

How to Spot Latin America's Tropical Art

By Antwaun Sargent — Nov 23 2015



Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today, Museo Jumex, Mexico City, November 19, 2015–February 7, 2016. Courtesy: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and Museo Jumex, Mexico City

Latin America is a diverse, multifaceted, heterogeneous region and The Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative (<http://www.guggenheim.org/map>)’s *Under the Same Sun: Art From Latin America Today* exhibit at Museo Jumex (<http://fundacionjumex.org/en/site/museojumex>) in Mexico City hopes to expand that art conversation globally. The traveling exhibition, includes more than 40 works of painting, installation, performance, photography and video, from Latin American artists representing 13 countries. It focuses largely on the political turmoil that has shaped those countries and renders visible the aesthetic contributions of Latin American artists to contemporary art and culture.

“I could not ignore the presence of politics, that’s something that most of the artists deal with in one way or another,” Guggenheim UBS MAP Curator for Latin America, Pablo León de la Barra (<http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/about/staff-profiles/curators/pablo-leon-de-la-barra>) tells The Creators Project. De la Barra organized the works around conceptualism, modernism, participation, and what he calls “the tropical,” which is an acknowledgement of the uniqueness each country has on cultural production. “It was really important for me to show that aesthetics are present but also the great contributions of most of these works and artists act as critical tools to rethink the realities.”



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Wilson Diaz's neon light text work, *Movement of the Liberation of The Cocoa Plant*, draws attention to the complex history Latin America has with agriculture corporations. Alfredo Jaar's

Times Square, April 1987: A Logo for America, visually rethinks the geographic and political landscape that is referred to as "America" to include not only the United States but also the countries of Central and South

America. And Carlos Motta's *Brief History of US Interventions in Latin America Since 1946* lists off more than a dozen times the United States forcibly shaped the political histories of many other countries in the region.

Under the Same Sun largely includes artists born after 1968. Yet it also recognizes intergenerational voices like the works of artists like Eduardo Costa's whose text work *A Piece That Is...*, is shown alongside Tania Bruguera (<http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/know-your-hashtag-yo-tambien-exijo>)'s *Tatlin's Whisper #6* video work and Jonathas de Andrade's hanging poster installation entitled,

Posters for the Museum of the Man of the Northeast. The exhibit looks at artistic strategies employed over the last several decades to explore questions of heritage, celebration, and dissent.



Alfredo Jaar, A Logo for America, 1987, Digital color video, 10 min., 25 sec., edition 2/6; original animation commissioned by Public Art Fund for Spectacolor Sign, Times Square, New York, April 1987. Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Guggenheim UBS MAP Purchase Fund Courtesy the artist

For de la Barra two artists that encompass the ideas present in the exhibition are Luis Camnitzer, who represents the older generation of Latin American artists in the show and Amalia Pica, one of the youngest artists exhibited. “In terms of Luis Camnitzer, there are two works of his in the exhibition, one that appears on the façade of Museo Jumex that says, ‘The museum is a school: The artist learns to communicate; The public learns to make connections. In a way the [work] implies a responsibility of the three players to create a form of critical thinking, and in this way I see the exhibition as a toolbox and the works of art as the tools that help you understand and change reality.”

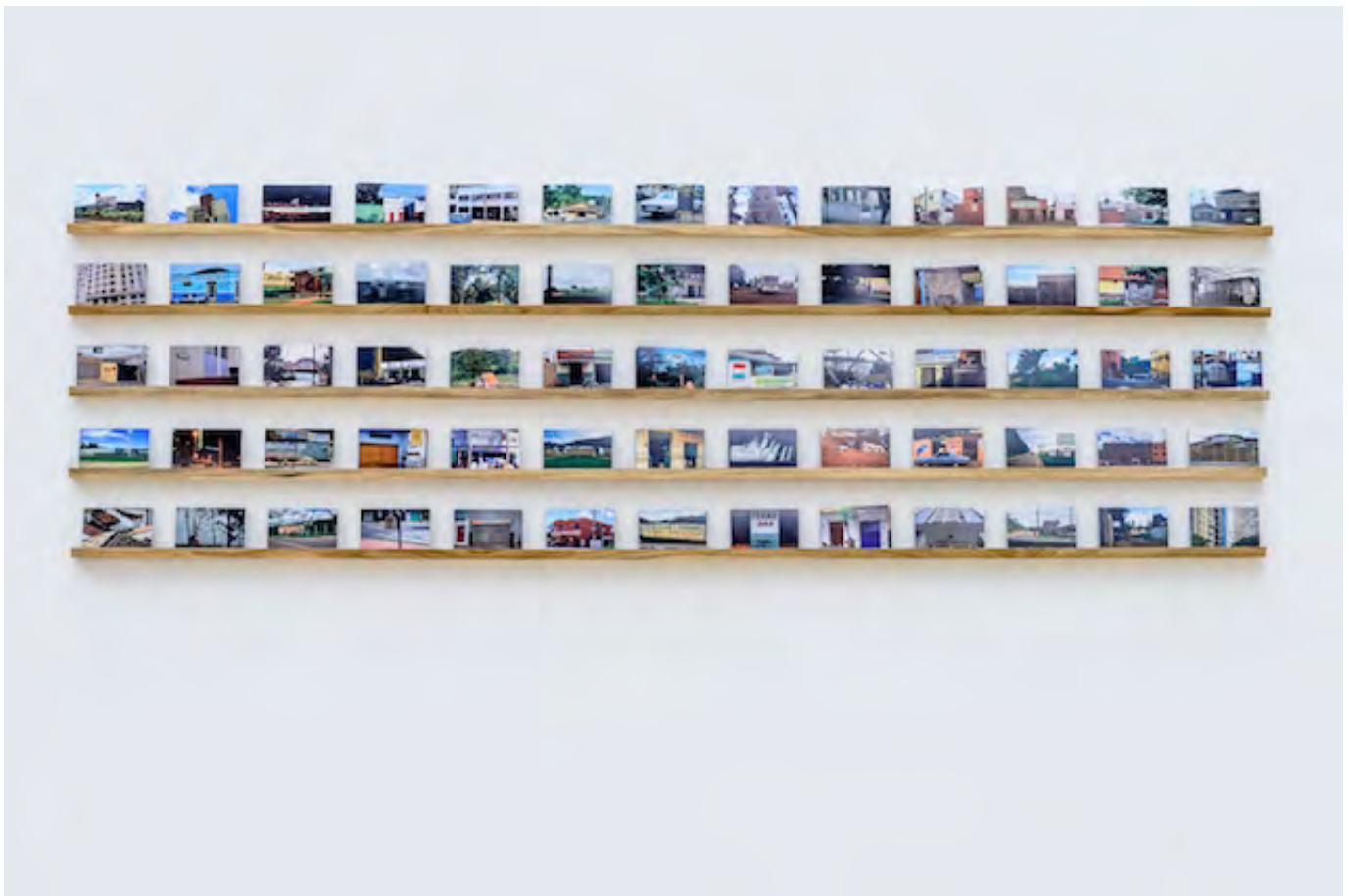
The other work by Luis Camnitzer is an installation of 10 slide projectors, entitled, *Art History Lesson No. 7*, that reminds us how art history used to be taught, as a series of slides being projected on a wall. Camnitzer empties the slides depicting artworks to allow the viewer to construct— in the remaining white space—their own histories that have been ignored by the canonized art world and mainstream retellings of history.



Luis Camnitzer, A Museum is a School, 2011– Site-specific installation, media variable, overall dimensions variable, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift of the artist in honor of Simón Rodríguez on the occasion of the Guggenheim UBS MAP Global Art Initiative, 2014.59. Installation view: Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today, Museo Jumex, Mexico City, November 19, 2015–February 7, 2016 Photo: Nisma Zaman, 2015

Amalia Pica's performance art work, $A \cap B \cap C$, comprised of actors occasionally rearranging colorful geometric shapes, "deals with the traumas during the military junta in Argentina, which she thinks is parallel to this idea of the prohibition of people to gather in public space because it could be seen as subversive to the regime," says de la Barra. "What she does in the performance with these actors with the intersecting geometric figures, is moves forward from the historical and thinks of new ways of trying to form community and connections."

The works exhibited in *Under the Same Sun* deal deeply with past politics in a way that could help establish a new language for understanding the future. "We were trying to achieve many things," explains de la Barra. "We were trying to give the artists of Latin America more visibility, and change the way in which the art center, in this case New York, perceives the other and recognizes that there are other spots where thinking is happening and where art practices are questioning the world we live in."



Under the Same Sun: Art from Latin America Today, Museo Jumex, Mexico City, Photo: Nisma Zaman, 2015

Under the Same Sun: Art From Latin America Today continues through February 16 at Museo Jumex. For more information, click here (<http://fundacionjumex.org/en/explora/exposicion/bajo-un-mismo-sol-arte-de-america-latina-hoy>).

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