

The Museum of Modern Art Department of Film

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#70

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VIDEO FROM LATIN AMERICA AT MoMA

Video artists from Latin America have been making tapes in recent years suffused with a strong sense of Latin American culture and politics. VIDEO FROM LATIN AMERICA, on exhibition in MoMA's Video Gallery from October 29 - December 1, 1981, consists of tapes by 21 artists from nine countries, who live either in their native lands or abroad. The show covers a range of approaches, and includes performance-oriented, narrative, poetic, documentary and political work. Latin American video has had extremely limited exposure, and the exhibition brings attention to this little-known area of art production.

In Latin America there has always been great interest in modern technology, and many artists have been attracted to such recently developed media as video, Polaroid photography, and Xerox painting. Although some experimentation by artists took place at television stations in the '60s, it was not until the mid-'70s that Latin American video art began with the purchase of the new portable camera by several art schools and museums. Few artists in these countries, however, have been able to develop a substantial body of video work, due to economic reasons and the scarcity of electronic equipment. Video equipment, most of which is imported, is extraordinarily costly, up to five times the price of equipment abroad. Equipment and parts are either unobtainable or constantly in need of repair; in some areas it is illegal for an independent to even possess a video camera. Color television has reached countries like Argentina only recently.

Through sheer persistence and determination, some Latin American artists have been able to produce strong statements in video. However, once a new videotape finally is made, there are few outlets for exhibiting the work. Over the last sixteen years, Latin American video has been exhibited in the Bienal of Sao Paulo in '75 and '81, and other institutions have presented and helped artists produce work, such as the Di Tella Institute and the Centro de Arte y de Comunicacion, both in Buenos Aires, and the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo in Sao Paulo and Bogota. Global Television in Sao Paulo and Televisa in Mexico City have shown artists' video.

Over the years a number of Latin American artists have left their original countries for Europe or North America to pursue their work under more favorable circumstances. What is apparent in the art by Latins both at home and abroad is that it retains a unique sensibility and energy and a strong political commitment.

The videotapes in this exhibition fall into four general areas. In performance-oriented projects the artist executes a series of actions which generally are centered around one theme. In TO DIE OF FRIGHT, Sonia Andrade carries out four activities in a strong, almost brutal essay. Anna Bella Geiger's short pieces in ELEMENTARY MAPS are visual and verbal puns. The Collectivo's work OH, SOUTH AMERICA is the documentation of a performed 'action,' wherein the five-person group dropped 400,000 art-political leaflets from six planes over Santiago. This exemplifies the somewhat secretive 'action-events' the group carries out, in which they interact with the people of Chile. In IN-PULSA Sandra Isobel Llano Garcia sets out to decipher the language of the body through the use of medical machines such as electrocardiograms. Margarita Paksa's short tape COUNTDOWN--THE ZERO HOUR concentrates on time and daily pressures.

The narrative-oriented tapes are equally varied. Michel Cardena's ARE WE FREE?, which was produced in Amsterdam with de Appel, examines attitudes towards lifestyles outside the social norm. Carlos Castillo Blanco's TVO is a parody of commercial television's manipulation of the viewer, and Artur Mattuck's MAURICIO: PRISONER is about harsh political control. The focus of Teodoro Maus' MAN ON THE EMPIRE STATE is an exile, shown first in his native country, then as a 'squatter' in the famous New York skyscraper. Ricky Ricardo of "I Love Lucy" fame is parodied in Tony Labat's BABALOU.

An example of a subtle genre of video work that is both poetic and highly visual is Oscar Monslave's VIDEO ESSAY #1. It studies the essential Colombian building unit, the mud brick, how and where it is made, the simple dwellings and large apartment buildings made from it. Geo Ripley's PIAJO is a non-verbal statement about the Piajo Indians, who live harmoniously on undeveloped land in the Dominican Republic. META MAYAN, by Eden Velez, is a thoughtful, romantic portrait of people living in Guatemala, while Cecilia Vicuna's three short visual poems reflect a reverence for land as well.

Latin Americans have also used video for documentary work. Margarita D'Amico and Manuel Manzano's VIDEO OF CASTILLITO: GUYANA is about an old, lower-middle class neighborhood, and the plans of an oil company to take over

the area. Church members, politicians, residents and businessmen openly discuss the situation in the tape. Jaime Ardila's MEMO-CINE is a straightforward work about contemporary Colombian art, based upon serial photographs taken of three artists (Santiago Cardenas, Beatrice Gonzalez, Luis Caballero) at work in their studios.

The selection of videotapes in VIDEO FROM LATIN AMERICA was made by Barbara London, Assistant Curator in The Department of Film, in the course of two research trips through Latin America in '79 and '80, funded by MoMA's International Council. Video exhibitions at MoMA are possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Council on the Arts and the Rockefeller Foundation.

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- Sonia Andrade: Brazilian, lives in Paris
- Jaime Ardila: Colombian, lives in Bogota
- Michel Cardena: Dutch, born in Colombia, lives in Amsterdam
- Carlos Castillo Blanco: Venezuelan, lives in Caracas
- Collectivo (Juan Castillo, Diamela Eltit, Lotty Rosenfeld, Eugenio Tellez, Raul Zurita) Chilean, live in Santiago and Toronto
- Margarita D'Amico and Manuel Manzano: Venezuelan, live in Caracas
- Anna Bella Geiger: Brazilian, lives in Rio de Janeiro
- Tony Labat, Cuban, lives in San Francisco
- Sandra Isobel Llano Garcia: Colombian, lives in Mexico City
- Artur Matuck: Brazilian, lives in Sao Paulo
- Teodoro Maus: Mexican, lives in New York
- Oscar Monslave: Colombian, lives in Bogota
- Margarita Paksa: Argentinian, lives in Buenos Aires
- Geo Ripley: Dominican Republic, lives in Santo Domingo
- Eden Velez: Puerto Rican, lives in New York
- Cecilia Vicuna: Chilean, lives in New York

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For further information, please contact Alicia Springer, Film Press Representative, 956-7289

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Video from Latin America

October 29 - December 1, 1981

MONDAY 11:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Jaime Ardila, Mmemo-Cine (30 min.)

2:00 - 5:45 p.m.
Margarita D'Amico + Manuel Manzano,
Video of Castillito: Guyana (27 min.)

TUESDAY 11:00 - 1:30 p.m.
Anna Bella Geiger, Elementary Maps
(12 min.)

3:00 - 5:45
Cecilia Vicuña, Three Works (15 min.)

THURSDAY 11:00 - 1:30 p.m.
Tony Labat, Babalou (12 min.)

3:00 - 8:00
Artur Matuck, Mauricio: Prisoner
(21 min.)

FRIDAY 11:00 - 2:00 p.m.
Sandra Llano Garcia, In-Pulsa (30 min.)

2:00 - 5:45
Michel Cardena, Are We Free!?
(23 min.)

SATURDAY 11:00 - 4:45 p.m.
Eden Velez, Meta Mayan (30 min.)

SUNDAY 11:00 - 4:45
Teodoro Maus, The Man on the Empire
State (60 min.)

TUESDAYS AND THURSDAYS
1:30 - 3:00 p.m.

Sonia Andrade, To Die of Fright
(12 min.)

Carlos Castillo Blanco, TVO
(9 min.)

Collectivo, Oh, South America
(12 min.)

Oscar Monsalve, Video Essay No.1
(13 min.)

Margarita Paksa, Countdown-the Zero
Hour (10 min.)

Geo Ripley, Piajo (12 min.)