

A SYMPOSIUM ON CONTEMPORARY ART AND LITERATURE IN LATIN AMERICA

SPEAK OUT, CHARLA, BATE-PAPO

1. Does present day Latin American art exist as a distinct expression? If it does, on what terms?
2. Can an artist produce independently of foreign interests?
3. What operative models does the Latin American artist have at his disposal: international currents, indigenous movements, or other resources?
4. To what extent do Latin American artists respond to their immediate circumstances: community, plastic resources, and others?
5. Does the universal complaint about a lack of a truly professional art criticism in the Latin American countries compel the artist to seek a feedback elsewhere?

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The Fine Arts Festival this year places emphasis upon the Arts of Latin America. In support of that theme, the University Art Museum schedule contains substantial evidences of contemporary expression during both semesters of the 1975-76 academic year and during the second semester the Colombian gold exhibit will be with us for a month. A tentative list of shows is being sent you separately. In addition, we have recently begun negotiations for a 150 piece collection of Mayan materials for December and January, perhaps not the best time but much better than none.

As our chief contribution to the Festival itself, we have arranged with Plural, a Mexican magazine devoted to art, literature, and criticism, and directed by Octavio Paz, for an exhibition of twelve major Latin American artists who have been discussed in the magazine's columns. The jury is composed of Plural's Editor-in-Chief, Kazuya Sakai, and Damian Bayon, representing the University. In addition, substantial one-man shows are being installed for October (opening September 28) of Alejandro Otero, of Venezuela, and Edgar Negret, of Colombia. Both men have been shown importantly in the Americas and Europe recently and Otero has just finished a major piece for the Colombian government in Bogota.

In conjunction with the Plural exhibit, a major international symposium on contemporary art and literature of Latin America has been underwritten by the Institute of Latin American Studies, with additional help from the Colleges of Humanities and Fine Arts. It has been organized with Rudolfo Cardona, Chairman of Spanish and Portuguese, who has been a joint planner and source of ideas since the outset of the Plural exhibition. It is about the symposium,

which will be open to all comers, that I now write, with the hope that your interest and time will permit you to participate as a discussant. The symposium, entitled "Speak out, Charla, Bate-Papo: Contemporary Art and Literature of Latin America," intends to recognize central issues facing Spanish and Portuguese Americans working as artists and writers. Two days of panel discussions, half-days being devoted each to art and literature, will be held at the Joe C. Thompson Center:

Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, October 27, 28, and 29.

Leading Latin Americans are being invited to participate on panels; a confirmed list of guests will follow before the first of October. At least a half-dozen or more countries will be represented. For example, from Mexico Octavio Paz and Jose Luis Cuevas are among a delegation of eight, with Fernando Gamboa, Director of the Museum of Modern Art in Mexico City, coming as a commissioner to the conference from that country.

In addition to panelists, we are asking discussants and observers to participate in the affairs of the conference, contributing commentary and inquiry as these persons see fit. Neither discussants nor observers have the responsibility for preparing opening statements or supplementary papers. Recognizing your existing academic schedule, it has occurred to us that you may be able to attend some of the morning and afternoon meetings and, with luck, that we may find you on hand the third day, which is to be given over to review discussions of what transpired during the first two days. Each session will be chaired by a visiting artist, literary figure, or scholar, and the third day we hope to have such an outstanding figure as Dr. Claudio Gutierrez, Rector of the University of Costa Rica and himself a distinguished philosopher, on hand for review commentary.

In view of your own interests in these and related matters, I am attaching a list of the five issues to which the panelists will devote themselves and to which we hope you will give consideration during discussion responses. As we see it, the chair will open each panel session (extending from 9:30 to 12:00 and from 1:45 to 4:00) with a description of the issues at hand. Each panelist will then make a statement of from two to ten minutes, outlining his or her own position vis-a-vis the question. That commentary will be open to review by panel and discussants. And at the end of each half-day session, time permitting, summarizing comments will be called for from both panelists and discussants.

Additionally, observers will form the third ring of participants. These will be persons whose distinction and experience warrant their review and participation in these events but whose commitments permit only intermittent visitation. Yet we are eager to have informed commentary where it is available.

This is a doubtless long-winded invitation and explanation of the events and the symposium itself. The organizers hope you will add your ideas to those of the panelists and that you will also mobilize your students and associates to attend these sessions.

Do let me know whether you can join in, so that we may include your name among the symposium participants.