

Latin American Artist of the 20th century

Outside Latin America, as Waldo Rasmussen, curator of this exhibition, points out, it was the MOMA, New York, that acted as pioneer institution selecting and exhibiting the work of latin american artists. Over sixty years ago, in 1931, two years after its foundation, the MOMA devoted an exhibition to the mexican master Diego Rivera.

Began in 1935, the latin american collection of the MOMA, made up of some 300 works, was first shown in 1943, and in 1967 more recent acquisitions were shown. After its presentation in Seville, *Latin American artists of the 20th*, will travel to the Centre Georges Pompidou where it will stay from November to January, continue to the Köln Kunsthalle (February to April 1993) and back to New York (MOMA, June to September 1993).

In this exhibition, it has'nt been Rasmussen's wish to "provide a complete historical survey but rather a broad view of the many complex strands in the work of Latin American artists". Furthermore, "Rather than stressing the exotic, the folkloric or the nationalistic, the exhibition maintains an international point of view". Thus, "the exhibition does not seek to define Latin American art, but rather to explore it as inclusively and openly as possible".

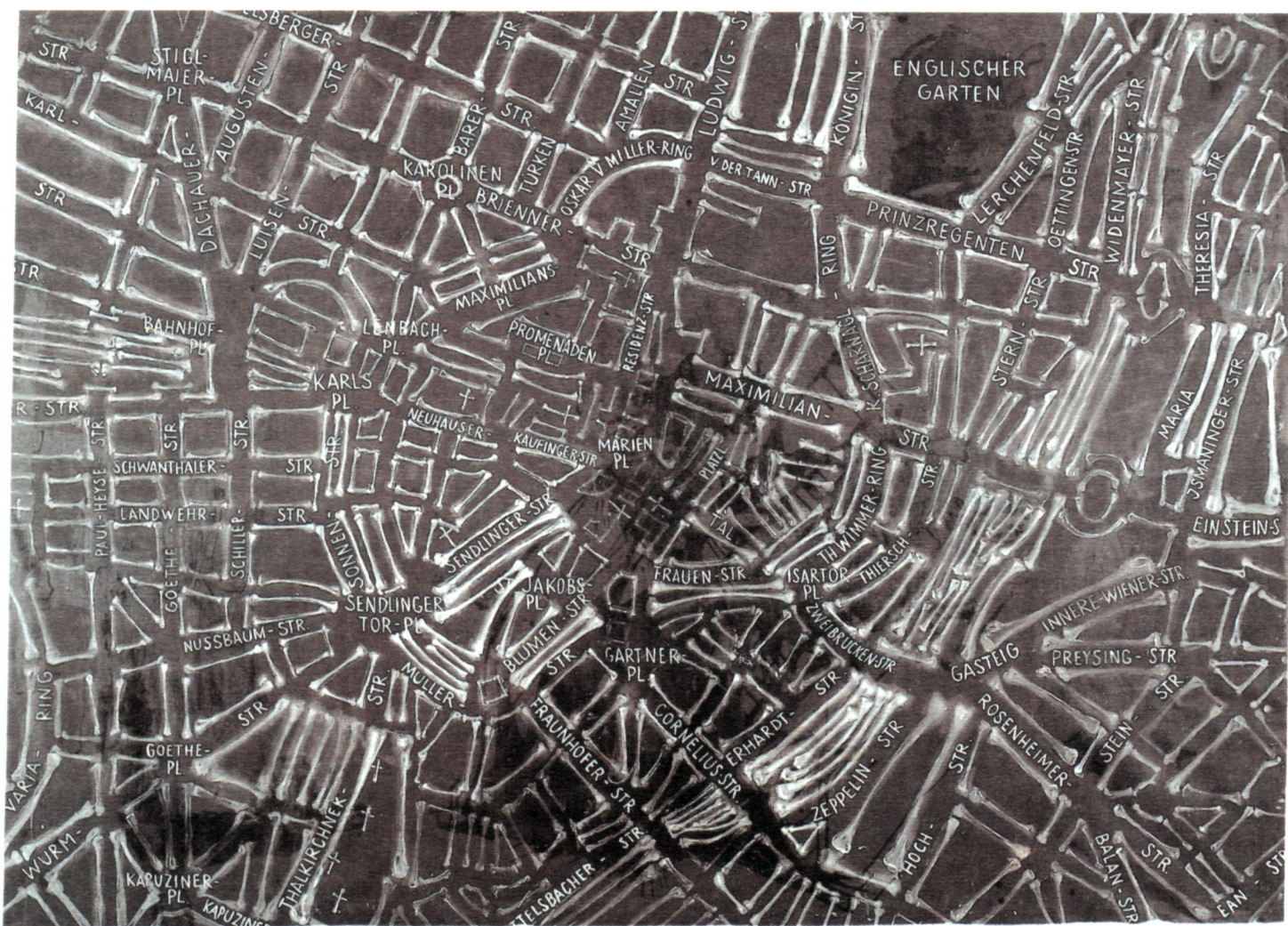
In his essay, Edward J. Sullivan divides the exhibition into seven areas, based upon aesthetic principles and charted movements in latin american art: 1) Notes on the genesis of latin american modernism. 2) Social conscience artists. 3) Constructivism in Lain America. 4) The inheritance of constructivism. 5) Surrealism and the surreal in latin american art. 6) The 60's and 70's: figuration and new figuration in latin american art, and 7) The crisis of modernism. He also indicates that this classification is not intended to be rigid.

The final and seventh area subsequently divides into A) Installation. B) The Human Body as theme. C) The politics of Action. D) The politics of objects and E) Times and Space. This subdivision attempts to fragment for analysis a huge jungle, separating unknown, dangerous and poisonous species and specially pop art, led by the north americans: the folkloric, the exotic, the rational.

However, each of these areas would need a specific exhibition for a full appericiation. With the 400 works and more than 100 artists represented in the exhibition, the almost non-existent or limited attention given to this continent in the west is aroused. A whole century, or such a vast and diverse continent can hardly be understood through art that falls in line with a parallel western interpretation.

The panoramic vision exhibited isn't only vast, excellent and grand, but it is also full of many extraordinary works of modern latin american art. And if the whole is seductive due to the quantity and quality of the work exposed, we can say the same about movements and tendencies akin to western art (Constructivism, Surrealism, Cynetic art, New Figuration, Expressionism, Conceptualism...). Some individual artists are very generously represented, for example: Rivera, Rafael Barradas, Tarsila do Amaral, Xul Solar, Laser Segall, Armando Reverón, Cándido Portinari, María Izquierdo, Frida Kahlo, Orozco, Volpi, Jesús Rafael Solto, Wilfredo Lam, Matta and several others.

It is also an exhibition difficult to surpass for many reasons. The colossal geographic and temporal dimensions will be difficult to repeat, taking into account recent perspectives on intercultural relations. An exhibition of this magnitude that refered to another country that was'nt Latin america would



GUILLERMO KUITCA. *Marienplatz*. 1991. Cort. Annina Nosei Gallery. New York.

be unthinkable, from the western viewpoint, which, of course, is a north american viewpoint.

The final result is, to say the least, confused. The jungle always remains impenetrable, it doesn't stand up to one analysis, even if it is structured and fragmented; it can't avoid transplants, absences, exclusions, rejections. The art of Latin american in the 20th century doesn't make up a lineal tale, and its kernel is composed of many leads. Four hundred works wouldn't probably be enough to represent the production of Brasil alone in the twentieth century, doing full justice to Brasil.

In short, what aren't acceptable criteria in Europe and in the United States shouldn't be for Latin America. At the end of his essay Sullivan asks: "Is there anything at all that is "Latin American" or is this term simply a neocolonial construct of the First World applied to the Third". A strange sort of conclusion. The reasoning behind the exhibition doesn't respond then to a question posed by the works that compose it, but rather that they establish with their own plural life. Latin America isn't a purely aesthetic issue for these artists, but in fact a continent of social issues, that are also political, economic, military, ecological; of differences and identities, of plurality, that persistent western colonial values refuse to see



FRIDA KAHLO: *Mis abuelos, mis padres y yo. (Arbol genealógico)*, 1936.

The Museum of Modern Art of New York. Donación de Allan Roos, M. D. y B. Mathieu Roos, 1976.

other than as a result of influences and aesthetic whims. These works are the consequence of another reality, not of another fiction.

From what we gather from Sullivan's essay latin american art is solely a european by product; yet the coexistence of indian, african, asian cultures, as well as the eventual mixing of bloods, explain just as great a part of the latin american modernist premises.

In a sense this exhibition establishes a panorama based on the hegemonic criteria of western great art. However, let's not get confused. This exhibition is only the result of a

Rasmussen-Sullivan interpretation, and not of latin americans. The species observed by their condescending and darwinian eyes are, furthermore, "the aesthetics of liberation", that underlies these works. Other visions that different foreigners like Lowry, Buñuel and Artaud were able to discern. To conclude, this exhibition appears like all of 1992: in Seville and lacking thought, without concepts, definitely avoiding that necessary debate on cultural colonialism that most certainly won't be held in Seville in 1992.

A.Z.

Plaza de Armas, Seville