Discussion / Questions

In the twentieth century, scientific and technological breakthroughs were often very futuristic and utopian, and their main justification for funding was the promise they held out of contributing to a better, potentially utopian, world. The inventions from Latin America have fit that set of parameters quite well. What are your opinions about them? How do the advancements in science and technology in Latin America in the twentieth century create solid scaffolding for a better world? When? Where?

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